A Deleuzian Theory of Eternity

by
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ABSTRACT

A DELEUZIAN THEORY OF ETERNITY

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The goal of this dissertation is to construct and defend a theory of eternity using the work of Gilles Deleuze. I will define eternity as the delay between the instant and the moment. This is an original definition. Eternity, in this sense, is not the same thing as timelessness; it does not mean "all of time;" it has nothing to do with God; above all, it does not equate to the endless perpetuation of lived time—i.e., immortality. Instead, eternity pertains solely to the repetition of events. An eternal event is one that can be repeated indefinitely. This project could accurately be described as a single extended argument for the eternal repeatability of events.

My general method is to examine Deleuze's writings on the past, present, and future for material relating to eternity. There are indications in Deleuze's work that all three dimensions of time can be identified with eternity in some way. My argument will be that a Deleuzian concept of eternity must be primarily identified with the future, and secondarily with the present and past. The delay between the instant and the moment is instigated by action taken in the present, and while this action initially refers to the past, it is always directed toward the future to come. An event is cut out of the past and pasted in the future from the standpoint of the present moment: instants are the past and future points at which we cut and paste the event. I will show that the delay between the instant and moment arises as the event becomes suspended in a relay between the past, present, and future, remaining forever unassignable to any specific time.
DEDICATION

For my dad, Bruce Ables. May he rest in everlasting peace.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My interest in both Deleuze and the philosophy of time was sparked by Philip Turetzky, formerly of Colorado State University. With his encyclopedic memory and authoritative footstomp, Turetzky taught me that philosophy was the greatest game, and the one that had to be taken most seriously. A straight line can be drawn from this project back to our conversations about time and intensity in the CSU courtyard. My interest in the philosophy of time was further kindled by Jean-Luc Solère at Boston College, a true paragon of scholarly rigor and reserve. He frequently made me feel the precise kind of stupid that motivates improvement. My comprehension (such as it is) of the broader currents of the history of philosophy is almost entirely due to the careful teaching of Solère.

At Guelph, I owe a debt of gratitude to John Russon and John Hacker-Wright. Dr. Russon, who was the first scholar of Continental philosophy I met at Guelph, immediately set high standards that I deeply wanted to live up to; it was no accident that my first publication on Deleuze (in *Deleuze and Guattari Studies*) began as an essay for his course, and one that he urged me to submit. I am grateful for his participation in this project. Dr. Hacker-Wright, meanwhile, stepped in late to help me see the project through at a time when it felt likely to collapse. His friendship and refreshingly unpretentious approach to philosophy have been a great comfort.

Words seem to fall short in formulating my gratitude to Bruce Baugh, perhaps because we have never met in person to exchange them. Suffice it to say that Dr. Baugh demonstrated incredible patience and dedication in working through the many iterations of this dissertation, always responding kindly and promptly to whatever I hurtled toward his inbox. In particular, Dr. Baugh consistently but firmly reminded me to have the proper exegetical respect for the subjects of this dissertation. If there is still a notable paucity of Spinoza and Bergson in these pages, it is not due to a lack of good advice on his part.

I would also like to thank Craig Lundy, the external examiner on this project, for his kind and illuminating comments on the final draft. Few things have solidified my confidence as a scholar more than receiving this thoughtful, thorough feedback from such a prominent commentator on Deleuze. I expected no such thing at any point.

My greatest debt, however, is to my adviser, Jay Lampert. Dr. Lampert agreed to take on this project before either of us knew what the project was, and when he was already overloaded with students; he continued to be my primary mentor even after leaving Guelph. As I have expressed to him, it is unclear whether I would have finished the dissertation without that commitment. And it would certainly have been much worse—in every way—without his dedication to critically reviewing every word of every chapter over and over until it was right. I have never had such close attention to my writing, and I doubt I will ever be lucky enough to have it again. That Dr. Lampert is also a formidable philosopher of time has just been icing on the proverbial cake. My indebtedness to his work is amply reflected in these pages.

Thanks, finally, to Erin Iversen for making everything else possible. I wish I had more to offer in return than these measly words. Alas, they are not even spells.
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Introduction

The goal of this dissertation is to construct and defend a theory of eternity using the work of Gilles Deleuze. I will define eternity as the delay between the instant and the moment. This is an original definition. Eternity, in this sense, is not the same thing as timelessness; it does not mean "all of time;" it has nothing to do with God; above all, it does not equate to the endless perpetuation of lived time—i.e., immortality. Instead, eternity pertains solely to the repetition of events. An eternal event is one that can be repeated indefinitely. This project could accurately be described as a single extended argument for the eternal repeatability of events.

1. Contributions to research

This dissertation is intended to make a positive contribution to philosophical research in two primary ways. First, it is an entry in the metaphysics of time—an attempt to say what eternity is. I will have cause to discuss many problems in the philosophy of time at length, as the past, present and future will each be analysed in different chapters. The reason for this is that eternity cannot be understood apart from time. My argument will be that a Deleuzian concept of eternity must be primarily identified with the future, and secondarily with the present and past. The delay between the instant and the moment is instigated by action taken in the present, and while this action initially refers to the past, it is always directed toward the future to come. An event is cut out of the past and pasted in the future from the standpoint of the present moment: instants are the past and future points at which we cut and paste the event. I will show that the delay between the instant and moment arises as the event becomes suspended in a relay between the past, present, and future, remaining forever unassignable to any specific time.
Second, this is a study of a particular concept in the work of a philosopher not usually associated with that concept. Although there has been no shortage of Deleuze scholarship in recent decades, there is, as of this writing, no other piece of research devoted primarily to Deleuze's concept of eternity. On the one hand, this is surprising, since Deleuze is widely recognized for his reflections on time. His analysis of Nietzsche's concept of the eternal return, for example, is perhaps the most well-known interpretation in 20th century continental philosophy (alongside that of Martin Heidegger). It is odd that the idea of eternal return could be promulgated without a clear understanding of what “eternal” signifies, but it seems that this is often the case.

On the other hand, there are legitimate reasons to downplay or even ignore the role of eternity in Deleuze’s work. To begin with, Deleuze himself frequently disavows the concept: philosophy should concern itself with neither the eternal nor the historical, he says at several points (DR xxi, WP 111, NP 107). Instead of eternity, he suggests, we should speak of the “untimely” or of “becoming” (DR 130, ATP 296). And for most of his career, Deleuze holds to this maxim: éternité is not favourably mentioned after 1970, except in studies of artists or other philosophers whose work involves that concept. However, Deleuze does invoke eternity about a dozen times in the books *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*, published in 1968 and 1969 respectively. These two books are arguably the most direct and forceful statements of the ideas that shaped his work from the early 1960s to his death in 1995. Accordingly, the theory of eternity reconstructed here is based primarily on these works.

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1 See Heidegger’s *Nietzsche*, vol. 2: *The Eternal Recurrence of the Same*. Deleuze’s interpretation of eternal return is discussed in chapter six of this dissertation.

2 In a preface to *Difference and Repetition* written in the early 1990s, Deleuze notes that it was “the first book in which I tried to ‘do philosophy.’ All I have done since is connected to this book” (xv).
However, I will not discuss these texts in isolation from the rest of Deleuze’s corpus. On the contrary, I will draw on works from across the span of Deleuze’s career. Sometimes I will criticize these works for internal reasons (logical fallacies, unsupported claims) and sometimes I will criticize them relative to one another. In the latter case, my criticisms are usually grounded in the conviction that it is only in *Logic of Sense* and (especially) *Difference and Repetition* that Deleuze’s unique theory of the future is given its proper weight and prominence. In particular, I will argue that several other works by Deleuze—principally those indebted to Henri Bergson—put too much emphasis on the past. I will show how theories that identify eternity with the past tend to lead to idealism (e.g., Platonism), just as theories that identify eternity with the present tend to imply an omniscient God. Since Deleuze is neither an idealist nor a theologian, we need a different basis for eternity. I will suggest that, for Deleuze, this basis lies in the open potentiality, or determinability, of the future.

This hints at a third contribution this dissertation makes to philosophy: it aims to revitalize the philosophy of eternity by demonstrating how the concept has social and political relevance in a contemporary setting. The influence of Karl Marx was inescapable for French philosophers of Deleuze’s time: they wrote with an eye to changing the world, rather than merely interpreting it.3 Indeed, Deleuze is often characterized as a philosopher of “the new,” that is, of the conditions under which novelty can be produced, recognized, and repeated.4 And it is precisely in the context of the production and repetition of the new that Deleuze invokes the concept of eternity. *Only what is new can become eternal*—this is the paradox that Deleuze embraces. Events, which are the types of occurrences in which novelty arises, become eternal when they are plucked out of the past and relayed into the future by an “actor” or intervening

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3 See Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach.”
4 For one of many examples, see *Deleuze, Guattari and the Production of the New* (O’Sullivan and Zepke, eds.).
subject. If I can show that this paradoxical statement is tenable, and that eternity and change must be thought together in the event, it opens up a dimension of meaning that has few precedents in historical theories of eternity.

Finally, if these constitute the positive goals of this project, there is also a negative stipulation that will be decisive. The stipulation is that eternity must not be confused with immortality. The claim that events can be made eternal is metaphysically controversial; the claim that human beings can live forever because their souls survive the deaths of their bodies is, I believe, rationally unsupportable. I will not attempt to refute arguments for immortality, except as they arise in the course of the project. Rather, I will treat those lines of argumentation that are explicitly or implicitly designed to support the thesis of immortality as inherently suspect, opting in every such case for alternative explanations.

We will see that this decision has considerable influence on the project: Henri Bergson and Marcel Proust are just a few of the writers whose doctrines will have to be qualified due to their commitment to immortality. Even in Deleuze, we will see creeping signs of the affirmation of life beyond life. But insisting on the inescapability of death—which means, in philosophical parlance, to insist on the finitude of existence—is, in my mind, the only way to make a theory of eternity truly modern. If this means reintroducing finitude into the work of a philosopher that showed signs of wanting to move beyond it, this is the price that must be paid.

2. Historical theories of eternity

It can be stated without any exaggeration that the concept of eternity is as old as philosophy itself. I have spoken of a revitalization of the concept, but it has only been dead for a relatively short while: from Parmenides’ Proem to Hegel’s absolute idealism, the grand
metaphysical systems of Western history almost all involve some notion of eternity. One of the unfortunate limitations of this dissertation is that I will not be able to examine this history in any detail. This is not to say that Deleuze’s work will be examined in a vacuum: on the contrary, I will have cause to discuss ideas from many well-known thinkers, including Plato, Plotinus, Augustine, Spinoza, Hume, Kant, Nietzsche, Husserl, Sartre, and Derrida. But I will treat all these thinkers the way Deleuze approaches the history of philosophy: by taking the conceptual resources I need to solve the problems at hand. History is a toolbox. This problem-based approach means that my selective discussions of these thinkers will probably be unsatisfying to those invested in them.

As a poor remedy for this deficiency, I can only hint here at how my interpretation of Deleuze fits into the historical discourse on eternity. We might distinguish three primary senses of eternity according to what is described as eternal: eternity refers to the eternal presence of God, the atemporality of ideal being, or the endlessness of time. Speaking generally, these three senses can be grafted respectively onto present-centric, past-centric and future-centric theories of eternity. Let us consider these in turn—keeping in mind that they are strictly generalizations, and that I am eliding many important details on all fronts.

By far the most widely known and accepted meaning of eternity in the Western tradition, both within philosophy and outside of it, pertains to God and God’s divine realm. That God is omnipotent implies he alone exists without beginning or end; God is omniscient because he sees everything that has happened and will happen, all at once; God is omnibenevolent because everything that happens is part of a greater, unified plan that transcends mortal desires. The difference between God and his creation is first of all the difference between the eternality of the

5 Though my schema is not quite the same, I am indebted to McTaggart’s “The Relation of Time and Eternity” for this way of dividing up the subject.
creator and the temporality of his corporeal creatures. God always exists, while his creatures begin to exist and cease to exist. The distinctive ways of existing proper to God and his creatures cannot occur together: God, who lacks nothing, has his life and essence fully present to him always, whereas created beings must piece theirs together across a finite succession of moments. The richest philosophical expression of these ideas came in late antiquity with thinkers like Augustine and Boethius.

The identification of eternity and God remains so strong that the decisive contemporary article on the subject, Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann's "Eternity," openly dismisses the problem of the existence of an eternal entity while presupposing one in its account (431). Not because the authors expect us to assume such an entity exists, of course, but because they see the philosophy of eternity as a contribution to the history and philosophy of religion. And they would seem to have a point, given that the most sustained examinations of the concept in contemporary scholarship have come from theologians like Paul Helm, William Lane Craig, and Katherin Rogers. For many philosophers, God and eternity simply belong together.

In chapter three, I will suggest that the privilege given to presence in 20th century phenomenology can also be seen as a heritage of the classical theory of divine eternity. This point will take some preparation, but in short, phenomenology puts the subject in God’s place. The subject contracts durations through protention and retention in such a way that past and future are drawn into, and preserved within, the present. The subject therefore assumes a kind of “God’s-eye view” on time because they remain forever situated in the “now” while the rest of time is drawn into presence. And since it is always “now,” there is a sense in which the present itself seems eternal. As we will see, even Deleuze cannot resist making use of this kind of
argument in his theory of “chronos” from Logic of Sense. But we will also see that what Deleuze calls “God” has little to do with the omniscient saviour of Christian tradition.

The second and most philosophically rich sense of eternity initially overlaps with the first sense in that it presupposes both the fundamental opposition between eternity and time and the priority of eternity over time. Here, eternity is outside or beyond time, not just in the sense of not being subject to time, but in the sense of being something qualitatively different that cannot be divided into intervals of duration. In place of God, however, eternity is here determined as a property of being, substance, the absolute idea, nous, or the eidos—whatever name is given to the fundamental ontological substrate of a given philosopher’s system. As in theological explanations, what is eternal is often seen as a metaphysical origin for what is in time.

Thus Plato, anticipating the Christian idea that man was made in God’s image by a few centuries, canonically defined time as the moving image of eternity: things that become imitate, through succession, the things that truly are all at once.6 For Spinoza, eternity denotes the necessity and infinity of the existence of substance; this eternity must similarly be expressed in duration through infinite modes and attributes, as well as in the relations between modes.7 And in Bergson, the whole universe has a kind of virtual memory in which everything that happens is stored and recorded; conversely, what happens in each new moment is drawn out of that world-

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6 Timaeus 37c-38c. See especially 38a: “We say that it [eternity] was and is and shall be; but ‘is’ alone really belongs to it and describes it truly; ‘was’ and ‘shall be’ are properly used of becoming which proceeds in time, for they are motions.” Note that this description applies equally well to the first and second senses of eternity I distinguish here, i.e., the eternal presence of God and atemporality of ideal being.

7 Spinoza defines eternity at the beginning of the Ethics: "By eternity I mean existence itself insofar as it is conceived as necessarily following solely from the definition of an eternal thing" (part 1, definition 8). Spinoza clarifies in proposition 23 of part one that “infinity and necessity of existence” means the same thing as eternity. This is why it only applies to substance. Deleuze emphasizes the importance of relations to Spinoza’s theory of eternity in Spinoza: Practical Philosophy, a short but rich book that will, regrettably, not have a place in this dissertation.
While Deleuze takes much from Spinoza as well as Plato, I will demonstrate at length that it is Bergson’s vision of the relation between eternity and time that has the most influence on Deleuze—even if what Deleuze ultimately calls “eternity” has no parallel in Bergson.

Volumes have been written on all these theories, but I confine myself here to two general observations. First, what really distinguishes this second type of eternity from theological systems is not just that God is depersonalized into Being—in a thinker like Spinoza, “God,” “substance,” and “nature” all refer to the same thing. The difference lies, rather, in the types of entities admitted into eternity by later variations on this second tradition: mathematical objects and theorems, essences, senses, natural kinds, and—most beloved to philosophers—eternal truths are all given an ideal reality in the eternity outside of time. In the Platonic tradition that persists to this day, for example, the truth that the interior angles of a triangle always add up to 180 degrees really exists, and the existence of this ideal truth is more stable and enduring than the existence of any particular triangle in the natural or cultural worlds. Entities like essences and truths are sometimes called atemporal rather than eternal to emphasize that they are valid in a way that seems to have nothing to do with time. Regrettably, I have not found that Deleuze’s work does much to illuminate the nature of these kinds of atemporal entities. I will, however, briefly discuss his relation to theories of essence at the beginning of chapter one. If the event as focal point for a modern theory of eternity has any competition, it is probably with essence.

The second observation is that, beginning with Plato, these theories invent an entirely new sense of the past: the dimension of the a priori. It is the property of always having been true that unites mathematical and metaphysical truths. The a priori past is not a past that was

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8 See chapter two, section two of this dissertation.
9 Mark Balaguer’s Platonism and Anti-Platonism in Mathematics provides a nice introduction to this tradition, which I am obviously simplifying here.
10 Heidegger, Basic Problems of Phenomenology 20.
once present and passed away, but a past that was never present, an immemorial past that is, somehow, always beside the present. The problem is always to determine the nature of the connection between the *a priori* past and the present we experience. In Neoplatonism, the solution to this problem involves the notion of participation, which puts things in time at a kind of nostalgic distance from the ideas they imitate.\(^{11}\) In Spinoza, by contrast, God or substance is immanent to all its modes, and each mode directly expresses God’s essence in a particular configuration.\(^{12}\) Once again, however, we will see that Bergson is most important here. Deleuze’s Bergsonian view is that the past is virtual, while the present is actual. The event links the two: actualization is when virtual events are made present, while counter-actualization is when actualized events are reintegrated into the virtual after being transformed. This dual movement will be at the heart of my study of the event.

This leaves us with the third and final meaning of eternity. “Sempiternity” traditionally refers to time that continues forever without end. On some accounts, this is all eternity is. Sempiternity is arguably more amenable to materialist or naturalist viewpoints than the theories discussed above. There is no need to identify distinct ontological levels for time and eternity, since what exists for a short time and what exists forever still exist on the same timeline, and according to a common measure. Thus, in theories like those developed by the Stoics, the universe itself is sempiternal, proceeding through endless cycles of cosmic conflagration and rebirth.\(^{13}\) The drawback to naturalistic theories of sempiternity is that they involve factual claims about the beginning and end of the universe: philosophers are generally not well-equipped to confirm such claims. Citing the Stoics, Deleuze will posit a kind of sempiternity in *Logic of*

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\(^{11}\) See Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, chapter 14.

\(^{12}\) *Ethics*, part one, propositions 25-28.

\(^{13}\) See Salles, *God and Cosmos in Stoicism* for a good overview.
*Sense.* He does not cite any evidence regarding the beginning and end of the universe, however, and there is little indication from the rest of his work that he was committed to this thesis.

Nietzsche’s influential theory of eternal return is also—at least on the surface—a theory of sempiternity.\(^{14}\) Nietzsche proposes that if time is unending, we will repeat all of our actions an infinity of times, just as we have already committed them over and over. He makes a kind of ethical test out of this fact: make sure the actions you commit are ones you would be willing to repeat forever. This suggests the sense in which sempiternity can be seen as future-oriented.

Time stretches out infinitely in both directions, but since we have control over the future and not the past, we are compelled in sempiternal time to consider the legacy of our actions. The emphasis on repetition in Deleuze owes something to these kinds of theories. If there is only unending time, and no higher-order eternity, then everything singular and unique, if it is to endure, must be “cut” out of the past or present in order to be preserved for the future. There are no timeless models suspended in the ideal heavens, and no omnipotent being keeping a log of his creations’ creations: there is only what happens, what ends, and what is repeated.

Whether or not time is endless, this basic point that survival is repetition seems important to me, and it will guide my critique of Deleuze’s Bergsonian heritage in this dissertation. If an event is to persist eternally, as I will argue, it must be picked out of time and made repeatable. Though it may otherwise survive in the virtual past, an event that is not selected for preservation in this way eventually fades into lost time. There may well be an eternal, all-preserving past, and even an omnipotent God who surveys that past. But for us mortals, an event that is not repeated and leaves behind no traces may as well be nothing.

\(^{14}\) As I discuss in chapter six, Deleuze offers a heterodox reading of Nietzsche’s eternal return that essentially inverts the surface message.
3. Alternative interpretations of Deleuze

Having delineated the goals of this dissertation and some general positions on eternity taken by past authors, it is time to turn to the details of my account. I will begin by briefly surveying interpretations of Deleuze’s discussions of eternity that have been offered by other scholars. While there has been a significant amount of work published on Deleuze in the past few decades, there have been no studies devoted exclusively to eternity, and only a few that focus on his overall theory of time (rather than just one or two particular works). Conversely, there have been many studies that touch indirectly on some aspect of Deleuze’s theory of time. Thus, while it is likely that individual parts of my own interpretation of Deleuze have been anticipated in many places, I will focus here on relating that interpretation to a few of the more fleshed-out accounts. This will involve the introduction of complex concepts that I can only outline here but return to later.

To begin with, no contemporary philosopher has had more influence on the interpretation of Deleuze presented here than Jay Lampert. Lampert’s *Deleuze and Guattari’s Philosophy of History* offers the best available analysis of chapter two of *Difference and Repetition*, where Deleuze first laid out his three “syntheses” of time (present, past, future). Furthermore, my interpretation of eternity as a peculiar kind of delay stretching across all three syntheses owes a great deal to Lampert’s *Simultaneity and Delay*. My interpretation of instants as retroactive and proactive constructions also comes from Lampert. Finally, my focus on the relation between decision and the virtual future, which will be crucial in chapter six, is directly inspired by Lampert’s more recent work.\(^{15}\) Despite this influence, however, Lampert tends to identify

\(^{15}\) Lampert’s *The Many Futures of a Decision*, published as I was finishing this dissertation in 2018, collects and develops many of the themes I touch on in this dissertation.
eternity with the pure past, whereas I argue that Deleuze’s eternity must ultimately be identified with the future. Lampert is also more interested in history than eternity.

My work is also indebted to *Germinal Life: The Difference and Repetition of Deleuze* by Keith Ansell-Pearson. Though it is one of the earlier studies in English to focus on Deleuze’s theory of time, it remains one of the most rigorous. In particular, Pearson’s work provides an excellent model for developing a theory of time and eternity as a theory of the event. As I do in the early chapters of this thesis, he follows the double structure of the event—as virtual and as actualized, as ideal model and concrete state of affairs—through the temporal schema that Deleuze develops from this double structure. In doing so, Pearson even brings into play the concept of the moment, which figures heavily into my interpretation: “The event is the event of time (the moment) that both happens to us and which lives beyond us (eternity)” (123). Though I will take issue with the vitalist characterization of the “life” of the event, this opposition between the present moment—where the event “happens to us”—and the eternal future of the event that exceeds us will be central to my account. Delay, however, does not figure strongly into Pearson’s reading.

Other readings of Deleuze are more distant from my interpretation. In some cases, this is a matter of emphasis, but in other cases theorists do not look deeply enough into the texts. *Gilles Deleuze's Philosophy of Time*, a popular work by James Williams, does not even have an entry for eternity in its otherwise lengthy index. To take another example, in his book *Gilles Deleuze’s Time Machine*, David Norman Rodowick reduces eternity to the banality that “what does not change is change itself” (128). On this view, things in time change and move, but “time itself neither moves nor changes” (Ibid.). Rodowick seems to derive this view from the identification

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16 See Deleuze and Guattari’s *Philosophy of History* 41.
of eternity with what Deleuze calls the pure form of time in *Difference and Repetition*. The pure form of time is too complex to dive into at this point. But to put the point very briefly, this pure form is by no means a simple emptying-out of the contents of time: it is not really a “purification” at all. Instead, the pure form concerns *virtual* time, and is articulated through four categories: the order, totality, series, and content of time. This will be explained in detail in chapter six, but it is not hinted at in Rodowick’s definition. It may be true that the form of change never changes, but there is more to eternity than this.

This kind of misreading of the “pure form of time” is evidently encouraged by Deleuze’s work, however, for Slavoj Žižek makes a similar claim in *Organs Without Bodies*: “Eternity is not outside time but the pure structure of time ‘as such’” (11). Žižek, like Pearson, highlights the role of the moment in Deleuze’s discussions of eternity, and correctly links the moment to the production of the new: “The moments of the emergence of the New are precisely the moments of Eternity in time” (Ibid.). This is not far from my argument. But Žižek’s account of the moment is strange. He suggests that the moment “suspends temporal succession” in such a way that “it is *time itself* that we experience, time as opposed to the evolutionary flow of things within time” (Ibid.). The “explosion of *time itself*” is an interruption of the ongoing changes happening in time (Ibid.). This is where I cannot follow Žižek, for I see no plausibility in the claim that temporal succession, or our experience of that succession, can be suspended. Eternity does dip into time within the moment, but it does so *within* succession. On my account of the moment, then, eternity and time run parallel for the duration that it takes “the new” to be properly secured in time. The moment is a synthesis of virtual coexistence and actual succession that produces something exceeding both succession and coexistence: delay.
Žižek's book, it should be noted, involves a critique of Deleuze, and his peculiar reading should be taken in this light. In this connection, Alain Badiou's well-known criticism of Deleuze in *The Clamor of Being* must also be mentioned. Badiou's goal in this book is to re-assimilate Deleuze to the classical metaphysical tradition he is sometimes thought to break away from—that is, to paint Deleuze as a "classical" philosopher of "the One" (10). As I have no interest here in settling fundamental scores about the nature of Deleuze's ontology, Badiou's critique is largely peripheral. But I would be remiss not to mention Badiou's specific claim that, when it comes to the relation of time to eternity, Deleuze is simply a Platonist under a different name:

> We know the master's [Plato's] formula: time is the "moving image of eternity." One might at first believe that it condenses everything that Deleuze renounces: the reduction of sensible time—concrete time—to the miserable state of a copy of an eternal model. But if the image is referred, as it should be, to its specific being as simulacrum (and not to *mimesis*), and eternity to the One qua integral virtual, we can understand that, for Deleuze as well, for Deleuze above all, the essence of time consists in expressing the eternal. (60)

As I suggested in section two above, there are indeed parallels between the dually structured theories of time in Plato and Deleuze. In *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze even uses direct transliterations of the Ancient Greek words for time and eternity used by Plato: chronos and aion. But Badiou equivocates on a central Deleuzian term. The relation between temporal and eternal realities may be a matter of expression for Deleuze, but it is not so in Platonism. For Neoplatonists like Plotinus—who is probably a more accurate reference point than Plato himself here—the relation in question is one of *emanation*, not expression: material bodies in time are emanations of their eternal counterparts in the *nous*.  

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17 See chapter one, section 1d.
18 See Plotinus, “On Time and Eternity.” Plato is harder to pin down than the simplified models of his thought sometimes suggest. This applies to his work on time as well. In Neoplatonism, however, Plato’s ideas (along with those of Aristotle, the Stoics, and others) had formed into a coherent, even rigid metaphysical system. Generalized comparisons to Platonism are, thus, not necessarily references to Plato’s dialogues.
This difference between emanation and expression is crucial for Deleuze, because it accounts for the historical transition from philosophies of transcendence to philosophies of immanence (like Deleuze’s own). He explains in a book on Spinoza that both emanative and immanent (expressive) causes produce their effects while remaining in themselves, but where the effect of an emanative cause is produced as something outside it, what is produced by the immanent cause remains in that cause (SEP 171–172). The former relation implies a hierarchical distribution of being, and thus an equivocity or analogy of being, while the latter implies an equality and univocity of being (173). Immanence and transcendence, or expression and emanation, are structured by irreconcilable views of metaphysical causality.\(^{19}\)

Thus, Badiou is wrong to assimilate Deleuze to Platonism on this point. For Deleuze, time remains immanent to eternity, just as eternity is immanent to time: “immanence is no longer immanence to anything other than itself” (I 27). What this means, for my purposes, is that the "content" of time and eternity is the same: there are only events. The eternity of the event is not its inheritance in an all-encompassing "One." On the contrary, because it is an indefinite delay that stretches into the unknown future, the eternity of the event is precisely what rules out the possibility of a "One" that would hold everything together in completion. Time is "not a whole, for the simple reason that it is itself the instance which prevents the whole" (PS 161). If eternity exceeds time but is also immanent to time, then—as I shall argue—it must be thought as a delay: a "now" that is also "not yet." To explain how such a paradox is possible, Deleuze will create a strange new concept with a plurality of strange names: the eternity of the determinable future appears in time as a "dark precursor" or "object = x." Whatever else one can say about Deleuze's classicism, there is nothing in Plato, or indeed any other theory of eternity, that resembles the

\(^{19}\) See chapter three, section 2a for more discussion on this topic.
dark precursor. It marks the point at which we must turn away from history to the details of Deleuze's texts.

4. Outline of the essay

This dissertation is divided into six chapters and a short conclusion. The chapters are each designed to form independent inquiries. However, there is an overall direction to the project: I move from past (chapter two) to present (chapters three and four) to future (chapters five and six), considering for each dimension of time whether it can be equated with eternity. As I have already hinted, my answer is that past and present have certain eternal features, but the future is most directly identifiable with eternity: the delay between the instant and moment takes root in the present, and refers first to the past, but is ultimately directed toward the future. Roughly speaking, then, the first half of the dissertation is more critical of Deleuze, while the second half develops my original interpretation of his concept of eternity.

Before turning to in-depth discussions of time, however, I will begin by offering a basic introduction to some aspects of Deleuze's ontology in chapter one. The focus will be on clarifying the nature of the event, since events are what is eternal in Deleuze. The event will be defined as a second-order complex of relations that produces something new. To explicate this definition, I will introduce two crucial sets of terms. First, we will have to understand the difference between actualization and counter-actualization. Actualization refers to an event's first entry into the world from out of the virtual, while counter-actualization refers to the event's return to the virtual when an actor relays it into the future. The present is actual, while the past and future are virtual: this is the key to understanding this dual movement. Consequently, we will have to get clear about what the terms "actual" and "virtual" mean. The double nature of the
event, according to which it is both within actual time and virtually between times (Deleuze uses the term *entre-temps*, or "meanwhile"), will be summed up by Deleuze under the somewhat misleading label of "eternal truth." The eternal truth of the event means it is both here and elsewhere, now and at another time, present and past.

Chapter two explains how this eternal truth is possible from a temporal perspective: it is because the entire past co-exists with the present. The present is only the actual tip of a virtual iceberg: everything that has ever happened is preserved and stored in the "pure past," which Deleuze unhesitatingly identifies with being-in-itself. This bold thesis is adopted from Bergson, who is undoubtedly the most important influence on Deleuze's philosophy of time throughout his career. I will thus begin with an analysis of Bergson's *Matter and Memory*, where the co-existence of past and present is first stipulated, before turning to Deleuze's own arguments for the thesis of the pure past. At the end of the chapter, I will offer a multifaceted critique of this thesis, ultimately arguing that, in its Bergsonian form, the theory of the pure past betrays a nostalgia for classical theories of immortality. A modern theory of eternity must begin with an acknowledgement of the finality of death.

The third chapter will turn from the past to the present. Deleuze writes in several works about an "eternal present" where "everything is simultaneous" (LS 163). Such a present would be much like the first sense of eternity I described above, and indeed, we will see that Deleuze connects this eternal present both to theology (via Augustine) and phenomenology (via Husserlian contractions of time). However, I will show that there is a conflict between Deleuze's desire to maximize the "divine present" and his attempt to ground that same present in the organic habit-cycles of living creatures. To cut the argument short, there seems to be no way to make plausible the claim that everything is simultaneous within the present.
If this dissertation were limited to a critical analysis of Deleuze’s texts, the argument would stop here. But I am offering a constructive interpretation of Deleuze’s philosophy, which means that where there are shortcomings or solvable problems in Deleuze’s work, I attempt to supplement that work with original concepts (or original interpretations of concepts) intended to solve the relevant problems. Instead of stopping with this negative conclusion about the eternal present, then, I will attempt to offer an alternative account. My account of the eternal present is based on the idea that past and future are folded up in present signs, which are defined as frozen contractions. The sum of temporal relations contracted and frozen in signs forms what Deleuze calls "the complicated state of time" (PS 45). The complicated state of time is a qualified version of Deleuze's eternal present: beyond the limits of memory, distant times only survive in the present if they are folded up in signs.

I will argue that an event which has not been counter-actualized must leave behind signs in this way if it is to remain accessible to us. Otherwise, it fades away into "lost time," which I compare to a temporal dark matter. Lost time is that region of the pure past which remains inaccessible to us even as we must postulate its existence to account for the events we can access. If an event is not counter-actualized, has left behind no signs, and does not persist in memory, it is lost. If an event is not counter-actualized, but has left behind signs, it survives in the eternal present. But if an event is counter-actualized and launched into the future by an actor, it is eternal, whether we can access it or not. This is the radical consequence of separating eternity from presence.

Having considered and rejected these early candidates for eternity, I proceed to put together the pieces of my own definition of eternity in the second half of the thesis. Eternity, as I define it, is the delay between the instant and the moment: chapter four focuses on the source of
the delay, chapter five focuses on the instant and moment themselves, and chapter six focuses on the "between," i.e., the pure form of time that ushers a counter-actualized event into eternity. While all of these concepts are drawn from Deleuze’s work, I will be defining the instant, moment, and pure form of time in original ways that help us to understand what eternity is. While this account gets increasingly abstract, chapter four begins at a very concrete level.

Using Bruce Baugh's work on Sartre, I show how delay is introduced into the present through action: specifically, through the gap between the decision to commit to a course of action and the eventual outcome of that action. Though this gap plays out in concrete, objective time, it is represented within presence by what Deleuze calls the "other-structure." The other-structure represents all the different perspectives on the present that I experience in a certain way. The "universal" or "objective" present is defined by a linkage of these divergent viewpoints around a common object of attention—in Sartre's terminology, “the co-presence to the world of two presents considered as presences-to” (BN 357). After drawing these arguments out of phenomenology, I will turn back to Deleuze to suggest that the ultimate realization of the universal present is the order of time, which takes form as a dated timeline.

Within objective time, or the universal present, subjects can effectuate “incorporeal transformations” that instantaneously redefine the sense or meaning of a situation. Deleuze originally introduces these transformations as a type of speech act: a judge makes a decree, and a defendant becomes a convict. When such transformations concern events, as I proceed to argue in chapter five, they need not be linguistic. The evental transformation—which occurs in the moment—occurs as a reciprocal determination of past and future. The nature of a virtual event is partially determined by the retroactive identification and selection of singular turning points to carry forward, and conversely, the way these facets of the event manifest in the future redefines
our understanding of the past. This cross-temporal determination shows how the delay of eternity is by no means linear: once it bounces out of the present, the event can be linked to any point in time. We may even find that an event thought to be new had its beginnings hundreds of years ago, but we could only understand that beginning as the event once it had developed across time. This openness of the past to ideal redetermination in the moment is part of what sustains the event’s eternal potential.

Chapter five expands on this concept of the moment (or “empty present”) and distinguishes the instant and moment from each other. In my argument, instants should be understood as retroactively and proactively imposed "cuts" on the continuous timeline. The instant is not the present because the instant is not a time, but rather an indivisible limit between times. Instants are constructions—tools used by the actor to slice out singular points in the actualization of an event and project them forward. Using somewhat crude metaphors, we can say that the past instant is where we “cut” out some facet of the event, while the future instant is where we “paste” the repeated event.

In his own words, Deleuze says the moment is a "third present," to be confused with neither the instant nor the living present (chronos) (LS 168). I will draw several meanings from this ambiguous claim, not all of which were necessarily intended by Deleuze. First, and primarily, the moment is the point in time at which an actor makes a free decision to counter-actualize an event. For this reason, the moment is always located at the heart of the living present. However, the moment is not the living present because it refers to the virtual past and future that overflow the present. This is where the moment links up with the instant: instants are retroactively and proactively placed from the vantage point of the moment. The instant and the moment thus presuppose each other, and the moment is always surrounded on either side by the
instant. In the moment, the actor cuts out an aspect of the actualized event to counter-actualize, and projects it forward. The moment is the point in the present through which the past is relayed into the future.

The moment, Deleuze writes, is the "present of the aion representing the instant" (LS 168). This definition relies upon Deleuze’s distinction between the two “readings” of time, chronos and aion. In short, chronos is the present and aion is the past-future. Deleuze associates chronos with a subjective contraction of the remembered past and anticipated future into an extended, actual “now;” aion is associated with the instant, understood as a punctual point of division between virtual past and future. If the moment just goes on indefinitely, according to my interpretation of this scheme, it is simply chronos; if it is instantaneous, it is simply aion. If the moment "represents" aion’s instant in the present of chronos, it must be instantaneous in one sense, and in another sense, have duration. I suggest that it is instantaneous insofar as counter-actualization involves a decision, and a decision occurs in an instant. But carrying out a decision—going through the work of ushering something new into the world—is a process that takes time. Thus, the moment designates the time it takes to make and work out a counter-actualizing decision.

In the final chapter, I use the philosophy of decision (not to be confused with decision theory)20 to argue that eternity is opened up for the future when actors choose to follow one series of consequences of an event rather than another series. The future itself is constituted by multiple incompatible (or “incompossible”) lines leading out of the moment: counter-actualization is a matter of selecting which lines to follow. What Deleuze calls the pure form of time is like a prism through which the single ray of an actualized event is split into different

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20 Decision theory concerns the rules for making the best decisions; the philosophy of decision (specifically in the form that Lampert gives it) concerns the temporal mechanisms that make decisions possible.
colors. Within the glass, all the shades co-exist; in the actual future, however, only one hue can be selected. The prism is analogous to what will be called the totality of time, which is constituted by all the variations on the events that have actually happened: all the alternate histories, alternative presents, and incompatible futures in one immanent network. In an event, a purely determinable element—the aforementioned dark precursor or object = x—is set free to roam across this totality in any order whatsoever. The open mobility of the dark precursor in the totality of time accounts for the subsistence of the virtual future in the present. Ultimately, it is because the future subsists in the empty present that the delay initiated in the moment can be suspended indefinitely, and the event held open to eternity.

By the end, this account will get rather technical. To counteract this, I will offer dozens of concrete examples along the way to illustrate the workings of eternal events. These examples will, I hope, take the place of the kinds of top-down metaphysical derivations of eternity common in the history of philosophy. It goes without saying that no collection of examples or arguments could unequivocally demonstrate the reality of eternity. Nevertheless, this dissertation proceeds on the belief—which may well be naïve—that there is such a reality, and that we can speak and write about it intelligibly. If this attempt at intelligibility means that some of Deleuze’s more evocative ideas are left aside or rejected, this seems an acceptable price.

Conversely, since I will be supplementing my analysis of Deleuze’s texts with original ideas, the theory of eternity that results may end up looking unrecognizable at some points. I will be careful to note where my ideas diverge from the letter of the Deleuzian text. However, if this method still seems unacceptable, I can only note that creative appropriation in the service of solving problems was the lynchpin of Deleuze’s own studies in the history of philosophy. This dissertation is, in the final analysis, not an attempt at an authoritative analysis of Deleuze’s
theory of eternity. It is, rather, an attempt to construct a Deleuzian theory of eternity. No one who knows Deleuze’s work could have doubts about which project he would have favored.
Chapter One: The Event

1. Introduction

Eternity is the delay between the instant and the moment. The instant and the moment are temporal concepts that I will use to indicate the stages of events as Deleuze conceives them. In this chapter, I will define the Deleuzian event as a singular set of second-order relations that produces something new. The instant, as I will define it, marks what Deleuze calls the actualization of the event: this is the retroactively or proactively determined point at which an event emerges out of chaos. The moment, as I define it, marks the point at which an engaged subject recognizes the potential of an actualized event and counter-actualizes it by projecting it into the future. To say that eternity is the delay between actualization and counter-actualization is to say that the event persists, in itself and independent of all subjectivity, even in the times it is not actual. Deleuze calls this the "eternal truth" of the event (LS 136, 161). Since it persists outside of the times in which it happens, the event can be pulled out of eternity and re-actualized indefinitely. In ontological terms, then, a Deleuzian theory of eternity is an explanation of the repeatability of events. This chapter is designed to serve as a brief introduction to the ontology of events as Deleuze conceives it.

2. Events

Deleuze’s discussions of eternity are rooted in the theory of a certain interplay between actuality and virtuality. Actuality refers to what exists. Virtuality refers to what subsists. Subsistence means that the past-future is within the present as something that escapes presence, like a half-remembered face glimpsed in a crowd. For Deleuze, “only the present exists,” and
“only the past-future…subsists in time” (LS 162–163). The actual is what is present, and the virtual is the past-future. Three specific concepts explain how the virtual past-future links up with the actual present. The central concept is the event. The event is both virtual and actual. Insofar as it exists in a duration of time, the event is actual. Insofar as it subsists between different times, it is virtual. The peculiarity of an event is to be virtually past and future at the same time it is actually present. Actualization refers to the process by which a virtual event appears in time. When actual, an event takes shape as a state of affairs. Counter-actualization, conversely, is the process by which an agent or “actor” extracts the “pure event” from an existing state of affairs and projects it into the future, so that it can be repeated:

The actor thus actualizes the event, but in a way which is entirely different from the actualization of the event in the depths of things…The actor delimits the original [event], disengages from it an abstract line, and keeps from the event only its contour and its splendor, becoming thereby the actor of one’s own events—a counter-actualization. (LS 150)

For Deleuze, a genuine event must be actualized and counter-actualized, where counter-actualization implies the intervention of an “actor” or committed agent (LS 52). The event must appear out of the past, be represented in the present of some actor, and be prepared for future delivery. If the event is not counter-actualized, and leaves behind no traces in signs or memories, it is lost. But if it is counter-actualized, the event is given "a chance which is itself eternal, a virtuality which will be valid forever even if it is not actualized" (C2 91).

2.1 What is an event?

My goal in this section is to introduce Deleuze’s concept of the event at a very general philosophical level. I will distinguish events from substances, states of affairs, and essences.

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21 Chapters two and three respectively explicate the role of memory and signs in preserving the past.
Events are the types of incorporeal processes that produce new substances—although, Deleuze suggests, these substances are really processes themselves if we situate their being in the flow of time. States of affairs are the actualized forms of events, but they are bound to the duration of their actualization, and the beings that instantiate them; they do not possess the eternal truth of the event, and cannot repeat. Essences, meanwhile, repeat in the sense that they are general forms shared by many particulars. Events are not general, however, but singular. They do not "repeat," but rather are "repeated" by intervening actors in specific and opportune situations: there is “no repetition without a repeater, nothing repeated without a repetitious soul” (DR 23).

I will also briefly discuss two ambiguities in the interpretation of Deleuze’s theory. First, while Deleuze sometimes seems committed to what we could call the big events in history—wars, revolutions, renaissances—I will suggest that his conception applies just as well to more mundane “microevents.” Second, I will decline to take sides in the noisy controversy over whether Deleuze’s philosophy of events requires a universal “Event” at its core. It is enough for my purposes that there are multiple events, and that they repeat across time.

2.2 Essences and events

When philosophers develop a concept of eternity, they generally use it to describe something eternal. To the extent that any contemporary non-theological philosophers recognize something as eternal, it is generally something like essence. An essence is an ideal form or set of properties that can be instantiated in many particular things, making them the kinds of things they are. This term has an idealist valence, and the common distinction between essence and existence can be traced back to Medieval interpretations of Plato's theory of ideas. But the
concept persists in modern forms—the natural kinds of biological taxonomy, the ideal objects of mathematical realism, or the universal imperatives of deontological ethics—that rest on diverse types of evidence going far beyond Platonic dialectics.

Deleuze himself has an ambivalent relation to the concept of essence. In his early original works, he identifies essentialism with Platonism, and suggests that the key to overturning Platonism is to shift focus to the event: "To reverse Platonism is first and foremost to remove essences and to substitute events in their place" (LS 53). On the other hand, Deleuze develops a unique conception of essence in his work on Spinoza and Proust. In chapter three, I will examine how this concept of essence fits into Deleuze's theory of the eternal present. But Deleuze never explicates a theory of essence in his original work, and even when he gestures at the concept (as in his work with Guattari), he often substitutes the term “event.” Following Deleuze’s own lead, then, I focus on the event in this dissertation.

2.3 Substances and events

In Deleuze’s work, we find different conceptions of the event in different contexts. I cannot touch on the details of all these accounts. But at the risk of drawing sharp lines over a blurry image, I want to pick out two of these conceptions which seem particularly at odds. The first is purely objective; the second links the event to agency in an essential way. According to

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See, for example, Sober: “Evolution, Population Thinking, and Essentialism.”

In “Descartes on Mathematical Essences,” Raffaela de Rosa and Otavio Bueno use Descartes’ theory of essences to construct their own “quasi-platonism.” This quasi-platonism, in turn, is designed to account for the “eternity of mathematical truths” (175–176).

Scoglio grounds a moral theory of property on “the deontologically absolute level of essence” (94).

See chapter three, section 2d.

See the revealing passage at ATP 399: “One does not go by specific differences from a genus to its species, or by deduction from a stable essence to the properties deriving from it, but rather from a problem to the accidents that condition and resolve it. This involves...operations in which the figure designates an ‘event’ much more than an essence.”
the first conception, "Everything is event." Deleuze explicitly endorses this conception in a 1987 lecture on Leibniz and Whitehead:

Generally it is considered that an event is a very special class of things. For example, I go out in the street and I get run over by the bus. It is an event. But the Great Pyramid, this is not an event. At most I would say, ah yes, the construction of the Great Pyramid is an event, but not the Great Pyramid itself. A chair is not an event, it's something. Whitehead said that the chair is an event, not only the manufacture of the chair. The great pyramid is an event. It is very important to understand that this is possible, the expression "Everything is event."²⁷

In this conception, the Great Pyramid is an event simply by virtue of being. This leads to bizarre conclusions: being the Great Pyramid for five minutes is an event, Deleuze says, and being the Great Pyramid for ten minutes is another event, and we can combine these two “time-slices” to get a third event.²⁸ Is this argument helpful? On one hand, there is a genuine conceptual shift involved in the re-conceptualization of substances as processes. To define everything as process, we must introduce time as the element in which beings exist. On the other hand, Deleuze’s claim that everything is event leaves us wondering how to divide up the many interlinked events constituting the world. For example, there seems to be an important difference between “being the Great Pyramid for five minutes” and “building the Great Pyramid.” Time passes in both cases, but the latter case involves a transformation. It allows us to order time, to give it a direction according to the progress of the Pyramid’s construction: the top of the Pyramid will necessarily be built after the foundation under it. We will see that this link between change and the event is a basic premise of Deleuze’s concept of eternity.

In the lecture, Deleuze's argument relies on an ancient parallel between the logical

²⁸ Deleuze does not often refer to analytic philosophy, but this lecture could be usefully compared with the idea of “time-slices” popularized in Quine’s theory of the indeterminacy of translation. (See Quine, Word and Object, ch. 2.)
structure of the proposition and the ontological structure of the world. Philosophers generally divide propositions into two mutually necessary components: subject and predicate. The world this reflects is a world of determined things with determinate qualities. Classically, in the tradition influenced by Aristotle, the term "substance" has the double sense of being the subject of the predicate and, at the same time, the individual thing to which qualities are attributed. In this conception, qualities or attributes are of the nature of substance in that they qualify substances and do not exist apart from them, even though they are logically distinct.

Deleuze turns to the Stoics, Leibniz and Whitehead to revise this conception of the predicate. Deleuze wants to argue that the predicate is not an attribute, but an event. It is not "included" in the subject, as we might think of the color red being included in an apple, but is already an external relation between the subject and the world. An attribute tells us "what" something is, but an event tells us "how" something is, its way of being in the verbal or processual sense. This is the first move towards making everything an event.

2.4 Subjects and events

The second move toward making everything an event is to argue that substances are constituted by events. At one level, no one is likely to take issue with this claim. A mountain range (substance) is formed by the collision of tectonic plates (event); a new Cadillac (substance) is assembled piece by piece in a factory (event). But the claim also applies to thinking

29 I should emphasize that what I describe in this section is a greatly simplified picture of Deleuze’s ontology, and also that basic ontological categories shift from one work of Deleuze’s to the next. Perhaps the most robust list of categories is given at the end of the third chapter of ATP. The fundamental distinction is between content and expression; there is a form and substance of content, and a form and substance of expression. These are situated within a milieu, and divided into strata, epistrata, and parastrata. The virtual and actual are further articulated in terms of abstract machines and concrete assemblages (ATP 63–74). For all this, Deleuze still refers back to the basic distinction between events and substances (or states of affairs) later in ATP. States of affairs denote substances and the relations between substances that determine their nature (LS 4–5).
substances, i.e., subjects. And while subjects are passively formed in many ways (we are "subject to" outside forces), we also tend to think of ourselves as actively initiating events. Deleuze’s ontology captures both the active and passive senses of subjectivity: while subjects are constructed, we also have the ability to become an active part of the events that shape us. When the subject becomes active as a relay point for the perpetuation of events, Deleuze gives her the title of *actor*.

For example: an artist might notice that she and her contemporaries had unwittingly developed a new style of painting by gradually modifying an old style. By giving the new style a name and recognizing it as something unique, the artist effectively creates, not just new artworks, but a new way for works of art to be. She is now both artist and actor. If the new style is called expressionism, then those who adopt the new style are defined by that engagement—they become “expressionists.” I will argue that any event which can be called eternal has just this structure: actors do not bring the event into being, but they seize it out of the ongoing flow of being, date it, give it a name, and leave instructions for future subjects to perpetuate the event.30

This account is likely to sound too subjective and anthropocentric for some scholars of Deleuze. After all, Deleuze claimed until the end of his career that he wanted to move beyond the idea of subjectivity.31 He professed a “hatred of interiority,” and his work seems generally inspired by the Bergsonian charge to think beyond the human condition (N 5–6). But these kinds of general claims can easily be set against others where Deleuze puts the subject at the heart of inquiry. In his book on Leibniz, for example, Deleuze claims that he seeks to determine the conditions under which “the objective world allow(s) for a subjective production of novelty" (F 79). It may be that Deleuze's philosophy can be harnessed to explain how objective novelty is

30 See chapter four, section 3c on the importance of dating and naming.
31 See *Who Comes After the Subject?* (ed. Cadava) 95–96.
possible, and other scholars have taken this approach. But I believe, and my account will reflect, that Deleuze is more concerned overall with subjective novelty—novelty of thought and expression—than with the production of new entities and structures in nature.

Other interpretations of Deleuze could reject this emphasis on the subject in an ontology of the new. But for basic textual reasons, I do not believe a Deleuzian theory of eternity can reasonably do so. Once we look past his general self-descriptions to the books themselves, we will see that Deleuze favorably invokes the concept of eternity precisely in the context of action and decision. Eternity concerns the repetition of events, and there is “no repetition without a repeater, nothing repeated without a repetitious soul” (DR 23). Eternity involves actualization and counter-actualization, but as we saw above, counter-actualization requires an “actor” who intervenes. On the other hand, it is crucial to emphasize that eternity is not merely “subjective”—it is a real metaphysical property of ideal events. I will offer many arguments for this point in the final two chapters.

2.5 Events and the Event

At this point we must consider two complications in Deleuze’s theory of the event. I have identified the most important criterion of an event: the event must produce something new through the reconstitution of the actors that seize on that event. The subject is a relay point for the event to repeat itself. This conception already takes us far from Deleuze’s claim that

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32 Perhaps the best such account is DeLanda, Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy.
33 One argument that could be offered for this point could draw on Deleuze’s firm differentiation in What Is Philosophy? between the actual objects of science, the virtual objects of philosophy, and the possible objects of art. (See WP 163.) But the hard question is whether there is any virtuality in nature, rather than just in thought, and different texts seem to give us different answers to this question. My reading is that the virtual is purely ideal.
34 See LS 150, and the introduction to section 1 above.
everything is event—here, events are indeed "a very special class of things." As examples of such special things, we might think of the French Revolution or the emergence of capitalism. To take another example, Deleuze's philosophy has often been associated with the collective events of protest in Paris in 1968, which had significant effects on the University system in France. Something new came out of all these events: French democracy, the free market, a new structure for higher education. And these outcomes were realized respectively through democratic, capitalist, or educated subjects—that is, actors internal to the milieu in which the event occurred.

However, I think it would be a mistake to tie Deleuze’s theory too closely to what we think of as the big events in world history: wars, revolutions, macroeconomic transformations. There is no doubt that Deleuze was a revolutionary. But he was also a philosopher, and he had a lifelong interest in simply describing the process by which novelty emerges in all its forms. He was at least as interested in genetics and metallurgy as he was in Marxist critique. I will therefore attempt to keep open the scope of what counts as an event. That is, I will give examples of what we can call microevents in addition to the macroevents of world history. When three children in a schoolyard create a game, complete with rules and repeatable moves, this is an event. A woman finds a wolf cub injured by a gunshot in the woods, and is inspired to start a shelter for treating live victims of hunting—this is an event. Not every event has to change the world, in short. But if an occurrence leaves nothing for the future—if the woman treated only the one cub, or the children’s game had no definable rules—then I will not count it as an event in the narrower of Deleuze’s two senses.

An important objection should be considered here. It will be said that if the woman

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35 Compare this formulation from Deleuze's lecture—a formulation he rejects—with page one of LS, where events are described in the exact same words: "Une catégorie de choses très spéciales."

36 On the (non-economic) use of the macro-micro distinction in Deleuze and Guattari, see ATP 235–237.
treated only the one cub, she still exemplified a mode of acting that could be repeated in the future to similar effect. We cannot know what will happen in the future, after all; a third party may have watched her save the cub, and then, after an indefinite delay, start his own wolf-saving foundation. Thus, every occurrence should be considered an event. I offer two responses to this objection. First, being an occurrence is indeed a necessary condition for being an event, but it is not a sufficient condition. The occurrence must produce something new. If the observer went on to start his own organization, then he would become the actor of a genuine event, but the fact that he (or someone else) might start such an organization is not sufficient to make the occurrence an event. Second, the key point in this objection is that the original saving of the cub was witnessed. An event that leaves traces in signs or memory can be recovered even if not initially counter-actualized. The woman’s intervention with the cub could thus be retroactively determined as the beginning of an event because that event made itself repeatable: it left a trace in the actual.

There is another tension in the theory that should be mentioned. Put simply, the question is whether there is one event or many events. Deleuze will frequently speak about "events" in the plural, or “an event,” but he also makes claims to the effect that there is "one single event for all events" (LS 180). To the chagrin of critics like Badiou, he will sometimes even use capitals: another passage in Logic of Sense invokes “the Event for all events” (LS 63). The event is one, but it is multiple; there are events, and there is the Event. Note that this is not the same problem discussed above: if we have distinguished “everything is event” from “events are very special things,” the question now is whether there is one singular special “Event” which contains all “events” defined in the second, narrower sense. This is a difficult question, and some of the most well-known criticisms of Deleuze have addressed it.37

37 See Badiou, Žižek, Hallward et al.
For my purposes, there is no need to suppose a universal Event; eternity concerns the repetition of singular events. I will, however, attempt to preserve the earlier tension between the ubiquity and specialness of events by distributing these properties in accordance with Deleuze’s two readings of time: chronos and aion. Chronos is the actual present, aion is the virtual past-future. Deleuze defines chronos in terms of continuity (in at least two works); continuity is understood as the uniform progression of a single ubiquitous event—divine chronos, or the story of the universe. Aion, or eternity, will be defined by discontinuity, where discontinuity is understood as the identity of non-contiguous points in continuous time. What synthesizes this cross-temporal identity is the event proper, which is like a cut in the uniform flow of time. In ontological terms, the difference between chronos and aion is that chronos pertains to the actual, aion to the virtual; the event is both virtual and actual. Since a Deleuzian theory of eternity will be unintelligible without this ontological distinction, it is crucial to explore here.

2.6 The virtual

At the heart of Deleuze’s ontology is the distinction between virtuality and actuality. In the context of a Deleuzian theory of eternity, we could describe the virtual as the objective past-future, and the actual as the present that includes the subjective past-future. These definitions are mine, not Deleuze’s. The basic idea is that the present of actuality is not a point-like now, but an extended, living presence of the type described in phenomenology, where the past is gathered

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38 These two "readings" of time are developed at length in LS, but as I will show, the distinction between present and past-future runs through Deleuze's career.
39 Deleuze says in DR that “there is no continuity apart from habit” (76). What is here called habit, or the first synthesis, is an early formulation of chronos from LS. He also restates the theory of chronos in the discussion of “continuous modifications” in ATP. See chapter four, part three of this dissertation on the subject.
40 On aion as discontinuous time, see Braidotti 242. I also develop this distinction in chapters four and five.
41 See section 2d below.
into present awareness through memory or “retention,” and the future is anticipated through “protention.” The present contracts the subjective past and future into the actual. But the objective past-future is what cannot be integrated into the actual, and therefore persists beyond us, in eternity. The virtual is incorporeal and eternal, the actual is corporeal and temporal. The uniqueness of the event is that it is simultaneously virtual and actual, present and not present, possible and real.

The distinction between virtual and actual is unique, but we can make analogies to other ontological differences. The virtual has a role similar to Heidegger’s Being, while the actual suggests beings that emerge out of Being through the disclosure effected by the event. The virtual plays the generative role of Spinoza’s substance, while actualities are like the modes that express substance in individual ways. At one point, Deleuze echoes Kant by suggesting that the virtual is noumenal, the actual phenomenal. None of these comparisons are exact, but they give us an idea of the structural importance of this division for Deleuze.

Deleuze also offers us some colorful metaphors of his own: the virtual is a coiled spring, and the actual is the sprung spring. The virtual is a spooled thread, and the shapes formed by the thread as the cat drags it all over the room are actualities. The takeaway from these images is that the virtual has ontological precedence over the actual, and that the actual is an expression of the virtual. But such images are inadequate in that actuality does not resemble virtuality, even to the extent an uncoiled spring resembles a coiled one. Moreover, ontological precedence is not the

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42 See chapter three, section 2.d.i. for more on these distinctions in relation to the concept of subsistence.
44 See book one of Spinoza’s *Ethics*, discussed in the introduction, section two.
45 See "On the ground of the distinction of all objects in general into phenomena and noumena" in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (338–354).
46 All of these comparisons to other philosophers are made directly or indirectly by Deleuze himself in *Difference and Repetition*. See DR 65, 303, 222.
same thing as temporal precedence.

When Deleuze defines the virtual, he favors a Proustian phrase: "Real without being actual, ideal without being abstract" (Time Regained 264). For Deleuze, “real” does not mean “existent” in the manner of perceptible, material things, or “substantial” in the sense of Spinoza’s substance; real means individuated, distinct, perfectly defined at the ideal level of the concept.\footnote{See Ables, “The Anticipations of Sensation” (comparing Kant and Deleuze on “reality”), and DR 280 on the “distinctness” of virtual ideas.}

We notice right away that there is a temporal claim in this definition, or rather, a claim about what is not temporal: the virtual is real but not present, it has a reality that is independent of presence, it subsists without what is present. The virtual is not what is present.

The second clause is equally important. To say the virtual is ideal means that it is incorporeal and imperceptible by our senses. It also means that it can be thought. More than this, there is a sense in which the virtual has its reality in thought: at one point Deleuze calls it “a thought-Nature which surveys every possible universe” (WP 177–178). “Thought-nature” is obscure: what Deleuze likely has in mind is something like the Spinozian idea that there is an “order and connection” of the world that is purely logical and conceptual yet parallels the order and connection of actual beings.\footnote{See book two, proposition seven of Spinoza’s Ethics.} (Deleuze often says the virtual is like a mirror that reflects the actual but does not resemble what it reflects.)\footnote{See DR 51, 152 and the discussion of mirror-images in C2 66–88.} Thought and nature converge in the order of things. The difference is that for Deleuze, this virtual order is multiple: thought surveys “every possible universe,” every possible connection of things, every ordering of time.\footnote{On the order of time, see chapter four, section three.} (Ibid.) In chapter six, I will try to interpret this phrase about possible universes literally in relation to a Deleuzian theory of decision.

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48 See Ables, “The Anticipations of Sensation” (comparing Kant and Deleuze on “reality”), and DR 280 on the “distinctness” of virtual ideas.
49 See book two, proposition seven of Spinoza’s Ethics.
50 See DR 51, 152 and the discussion of mirror-images in C2 66–88.
51 On the order of time, see chapter four, section three.
In Deleuze, it is helpful to think of virtuality and actuality as interacting but independent processes. Virtuality is understood best as an ongoing process of actualization and counter-actualization, while actuality is the milieu in which events are actualized and counter-actualized. This is where the event fits into the picture. The event is what links virtual and actual. More precisely, an event marks the actualization of virtual realities. Virtual being drops something new in the actual world, and it ends up transforming that world: this is an event. But what becomes of this novelty once it has been integrated into the world? It creates what Deleuze calls a state of affairs or redefines the sense of an already existing state of affairs. Events are what populate the virtual, while states of affairs populate the actual. The process by which an event creates or redefines a state of affairs is actualization. Counter-actualization is the process by which the actor extracts the “pure event” from an existing state of affairs and projects it into the future. These processes will be discussed in the following section.

3. The event as meanwhile: What Is Philosophy?

So far in this chapter, I have presented a general overview of Deleuze's theory of the event. From this point on, I want to turn to Deleuze's texts to begin digging out the finer details of the theory. I will begin with a close reading of a portion of his last major philosophical treatise, What is Philosophy? Here, Deleuze (writing with his frequent collaborator, Felix Guattari) distinguishes virtual events from actual states of affairs.

This ontological distinction was first formulated at the beginning in Logic of Sense. In that work, states of affairs denote bodies, qualities of bodies, interactions between bodies ("actions and passions"), and "facts" about all these things (LS 2–3). Events, contrarily, are not "things or facts" but "logical or dialectical attributes" that "subsist or inhere" in states of affairs.
The picture is considerably more complicated in *What is Philosophy?* States of affairs “may be mathematical, physical, or biological,” where each of these categories “refer” to “coordinates” in different types of “systems” (WP 122–123). There are, moreover, three levels of actualization. I will circumvent these complications here and restrict myself to a minimal account: states of affairs denote bodies, relations between bodies, and facts about bodies and relations.

In *Logic of Sense*, states of affairs are consistently associated with the present, and events with the past-future. In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze suggests a different formulation: states of affairs are defined as times between instants, while events are said to happen between times. The event, moreover, is given a new temporal formula: it will be characterized as *entre-temps*—a “meanwhile.” While Deleuze does not articulate the meanwhile in a systematic way, I suggest that we can draw out at least three distinct meanings for the term. What the three meanings jointly reveal is that an event cannot be localized at a single place, restricted to a particular time, and expressed in a single way; each of these dimensions of the actualized event is multiple. It may be too much to say that all events exhibit this kind of multiplicity, but I will try to show that some events do, and thus, that the meanwhile is a real metaphysical structure of the event.

First, any given event is divided between different occurrences that are roughly (though not necessarily exactly) simultaneous. For example, I am watching a talk at a philosophy conference; meanwhile, there is another talk going on in the room next door that started slightly later. Second, at the level of each of these sub-events, there is a multiplicity of dimensions in which the event is expressed. The person next to me is dutifully taking notes on the talk, but I am

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At the first level are states of affairs and scientific propositions; the second level includes “things, objects, or individuated bodies” that correspond to logical propositions; the third level is lived experience, i.e., perceptions and affections, and this corresponds to opinion (WP 155).
distracted by something out the window, so I will remember a different talk than my peer will.

Finally, the event considered as a whole, as well as each sub-event, can be linked with its own past and future actualizations through the openings provided by “cuts” in duration. The conference might be the 36th annual meeting of its kind, or it might be so successful that it inaugurates a new series. I will use the analogy of cuts in film to understand this final sense, in which meanwhiles connect non-contiguous presents to each other independent of duration. The core idea will be that events are cuts because they are openings between different points in time.

### 3.1 Eternal truth

At the end of a chapter called "Prospects and Concepts," which articulates the difference between the objects of logic (prospects) and philosophy (concepts), Deleuze offers perhaps his most explicit and extended description of the relation between the virtual, the actual, and the event. Actual states of affairs and virtual events are "two types of multiplicities" that are "related to two vectors that intersect, one according to which states of affairs actualize events and the other according to which event absorb (or rather, adsorb) states of affairs."\(^{53}\) These two different "vectors" are what Deleuze calls actualization and counter-actualization (or counter-effectuation).\(^ {54}\) Actualization is when the virtual event "descends" into the things that embody it. But philosophy is the domain of the concept, and concepts are what we use to "ascend" from the actual to the virtual (WP 157).

It is at this point that Deleuze comes to his discussion of the event:

> If we go back up in the opposite direction, from states of affairs to the virtual, the line is not the same because it is not the same virtual...The virtual is no longer the chaotic virtual

\(^{53}\) WP 153. Adsorption is when a gas or liquid leaves a molecular trace on the surface of a solid. Deleuze will often describe the virtual metaphorically as a mist or cloud to emphasize its incorporeal and indeterminate nature.

\(^{54}\) WP 159. This term is “contre-effectuation.” Deleuze uses "contre-actualisation" elsewhere.
but rather virtuality that has become consistent…This is what we call the Event, or the part that eludes its own actualization in everything that happens. (WP 156)

Deleuze speaks of two lines: one line, which goes from the virtual to the actual, represents the actualization of the event in states of affairs. The second line, which “goes back up in the opposite direction,” is the line of counter-actualization. It is the same event that travels on both lines. The event is not only virtual or only actual: it is virtual, then actual, then it returns to the virtual. But it is transformed in this return: the initial event is “chaotic,” so only certain facets of the event will be selected and made “consistent” enough for counter-actualization.

When Igor Stravinsky premiered his *Rites of Spring* in 1913, for example, its driving, repetitive rhythmic structures felt so chaotic to a classically-minded audience that the music caused a small riot. It was an event, and one that inspired other composers to counter-actualize these new musical forms. But within a few decades, this shocking music had become familiar enough to appear in the family cartoon, *Fantasia* (1940). The balletic presentation was gone, and the work truncated and made gentler. This is one example of how an artistic event is made “consistent” with the norms and values of future presents. In chapters five and six, I will explore the mechanisms of selection for counter-actualizing events in a more systematic manner.

An event can be repeated and revisited in the future because, even as it is actualized, there is something that exceeds the actual. In *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze will call the “elusive” remainder of the event its eternal truth. To consider events “from the perspective of their eternal truth” is to think them “independently of their spatio-temporal actualization in a state of affairs” (LS 136). This particular formulation is slightly misleading. The event is not simply independent of its own actualization, like a Platonic universal. Rather, just as the novelty of Stravinsky’s style had influence beyond its premiere, the event “eludes” or withdraws from its initial actualization

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55 Ross, *The Rest is Noise*, chapter 3.
It is doubled: “The eternal truth of the event is grasped only if the event is also inscribed in the flesh. But each time, we must double this painful actualization by a counter-actualization…” (LS 161). This doubling of the event is what makes it “consistent,” repeatable and perpetuatable. In short, counter-actualization does not create the event, but it lends it an eternal truth.

3.2 Critique of the timeline model

While differentiating events from states of affairs, Deleuze sketches a different conception of time appropriate to each. A “state of affairs” or “actual system” is “defined as a time between two instants, or as times between many instants” (WP 157). On the other hand, “it is the event that is a meanwhile [entre-temps],” situated between times (WP 158). The former conception implies succession and continuity; the latter, discontinuity. In this section, I will consider some shortcomings of the most basic model of continuous time: the unidirectional timeline.

Deleuze writes that the event, "in contrast with the state of affairs, neither begins nor ends but has gained or kept the infinite movement to which it gives consistency" (WP 156). The event is "the interminable that neither stops nor begins" (WP 157). Citing Péguy, he gives a third formulation: the event "starts again without ever having begun or ended" (WP 156). All of these formulations seem paradoxical. If the event does not start or end, then how could it involve movement? What is movement without time? Is time not the measure of movement? And if this movement is interminable, how can it "start again”?

The difficulty with thinking the way Deleuze suggests is that we are used to thinking of beginnings and endings in substantial terms: something begins, something ends, something is
happening. The "things" in these kinds of statements are not objects, we understand, but they are not what Deleuze calls events either. If I am presently storming the Bastille, then I am certainly mired in an ongoing set of processes. All of these processes can be referred back to actualities: the stones in the building, the limits of my strength, my desire for freedom. But "storming" as an event is something that happens at the level of the relations between these actualities. An event is a complex of relations, and as such, it can only arise when the terms being related enter into certain configurations. But the terms themselves are already relations: a prison is a space governed by power inequalities, and these same inequalities motivate those raiding the prison. Inequality or imprisonment is the relational state of affairs that instigates a storming, and it can be made different when material conditions are different. An event thus arises as a second-order complex of relations that produces something new.  

In English and French, we speak of relations this way, as "between" two things. This involves a certain spatialization of the subject matter, as when we represent family relations in terms of points on a tree. As Bergson argues, time itself is commonly spatialized this way. Think of a timeline in a history book, for example, which represents the course of history as a linear progression from the past, on the left, to the future on the right. With such models, we represent everything that happens as happening in a space between two points on the line. The French Revolution started here and ended here—what else is there to say? Deleuze formalizes a version of this common understanding when he writes that a state of affairs is "defined as a time between two instants, or as times between many instants" (WP 157).

56 Deleuze never defines the event in exactly this way. But the pieces of this definition all come from his work. On second-order relations: “There are always simultaneously the two aspects of the out-of-field: the actualizable relation with other sets, and the virtual relation with the whole...The second relation—the most mysterious—is reached indirectly, on to infinity, through the intermediary and the extension of the first” (C1 18). See also the discussion of virtual “difference in the second degree” at DR 119–120. That the event is the production of something new is a theme throughout Deleuze’s work, and this dissertation.
But there are problems with this basic timeline model. In the first place, it seems too restrictive to say that any duration of time must be bound between two instants. An instant is precise, and must be placed at a definite point on the timeline. But many events have starting and ending points that are only vaguely defined. For example, firework displays are often scheduled to begin at dark and end when the fireworks are all used up. These are vague boundaries. And how would we determine the instant the show begins? Is it the moment when the first explosive is launched, or when it is loaded, or when it bursts? There would seem to be a degree of arbitrariness in such decisions. Finally, it is not clear that instants even exist: is there really a minimum of continuous time that can be objectively isolated from the times next to it on the timeline? Deleuze was well aware of these problems, and I will return to his complex use of instants at length in chapter five. For the present discussion, I simply note that starting and ending points of states of affairs are more indeterminate than instantaneous.

A more fundamental issue is that many events unfold in a disjointed, discontinuous fashion. There is nothing on the timeline to indicate that a later point is part of the same event as an earlier point when the two are not mutually connected by a continuous duration. For example, the feminist movement is often divided into three “waves” that emerged in different decades between the late 19th and 20th centuries. It seems uncontroversial to say that, while these waves involved different individuals and ideas, they were all part of the same project of liberating women from oppression. Yet this only makes sense as a discontinuous project: the second wave of feminism, for example, arose partially as a response to the backlash against the first wave. The overall event only makes sense when we take into account the times between waves. So it would be incorrect to represent the feminist movement as a single, continuous event on the timeline, but
it would also be incorrect to split it up into three different events. The line simply cannot account for disjointed events.

Finally, the timeline model does not capture the sense in which past and future moments are contained in the present moment. We perceive things in the present, but the interpretation of what we see presupposes past knowledge that is right there with us in the present. Practical action often demands that we think ahead of ourselves. We can imagine a kind of retention and protention on the timeline model, where rays extend out from the present into a certain range of the past-line and future-line. But memory does not follow a continuous line in the sense that we have to think about the last five years of our career to think about getting a job six years ago. And the future has no duration at all, even the duration of a memory. To the extent it exists, it exists in the present. In later chapters, I will argue that this presence of past and future in the present is no metaphor or subjective quirk; it is the very subsistence of eternity in time.

But we are not yet in a position to understand these cross-temporal relations. My only goal in this section has been to suggest that there are shortcomings in what is often taken as an intuitive model for time, and that these shortcomings arise from the complex temporal structure of events. In short, the timeline is not as simple as it first seemed. It will be objected that this does not really tell us anything about time, only about the timeline model itself. As Anthony Grafton and Daniel Rosenberg have shown in *Cartographies of Time*, there have been many ways of representing time, and many of them are likely better equipped to deal with evental complications than my simplistic model. But the fact is that Deleuze himself is attached to the linearity of time, to the point that he even defines eternity as a “straight line”—albeit a straight

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57 I return to the paradigmatic event of feminism in section two of the conclusion to this dissertation.
line that forks.\textsuperscript{58} In later chapters, I will attempt to explain how Deleuze’s conception of linearity addresses problems like those raised here. For now, I turn to the other conception of time.

### 3.3 The meanwhile

Because of the limits of the understanding of time that defines states of affairs, Deleuze sketches an entirely different conception to define the event. If the timeline model presents time as interval, this new conception implicates time as a whole (C1 32). But this is a strange, fragmentary whole, which Deleuze calls the meanwhile.\textsuperscript{59} If the timeline measures occurrences contained between stopping and starting points, the meanwhile “neither begins nor ends” (WP 156). Instead, it subsists between times.

"We no longer have to search for what takes place from one point to another, from one instant to another...It is no longer time that exists between two instants; it is the event that is a meanwhile" (WP 157–158). The word "meanwhile" here is a translation of the French \textit{entre-temps}, which has the same colloquial sense it does in English but translates literally as "between times." Like Blanchot, Levinas, and others, Deleuze uses \textit{entre-temps} as a technical term.\textsuperscript{60} We could thus rewrite the sentence above: at the virtual level, it is not time that exists between instants, it is the event that subsists between times. But assuming that we can divide time up as finely as we like, how could there be something between times which is not time itself?

The familiar sense of the phrase "meanwhile" actually comes in handy here, though it can be misleading in other ways. We are accustomed to seeing this phrase in older films and television programs, where it is used to connect occurrences that are approximately simultaneous.

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\textsuperscript{58} "This is Borges' reply to Leibniz: the straight line as force of time, as labyrinth of time, is also the line which forks and keeps on forking, passing through incompossible presents, returning to not-necessarily-true pasts" (C2 131).

\textsuperscript{59} For the "meanwhile," Deleuze cites Groethuysen, "De quelques aspects du temps."

\textsuperscript{60} See Wall, \textit{Radical Passivity: Levinas, Blanchot, and Agamben} 93–114.
and narratively connected but occurring in different places. The hero is fighting the villain; meanwhile, his sidekick is defusing the villain's bomb. By cutting back and forth between these two states of affairs, the director signifies that they are part of a single event: defeating the villain. That event does not transpire in either of the two states of affairs alone: the villain will either get away or blow up the building if both the hero and his sidekick do not complete their missions. Its entire subsistence as a second-order complex of relations is in between those two occurrences. For Deleuze, all events have this structure: "In every event there are many heterogeneous, always simultaneous components, since each of them is a meanwhile" (WP 158). This tells us what Deleuze is getting at with his insistence that the event is what withdraws or exceeds its own actualization in states of affairs: it hovers between them as they happen.

3.4 Cutting

This cinematic (or televisual) metaphor is particularly appropriate for Deleuze’s work, as Deleuze is arguably the first great philosopher of the cinema. Perhaps we can extend it a bit further. We comprehend the event of the villain’s defeat by synthesizing the two heterogeneous occurrences into one event. But each of these sub-events is itself presented heterogeneously: every meanwhile is composed of meanwhiles. This is evident, for example, in the audio-visual duality of the cinematic experience. In modern film, both audio and video are equally important elements; even in films with little or no dialogue, ambient sound and added music fold us into the action. Although it is natural to think of audio and visual as unified in the work, they are really two independent and parallel processes that converge only in the event in play, which is neither audible nor visual in itself. (Anyone who has tried to watch a film with the audio and visual tracks out of sync can attest to both their independence and mutual necessity.) For Deleuze, every event is formed at this kind of aleatory crossing.
Cutting from one facet of a situation to another, the camera synthetically constitutes the event. But there are many kinds of cuts in film, and most of them do not depict simultaneous events. On the contrary, they are more often used to construct a story out of events that, as we say, do not occur "in real time." Since it has to represent a long span of time in a shorter span of time, the film has to select the most significant episodes from this span in a way that makes the same sense. One of the methods for achieving this result is to let cuts, which do not occupy any time at all, link together disparate events to form one more comprehensive event. To take a famous example, when Stanley Kubrick cuts from a tossed bone to a spaceship in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1969), he is able to represent the entire event of humankind's technological evolution without actually detailing any of it. Cuts are “meanwhiles” in that they embed happenings into each other by positioning themselves as the invisible intermediary between; although they are empty, a mere temporal absence, they form so many modes of change which allow the filmmakers to construct something between the times actualized in each shot.

Events are cuts because they open up connections between distant times. Just as a film represents a sequence of events by cutting across key moments of that sequence, an event brings non-contiguous moments together by cutting between what Deleuze will call “singular points” of a continuous duration. These cuts open a super-temporal “communication” between the bodies and processes which actualize and re-actualize the same event. A compelling example of this comes from Deleuze’s analysis of a famous scene in Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*. In this scene, the book’s narrator is overwhelmed by an experience of involuntary memory when he combines tea with a certain cookie he favored as a child. The event of Marcel's encounter with the madeleine cookie opens up the essence of his childhood home, Combray, forging an identity

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61 See LS 169–176 on the “communication of events.” Deleuze’s sense of “communication” may echo the surrealist Andre Breton’s *Communicating Vessels*; cf. the discussion of "Cells and Vessels" in PS 116–130.
between his past and present. This event is composed of heterogeneous components (the tea, the cookie, Combray, Marcel) that serve as “meanwhiles” defining the material specificity of the event. And yet the event itself remains incorporeal, ideal and therefore communicable, as evidenced by the fact that we can discuss the episode in Proust's text with such precision. Indeed, with events such as this, the text is itself the novelty that is created, and it is what passes the Combray event on into the future.

Thus, to define the event as meanwhile means multiple things. First, within a given time and place, the event is divided between different simultaneous occurrences. Second, at the level of each of these sub-events, there is a multiplicity of dimensions in which the event is expressed. Finally, the event considered as a whole, as well as each sub-event, can be linked with its own past and future actualizations through the openings provided by cuts in duration. It is this final sense of the meanwhile that will be most important in later chapters.

3.5 Toward the past

*What Is Philosophy?* is one of Deleuze’s final texts, and some of its more paradoxical formulations are like riddles pointing us to earlier texts for answers. Above, I asked how the event could be "interminable," perpetually in motion, if it neither begins nor ends. Deleuze's answer to this riddle is that the activity of the event occurs between times, rather than between instants; we could not assign it a fixed span on the timeline without altering its nature as an in-between. The motion of the event is a movement of constant deferral, eternally withdrawing from the present. "Nothing happens" in this empty time, but everything changes, for events are virtual catalysts of change that enable the incorporeal transformation of ordinary processes.62

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62 On the incorporeal transformation, see chapter four, section three.
However, invoking the virtual as a solution only raises more questions. One of these concerns the status of past and future in Deleuze's conception. I have loosely defined the virtual as the objective past-future, reflecting Deleuze's claim that the event escapes the present into an "infinite waiting" that is also "infinitely past" (WP 158). But there is no obvious reason to accept the suggestion that we "see" the event "as still to come and having already happened, in the strange indifference of an intellectual intuition" (Ibid.). When I think about the French Revolution, it seems to me that I am thinking of something that happened in the past and ended. Conversely, it is hard to imagine a scenario where the French Revolution ends up on my day planner. Why do events not stay in their place?

Questions about virtuality in Deleuze are inextricably bound up with questions about past and future, much as the Platonic theory of ideas is inseparable from discussion of anamnesis and teleological anticipation. Many things changed in the time between Logic of Sense and What Is Philosophy?—for one, Deleuze decided to stop calling eternity “eternity”—but his strange description of the event as simultaneously past and future is remarkably consistent. The most commonly repeated description of the event in Logic of Sense is that it divides the present into past and future, or is divided into past and future. In that book, moreover, eternity is explicitly identified with aion, the past-future. However, Logic of Sense is even less helpful than What is Philosophy? if our goal is to differentiate between the past and future, for it scarcely distinguishes them from one another.

Deleuze does differentiate past and future in a different set of texts, and I will turn to these in the next chapter. These texts emphasize the past over the future. For now, I shall do the same: the future will be the focus of chapters five and six, while chapters three and four will focus on the present. But if Deleuze develops original concepts of both the eternal present and
the eternal return, it is his doctrine of the pure past that has been most influential. Drawing on Bergson, Deleuze contends that although an event exists at different times at the actual level, these differences remain simultaneous at the virtual level. Virtual simultaneity, or subsistence in the pure past, is the ground of an event's eternal truth.
Chapter Two: The Pure Past

1. Introduction

The first chapter of this dissertation introduced us to the basic elements of Deleuze’s ontology. I have defined the event as a singular set of second-order relations that produces something new. Genuine events are distinguished by their “eternal truth,” which refers to the withdrawal of an event from its own actualization. To say an event has eternal truth is to say it is both here and not here, now and not-now. In Deleuze’s terms, the event is simultaneously actual and virtual: actual insofar as it exists in the present, virtual insofar as it persists as a repeatable model between times.

Now, the claim that the event is simultaneously virtual and actual is patently a temporal claim: it says that the event is virtual and actual at the same time. If the actual denotes what is, what is present or has presence, then we can further reformulate this claim: the event is at the same time it has been or could be. The question then becomes, what is this “same time”? What is the structure of time that allows for something present to also exist in a different time? For Deleuze, this structure of time is called the pure past. The past is virtual time, as the present is the time of actualization. We normally think of the past as something that has happened and has passed. The core of the theory of the pure past is that the past does not fade into non-existence once it is no longer present. Rather, the entire past is preserved in itself, and this totality coexists with each new present. Succession is a real structure of time, because different things happen in each new moment. But the proposal of Deleuze, following the work of Henri Bergson, is that these successive moments also coexist in the pure past. This is what makes it possible for events to be stretched or suspended between times, in the “meanwhile.”
The goal of this chapter is to explicate and evaluate the theory of the pure past in detail. I will look at the genesis of the theory in Bergson’s 1896 treatise *Matter and Memory*, where it is first formulated as an alternative to the common belief that memories are stored in the brain. I will then review the theory’s development across Deleuze’s career, focusing on *Bergsonism*, *Difference and Repetition*, and *Cinema 2*. We will see that Deleuze uses the language of eternity in some of these texts, but I will present several arguments against the identification of eternity with the pure past. For an event to be eternal, it is not enough that it survives in the pure past. It must be picked out of the past, as I will argue in later chapters, and projected into the future by an actor.

2. Memory in Bergson

2.1 Deleuze and Bergson on memory

It is easy to assume that we know what the past is. The past is yesterday, a month ago, a million years ago—anything that has already happened and is no longer happening. The past is the part of the timeline we can fill in: in a word, history. And yet the past is not simply severed from the present as though from a distant origin; rather, it remains immanent to the way we perceive and understand what is present to us. The faculty that allows the past to be retained and recollected for the present in this way is memory. But memory is manifold and complex: Deleuze and Bergson outline several fundamental types. I will look at voluntary and involuntary memory in Deleuze, and then turn to Bergson’s distinction between motor memory and independent recollection.

In his work on Proust, Deleuze distinguishes between voluntary and involuntary
memory. When we are actively searching our minds for some fact or detail about the past, we are exercising voluntary memory. But when the past unexpectedly imposes itself on us through a qualitative medium—as Combray did to Marcel through the taste of the madeleine, or as an old song on the radio might for a modern person—we have a glimpse not just of what happened, but of the “essence” of what happened. This is involuntary memory. The cookie brings back an idealized, nostalgia-tinged version of Combray, not the material place itself. The song on the radio reawakens feelings and associations that selectively interpret the past. These flashes of the essential past allow us to regain something that might otherwise have been forgotten—or was never fully grasped to begin with.

In *Proust and Signs*, Deleuze also examines how memory intervenes in the interpretation of signs. Your being able to understand this sentence depends on syntactic and semantic knowledge that had to be learned somewhere along the way. This knowledge does not have to be consciously applied for you to understand the sentence, however; it is, once learned, ready for immediate application. Like artificial signs, natural signs also draw on past knowledge: if we see a certain pattern of small scars on someone's face, we can infer that at some point they had chickenpox. But inference is not required for this kind of memory that overlies the present, nor is it necessarily restricted to signs. When I look at a truck, I simply see a truck, not an object that I have to interpret as a truck. There may be a delay between the perception of the relevant space and my identification of the space as a truck. And my becoming conscious of the truck-perception may be an even later occurrence. Nevertheless, once the awareness is there, it is there all at once: a present object, overlaid with past meaning.

In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson divides up memory in a different way than Deleuze.

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63 This paragraph draws on PS 57–61.  
64 See Lampert, *Simultaneity and Delay*, chapter five for a more thorough discussion of cognitive delay.
Bergson stipulates that "the past survives under two distinct forms" (MM 78). Bergson places both forms under the general category of "recognition" (Ibid.). The first form he calls independent recollection. This kind of memory "implies an effort in the mind, which seeks in the past, in order to apply them to the present, those representations which are best able to enter into the present situation" (MM 78). Independent recollection is distinguished from Bergson’s second form, motor memory. Motor memory is the kind of memory that functions in action and is learned through repetition. My ability to type without looking, for example, was learned through many weeks of repeatedly practicing the act in high school. My ability to teach, though more complex, was also learned through practice and habituation. Bergson thinks such abilities are indeed memories, but these memories "are lived and acted, rather than represented" (MM 81).

At the same time, it is important to note that this second type of memory includes more than what is sometimes called muscle memory. Muscle memory is what allows me to type, or sing, or ski without falling down the hill. But Bergson gives an interesting example that suggests motor memory should not always be closely associated with the body:

I study a lesson, and in order to learn it by heart I read it a first time, accentuating every line; I then repeat it a certain number of times. At each repetition there is progress; the words are more and more linked together to form a continuous whole. When that moment comes, it is said that I know the lesson by heart, that it is imprinted on my memory. (MM 79)

Bergson goes on to explain, somewhat counter-intuitively, that this process yields two kinds of memories of the same text. To the extent that I know the lesson by heart, and as a complete whole, I have a motor memory. Insofar as the text is “imprinted on my memory” through sheer repetition, this motor memory is just another "habitual bodily exercise" (MM 80). But when I think about each individual reading or learning session, Bergson says, then I find that each is a completely unique experience: "It is like an event in my life; its essence is to bear a date, and,
consequently to be unable to occur again" (Ibid.). The individual difference of each exposure to
the material is filtered, through repetition, into something rote and readily applicable: the lesson.

For Bergson, this example captures something essential about the relation between motor
memory and independent memory: the former is always a reduction of the difference of the
latter. That is, the memories which are integrated into present action are selections of a larger
retentive pool. Independent recollection, for Bergson, allows us access to our whole past: it
records "all the events of our daily life, as they occur in time; it neglects no detail" (MM 81). By
contrast, motor memory is completely bound to the material needs of the present. Nevertheless—
and this is what is essential—it is the same objects of memory that are preserved as "independent
recollections" and functionalized as "motor mechanisms" (MM 78). All we have to do is redefine
our terms a bit here to see that this is the precise logic Deleuze will later use to describe the
event. Independent recollections are virtual, and motor mechanisms are actual; the excess of
virtual memory must be selectively pared down to be actualized in states of affairs.

But there is a final point about memory to raise. Riding a bicycle is a type of motor
memory: once learned, as the saying goes, you never forget how to do it. But this saying is false.
If you forget to wear a helmet and get into a bicycle accident, the resulting head injuries may
well cause you to forget how to ride. This points to a common feature of all the types of memory
mentioned above: they depend, in some essential way, on brain functions. Injuries to the brain
can affect not only motor memory, but also independent recollection: our ability to recognize
objects, to speak, and to understand speech can all be affected by such injuries. In the case of
amnesia, they can even erase memories. Given this incontestable connection between memory
and the brain, it is common to adopt the materialist position that memories are "in" the brain, and
to the extent the past still exists, it exists in our heads.
Bergson famously rejected the position that memories are stored in the brain. His counterpoint is simple to state, but hard to prove. When the brain is injured, Bergson says, it is not memories themselves that are destroyed—it is only our mode of access to the memories. The brain is like a translating device in which virtual, non-material memories are remade to fit into the material world. If this device is broken, the memories are not lost. But they cannot be translated and adapted appropriately to the situations that require them. However, if this is true, and if memories do not exist in the head, then where do they exist? The answer requires us to push beyond memory to pure memory, and the pure past.

2.2 Pure memory

Bergson is the most important influence on Deleuze’s philosophy of time. And perhaps the single most important idea in Bergson’s philosophy of time is that the past survives in itself, rather than in our heads. This idea forms the kernel of Bergson’s theory of duration, the focus of his mature career. In this section, I want to focus just on that kernel: why should we think the past survives in itself? What does that even mean? The initial treatment of these problems is found in chapter three of Matter and Memory. Later, I will look at how Deleuze adapts Bergson’s theory for his own purposes.

In the account of Matter and Memory, which Deleuze cites at crucial points in his own philosophy of time, memory is less like a repository for moving pictures than a camera through which we view the motion itself.\(^\text{65}\) The past is "something," but it is not something stored in our heads, even if we have to use our minds to access it. The simplest analogy for understanding this

\(^{65}\) Remembering is described as "a work of adjustment, something like the focusing of a camera" (Matter and Memory 171). I will abbreviate references to this work as (MM) going forward.
point is the persistence of spatial objects. If I drive past a building and turn the corner, I do not suppose that it blinks out of existence once it is no longer visible in the mirror. Bergson argues that the same principle applies to objects in time: the fact that something no longer exists in the present does not mean it ceases to exist. It has merely passed into the past, where it is preserved and can be remembered. It is surprising, perhaps, that Bergson makes this comparison, since he might be most famous for rejecting the conflation of time and space (or, more accurately, the reduction of time to a spatial model). Perhaps Bergson was, so to speak, courting the enemy—that is, using concepts we understand (about extended space) to introduce something we mostly do not acknowledge (pure memory). In any case, Bergson’s central point can be stated, without any reference to space, as a kind of transcendental argument: it is not because we have the faculty of memory that the past can be preserved; it is because the past is preserved that the exercise of a faculty such as memory is possible.

It is from Bergson that Deleuze takes his conception of the relation between virtual and actual. The virtual is to the past what the actual is to the present. Bergson first argues that there is a difference in kind, rather than degree, between perception and memory. No matter how forceful the recollection, the memory of pain is not pain itself (MM 174–175). He then argues that this derives from a more fundamental difference in kind between present and past. The actual or "active" present is always defined by a simultaneous presentation of discrete objects in space, while the virtual past forms a continuous but sequential stream (MM 187–188). The continuity of the virtual manifests as the continuity of memory.

In accordance with these differences, the act of remembering transforms the nature of

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66 MM 182: "...there will no longer be any more reason to say that the past effaces itself as soon as perceived, than there is to suppose that material objects cease to exist when we cease to perceive them."

67 See Russell, A History of Western Philosophy 795 for one characteristic example of this view on Bergson.
what is remembered: "Memory passes into something else by becoming actual" (MM 174). And again: "Memory actualized in an image" is different than "pure memory" (MM 181). Bergson spells out this difference in terms of consciousness, which he calls "the characteristic note of the present" (MM 181). Bergson says the "actual" present is "active," or directed towards action, while the "virtual" past is "powerless." More than Deleuze, he emphasizes this pragmatic dimension of the present: "Actual consciousness accepts at each moment the useful, and rejects in the same breath the superfluous" (MM 188). His idea is that memory naturally provides the knowledge or information necessary "at each moment" for the remembering subject to complete their objectives. The objective problems faced by the subject will call upon different "sections" or "regions" of memory in response.

If I run over a nail in the middle of nowhere, my mind suddenly has a problem to solve, and to solve that problem, it leads me to dredge up that section of my memory in which I learned to change a tire. This process may be more or less voluntary, and successful, in different cases. Conversely, once I access the memory-event "Changing a tire," the mind may freely yield up all associated memories, whether they are helpful or not: I might remember the last time the car broke down, or that terrible horror movie about the tire that went on a killing spree. It is thus a two-way street: the exigencies of the present determine what of the past will be actualized, while the content of the past determines how the subject will respond to the problem.

Much of the value of Bergson's analysis lies in its attention to the way past and present mingle without blending in the process of actualization. When engaging in recollection, he argues, we first have to make the qualitative leap from the activity of the present to the "past in

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68 Rubber (2010).
69 On the reciprocity of past and present, see 197: "It is from the present that comes the appeal to which memory responds, and it is from the sensori-motor elements of present action that a memory borrows the warmth which gives it life."
general," and from there to a "certain region of the past" (MM 171). These regions of the past are not distributed equivalently and indifferently in the manner of points in space but are organized into "systems" by certain privileged memories acting as structural centers: "It is sufficient to point out that these systems are not formed of recollections laid side by side like so many atoms. There are always some dominant memories, shining points around which the others form a vague nebulosity" (MM 223). These "shining points" are what Deleuze will later call singular points or simply singularities. For now, we can think of them as the big events in our lives (weddings, new careers, births and deaths) that we use as reference points when we recount sections of our own life stories.

Guided by the light of these shining points, we can locate the recollections we sought. As we focus our attention on them, however, their nature changes. They are activated and actualized, transmuted from idealities into images that overlie present perceptions. Bergson thus distinguishes pure memories from these memory-images that give sense to what we experience. However, the image retains a trace of its virtuality: "If, being a present state, it were not also something which stands out distinct from the present, we should never know it for a memory" (MM 171). The past is experienced in the present AS past. In its derived form as memory-image, it thus forms a "virtual object" which doubles the actual objects extended before us (MM 167). But Bergson insists that this virtual object should not be confused with the ideal object of pure memory, which is never ours to regain in its original form.

While some of the Bergsonian ideas enumerated so far may still be controversial, they do not seem any more metaphysically audacious than some other accounts of the relation between mind (memory) and body (matter). We cannot say the same about the most famous theses in *Matter and Memory*, which Bergson would spend much of his subsequent career defending and
developing. The first thesis is that pure memory contains "the whole of the past" (MM 220). The practical demands of the present normally distract us from it, but if a person could "dream his life instead of living it [he] would no doubt thus keep before his eyes at each moment the infinite multitude of the details of his past history" (MM 201). We ourselves are the "actual synthesis of all our past states" (MM 188). We feel the "pressure" of the entire past in every present, as it is "continually pressing forward, so as to insert the largest possible part of itself into the present action" (MM 219). At the extreme limit of memory, "there is no recollection which is not linked by contiguity with the totality of the events which precede and also with those which follow it" (MM 222).

Second thesis: the totality of our recollections in pure memory are "repeated an endless number of times on the different levels of memory" (MM 129). There are "an infinite number of possible states of memory," which are "so many repetitions of the whole of our past life" (MM 219–220). Further, there are "an unlimited number of different 'systematizations'" of these states, and infinite "planes" on which we can group them according to relations of association by similarity and contiguity (MM 220).

Putting these theses together, we have the claim that every time we draw on memory—which is every moment of our lives, in sleeping and waking—we are surveying infinite variations on our entire lives and, simultaneously, infinite second-order relations between these variations (systematizations, planes). It is no surprise that the virtual appears chaotic from the relative stability of the present. In fact, this stability is a kind of perpetual balancing act: the present is only the most contracted point of the past. It is where spiritual memory meets extended matter, which Bergson defines as "a present which is always beginning again" (MM 178). Above all, our sensations of our bodies and the immediate space they occupy fix us in the present. But if
the material body is renewed anew in every instant, then the unified object I think of as my body is itself a memory-image composed of all the states of time in which that body occupied space. Finally, the indefinite horizon formed by extended space as it passes beyond our field of perception forms a "diagram" of the future as an objective unknown, indefinitely open for determination by the past (MM 186).

2.3 Critique of Bergson

Bergson’s theory is that the whole past exists simultaneously with the present. This implies that the whole past exists simultaneously with itself, which allows for the sectioning and systematization of past events. These are, needless to say, controversial and difficult theses. Much of the work of this and the following chapters will be to develop and evaluate Bergson’s core ideas. In this section, I want to try to motivate sympathy for Bergson’s position by putting it in a context that modern, scientifically-minded readers might think of as more objective than memory.

One problem raised by a reading of Matter and Memory concerns the apparent subjectivity of memory. Even if I were able to access the whole span of my memories, as Bergson suggests I should be able to, there would be a great deal of past time that I had no access to. Some other people might have access, through memory, to times that passed before I was born. But no one has access to what Quentin Meillassoux calls “ancestral” time—i.e., time that passed before creatures with faculties of memory and perception could have existed in the universe (After Finitude 10). Conversely, there will likely be a time in the future when no living beings are around to remember anything. Bergson would have to maintain that the pure past survives through all these changes, and indeed, is wholly unaffected by them. Otherwise his
thesis is not an ontological thesis, but a psychological claim in fancy dressing. However, is such a thesis plausible when applied solely to the objective world?

An argument in David Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature* suggests that it is not so crazy to think the universe has a kind of memory. 70 We believe that all matter is subject to causal forces, and everything physical is the way it is because of a causal chain that can be linked back, in every case, to the very beginning of the universe. It will be said that this proves nothing, since it is only the proximal causes of current processes that demonstrate their efficacy, and thus reality, in the present. Present effects, in other words, point only to immediately past causes, rather than the whole history of causes. But it is not clear that we can temporally separate the presence of a sufficient cause from the presence of the effect of that cause.

If I place a basketball on a pillow, the basketball causes an indentation to appear on the pillow at the same time the indentation actually appears. If a gust of wind makes contact with a piece of paper at the edge of my desk, it is instantly blown off the desk. Causes seem to be simultaneous with their effects in these cases. And how could it be any other way? There are no holes in time. If there is a delay between a cause and an effect, then that cause may be a cause, but it is not a sufficient cause; it is only the instigator of a chain of events. The asteroid that hit Earth 65 million years ago, for example, probably did not immediately kill every dinosaur. There would have been many intervening steps before that final death: the spread of dust, wind and radiation; the integration of this aftermath into the air and soil. This does not make it incorrect to speak of the asteroid as the cause of the dinosaur extinction. It just was not a sufficient cause: this cause required other causes to take effect.

Now, for Hume, the apparent simultaneity of some causes with their effects must be a

70 This argument was brought to my attention by *Simultaneity and Delay* 78-79.
kind of illusion. If it is true that even one sufficient cause is simultaneous with its effect, then all sufficient causes must be simultaneous with their effects. For what difference could there be between this immediately acting cause and those whose effects are delayed, except that they are not sufficient causes at all, but partial causes? Hume thinks that dire consequences follow from this line of reasoning:

The consequence of this would be no less than the destruction of that succession of causes, which we observe in the world; and indeed, the utter annihilation of time. For if one cause were co-temporary with its effect, and this effect with its effect, and so on, ’tis plain there would be no such thing as succession, and all objects must be co-existent. *(Treatise of Human Nature 55)*

Having introduced this puzzle, Hume quickly dismisses it as an “affair of no importance” (Ibid.). For Hume, causality is an idea of necessary connection formed from the repetition of associations between events. It is not a material phenomenon that needs to be explained. But if we believe that causes and effects are, in some broad sense, real forces in nature, Hume’s puzzle seems to require an answer.

Hume says the simultaneity of cause and effect precludes succession, and thus time, since without succession “all objects must be co-existent.” He does not consider that all objects might be co-existent in one sense, and successive in another. All causes could be simultaneous with their effects without destroying succession if: a) causes co-exist in the virtual past, b) the most recent effects exist in the present, and c) the whole past is simultaneous with the present. Just as Bergson says the present is only the most concentrated, compacted form of the whole past, we can say that the effects which appear in the present point back to a history of causes spanning all of time. We thus avoid the “utter annihilation of time,” and the absurd supposition of empty delays between causes and effects, by qualitatively distinguishing the past from the present.

Now, I am not pretending this argument establishes anything conclusive about causality.
And even if it were valid, it would not be sufficient to prove Bergson is right. The causal history of the universe is only one sequence of actual events, and this totality does not have the variability, dynamism, and retroactive malleability of Bergson’s virtual past. My purpose is only to suggest how Bergson’s metaphysical distinction between present and past might have a legitimate scope beyond subjective memory. It gives us a useful tool for unpacking temporal riddles. In the next section, we will see how Deleuze extracts the fundamental operations of time from this distinction.

However, by way of bringing things full circle, we can observe that the same tension between simultaneity and succession structures memory itself. Deleuze, we saw above, distinguishes between voluntary and involuntary memory. The former implies a conscious decision to go back into some span of the past to find some information; the latter is when some detail or association from the past suddenly imposes itself on the present all at once. Lampert articulates a similar difference in terms of order (though without the reference to volition).71 When we employ the first kind of memory, we mentally retrace our steps in the order they occurred, while experiences of involuntary memory—for example, a traumatic memory triggered by a fateful encounter—disregard order and draw us immediately to a certain point in the past. In the first case, the past presents itself in accordance with an objective order of succession. In the second, the past is a simultaneous totality that coexists in its entirety with the present, so any point of that totality can emerge into consciousness at any time.

This is parallel to the discussion of causality above, where causes existed simultaneously (in virtual community) and in succession (relative to the effects occupying the present). As Lampert emphasizes, both succession and simultaneity are demonstrably real structures of

71 See the discussion of Bergson in Simultaneity and Delay 140–141.
(subjective or objective) time, yet they are incompatible structures. They are therefore, as Deleuze would say, two readings of time. What began as a distinction between present and past subtly transforms into a distinction between two perspectives on the co-existent past-present as a whole. This essential multiplicity of temporal dimensions will be important as we turn back to Deleuze.

3. The pure past

Deleuze’s theory of time is formulated in different ways over the span of his career. Sometimes time is divided into three syntheses (past, present, future), and sometimes into two dimensions (aion and chronos; sheets of past and peaks of present). Sometimes eternity plays a major role, while in other works it is dismissed entirely. And what Deleuze means by presence and futurity changes from work to work. But the one point that Deleuze continues to revisit from *Nietzsche and Philosophy* to *Cinema 2* is Bergson’s thesis that the whole past co-exists with the present. Deleuze dissociates this thesis from the problem of memory in his own works in order to present an ontological theory: pure memory becomes the pure past. But even this theory has distinctive variations. In this section, I want to look at the evolution of Deleuze’s adaptation of Bergson from *Bergsonism* and *Difference and Repetition* to *Cinema 2*. This overview of the discussion will allow me to draw out several problems that will guide the discussions of the following chapters.

3.1 The past as being-in-itself

Unsurprisingly, the most faithful recreation of Bergson’s position comes in Deleuze’s monograph on the philosopher. In *Bergsonism*, Deleuze severs the link between psychology and
ontology assumed in *Matter and Memory*. The past is accorded full autonomy and self-subsistence, and needs no support from the subject: "The past is not to be confused with the mental existence of memory-images which actualize it in us. It is preserved in time...Memory is not in us; it is we who move in a Being-memory, a world-memory" (C2 90). And again: "It is in the past as it is in itself, as it is preserved in itself, that we go to look for our dreams or our memories, and not the opposite" (C2 80). Deleuze states this point in stark ontological terms:

> We have great difficulty in understanding a survival of the past in itself because we believe that the past is no longer, that it has ceased to be. We have thus confused Being with being-present...But it has not ceased to be. Useless and inactive, impassive, it IS, in the full sense of the word: It is identical with being in itself...At the limit, the ordinary determinations are reversed: of the present, we must say at every instant that it "was," and of the past, that it "is," that it is eternally, for all time. (B 55)

> Without even looking for it, we have run into a new notion of eternity. Later in this chapter, I will argue that this not the primary sense of eternity in Deleuze, nor is it an acceptable conception in itself. For now, it is important just to understand the point. First, the past is separated from memory. Different people have different memories, but all memories together would still only occupy a part of the totality of the pure past. This totality includes all happenings from all presents. But if the pure past is an ever-growing repository for happenings, trailing behind the present, it is also perpetually expressing, explicating, or inserting itself in the present. As in Bergson, there is a double directionality between present and past: the exigencies of the present determine what sections, planes, and systems of the past will be actualized, while the various modalities of the past create a shifting field of possible determinations of the future.

> Second, Deleuze identifies the pure past with being or being-in-itself. One way to understand this claim is through a spatial analogy that Deleuze and Bergson like to use: "Time is not the interior in us, but just the opposite, the interiority in which we are, in which we move, live, and change" (C2 82). Time is the water in which we swim, the wind beneath our wings. It is
the page on which we print the timeline, the continuous white upon which discrete black moments can be represented. This kind of analogy is misleading after a certain point, but it does suggest that it is incorrect to think of Deleuze's pure past as something that trails "behind" the present. If the past is the element in which the present moves, the page behind the timeline, then it is just as much "in front of" the present as behind it. To complete the picture, we would have to imagine infinite possible timelines located at different points on the page, where each location signifies the same time—the whole of time, the totality—but in a particular mode or state. The actual universe would be just one of these timelines, cut out at random from all those which overlap it. Everything else remains, but it remains in the past.

“Being-Memory” is a source—a well to draw from, a thread to unwind. It is the most general and broadest category of things because it includes all things that have been and could be: virtuality incarnate. The virtual past is the genesis of the actual present because the actual is always, by definition, an actualization of virtuality. Even the first moment in time—if there was a first moment in time—was an actualization of a past that was already a totality and had only to show its infinite faces in presented sections. If these presentations can be laid out in the cosmos, it is because they always already coexisted in Being: "The idea of a virtual coexistence of all the levels of the past, of all the levels of tension, is thus extended to the whole of the universe: This idea no longer simply signifies my relationship with being, but the relationship of all things with being. Everything happens as if the universe were a tremendous Memory" (B 77). Deleuze concludes that "the only equivalent thesis" in the history of philosophy "is Plato's notion of Reminiscence" (B 59).

3.2 Paradoxes of time

After Bergsonism, Deleuze would begin to integrate Bergson’s analyses of time into his
own work. The core idea that the past coexists in its entirety with the present does not change, but Deleuze articulates and justifies this core idea in different ways. Following these changes in detail would take us too far off track, but it is worth noting the variations at this point to understand the depth of Bergson’s original insight. Deleuze makes this task unusually easy by breaking down the Bergsonian contribution into sets of fundamental theses in *Bergsonism*, *Difference and Repetition*, and *Cinema 2*. Deleuze calls these theses “paradoxes,” though it is questionable whether they all fit this description. Here is a list of the fundamental theses from each work; Deleuze gives titles to some, but not to others.

- **Bergsonism (57–60)** -

1. We place ourselves at once, in a leap, in the ontological element of the past (paradox of the leap).

2. There is a difference in kind between the present and the past (paradox of Being).

3. The past does not follow the present that it has been, but coexists with it (paradox of coexistence).

4. What coexists with each present is the whole of the past, integrally, on various levels of contraction and relaxation (paradox of psychic repetition).

- **Difference and Repetition (82–83)** -

1. The past is contemporaneous with the present that it was.

2. If each past is contemporaneous with the present that it was, then all of the past coexists with the new present in relation to which it is now past (paradox of coexistence).

3. The pure element of the past in general pre-exists the passing present (paradox of pre-existence).

4. The present can be the most contracted degree of the past which coexists with it only if the past first coexists with itself in an infinity of diverse degrees of relaxation and contraction at an infinity of levels.
1. The pre-existence of a past in general.
2. The coexistence of all the sheets of past.
3. The existence of a most contracted degree.

There is a typically Deleuzian inconsistency among these three sets. For example, what Deleuze calls the paradox of coexistence in *Difference and Repetition* is not the paradox of coexistence in *Bergsonism*. *Bergsonism*’s paradox of coexistence includes both the second and fourth theses in *Difference and Repetition*. More conspicuously, neither of the first two theses in *Bergsonism* appear in either of the next two works. The so-called “paradox of the leap” seems particularly out of place in this list: the point it is meant to emphasize is that there is a qualitative difference between past and present, such that the past cannot be reconstituted with the present. If this is so, Deleuze reasons, then there must be a difference in kind between our epistemological mode of access to the present and the past; when we dissociate ourselves from perception and retreat into the labyrinth of memory, it is thus a discrete shift, a “leap” (or a *cut*) out of the actual. Whether this is accurate or not, the temporal point—that there is a difference in kind between present and past—is better made in the second thesis.

The four theses of *Difference and Repetition* are thus developments of theses three and four in *Bergsonism*, where *Bergsonism*’s thesis two serves as the foundation for both sets. But we notice that *Difference and Repetition* introduces a new idea with thesis three: “The pure element of the past in general pre-exists the passing present.” Here, the past is a “substantial temporal element…playing the role of ground” (DR 82). The present has its “ground” in the past insofar as (1) what happens in each present is an actualization of a past reality, and (2) what happens in each present is recorded and preserved in the pure past. Deleuze presents this final thesis as a
development of the second: if the present is only the “maximal contraction” of a past that coexists with it, then “it must first be the case that this whole past coexists with itself” (DR 82–83). Contraction is a self-tightening, an action motivated from within. And this leads back into the fourth thesis from Bergsonism and Difference and Repetition, for self-variation, or auto-differentiation into infinite planes and sections, is the precise way in which the past coexists with itself.

Finally, we notice that Cinema 2 has three rather than four theses. (Instead of “paradoxes,” Deleuze calls these the “paradoxical characteristics of a non-chronological time” (C2 99).) Unlike in the other texts, Deleuze chooses here to emphasize the idea of the present as a contraction in its own thesis (#3). The present is but the actualized tip of an immense, obscured virtual iceberg; it selectively presents us with a certain cross-section of the pure past, distributing virtualities in succession and across space. Cinema 2 also preserves the paradox of pre-existence, according to which the past is an a priori ground of time in itself.

3.3 Problems to come

What can be said in general terms about the accounts in these three works? The verbal differences surveyed here do not amount to much. But with Deleuze, it is always important to look beyond how concepts are defined to determine the context of their use. And there are crucial differences in the contexts of these ideas. Pausing for a moment to look at these contexts will give us an idea of where the current inquiry will take us in later chapters. In essence, what we will see is that the pure past is a necessary, but not sufficient, part of a Deleuzian concept of eternity: it must be complemented by a theory of the virtual future.

Bergson gives to the past what Deleuze himself calls “an assured status” (C2 95). The
comparison to Plato was no accident; for Bergson, the pure past provides a metaphysical ground for explaining the ideal genesis of real beings. In other words, there is a clear priority given to past over present and future; in Bergson, actualization is inevitably a kind of reduction. 

*Bergsonism* largely upholds this priority. But in *Difference and Repetition* and *Cinema 2*, the situation is more complicated.

*Difference and Repetition* gives us the first version of a full-blooded Deleuzian theory of time, but this theory is multiple: it requires three distinct syntheses of time. The three syntheses correspond to present, past, and future, and concepts from different philosophers influence each synthesis. The crucial point to note is that, in Deleuze’s presentation, these are not three parts of one time, but rather three independent models for time as a whole. The first synthesis, for example, is an essentially Husserlian conception of time as presence. According to this model, past and future are only protentive and retentive contractions of extended durations into the now. They do not have independent reality. But in the second synthesis of the pure past—the synthesis influenced by Bergson—the present is only the most contracted point of the immense virtual past. From the perspective of this synthesis, the past is “a pure, general, *a priori* element of all time” (DR 82). What happens in the present derives from what subsists in the past, and returns to the past. And finally, the third synthesis (which draws on Nietzsche, Freud, and others) breaks this cyclical movement from present to past to present in order to make room for novelty—it “ungrounds” time, as Deleuze says, and ensures that neither past nor present return (DR 90–91).

Although Deleuze suggests that the three syntheses of time are independent models accounting for time as a whole, there is a clear sense in the text that there is also an order of justification among them. The second synthesis is developed to solve problems arising in the analysis of the first, and the third does the same for the second. The pure past is the ground of the
present, while the third synthesis ungrounds this ground. In *Cinema 2*, however, Deleuze presents two “images” of time—peaks of present and sheets of past—each of which is “valid for time as a whole” (C2 95). Unlike in *Difference and Repetition*, there is no effort to derive one image from another; they are like two pairs of colored glasses we can switch at will to see the world a different way. Deleuze’s *Logic of Sense* also gives us a dual image of time in the theory of aion and chronos—but in that work, aion is both past and future. (Aion, as a reminder, was just the ancient Greek term for “eternity.”) Later in this dissertation, I will argue that this difference is no accident: it was at the same point in his career that Deleuze stopped employing a concept of the future that he stopped talking about eternity. Put as simply as possible, there is no eternity without the future, and no theory of eternity without a concept of the future. This is why I will ultimately turn to *Difference and Repetition* to formulate that theory, rather than *Cinema*, *Bergsonism, Proust and Signs*, or any of Deleuze’s work with Guattari.

In chapter six, I will try to separate out a specific futurity from the complex past-future of aion. In intervening chapters, I will argue that the theory of the pure past is necessary, but not sufficient, for an account of the eternal event: since only what touches down in the present can repeat eternally, what is never recaptured from the past fades away into lost time. Moreover, in the final section of this chapter, I will consider a number of criticisms of the pure past, including some which focus on its identification with eternity. For now, however, I want to return to a critical analysis of the fundamental ideas underlying all these expressions of the theory.

### 3.4 The most fundamental operation of time

The theory of the pure past is rich enough, we have seen, that it can be expressed in many ways. At this point, however, I want to narrow the focus down to the logical core of this theory.
In *Cinema 2*, Deleuze gives us the most concentrated version of this theory by reducing it to its fundamentals: the co-existence of past and present (fundamental position of time), and the splitting of past from present (fundamental operation of time).

According to *Cinema 2* and *Logic of Sense*, we can assume two equally valid perspectives on time. It is possible to see the whole of time from the perspective of the present and what its passing demands of the past; it is also possible to see the whole of time as an expression of the infinitely variable past as it contracts (in actualization) and expands (as presents continually “fall back into it”). We can see time as lost, slipping away into the past, but we also see time regained for the future. It is possible to see time in two ways because time is essentially constituted by two coequal processes: the present passing into the past, and the present being preserved by the past.

It is therefore an ontological thesis about the real contemporaneity of past and present that underlies the multiplicity of time’s manifestations. In *Bergsonism*, Deleuze calls this thesis a fundamental position of time:

There is here, as it were, a fundamental position of time and also the most profound paradox of memory. The past is "contemporaneous" with the present that it has been... The past and the present do not denote two successive moments, but two elements which coexist... The past does not follow the present, but on the contrary, is presupposed by it as the pure condition without which it would not pass. (B 58–59)

The "fundamental" thesis here, which Deleuze restates throughout his career, is that the past is contemporaneous with the present that it was. It is not difficult to see why this is a such a crucial point for Deleuze: the co-existence of present and past provides a meeting point for the virtual and actual. We do not have to wonder how the event jumps out of the ether to actualize itself, or why signs can transport us across non-contiguous temporal spans: we are floating in that ether,

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72 WP 110: Becoming “is born in History, and falls back into it, but is not of it.” I will return to this theme later in relation to what Deleuze calls superhistoricity.
and our memories overreach those spans. In simpler terms: if the past and present do not co-exist, then the event could not exist in two different times at once, and therefore could not be eternal.

Deleuze's primary argument for the claim takes the passing of the present as its basic postulate. We know the present passes—when does it pass? There seem to be two possible answers: it passes after it is present, or it passes at the same time as it is present. It clearly cannot pass before it is present. But the supposition that it passes after it is present leads to contradictions. The present exists, and existence belongs to what is present. Once the present has passed, it no longer exists; something that does not exist cannot become past or do anything else. Of course, the events of the present may be (per hypothesis) preserved in the past, and they may "become" in a different sense. But then they would already be past, not becoming-past. Becoming-past implies that the present has two different statuses—present and past—simultaneously, while past is just past. But if there are two different temporal determinations at "the same time," what would this third time be? If the present became past after it was present, it would have to have already been replaced by another present. But this would imply the existence of two simultaneous presents, which is absurd, for if events happen at the same time (as they would in two simultaneous presents) then they are both simply present. In sum, the becoming-past of the present must occur while the present is present, and not afterwards. Pastness and presentness are logically distinct as virtual and actual, but both co-exist at the same time in the event.

Now, if the past is constituted at the same time as the present, how does time allow for

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73 There are different versions of this argument at B 58–59 and DR 81.
74 Lampert, *Philosophy of History* 45–46.
75 Lampert, *Philosophy of History* 46: "The present and past of an event co-exist at the same time."
change at all? It seems we would be stuck from the outset in an eternal circle between the past which just actualized itself and the present which became past. There would be no novelty, no progress or regress, nothing to surprise us. For history to begin, we need something to push the present away from the past. According to Deleuze, time at the most basic level consists of precisely this split:

The most fundamental operation of time: since the past is constituted not after the present that it was but at the same time, time has to split itself in two at each moment as present and past, which differ from each other in nature, or what amounts to the same thing, it has to split the present in two heterogeneous directions, one of which is launched towards the future while the other falls into the past...Time consists of this split. (C2 81)

As the present is split, half falls into the past while the other half is "launched towards the future." It is this future and all the futures after it that hold open a space for the possibility of change. We are not yet in a position to understand how this happens, for I have not touched on Deleuze’s doctrine of the future. But its introduction into the schema of the co-existent past-present creates certain logical problems.

3.5 Splitting time

To conclude this section, I want to linger for a moment on what Deleuze calls the fundamentals of time: its operation and position. For it seems that there is a basic conceptual tension between his description of time's operation and the co-existence of past and present.

Compare the following five propositions:

1. Time splits itself into present and past (C2 81)
2. Time splits the present into past and future (C2 81)
3. Time splits itself into past and future (C2 82)
4. Time is split into past and future (LS 62)
5. The past and future split the present (LS 5)

I have discussed the first two propositions from Cinema 2. Deleuze suggests that they mean the
same thing; they are equivalent ways of formulating the "fundamental operation of time." The last two formulations come from *The Logic of Sense*, where they are applied to aion, one of the two readings of time.

Now, if Deleuze is going to call something the fundamental operation of time, the reader is justified in expecting him to be precise and consistent about the nature of that operation. But Deleuze is neither; it is not clear that propositions 1 and 2 mean the same thing at all. We are told, to begin with, that time consists of a splitting operation, and we experience this operation as the passing of the present. Do we conclude that time does not "consist" of the past and present themselves? This seems wrong, for Deleuze has also said that the "fundamental position" of time is the co-existence of past and present.

Perhaps we should say that time consists of the past, the present, and the splitting of the two—or more accurately, the co-existent past-present and its division. This gives us proposition 1: time splits itself because time is the past-present, the past, the present, and the split. This interpretation retains immanence, but it does not seem to make sense. If time splits itself into itself, then it really would be a circle, and no change would occur at all. More to the point, if the past eternally co-exists with the present, then it is meaningless to say that the past-present divides itself into the past and present; either the division between past and present was there in the first place, or it is not there at all.

It seems that what Deleuze means with 1 is that time splits itself into the *next* present and the past. Otherwise there would have to be something more "fundamental" than the past-present. The past-present is at one instant, then it splits, and that instant passes. The former instant adds something new to the past, while the past contemporaneous with that former present catches it and preserves it. This is the sense, perhaps, in which the past could split into the past. A better
way of putting this formulation would be that time divides itself into past and future. This would give us proposition 3. But this is not what Deleuze says in proposition 2, which he holds to be equivalent to proposition 1. 2 says that time splits the present into past and future. The past-present splits the present into the past and future. But the present was already split, by hypothesis. We fall back into the circle.

Propositions 4 and 5 further complicate the picture. 4 is a passive restatement of 3: instead of time splitting itself into past and future, we are told that time "is split" into past and future. This would seem to contradict 2, which says that time splits the present into past and future. But we could resolve this contradiction by identifying time, not with the past-present, but with the present. If we do this, propositions 2, 3, and 4 suddenly say the same thing: time, the present, is what is split into past and future, and it is also what does the splitting.

This would let us read 1 differently: instead of the past being divided into itself, the present would now split into itself. This seems like a stronger reading, for we can understand the passage of the present into the future as a kind of splitting—in the sense of choosing some branching possibilities to actualize over others, for example—easier than we can understand the past splitting into the past. However, we seem to run into tension with proposition 5, which says that it is the past and future that do the splitting. But I do not think this difference is more than a verbal one. Time is, at minimum, a set of inorganic processes without agency. If it is the nature of the present to pass, and this is the genesis of the splitting of time, then it makes no difference to say that the present splits itself into past and future or the past and future split the present—what matters is what is split, and how, and where it ends up.

I think it is possible to make sense of these disparate formulations of time's fundamental operation if we reformulate them as follows:
1. The present splits itself into present and past
2. The present splits the present into past and future
3. The present splits itself into past and future
4. The present is split into past and future
5. The past and future split the present

What is split is time, and time is the present. If we begin with the co-existence of present and past, there is no way to reconcile these theses in a non-circular fashion. But time is not a circle. We could therefore say that the present is the foundation of time; it comes first. When the present is split, it is split simultaneously into past and future. We could combine the past and future into what Deleuze will call the "past-future." This does not mean that past and future are the same, only that they are both perpetually interacting with the present, and with each other in accordance with their common difference from the present.

But have we not passed over the essential complication? Propositions 1 and 2 are presented as though they applied to all of time. But 4 and 5 are applied to aion. Aion is only one reading of time in *The Logic of Sense*; the other reading, chronos, is explicitly identified with the present. Now, clearly the splitting of aion is closer to the "fundamental operation" of *Cinema 2*. It is thus tempting to say that aion itself is the fundamental dimension of time, and chronos is derived. But if this is so, then how could aion be identified with the present, as it must be to reconcile even just propositions 3–5? The answer is inescapable: there must be more than one present in the present. In later chapters, I will distinguish at least four presents in Deleuze.76

4. Eternity and the pure past

It may not seem as though this chapter has brought us any closer to a new concept of eternity. In fact, eternity has hardly been discussed. But the concepts of the pure past and the

76 The different presents: chronos, the moment, the instant, and "becoming-mad" or "bad chronos." See the first chapter of LS for this last concept; I mostly leave it aside in this dissertation.
event form, respectively, the temporal and ontological cores of a Deleuzian theory of eternity. They are the constants around which subsequent discussions of present and future will turn. Throughout this chapter, I have tried to look ahead to the ways these concepts will function as my discussion grows more complex. At the same time, my final interpretation of Deleuze will depart in crucial respects from the Bergsonian model (and, in certain ways, from Deleuze’s own texts). I therefore want to end this chapter by laying out five criticisms of the theory of the pure past, followed by one set of reasons to reject its identification with eternity. The idea is not to refute Bergson or Deleuze, but rather to suggest that an immanent theory of eternity would be best served by shying away from the requirement that the whole past eternally exists with the present. This will open the way for my later argument that eternity must touch down in the actual and be projected into the future.

4.1 Deleuze without Bergson

There are some intuitively appealing reasons to say that the pure past simply is eternity. I quoted Deleuze's claim that the pure past "is eternally, and for all time"; we now have a better sense of what this means (B 55). The pure past "is eternally" because it is always already there wherever we are in time. The entire past is always trailing behind the present, and simultaneously pushing itself forward into the present through the force of continuous variation. But I have also argued that it is just as much in front of the present as behind it, for if the pure past is the element in which time passes, it is the element in which everything exists and changes. As such, it has been seen to play a role as ontological ground that Deleuze himself defines in relation to Plato. The pure past is thus being-in-itself, the well from which all the happenings of the world are drawn. As an absolute "World-memory," it is the virtual storage ground for all the evental contents of the entire past. And since the entire past coexists with every present, immanent in
what is actualized, then all of time is wrapped up in this past.

Now, it is evident that when Deleuze puts forward these kinds of arguments, he is still very much in the shadow of Bergson. This association is so strong that when Deleuze offers perhaps the most straightforward formulations of his thoughts on time (in *Cinema 2*), he does so in a set of "Commentaries on Bergson." If Bergson is Deleuze's "real master," as Badiou famously quipped, then we ought not be surprised by this (Badiou 38). But one of the exciting things about reading Deleuze is that his text never answers to just a single "master." There is certainly a Bergson-Deleuze who dominates in *Bergsonism, Difference and Repetition*, and the *Cinema* volumes. But Bergson is never mentioned in the theory of time and eternity developed in the pages of *Logic of Sense*, nor does he figure into the account of the "meanwhile" from *What Is Philosophy?* More to the point, the conceptions in those books make no explicit reference to pure memory or the pure past.

This raises two possibilities. First, it might suggest that Deleuze is presupposing the theory of the pure past in the later works and expecting his readers to fill in the blanks. If this is true, it would imply either that the pure past is an inessential component of time, or that the conceptions of time developed in those books are incomplete. In the former case, we obviously would not want to identify the pure past with eternity, since *Logic of Sense* argues for the eternal past-future. And the latter supposition would contradict Deleuze's claims in *Logic of Sense* to be offering, not one, but two theories of time, each of which is adequate to time as a whole. Whatever the case, it seems clear that we would not be doing Deleuze any favours by

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77 In chapters one and four of C1, and chapters three and five of C2.
78 Bergson is mentioned once in *Logic of Sense* in connection to sense. *Proust and Signs* is intermediate in this regard. Deleuze sets Proust against Bergson, but he does invoke his theory of the pure past to explain Proustian essences.
79 See LS 5, for example: time "must be grasped twice, in two complementary though mutually exclusive fashions."
automatically reading Bergson-Deleuze\textsuperscript{80} into \textit{Logic of Sense} and \textit{What Is Philosophy}?

This raises the second possibility, which is that Deleuze thought time and eternity could be explained without the axiom that the entire past co-exists with the present. I find this possibility more appealing for a number of reasons. First, adopting a different conception allows us to sidestep the torturous task of trying to assimilate all these books to each other, or forcing them to say the same thing. It therefore accords better with the immanent designs of Deleuze's individual texts. Second, some might say that the theory of an eternal, virtual past conflicts with modern physics; such a critic might cite Bergson’s public debates with Albert Einstein on the nature of time, where Einstein dismissed “the time of the philosophers” as a fiction.\textsuperscript{81} I am wholly unqualified to enter into this debate, though others have defended Bergson against Einstein.\textsuperscript{82}

Along more philosophical lines, we could adduce a third reason: moving away from the pure past does not commit us to Bergson's peculiar denigration of spatiality. I think, following Deleuze, that Bergson was correct to argue that time cannot be thought on the model of space. But extensive space, or the space in which we interact with material, actual things, may originate through its own distinctive virtual processes. This is one of the points where Deleuze moves beyond Bergson’s limits; in \textit{Difference and Repetition}, he develops a theory of intensive space as pure depth via a critique of Bergson.\textsuperscript{83} At the same time, we still find Deleuze making the claim

\textsuperscript{80} It could be justly objected that I have not examined Bergson’s later philosophy of time, where he complements the theory of the pure past with the more future-oriented \textit{Élan vital} (first elaborated in \textit{Creative Evolution}). In this sense, I am dismissing Bergson too hastily. It is true that Bergson’s texts offer us many resources that I am not using here. However, as we will see, Deleuze himself must have been dissatisfied with Bergson’s theory of the future. For when Deleuze develops his own concept of the future, he uses Nietzsche, Freud, Kant, and Hölderlin rather than Bergson. Regardless, Bergson’s career provides no shortage of inspiration for philosophers of time; despite my criticisms here, I draw on other aspects of his work in chapter five.

\textsuperscript{81} See Jimena Canales’ \textit{The Physicist and the Philosopher} for an overview of this debate and its legacy.

\textsuperscript{82} See Lampert, \textit{Simultaneity and Delay}, chapter six.

\textsuperscript{83} See Ables, "The Anticipations of Sensation.”
that time, not space, is the pure form of difference. But as Lampert has suggested, there is no more reason *prima facie* to define time rather than space as the paradigm of difference (*Philosophy of History* 13). It is thus important to find a way of understanding how time and eternity, like space, fit into the processes of the cosmos rather than acting as their engine.

A fourth reason concerns the alleged passage of the present. We recall that Deleuze's paradoxical proof for the existence of the pure past demonstrated that the present must already be past in order to pass. As Lampert has suggested, however, this argument seems better designed to obviate the need for postulating passage at all than to explain why it happens.\(^84\) If past and present eternally co-exist, the latter never needs to become the former. Both simply are, eternally and together. But if the present does not pass, then Deleuze's core argument falls apart, since it takes the passing of the present as its basic premise. This may help to explain why Deleuze's description of the fundamental operation of time was at odds with what he called time’s fundamental position. The present may be split in two directions, but it cannot be split from the past and not split from the past simultaneously. This paradox will come back to haunt us later.

### 4.2 Horkheimer and the spectre of immortality

A fifth and final set of reasons for shifting the focus away from Bergson can be drawn from a piercing critique of the thinker published in 1934 by critical theorist Max Horkheimer.\(^85\) Horkheimer does not set out to refute Bergson, exactly, but rather to argue that his theory of pure memory (which would be assimilated to the broader temporal concept of duration in later works) is a retrogressive attempt to preserve all the old comforting myths of metaphysics under new

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\(^84\) Lampert, *Philosophy of History* 46. Deleuze claims the co-existence of past and present "gives us the reason for the passing of the present" (81).

\(^85\) Titled "On Bergson's metaphysics of time."
Bergson claims to introduce time and real change into metaphysics, Horkheimer argues, but he does not acknowledge the historical or cultural situatedness of his own philosophy, instead engaging in a kind of pre-critical speculation. The "eternal time" that Bergson calls duration is in fact "nothing other than a bad formulation for the dimension of time as it plays a role in physical observation" (Horkheimer 13–14). Conversely, Bergson's understanding of physical time is built on another false analogy, this time between the interior life of the person and the "spiritual interior of the world": "By making up a story about a divine current of experience as absolute being, Bergson must also deny time" (Horkheimer 13). And in denying time, he is implicitly denying the struggles, victories, defeats, and failures of human beings, whose lot is to be stuck in history. Thus, for example, the "superstition that everything which is past also exists in the present" suppresses the historian's simultaneous struggles to preserve history (often against real threats, like invasions or repressive rulers) and to seek lines of flight in liberating historical currents (Horkheimer 18).

I consider this denigration of the work of the historian to be the most significant flaw Horkheimer finds in Bergson’s work, and I will return to this point. But Horkheimer's most dramatic charge against Bergson is that his eternity reveals itself to be another futile grasp at immortality. In response to a Bergsonian passage invoking an “eternity of life” in which “we live and move,” Horkheimer writes that “Bergson wants to conjure away the fact of death by means of cant about an eternal reality with which we could unite ourselves” (Horkheimer 14). In this

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86 See especially the concluding sections of chapter three.
87 For context, here is the passage from The Creative Mind to which Horkheimer is responding: "Indeed, the more we acquire the habit of conceiving and perceiving all things sub specie durationis, the deeper we sink into real duration. And the deeper we sink into it, the more we orientate ourselves toward the principle, though it be transcendent, in which we participate, and which is not an eternity of immutability but an eternity of life: how could we live and move in it otherwise? In ea vivimus et movemur et sumus" (120–121).
sense, Bergson’s philosophy has the same function as religion: consoling humans about the brute fact of our mortality by promising another world. Against Bergson, Horkheimer insists on the finitude of human existence: "Reality is neither unitary nor eternal. Humans suffer and die for themselves and in different circumstances" (Horkheimer 15).

To be sure, Horkheimer offers little beyond an *ad hominem* attack here. But his charge is supported by Bergson’s own comments on immortality. In a 1913 address at Harvard University, Bergson said the following:

> You cannot prove immortality, but you do not have to in order to be justified in believing it. Indeed, the burden of proof is on the doubter. Nobody can prove that something will never come to an end; such an attempt would be absurd…But if we can prove that the role of the brain is to fix the attention of the mind on matter and that by far the greater part of mental life is independent of the human brain, then we have proved the likelihood of survival.  

Bergson says it would be absurd to attempt to prove something will never come to an end. Of course, classical philosophers from Plato to Spinoza have offered formal proofs of the immortality of the soul. These arguments may or may not have been valid, but it is not clear why they are absurd. (Plato would have thought it absurd to prove something real *can* come to an end.) Certainly, one could prefer an attempt at formal proof to Bergson’s argument. Bergson’s logic—immortality is likely if the pure past is real, and if it is likely, we are justified in believing it—may have more substance than evangelical appeals to pure faith, but it is based on the same fallacious appeal to ignorance: the impossibility of demonstrating the non-existence of an entity does not itself support the existence of that entity.

It seems strange, moreover, to speak about immortality being more and less likely. But we find, probably not coincidentally, that Deleuze uses similar language in other discussion of immortality. When discussing essences in *Proust and Signs*, for example, Deleuze says the

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88 Recorded in the *Cambridge Sentinel* (vol. 10, no. 22, 29 Mar. 1913).
following: “They die if we die, but if they are eternal, we are immortal in some fashion. They therefore make death less likely” (PS 41–42). The Bergsonian influence is clear, but I think claims like this also must be read in the light of Spinoza’s influence on Deleuze. Perhaps “likelihood” is an ontological notion here, not an epistemological one. That is, Deleuze is not saying that immortality might be real, but we cannot know for sure. He is saying that immortality is achievable; to the extent that we live or think a certain way, we are making ourselves more likely to be eternal. This is a direct extension of proposition 39 in Book 5 of Spinoza’s Ethics: he whose body is capable of the most activity will thereby have a mind whereof the greatest part is eternal.89 In A Thousand Plateaus, Deleuze and Guattari ask, “How do you make yourself a body without organs?” (ATP 165). But through his work on Spinoza, Proust and Bergson, Deleuze formulates a different question: “How do you make yourself more likely to be eternal?”

As in Bergson, such thinking is directly tied to the pure past. In Deleuze, too, we find passages that betray an affinity for a universal "inorganic life" in which everything unites and lives on (ATP 550). This is the Deleuze for whom the past is "salvation."90 Even Difference and Repetition trumpets the glory of "metempsychosis," wherein "one life may replay another at a different level, as if the philosopher and the pig, the criminal and the saint, played out the same past at different levels of a gigantic cone" (DR 83). Such passages certainly sound more mystical than they need to: Deleuze does not really believe in the transmigration of souls. But what he is arguing for—the eternality of the pure, all-inclusive, virtual past—sounds very much like the

89 I should note that Spinoza’s theory of immortality is a particularly contentious topic in work on the Ethics; many interpret Spinoza to be arguing for a kind of eternity of the soul within life, rather than an immortality after death. (See, for example, Nadler’s “Eternity and Immortality in Spinoza’s Ethics." ) By extension, one could attribute such a view to Deleuze. The interpretation of Deleuze I defend in this dissertation avoids attributing either kind of immortality to the subject, for it is only the event that is eternal.

90 "Salvation can come only from the other side, from the side of the pasts which are preserved” (C2 91). This is in the context of a discussion of Fellini.
kind of philosophical "consolation" that Horkheimer heaps such scorn on.91

Whether it is earned or automatic, universal or selective, immortality must be rejected all
the same by the thinker of immanence. Immanence is a rejection of the transcendent; what
symbolizes the transcendent better than a life beyond life? The vitalist temporality of Bergson
and Bergson-Deleuze does not satisfactorily account for the finitude, and the loneliness, of
mortal existence. Human beings do suffer and die for themselves, and in different circumstances.
Memory has limits, and they are strict ones. We cannot leap into the past any more than we can
leap into the Big Bang: we are its aftereffects.

Does that mean that a Deleuzian theory of eternity is doomed from the outset?
Horkheimer would certainly say so: "There is no metaphysics of time: this is rather a beginning
full of contradictions in itself" (Horkheimer 13). But we need not follow him this far, for the
metaphysics of time is alive and well. What we need is to find a concept of eternity that does not
smuggle back into philosophy the perennial longing for immortality. This is harder than it seems,
even within Deleuze's preferred constellation of thinkers. Deleuze tells us that Spinoza goes
further than any other thinker in his effort to expunge all vestiges of transcendence (WP 60). Yet
Spinoza's Ethics abandons immanence in its final pages in order to argue for the eternity of the
soul. Proust flatly posits a connection between the eternity of art and the immortality of the
soul.92 And Deleuze presents Bergson as a philosopher of immanence, but what we have found in
Bergson is a traditional longing for an “eternity of life” (The Creative Mind 122). Can we avoid
this perennially tempting snare?

I believe it is possible, and that Deleuze's texts give us the resources to construct such a

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91 It is worth noting that one of the great philosophical texts on eternity is Boethius' Consolations of Philosophy.
92 Proust finds a link between "the question of the reality of Art, [and] the question of the reality of the soul's
Eternity" (Time Regained 374, author's emphasis).
theory. However sympathetic Deleuze might be to Bergson, Spinoza, and Proust in his commentaries on those thinkers, nothing in Deleuze implies the transcendence of the soul. But Deleuze is not quite a philosopher of finitude either. Deleuze offers an alternative to the duality of infinitude and finitude: *immanence*. A theory of eternity without immortality is an immanent theory of eternity. And an immanent theory of eternity, on my reading, is a theory of the repetition of events. This theory requires no commitments to the existence of the soul, or to any kind of immortality. The actor is part of what makes events eternal, because the actor counter-actualizes the event that manifests in her world. But the actor is not eternal; she dies when her time comes. Only the event, in its eternal truth, escapes its time.
Chapter Three: The Eternal Present

1. Introduction

In the last chapter, I discussed Deleuze’s theory of the pure past. I considered the idea that eternity should be identified with this virtual past, and ultimately rejected this identification. In this chapter and the next, I want to examine the role of the present in a Deleuzian theory of eternity. This chapter will discuss the eternal present, while the next will focus on the universal present. Generally speaking, the eternal present is an explanation for the subjective dimension of the present—the sense in which “I am myself time,” as Merleau-Ponty puts it 93—while the universal present accounts for the objective present of the world in which subjects co-exist, cooperate, and collide.

In the eternal present, everything is gathered into the "now." In the universal present, there is something irreducible to presence: an objective past-future that cannot be contained in any "now." Although there are good reasons to think the eternal present is eternity (as there were with the pure past), I will argue that eternity cannot be identified with the present. The discussion of the universal present, however, will explain the present's role in the argument of this dissertation: namely, to be a relay point for the counter-actualization of the event.

I should note that neither the eternal present nor the universal present, in the senses I give those concepts here, are clearly articulated in Deleuze’s work. This chapter marks the point at which I move from a strict exegesis and critique of Deleuze to a more constructive approach: supplementing Deleuze’s texts with ideas meant to solve problems in those texts. Naturally, Deleuze should not be held responsible if these ideas are found lacking.

93 Phenomenology of Perception 481.
1.1 Subjective and objective presents

Why do I divide my discussion of the present into two chapters? Why distinguish two senses of the present that are not explicitly opposed (or clearly defined) in Deleuze? It is because I believe that any contemporary philosophy of eternity has to navigate between subjective and objective poles. At one extreme, we find what might be called temporal objectivists. This position would be grounded in a rejection of any special relation between time and the subject. If eternity has any meaning for the objectivist, it signifies the unthinkable excess of time over the paltry span of a human life. For the objectivist, time has been around as long as the cosmos, and it is no more than idealistic hubris to think human beings contribute anything special to time. Temporal objectivism is perhaps the dominant view of time among modern Westerners and could be associated with a kind of baseline scientific realism: time is not me, time is out there. Among continental philosophers, Quentin Meillassoux is undoubtedly the most ardent defender of temporal objectivism.94

Deleuze does think there is something objective beyond the subjective synthesis of time. However, his position differs from basic temporal objectivism by describing this objective element in metaphysical rather than physical terms. For Deleuze, the objective element is the event: “An ideal event…is an objective entity” (DR 156). To be sure, the ideal or virtual event is not objective in the sense we think of rocks and gravity as objective. It is not an object of natural science. But as it was described in the last two chapters, virtuality is certainly objective in the sense that it is, eternally, in itself. It is, further, a metaphysical source of the events that come to shape the world. It is because the event is objective in this sense that the past and future cannot be reduced to the present.

94 See After Finitude, especially chapter one. What I am calling temporal subjectivism is what Meillassoux calls “correlationism.”
At the other pole is the subjective extreme first articulated by St. Augustine and reawakened in phenomenology: “I am myself time” (Merleau-Ponty 481). There is not a past, present and future; there is the present in which I am, and in which I also find the past and future: “A present of things past, a present of things present, a present of things future” (Augustine 19). Eternity means one of two things on this view. It either means that it is always now forever, or it refers to the unlimited scope of my consciousness of time—the fact that I can draw everything past and future into the now.

The concept of the eternal present combines these claims. The present is eternal because nothing exists outside the present: tautological as it sounds, the time is always now. What appear to be past and future are, on this view, really just parts of a larger present, which can (in some of Deleuze’s texts, at least) be contracted without limit. The eternal present, then, would be the whole duration of the universe contracted into the "now." Within such a "divine" present, as Deleuze says, "everything is simultaneous" (LS 163). The task of this chapter will be to determine whether this claim is plausible. I will argue that it is plausible on a very limited interpretation: the past and future exist simultaneously in the present only to the extent they are folded up in signs, which I will define as frozen contractions.

I will develop my argument that past and future are folded up in present signs by reference to the Deleuzian concept of complication. Complication, which Deleuze defines as the unity of a multiplicity, folds different presents into one another, so that we can “explicate” pasts and futures that are “implicated” in the present. In Proust and Signs, Deleuze explains explication, implication, and complication—the “categories of immanence” (SEP 175)— in terms of essence, but I will argue that his presentation of essences is too idealistic. Instead, I will argue that the complicated state of time can be adequately explicated in terms of events and
signs. Eternity is not eternality, but the eternality of the eternal present is the network of temporal relations between events that are expressed in presently existing signs. The difference between eternity and eternality is that these signs (and subjective memories) are all that sustain the eternal present, while eternity refers to presence only insofar as it escapes or exceeds presence.

2. The present in Deleuze

To understand the eternal present, we need to understand how Deleuze describes the present. As Deleuze repeatedly says, the present is all that exists (DR 76; LS 4, 162). Whatever *is*, is in time. In Deleuze’s philosophy of time, subjectivity always implies presence. The subjectivity of time is the subject’s contraction of past and future into the present: time is a gathering into presence. This gives subjectivity its full phenomenological scope. But there are non-phenomenological features in Deleuze’s description of the present: organic habits, and a peculiar conception of God.

2.1 From the living present to the eternal present

In *Difference and Repetition*, the first synthesis of the present is associated with habit.95 I discuss this synthesis at length in chapter five. Briefly, what Deleuze calls habit refers to the cyclical process whereby organisms satisfy needs and desires while compensating for the fatigue that arises from that effort. It is a way of truly "living in the present" by making the rest of time answer to the needs of the present. Deleuze thus adopts a phenomenological model of protention and retention (i.e., anticipation and recollection) to account for the temporality of habit: "The present does not have to go outside itself in order to pass from past to future" (DR 71). In

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95 See DR 70–79. I discussed the general structure of the three syntheses in chapter two.
drawing everything outside itself into a common field of presence, the present establishes the continuity of homogenized time. But this organic present is too bound to the objects of its needs for its temporality to be universalizable across all of time: "We could no doubt conceive of a perpetual present, a present which is coextensive with time...But such a present is not physically possible" (DR 76).

Deleuze has no such reservations in Logic of Sense. In this book, he introduces his own version of the eternal present, albeit briefly and enigmatically. In Logic of Sense, the eternal present is precisely a present which is coextensive with time. Specifically, it is the maximal extension of chronos.

In its basic form, chronos is just the living present described in Difference and Repetition. When someone asks what time it is, the answer is always chronos. Only the present exists in time, and time is filled by the present (LS 162). But this is a variable present. "Now" can refer to the present of my phone call, which overlaps with the longer present of writing this chapter. But this longer present includes within itself the smaller, recurring present of Purple Rain, which loops in the background. We can mark off presents at increasingly wide intervals: the present of this winter, or this presidential administration, or this century. For Deleuze, it is not enough to extend this present to the limits of our memories, or even our lives. The present extends as far as speculation, imagination, prediction, and anticipation can take us, which means that it embraces the entire happening of the cosmos from beginning to end (LS 150). As Deleuze puts it, the "eternal present" (LS 150) "complicates or comprehends the future and the past" (LS 162; author's emphasis). In this context, Deleuze makes his most audacious claim: within the complication of the eternal present, "everything is simultaneous" (LS 163).

96 DR 75: "There is no continuity apart from habit."
If the present encompasses the entire duration of the universe, then past and future can only be defined as dimensions of the present. Deleuze expresses this relation in different ways: the present "gathers together or absorbs the past and future," it "contracts in itself the past and future" (LS 5, 61). When he speaks of contraction, Deleuze does not mean that the past and future already subsist (as the pure past would) and the present synthesizes them into a temporal unity. His point is that what I refer to as past or future is really just part of a larger present: "There is always a more vast present which absorbs the past and future" (LS 162). Past and future are thus defined relative to the present, which means in turn that presents are defined relative to each other.

Interestingly, Deleuze also refers to this eternal present as a "divine" present (LS 163). Presents may be relative to the past and future for the mortal beings stuck inside them, but "what men grasp as past and future, God lives in its eternal present" (LS 150). It is surprising at any level to find Deleuze talking about God and God's divine time. But this is a peculiar God. In the classical tradition of thinkers like Augustine and Boethius, God "lives" in an eternal present because he is omniscient, and therefore has an immediate awareness of past, present, and future all at once. On this theory, if the greatest present that includes all others is "divine," it is because chronos would become a whole only in the eyes of a God who can comprehend, and thus contract, the whole of time. But this is not Deleuze’s argument. For Deleuze, God does not contract the whole of time, He is the whole: "The God is Chronos: the divine present is the circle in its entirety, whereas past and future are dimensions relative to a particular segment of the circle which leaves the rest outside" (LS 150).

In general, Deleuze’s “God” does not refer to a supernatural agent or all-knowing being;

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97 See the Confessions of Augustine, book 11: "Your years are one day, and Your day is not daily, but today; because Your today yields not with tomorrow, for neither does it follow yesterday. Your today is eternity."
it is, rather, a term for the “whole of reality” (LS 295). As detailed in Logic of Sense, what Deleuze calls God is shorthand for a complex constellation of co-implicated identities: God is the identity of world, self, bodies, and language (LS 292). While developing his interpretation of the Kantian Idea, Deleuze argues that “God defined by the sum total of all possibility, insofar as this sum constitutes an 'originary' material or the whole of reality. The reality of each thing 'is derived' from it: it rests in effect on the limitation of this totality” (LS 295–296). This is exactly how Deleuze describes chronos: the totality of time from beginning to end encompasses the "originary material," and every particular or “relative” chronos is a "limitation" of this reality (LS 162). To Deleuze's list of divine identities, we should therefore add the identity of the totality of time as eternal or divine present.

2.2 The problem of simultaneity

I have been examining the subjective pole of Deleuze’s concept of time. It is at this pole that we found the eternal present introduced. But how should we understand this concept? What does Deleuze mean when he says that everything is simultaneous in the divine or eternal present? Deleuze gives us phenomenological and theological answers, but neither seems adequate.

It is easy to say that the phenomenological view of the present tends toward a kind of eternity insofar as it draws together past and future time into the perpetual presence of subjectivity. But the first synthesis in Difference and Repetition is as much an organic synthesis as a phenomenological one: “Perceptual syntheses refer back to organic syntheses…they refer back to a primary sensibility that we are” (DR 73). Here, subjective contractions—protention and retention—are rooted in the objective dispersed-ness of an organism caught in cycles of need-fulfillment and fatigue. I “retain” the coffee I drank this morning because the coffee
affected my cycles of awareness, and even if the coffee is not still physically active, I am still playing out that cycle it entered into: I might be more tired now than if I had not had coffee. I am not sure if this account is correct, but relative to many traditional phenomenological theories, it does have the virtue of situating subjective time around an actual, embodied existent (instead of, e.g., a Cartesian ego or transcendental subject). Yet, it is this organic base that prompted Deleuze’s claim in *Difference and Repetition* that “a present coextensive with time…is not physically possible” (DR 86).

What changes between this work and *Logic of Sense*? What made Deleuze think eternal chronos was “possible,” when he did not think so before? Clearly, eternal chronos must be more than just the mental contraction of the remembered past and expected future into the perceived present. Deleuze links chronos to causality, for example, and suggests that the eternal or maximal present corresponds to the objective chain of causes in the cosmos from beginning to end (LS 163). Surely, no subject could contract such a timespan. Deleuze brings God into the equation, but if my interpretation is right, “God” is just a name for the objective correlate of the eternal present, i.e., the whole cosmic timespan synthesized into a sum total of reality. (“The God is chronos” (LS 150).) The transcendent God of Augustine would be a possible solution to the question of how everything is simultaneous in the eternal present. But this kind of transcendent God has no basis in Deleuze’s thought.

What is it that effectuates the gathering-into-simultaneity within eternal chronos? One gets the sense that Deleuze *does* want to posit a kind of eternal time-consciousness, only without calling it either “God” or “consciousness.” Instead, he might call it an “impersonal transcendental field, not having the form of synthetic personal consciousness or a subjective identity” (LS 99). Just as the past preserves itself in itself, this argument might go, the eternal
present is a kind of auto-contraction of natural time within this transcendental field. This would give us identity across time, but not “subjective identity.” This answer quickly falls apart, however, for it is clear in the text that the transcendental field operates in accordance with the second reading of time—aion, or eternity—rather than chronos.98

Ultimately, I do not think Deleuze gives us a satisfactory explanation of the eternal present in *Logic of Sense*. Chronos is the totality of succession, but if it is a totality, what holds it together? The auto-contraction of eternal chronos, in turn, throws into question Deleuze’s theory of the organic present in *Difference and Repetition*. However, I have left one conceptual resource untapped. In his most concise summary of eternal chronos, Deleuze introduces complication:

There is always a more vast present which absorbs the past and the future…God experiences as present that which for me is future or past, since I live inside more limited presents. Chronos is an encasement, a coiling up of relative presents, with God as the extreme circle or the external envelope. Inspired by the Stoics, Boethius99 said that the divine present *complicates* or comprehends the future and the past. (LS 162, author’s emphasis)

Is it, perhaps, through the relation of complication that we can understand the consistency of chronos, and the simultaneity of its contents? These concepts will also be linked two decades later in *Cinema 2*, where Deleuze invokes Augustine to describe an event’s present: “A present of the future, a present of the present and a present of the past, all *implicated* in the event, rolled up in the event, and thus *simultaneous* and inexplicable” (C2 100, my emphasis). The relevant discussion in *Cinema 2* is about so-called “peaks of present,” which are opposed to virtual sheets of past. This is a very difficult text that would introduce more problems than solutions for us at this point. But there is a consistent textual association between complication and the simultaneity

98 This discussion is extremely complex; see LS 98–108. Aion is identified as the domain of singularities. Deleuze takes this idea of an impersonal transcendental field from Sartre’s *The Transcendence of the Ego*.

99 Deleuze cites Boethius’ *Consolations of Philosophy*: “Therefore, whatever is subject to the condition of time...is such that it cannot rightly be thought eternal. For it does not comprehend and include the whole of infinite life all at once, since it does not embrace the future that is to come” (115).
of the past-future within the present. Unfortunately, neither *Logic of Sense* nor *Cinema* thematize complication. In the next section, then, I will begin by analyzing the concept of complication. This concept will lead us toward a new understanding of the eternal present that is both more modest and, I think, more plausible than the divine chronos of *Logic of Sense*.

3. The complicated state of time

Our problem is to determine how, or whether, everything can be simultaneous in the eternal present. How can different times be in the same time? The last section suggested that we need more than the contractions of phenomenology or theology to resolve this problem: we need a way for these cross-temporal identities to be fixed in time, so they cannot be explained away as artifacts of the subjective synthesis which merely brings them to co-awareness, rather than genuine identity. My argument will be that real pasts and futures are folded up in present signs. If subjects contract time, signs are frozen contractions. By *explicating* the meanings that are *implicated* in signs, we unfold the complicated state of time as a whole.

Complication, or what I will call the eternality of the present, refers to the way signs fold together distant presents across their chronological separation. Such foldings are made possible by the coexistence of the past and present; for us to access this coexistent time, however, there must be some existent expression of the event which gives the past a foothold in the actual. This is what signs are for. Signs do not preserve the past, for the past preserves itself in itself. But signs fold up the past for preservation, and where its signs are lost, the event is lost for all presents. If time is not regained through counter-actualization, we must call it lost time. This, then, is the difference between the eternal present and eternity: everything in the eternal present must be accessible through signs or memories, while events launched into eternity subsist for
themselves in the virtual past-future that escapes all presence.

### 3.1 Complication

To begin with, I want to introduce complication, explication, and implication at a very abstract level, since this is how Deleuze usually discusses them. The subsequent sections on signs are focused on testing concrete examples of complication. Finally, I will show how Deleuze’s ideas about complication can be combined with his ideas about the present to generate a new conception of the eternal present.

In his work on Spinoza, Deleuze argues that the history of philosophy from Plato to late Neoplatonism represents a progression from an emanative conception of genesis to an expressive conception articulated in the trinity of explication, implication and complication. If emanation suggests a metaphysical cause producing something that proceeds out of the cause and does not return (like sunlight from the sun), expression suggests the product or effect remaining in the cause even as it is expressed (like a Jack in the Box). In Deleuze’s thought, the “pure” or virtual event is both the cause and, when it is actualized in states of affairs, the effect. If immanence is ultimately immanence to itself, as Deleuze insists, then the dual movement of the event (actualization and counter-actualization) is the immanent genesis of the world.

Deleuze therefore grants these categories of immanent thought a privileged place throughout his philosophical career. In his book on Leibniz, he writes: "Explication-implication-complication form the triad of the fold, following the variations of the relation of the One-Multiple" (F 25). In *Difference and Repetition*: "The trinity complication-explication-implication accounts for the totality of the system—in other words, the chaos which contains all, the

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100 See SEP 169–190, which is surely one of the most important texts in Deleuze's corpus.
divergent series which lead out and back in, and the differenciator which relates them one to another" (DR 151). And in *Proust and Signs*, complication is employed to define a certain sense of eternity (though not, as we will see, the sense I ultimately defend).

As with the other categories of immanence, explication and implication, complication has its roots in the Latin root *pli*, which means to fold, lay, twist, or braid.\(^\text{101}\) (In English, a “plica” is a fold.)\(^\text{102}\) This root evolved so that it can now be used as noun, verb, or adjective. Deleuze will make use of these various senses in his writing: he will sometimes speak of complication as a certain relation between terms, sometimes as a property of terms, and sometimes to designate an operation of one term on another. With relation to all its possible meanings, Deleuze prefers to translate the stem in accordance with its direct French descendent, "pli," which also means "fold" or "to fold." Thus, to explicate is to unfold, and an explication is an unfolding; what is implicated is folded up within something else; complication refers to what is folded together.\(^\text{103}\) The virtual event is the event folded up; the actualization of the event is its explication; the explicated event implicates its virtual source insofar as its eternal truth allows us to repeat that virtuality. Whatever the metaphor or figure, the basic sense of complication is the same: the holding together of what remains separate. When complication is taken as a substantive, it can be defined as the state of unity proper to a multiplicity (L 23).

Francois Zourabichvili distinguishes two senses and two usages of "complication" in Deleuze. The first sense refers to the aforementioned state: namely, the state of co-implication or reciprocal relatedness among terms. The relations between all the players at the start of the

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\(^{101}\) Lynd 213.

\(^{102}\) [https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/plica](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/plica)

\(^{103}\) Deleuze’s concept of the fold comes from Leibniz. He cites several sources, including Leibniz’s “Principles of Nature and Grace based on Reason” and the famous paragraph 63 in *Monadology*: “A soul can read within itself only what is represented there distinctly: it could never bring out all at once everything that is folded into it, because its folds go on to infinity.”

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American National Football League draft form a complicated state; all the different players’ strengths and weaknesses are defined relative to each other, by function of their differences, and not by derivation from a common origin.

The second sense refers to a synthetic ontological process: "More profoundly, 'complication' expresses the synthetic operation of two inverse movements from the virtual to the actual (explication, development, unrolling) and from the actual to the virtual (implication, enveloping, rolling-up)" (Zourabichvili, Philosophy of the Event 155). This sense would refer to the relation between the whole draft as organizing event and the actualized, distributed teams that draft produces. In the Neoplatonic language from which these terms originate, this process of complication "assures the immanence of the one [i.e., the NFL] in the multiple [each individual team] and of the multiple in the one" (Ibid.). Zourabichvili warns us against confusing this reciprocal implication of the one and the multiple with the reciprocal implication of the terms of the multiplicity. Ultimately, the "interdependent functioning" of these two processes "provides a complete picture of the world according to Deleuze" (156).

We can graft this claim onto Deleuze's theory of time as understood so far. In the last chapter, I followed Deleuze’s interpretation of Bergson down to the “fundamentals” of time. It was said that the fundamental position of time is the co-existence of past and present, while the fundamental operation of time was the splitting of the actual present from the virtual past. On this reading, the pure past is the simultaneous “one” to the multiple, actual presents succeeding each other in time. All presents are implicated in the pure past insofar as their actualized states of affairs are explications of virtual events, but also in the sense that (according to Deleuze) the pure past is the ground for the passage of the present as such. Complication, then, could be defined as the synthesis of the fundamental position and operation of time—i.e., the
simultaneous unity of all presents within the pure past, and their ordered differences from each other as actualized.

3.2 Critique of complication

This definition of complication seems like a tidy way to sum up Deleuze's philosophy of time. However, I now want to suggest that this account, which is based on the classical dialectic of the one and the multiple, takes us down the wrong track. Zourabichvili's reading certainly works for the Bergsonian or Spinozist image of Deleuze, according to which there is still a kind of substance, a “one,” and it is the task of the philosopher to explain difference in a way that reconciles it as part of a higher identity. But as Deleuze himself suggests in Proust and Signs, the logic of the one and the multiple breaks down when time is composed of “fragments that can no longer be restored, pieces that do not fit into the same puzzle, that do not belong to a preceding totality, that do not emanate from the same lost unity” (PS 113).

If we substitute “presents” for “fragments” here, then our problem is no longer how to understand the unity of all presents in the pure past, but rather to understand how they fail to cohere. I will argue in later chapters that they do not cohere because of the uncertainty of future resolutions to ongoing events. In other words, introducing the determinable element of the future into the present fragments the unity of the pure past because it introduces delays between ongoing events and their eventual outcomes. This delay proper to the future is what is missing from the preceding account of complication.

It will be said that this kind of argument fails to distinguish between what happens in time and time itself. It may be that events are structured by a delay, but this does not show that the present is not completed in the present, or that the next present is somehow deferred. My
response to this will be to develop, beginning in the next section, a theory of subsistence—that is, of the real presence of the past and future inside the present. The two corollaries of this demonstration are Deleuze’s argument for the co-existence of the past and present, and the arguments I will present in chapter six for the multiplicity of futures in the present. The ideal variability of the event, on the one hand, and its indeterminate power of repetition, on the other, only make sense if the present is really open onto the times outside itself. This opening is the line of flight through which the event’s eternity maintains itself outside of time.

We must therefore adopt a skeptical approach in reading what amounts to Deleuze’s most explicit definition of eternity, given in *Proust and Signs*. Complication, we recall, is the state of unity of a multiplicity. If we conceive the whole of time as a vast multiplicity—an assemblage of different perspectives on pasts, presents, and futures in all their complex relations, held together by nothing but the bare passage of everything through the present—then complication designates the co-existence of all these times and perspectives. It requires that we think a complicated state of time where all the dimensions of time are coiled up, fraught with a reciprocal tension, implicated in each other but waiting to be explicated or unfolded as they are put together in a development or interpretation. This is how Deleuze portrays eternity in the definition given in *Proust and Signs*.

Certain Neoplatonists used a profound word to designate the original state that precedes any development, any deployment, any ‘explication’: *complication*, which envelops the many in the one and affirms the unity of the multiple. Eternity did not seem to them the absence of change, nor even the extension of a limitless existence, but the complicated state of time itself. (PS 44–45)

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104 See chapter two, section 2d and chapter six, sections 2-3 respectively.
105 Deleuze gives a Latin quotation in this paragraph but offers no hints as to where it comes from. Later, in *Logic of Sense*, he cites Boethius for his temporal usage of the term. In SEP, Deleuze also mentions “Boethius’ commentators, notably in the twelfth-century School of Chartres” (SEP 376–377). He says that Nicholas of Cusa and Bruno gave the categories of immanence “a rigorous philosophical character” (SEP 377). Meister Eckhart and Bonaventure are also mentioned.
The first thing to note about this definition is that it synthesizes both senses of complication: the sense of complication as a duality of movements, and a state of things. Second, it is appropriate for Deleuze to cite the Neoplatonic dialectic of the one and multiple in *Proust and Signs*, since that work is explicitly devoted to developing a new conception of unity through the categories of what Deleuze calls “Proust’s Platonism” (PS 4). But in the light of Deleuze’s later development, the final sentence here is most interesting. Eternity is a state of time; time is not one and multiple, time is multiplicity. This multiplicity is unified without being totalized: it is folded up, complicated, within itself. Points on the timeline do not just refer to their immediate pasts and futures; if we could follow lines of each present connecting to all the other presents related to that present, the lines would go all over the place. We will see in later sections that this is the picture of time developed in *Proust and Signs*.

The major problem with this definition, however, is that it defines the complicated state of time as an “original” state that “precedes” any explication. This *a priori* state of time is one in which the pieces all fit into the puzzle, and every present is safely contained in the pure past. If the pieces fit together in this image, it is because they all have a unique place in the “original” state of pre-explication, and they can return to their original place. The pure past thus becomes a kind of Spinozian substance: nothing ever really gets away from it.

What I want to show is that this is an unacceptable picture of Deleuzian time. If all the events of history were wrapped up together, just waiting to be deployed in their respective times, then freedom has no meaning, and the future is nothing but an as-yet-unseen present. In the mature Deleuze, events must be picked out of time *from within time*. As Deleuze argues in *Cinema 1*, the production of the new must be thought as something possible in any moment
whatsoever: “otherwise, time is no more than the image of eternity” (C1 7). Eternity does not precede the explication of presents in time. On the contrary, eternity must be constituted within the ongoing folding and weaving of beings in the world.

3.3 Signs

In what follows, I want to offer an alternative interpretation of complication that avoids the metaphysical quagmire of the one and the many. The interpretation is built around Deleuze's theory of signs. My argument will be that the past and future are folded up in signs. Signs are frozen contractions preserving subjective syntheses of time for the future. The complicated state of time is not an a priori togetherness of times; it is a shifting network of implications between signs whose meanings refer interpreters forward and backward on the timeline. All of these implications are “simultaneous” in the weak sense that the signs harboring them co-exist in the same time—the present. The eternal present is the total state of relations between times insofar as those relations are recorded in presently existing signs.

Deleuze once remarked in an interview that he thought his whole career “constituted a theory of signs and the event” (N 143). This focus on signs is not always obvious, but there is certainly no reason to overlook the semiotic dimension in his work. From Proust and Signs to the chapter of A Thousand Plateaus called “On Several Regimes of Signs” (ATP 111–148), the production and interpretation of signs was a constant concern for Deleuze. In Nietzsche and Philosophy, all bodies are signs of underlying relations between forces, and philosophy is conceived as a “symptomatology,” a diagnosis of the ontological senses of these material signs (NP 3). In A Thousand Plateaus, signs are treated with suspicion insofar as they totalize nomadic

106 See chapter five for my development of the "any-moment-whatever."
thought. In the *Cinema* volumes, Deleuze invents whole new categories for signs based on their temporal functions—lectosigns, noosigns, chronosigns and more (C2 334). All of these discussions are interesting (and the semiology of *Cinema* in particular is sorely neglected), but I want to focus here on what Deleuze says about signs and time in *Proust and Signs, Difference and Repetition*, and *Logic of Sense*.

### 3.3.1 The book of nature

Deleuze finds an unexpected temporal importance in the distinction between artificial and natural signs. He says natural signs are those which refer to past and future as parts of a greater extended present, while artificial signs refer to past and future as distinct dimensions of the present (DR 77). Both kinds of sign illustrate how contractions of the living present are folded up in signs, but only artificial signs can account for what Deleuze labels the *subsistence* of the past and future in the present. For Deleuze, subsistence requires that the objective past-future be internally differentiated from the present *within* the present—or, put slightly differently, that the past-future is itself an internal difference within presence. Subsistence means that there is something left out of chronos’ gathering—the virtual event, aion, eternity. It is only artificial signs that genuinely fold up subsistent past and future events in the present.

Deleuze’s account of natural signs is developed across two short, related passages in *Logic of Sense* and *Difference and Repetition*. In *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze contrasts the time of the pure event—the “meanwhile” that withdraws from its own actualization—with the present time of states of affairs.

The agonizing aspect of the pure event is that it is always and at the same time something which has just happened and something about to happen; never something which is happening...It is in this sense that events are *signs*. Sometimes the Stoics say that signs are always present, that they are signs of present things. One cannot *say* of someone...
mortally wounded that he has been wounded and that he will die, but that he is having
been wounded, and that he is due to die. (LS 63)

This is a difficult passage, and some of these ideas will be explored in the final chapter. Using
the concepts of chapter one, we can say that the eternal truth of an event leaves a trace in its
actualization. That is, within the state of affairs given to us in representation, there is some
element which exceeds what is represented. This is because we have an intuition of the subsistent
event: the virtual past-future of the pure event subsists in its own actualization in the present, but
as distinct from presence. The present image is doubled in the virtual past, and a complete
presentation of this image is delayed into the future. What Deleuze says here is that this lingering
virtuality, this past-future-ness of the event, is represented in presence as a sign. But Deleuze’s
comments on Stoicism and the wound are hard to parse: are signs “always present,” or are they
“signs of present things,” but not themselves present? What is the importance of the point about
tense?

The ideas here are more clearly stated in a sister passage in Difference and Repetition.
Deleuze reintroduces the Stoic thesis after giving a new definition of signs: “Signs as we have
defined them—as habitudes or contractions referring to one another—always belong to the
present” (DR 77). If we put this passage together with Deleuze’s earlier claim that events are
signs, then we could also define actualized events as complicated contractions. But what does it
mean to say that signs “belong” to the present? Deleuze gives the same example as in Logic of
Sense:

One of the great strengths of Stoicism lies in having shown that every sign is a sign of the
present, from the point of view of the passive synthesis in which past and future are
precisely only dimensions of the present itself. A scar is the sign not of a past wound but
of “the present fact of having been wounded”: it contracts all the instants which separate
us from it into a living present. (DR 77)

This tells us why “one cannot say of someone mortally wounded that he has been wounded and
that he will die” (LS 63). His being-wounded never ended, because the wound itself—through a somewhat mysterious process that Deleuze calls “contemplation”—contracts the whole span of its existence into a single living present.\textsuperscript{107} Wounds, like all natural signs, are “signs of the present, referring to the present in which they signify” (DR 77). But this present in which they signify is an extended present, trailing back through the living involvement of the organism with the objects of its needs. The scar as sign is, then, both a sign \textit{in} the present and a sign \textit{of} the present, but in different ways. It is a sign \textit{in} the present because the material mark on my body is right there right now, available to perception. It is a sign \textit{of} the present because the scar contracts its own duration, its own inorganic lifespan, and in this sense, it is a \textit{relation} between the present of the present and the present of the past. The scar is frozen in the present, but what is frozen is a cross-temporal relation: the scar is a frozen contraction.

It is hard to know just how to evaluate Deleuze’s quasi-organic explanation of the living present. It is one thing to argue that the temporal contractions phenomenology takes for granted depend on the organic contractions of need-fulfilling organisms. But Deleuze goes farther, arguing that every part of every organism is its own little contractor: “A soul must be attributed to the heart, to the muscles, nerves and cells, but a contemplative soul whose entire function is to contract…” (DR 74). It is not the subject who positions the scar within their own contraction of time: it is the scar itself that “contracts all the instants which \textit{separate us from it} into a living present” (DR 77, my emphasis). The history of the scar is folded up, \textit{implicated}, inside the scar itself. The scar \textit{explicates} the event in which it marked the body. A body is a complication of thousands of foldings, a non-totalizing unity of a thousand little souls.

\textsuperscript{107} “We are contemplations...The phenomenon of claiming is nothing but the contracting contemplation through which we affirm our right and our expectation in regard to that which we contract...We do not contemplate ourselves, but we exist only in contemplating—that is to say, in contracting that from which we come...Organisms awake to the sublime words of the third Ennead: all is contemplation!” (DR 74)
If this is “no mystical or barbarous hypothesis” (DR 86), it is because these mini-contractions are folded up as material signs—for example, wheat: “What we call wheat is a contraction of the earth and humidity” (DR 75). The wheat is the folding together of these two elements over a long duration. The present shape of a mountain range implicates thousands of years of formation and erosion, and geologists read these signs to explicate this history. And this applies as well to what Augustine called the present of the future: buds are signs of the flowers they unfold into. Natural history relies on reading the signs written into the book of nature. The complicated state of natural time would be like the dimension of meaning in nature’s book—not just the signs, but their relations, all the ways they can be put together, all the different interpretations of the text. But if the Medieval image of the book of nature gives it an order (a beginning in time, and of time, determined by the divine Author), what Deleuze describes would be a rhizomatic book—readable in any order, interpretable in every combination.  

This seems truer to the world as natural science describes it, as it is largely a matter of chance what signs we encounter at any given moment, and we do not have the luxury of a preface when trying to make sense of the world.

3.3.2 Artificial signs

However convincing Deleuze’s account of natural signs might be, it is not enough to demonstrate the subsistence of the past-future within the eternal present. The point of subsistence is that the past-future subsists in the present as something distinct from the present; it is a difference within the field of subjective identity. But as Deleuze explains immediately after the discussion of the scar in *Difference and Repetition*,

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108 On the classical idea of the book of nature, see Berkel and Vanderjagt. On Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizomatic model, see ATP 1–26.
Natural signs are signs founded upon passive synthesis; they are signs of the present, referring to the present in which they signify. Artificial signs, by contrast, are those which refer to the past or the future as distinct dimensions of the present, dimensions on which the present might in turn depend. (DR 77)

By this explanation, the relation of subsistence is only captured in artificial signs, which Deleuze defines as those signs whose production and interpretation requires active synthesis, i.e., “the passage from spontaneous imagination to the active faculties of reflective representation, memory and intelligence” (DR 77). This “passage” is necessary because, for Deleuze, memory and intelligence draw upon the virtual past-future. What Deleuze calls contemplation is no longer an issue here, which means that the kind of folding discussed in the last section no longer applies. Before, we could almost interpret the categories of immanence literally, as if time really was coiled up in natural signs. Now, we need to understand how explication, implication, and complication function with ideal meanings. This will, admittedly, require a more metaphorical interpretation of folding and frozenness.

Unfortunately, Deleuze makes this distinction between signs almost as an afterthought in Difference and Repetition. His follow-up paragraph brings in a new batch of concepts instead of explaining the subsistence captured in artificial signs. However, Proust and Signs does work this problem into its typology of signs. And though I have taken issue with its definition of eternity already, this book still gives us the best account of the complicated state of time, and how eternality is folded up in the present.

3.3.3 Lines of time

In Proust and Signs, signs incarnate serial rhythms of time passage. Deleuze articulates four “lines” of time, and links them to four different types of signs: worldly signs, signs of love, sensuous signs, and signs of art. The lines of time are lost time, wasted time, time regained at the
heart of lost time, and time regained.

Why lines? The root “pli” can be translated as “fold,” but also as “weave.”
So in Deleuze’s original definition, the complicated state of time is like a ball of yarn made of many threads; as we unwind one line of time, the whole ball is partially unrolled, while the unwound line tugs at the other lines it was wrapped up with. In the later Deleuze, however, there is no wound-up, complicated yarn ball that “precedes” the explication of its lines. There is an eternally ongoing weaving and unweaving, entangling and disentanglement: an eternal complicating as state of the present. At any given present, the state of entanglement is implicated in the relations between all the signs that exist: “Everything is implicated, everything is complicated, everything is sign, meaning, essence” (PS 92).

Metaphors aside, what we explicate is always a sign. Ideal meanings, concrete references, essences, or virtual events are implicated in different ways in different types of signs. Signs are "boxes out of which we take something of an entirely different shape, of an entirely different nature, an excessive content" (PS 116). Explication requires interpretation, and therefore the active faculties of memory (recalling past meanings) and intelligence (figuring out unknown meanings or creating new ones). But it also requires that we let the sign unfold or unwind itself across time: "This 'explication' is identified with the development of the sign in itself. This is why the Search is always temporal, and the truth always a truth of time" (PS 17). Since we are moving along in time, presents become implicated pasts, and futures become present, forcing us to revisit old interpretations. How many different interpretations of the text of the Bible have there been since its assemblage, or the canon of Shakespeare? Signs do not just mean what we

109 Hunter 559.
110 Deleuze says, for example, that worldly signs are mere stand-ins for worldly events (like a staged laugh stands in for a real expression of humor), but that the signs of art incarnate eternal essences. But he never gives any extended space to discussing the difference between, for example, meaning and reference as such.
want them to mean, but the way they are explicated changes as standards of meaning and values change over time.

The fundamental lines, Deleuze suggests, are lost time and time regained. Lost time refers to change as it manifests in temporal succession: "The passage of time, the annihilation of what was, the alteration of beings" (PS 17–18). It does not fundamentally refer to the past, but to present time either as it is in the process of passing away, or as it looks from the perspective of having passed. Deleuze says that lost time is revealed most clearly in signs of love, for "love unceasingly prepares its own disappearance, acts out its dissolution," silhouetting the presence of the beloved against the future possibility of their loss (PS 19). Other examples of lost time might include training for years only to fail to be admitted to a competition, or raising a child who becomes a serial killer. Even in situations where one does not so obviously “lose,” perhaps there is lost time: the happy parent of a promising, non-murderous child might still lament the years of his life that are being devoted to childrearing at the expense of other endeavors. A derivative form of lost time is what Deleuze calls time wasted. This time corresponds particularly to worldly (or conventional) signs. Deleuze says that worldly signs only lead us to other signs in an empty circle: standing for one’s national anthem has no effect on anything, but since it stands in for the resoluteness of a soldier fighting for her country, some people see a failure to stand as an unwillingness to defend one’s country (which, of course, is frequently correct).

Opposed to lost time is time regained, which takes two forms. First, we have time captured in an "image of eternity," which appears through the faculty of involuntary memory, and the medium of the sensuous sign. Sensuous signs are qualities of objects (particularly tastes and smells) that do not refer or mean in the conventional sense; instead, they raise associations within us, as when an old song on the radio makes me feel the way I felt when I was 17, or a
smell recalls a vacation to a different country. Second, there is the "veritable eternity" disclosed through the signs of art (PS 87). Signs of art can be words in the page of a novel, but also paint on a canvas, or background music in an elevator. The "image" of eternity afforded by the sensuous sign is the pivot point between the two dimensions, for that image is really the revelation of "time regained at the heart of lost time" (PS 46). But ultimately, the work of art is "the only means of regaining time lost" (Ibid.). For it bears "the highest signs," the immaterial signs of art, which, in transforming the other types of signs, weave together or complicate all their lines of time into "an absolute, original time" (Ibid.).

This distinction between sensuous signs and signs of art is the heart of the first half of *Proust and Signs*, and it is the key to achieving our goal of charting simultaneities across time. It is also, in its original formulation, hopelessly idealistic. Echoing Hegel’s *Aesthetics* more than Proust, Deleuze argues that the “highest” signs of art have their supreme place in the “hierarchy” of time because they are less "refractory to spirit" than the sensuous signs stuck in matter (PS 40). This “spiritual” account culminates in the formulation of a new concept of non-Platonic essences, which fold together subject and object in the “true unity” of “an immaterial sign and an entirely spiritual meaning” (Ibid.).

Unfortunately, Deleuze never returns to the link between time and essence in later work, and the concept accomplishes nothing in *Proust and Signs* that the theory of the pure past and the event cannot. This is not to say the concept of essence cannot illuminate Deleuze’s theory of time. But we will see that even Deleuze found it necessary to restate the theory of eternity in *Proust and Signs* in terms of the *event*, and not in terms of essence.
3.4 The same cookie?

Having surveyed Deleuze’s early theory of signs as a whole, I now want to focus on one specific argument from Proust and Signs that is repeated in Difference and Repetition. I will first reconstruct the argument as Deleuze presents it in the 1964 text, then offer an alternate version based on my futural interpretation of Deleuzian eternity.

Deleuze’s argument proceeds as an interpretation of what might be the most famous moment in Proust’s In Search of Lost Time. This episode comes early in the book, and is even a kind of inciting incident for the story, insofar as it takes Proust’s narrator (“Marcel”) back to his childhood. It also illustrates how involuntary memory (which I discussed last chapter in relation to Bergson) works. In the novel, the narrator comes home to Combray after some time away. His aunt offers him tea with a madeleine cookie. Marcel dips the cookie in the tea and takes a bite, whereupon he is suddenly filled with an accountable euphoria and a sense of having recovered a “precious essence.” Marcel spends a few moments searching for the thread of this involuntary memory, then remembers the association: his aunt gave him tea and madeleines on Sunday mornings when he was young. As soon as Marcel isolates this detail, it opens a whole floodgate of memories, as if the Combray of yore “sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea.” The language of folding (“sprang”) is unmistakable: of those foods that did not reawaken memories, Proust says they lost the “power of expansion” (PS 64).

Deleuze interprets this famous episode in terms of a transition from resemblance and

111 See Proust, Swann’s Way 60–65
112 Ibid., 60.
113 Ibid., 64–65.
contiguity to identity and difference. At the first level, there is a resemblance between the past flavor of the cookie and the present flavor. Perhaps cookies do not always taste exactly the same, but they resemble each other enough to be a constant type. There is also a “contiguity,” Deleuze says, between the context of the two sensations: Combray. The cookie’s flavor is like the flavor we tasted at Combray, and so “it revives Combray, where we tasted it the first time” (PS 56). But this is only the first level. At the second level, the resemblance of the flavors becomes an identity: “More profoundly, the resemblance refers us to a strict identity of a quality common to the two sensations or of a sensation common to the two moments, present and past” (PS 59). And at this level, contiguity becomes an “internalized difference”: “Combray rises up, not as it was experienced in contiguity with the past sensation, but in a splendor, with a ‘truth’ that it never had in reality” (PS 56). The Combray that springs out of Marcel’s cup of tea is not the actual city, or even the remembered city—it is the very “essence” of Combray, subsisting in a past that was never present (PS 61).

It is not clear that Proust’s text implies a “strict identity” (PS 59) of the present and past sensations, but this is what Deleuze commits to. In Proust and Signs, Deleuze gives a Bergsonian explanation of this point: “Combray rises up in a pure past, coexisting with the two presents, but out of their reach” (PS 61). In other words, the identity of the present and past sensations is explained by virtue of their co-existence with a third thing that is also, paradoxically, “out of their reach” (PS 60). Deleuze says that the “essential thing” is precisely this third party—

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114 “At the same time that the resemblance between the two moments is transcended in the direction of a more profound identity, the contiguity that belonged to the past moment is transcended in the direction of a more profound difference” (PS 60).

115 Deleuze’s use of “contiguity” (contiguïté) here is likely inspired by Hume’s Treatise of Human Nature. Hume was the subject of Deleuze’s first book, Empiricism and Subjectivity, written ten years before Proust and Signs. Hume identifies contiguity as one of the three principles governing the association of ideas, along with causality and resemblance.
Combray as an “internalized difference” between the past and present. This essential Combray is irreducible to both the present present and the past present, Deleuze says, because it is ultimately part of “the very being of the past in itself” (PS 61, author’s emphasis). In the terms of my interpretation, this essential Combray is the pure event “Combray,” while the present and past Combrays are actualizations of this pure virtuality. If my Deleuzian theory of eternity is correct, and this ideal Combray is really an “image of eternity,” then it must be an event.

But it feels wrong to say that Combray is an event. I have defined a Deleuzian event as a singular set of second-order relations that creates something new. The Combray Deleuze describes here fits part of this description: it is not just the network of relations holding together the actual city, but a set of emergent relations between past and present presentations of this network, singularized by being folded up in the tea and cookies. But does anything new come out of Marcel’s experience? This is the most important question for an event.

This is also, I believe, what is really at issue in Deleuze’s prioritization of signs of art over sensuous signs. As we saw above, Deleuze says that sensuous signs give us an “image of eternity,” while only signs of art reveal an authentic eternity. The image of eternity is the “essence” of Combray that rises up from the pure past in involuntary memory. But this image, Deleuze says, cannot be sustained for long. The “ineffable vision” of essence is made of the “mixture” of past and present (PS 63). But the present drags the past down into passage, and thus nonexistence:

The revelations of involuntary memory are extraordinarily brief and could not be extended without damage for us…Involuntary memory gives us eternity, but in such a manner that we do not have the strength to endure it for more than a moment nor the means to discover its nature. What it gives us is rather the instantaneous image of eternity. (PS 63)

This reference to organic limits on memory recalls the contemplative contractions of the
first synthesis. As we saw above, what made the living present of *Difference and Repetition* morph into the eternal present in *Logic of Sense* was the subtraction of these organic limitations from the account. We can apply the same logic here. Insofar as it is the virtual being-in-itself of the past that imposes itself upon us in involuntary memory, we experience the reality of passive synthesis—that is, cross-temporal contraction, simultaneity across time—in the glimpse of an essence. But for that contraction to be preserved or *frozen*, it must be folded up in something besides the subject. And this is what the signs of art are for: a work of art is an *event* that wraps up essences within it, and stores them for the future. In so doing, it retroactively determines them as part of its eternal event.

So, to round out our example, is Combray an eternal event? If it is only “time regained at the heart of lost time” (PS 46), then it gives nothing new to the future, and so it is not an event. But if a novelist were to take that Combray experience, “translate” it into signs, fold it up between two covers, and publish it for all the generations to come, then they would launch it into an authentic eternity. This, then, is why the signs of art have a privileged place. Not because they are the signs most “refractory to spirit,”\(^\text{116}\) or because they enable the immortality of the artist who creates them (as Proust says),\(^\text{117}\) or because they are “containers” for the right kinds of eternal essences\(^\text{118}\)—it is because signs of art are put together to make works of art, and a true work of art is always something *new*. Thus, Combray as essence may be a real overlap between the present and the pure, virtual past. But Combray as event, Combray in its eternity, requires a counter-actualization of the reality offered in that essence. This was the accomplishment of the actor, Marcel Proust, who made signs gathered under the name, *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

\(^{116}\) PS 40.
\(^{117}\) PS 44, citing volume 3, p. 374 of the Pléiade edition of the novel.
\(^{118}\) PS 116.
3.5 Complicated time

Deleuze’s early claim that only art gives us access to eternity is bold, but I do not think Deleuze was committed to this thesis in the long run, nor do I think it is supportable. There are many kinds of events, and most of them are not artistic. I think it would be difficult to defend a \textit{a priori} limits on the types of signs and expressions that allow events to persist in the eternal present. Nevertheless, Deleuze’s distinction between sensuous signs and the signs of art does provide a nice paradigm of the folding.

Let us review Deleuze’s argument. In the case of sensuous signs, my mind is led from a certain present sensation to a past sensation it resembles, and this resemblance becomes an identity when the two sensations are “telescoped” within a common essence (DR 85). An essence is a past that was never present, a Combray irreducible to the actual present or past cities. Here, the differential perspective emerges only fleetingly, and only given the right conditions. Art is different because it brings its own conditions along with it in the form of percepts and affects; these create their own little “world,” their own point of view or way of seeing.\footnote{119} The sensuous sign internalizes the context of a past sensation and represents it as an image, but the sign of art projects its own context and presents its individual figures upon this ground. In this way, the essence of the artwork constitutes "an irreducible viewpoint that signifies at once the birth of the world and the original character of a world" (PS 110).

This seems like a rather technical set of philosophical claims, but what Deleuze is suggesting cuts to the truth of what we mean when we talk about art. What is the difference between a simple report of experience that one might find in a surveyor's log or a piece of journalism, and a work of art about the same subjects? They might mention all the same things:

\footnote{119 See WP 163–200.}
not just people and objects, but smells, sounds, and other qualities. But the artist moves beyond the "what" to the "what it is like."

The "I" who narrates *In Search of Lost Time* is not Marcel Proust, or the reader, or an impersonal transcendental field; it is a *role* that anyone who reads the novel can assume. To assume this role is to be witness to a kind of "birth of time" in that one lives through all the lines of the narrator's life: his worldly indoctrination, his loves, the qualities that involuntarily open up his past, and his budding vocation—in short, the immanent series of events that constitute it as a life, as they are interwoven into the particular fabric of that life. It is all there in the book, folded up in signs, just waiting to be explicated by the reader. In this sense, the novel does not recount the time of the narrator's life, it *is* that time. Its unity is the unity of a lived temporal series, of a multiplicity of interwoven fragments that will never be pieced together or answer to a common form, but only feed into each other at certain crossing points. The time of the novel admits only of a messy, disjointed kind of unity, but this is just what allows it to interject itself into the messy lives of the readers who assume its viewpoint.

The simple rejoinder to this argument is that subjects already have worlds, points of view, and qualitatively distinct perspectives. Art may be unique in that it can package up the phenomenological or experiential dimensions of experience along with all the other dimensions: political, economic, scientific, and so on. But political, economic, and archaeological signs (along with all the other types) can also instigate eternal events when conditions are right for the actor that interprets them. The American system of government is folded up in the text of the Constitution, which served as a model and an inspiration to other would-be democracies in the 19th and 20th centuries. To use the Constitution as a model for a new government is *explicate* that document. A society whose citizens are forced to shovel around wheelbarrows full of money for
basic purchases due to inflation will come to see those pieces of paper as signs of their collapse, and claims to a more prosperous future. Here, the paper *implicates* its own material futility, its own unbearable weight, relative to the high values of currency in past and future. Finally, the archaeologist is concerned with unfolding all the lines of time—the societal customs and schedules, patterns of work distribution, agricultural cycles, and nuptial or burial rites—*complicated* in the scattered fragments of ruins.

Just as we can stumble across the ruins of an earlier civilization and weave together what might have been their lines of time, we are all tangled up in our own. We have our own personal “habits”—our own ways of contracting past and future—but most of us are also caught up in other lines, structured by other contractions, at work, school and in the community. Beyond this, the past and future stretch out beyond my present, my generation’s present, and humanity’s present. Complication is nothing other than the fact that all of these different lines of times, and all the different ways they could be or have been experienced, must be traced out of the present, because they are all tangled up in the signs of the present.

4. Objections and responses

My goal in this chapter has been to provide a plausible interpretation of Deleuze’s claim that everything is simultaneous in the eternal present. I argued that this thesis is best interpreted as a claim about the complicated state of time, which refers to the subsistence of the past and future within the present. Ultimately, the eternal or complicated present as I define it is not a simultaneity of *all* time within divine chronos—it is a simultaneity only of those times that are contracted and frozen in present signs. Insofar as signs all exist in the present, and different past-futures subsist in the present, these pasts and futures are simultaneous in the sense that they are
implicated in those signs. This may be a weak sense of simultaneity, but I think it is also more plausible than other possible explanations, particularly if we take theological answers out of the picture.

It will be said, however, that I am perverting Deleuze's text, and trivializing what Deleuze clearly takes to be fundamental ontological categories by binding their operations to signs. Since I am calling this a Deleuzian theory of eternity, this criticism deserves a proper response.

4.1 Which Deleuze?

The plain fact is that there are multiple shapes a Deleuzian theory of eternity might take. Though I have discussed Proust in this chapter, the broader interpretation I am pursuing is based primarily on the mentions of eternity we find in Deleuze’s early, original, theoretical works: *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*. A project that began with an analysis of Deleuze’s historical work—on Spinoza, Nietzsche, or Leibniz—would likely yield a very different concept of eternity. A project that focused solely on Deleuze’s aesthetic works—on Kafka, Francis Bacon, and the history of cinema—might even produce a third concept. What distinguishes my interpretation from the other two approaches is the prominence of the *future* in my account. While Deleuze uses the concept of eternity in his historical and aesthetic works, all of the positive, theoretical uses of the term in his original texts pertain to the pure form of time.\(^{120}\)

Deleuze associates the pure form of time solely with the future, not the past or present (DR 90). And it is only in *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense* that this unique conception of the future is developed.

I mark this change because there is a tendency among some interpreters to treat Deleuze’s

\(^{120}\) I examine each of these instances in chapters five and six.
texts as essentially “monotonous,” to use Badiou’s term (*Clamor of Being* 14). It is supposed that Deleuze had one message all along, and different texts offer variations on this message. This is simply untrue: there are not just changes in Deleuze’s way of describing things, there are changes in the things he describes. Thus, my focus on the theoretical presentation of Deleuze’s theory of eternity, rather than the historical or aesthetic presentations, is not just a whim. I believe, and I think Deleuze believed, that there was something fundamental lacking in his early discussions of eternity—namely, the delay of futurity.

The most visible evidence of this change is written into the very structure of *Proust and Signs*. The final version of *Proust and Signs* is composed of three different texts written in different years: 1964, 1972, and 1973. Between 1964 and 1972, Deleuze shifted from the early historical works to original philosophy, and then again to a unique mode of collaboration with Felix Guattari (though he would eventually return to more traditional studies in the later stages of his career). After all this, what made Deleuze return to a work completed almost a decade before? The answer is unknown, but part of the answer is likely that Deleuze thought the conception of time presented in the early version of the text was inadequate. The difference between the 1964 and 1972 texts concerns the unity of time. Here is how it is explained in the 1964 text:

> From a certain viewpoint, each line of time is valid in itself... But this parallelism or autonomy of the various series does not exclude, from another viewpoint, a kind of hierarchy. From one line to another, the relation of sign and meaning becomes more intimate, more necessary, and more profound. In every instance, on the higher line, we recover what remained lost on the others. It is as if the lines of time broke off and fit into each other. (PS 88)

What stands out here is the harmony of the different temporal lines, and the Hegelian economy with which what is lost in transition from one line to the one “above” it in the hierarchy is compensated for in the product of the transition. Time is portrayed very much like a whole of
parts which "fit into each other" (PS 88). This image gives us the early, Neoplatonic definition of eternity as the complicated state of time (also in the 1964 text).

Now, compare this with the account of the 1972 text, where time is "not a whole, for the simple reason that it is itself the instance which prevents the whole" (PS 161). Here, time is made up of "fragments that can no longer be restored, pieces that do not fit into the same puzzle, that do not belong to a preceding totality, that do not emanate from the same lost unity" (PS 113). Simply put, the parts of time "cannot be adapted" to one another, and they certainly do not form an efficient hierarchy conserving meaning and spiritual content (Ibid.). The contrast with the account from 1964 could not be clearer.

So what is missing from the earlier account? Delays, gaps, deferrals in time. If time was just the pure past and the present, we can understand how all actual moments might be gathered up into a kind of virtual whole. But when we introduce the future—which does not exist, and therefore subsists in the present as a kind of fertile absence—then a determinable element is introduced into time, blocking closure, and leaving what is eternally open to what will be. Deleuze has many names for this determinable element: dark precursor, object = x, aleatory point. Most relevant to this chapter, he calls this avatar of the future the pure sign (LS 176).

Whatever its name, Deleuze clearly signals his reorientation around this concept in Difference and Repetition. Returning to his own argument about Proust's madeleine in Difference and Repetition, Deleuze defines Combray as “something = x, something which can no longer be defined by an identity…Combray in itself as the object = x” (DR 122). If Combray can no longer be defined by an identity, even the identity of an essence, it is because it has become a determinable event, open to the differences of its future repetitions. Deleuze drives the point

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121 Cf. Section 2b above.
home at the end of his short “Note on the Proustian experiences”: “The Proustian formula 'a little time in its pure state' refers first to the pure past…but more profoundly to the pure and empty form of time, the ultimate synthesis…which leads to the eternity of the return in time” (DR 122, my emphasis).

The next chapter of this dissertation serves as a transition from an account focused on the past to one focused on the future. To make room for the determinability of the pure sign, I will introduce delay into the heart of the eternal present. That is, I will use Deleuze's work (along with Husserl and Sartre) to show how there is an irreducible distance or difference at the same time, just as complication explains how there can be simultaneity among different times. If everything that actually happens in the universe can be contracted into the eternal present, then the stubborn reality of delay will reveal virtual happenings, events, at the heart of presence. This next chapter will share some themes with the present one: it will still concern the intersubjective structuring of time, only instead of focusing on the traces of events (artificial signs), it will focus on the mechanisms by which we seize hold of an event and repeat it. We will stop talking about subjects and start talking about actors. Action is the crucial element that will take us from the present to the future. It is in the delay between the initiation of an action and its resolution that the determinability of the future is maintained.

4.2 Problems of scope

Politically oriented readers of Deleuze might also object to the kinds of examples I have chosen. I have cited historians, archaeologists, and artists as examples of those who make and interpret the signs that record historical events. My analysis of signs focused on a sophisticated Modernist novel. Does that mean that the signs of eternity are always made by the richest, best
educated, and most talented of us? The answer here is simple: I have chosen these examples purely for the sake of convenience (or because Deleuze uses them), and the signs that prop up eternity do not have to be signs made by and for the elite. A revolutionary does not need to understand the symbolism of a flag to carry one, or to die for it. In many cultures where people cannot read or write, history is still preserved through oral storytelling traditions—i.e., what Deleuze would call vocal signs (ATP 62). To take a more basic example, a child might find a rusty tool and invent a new method of play dictated by its shape and function, while knowing nothing of its origins. This, too, is an event.

A similar objection could come from the opposite side: my account has not been theoretical enough. Without a more sophisticated analysis of the structure of the sign, the types of signs, and our uses of them, my account is not even detailed enough to be verifiable. It is true that there are some important discussions of signs in Deleuze’s work that I have neglected,\textsuperscript{122} not to even mention the work of C.S. Pierce, Louis Hjelmslev, and the other theorists who might have influenced Deleuze. But I have aimed for depth, not width. I wanted to focus on the points in early Deleuze where time and signs were an issue together, since these discussions always led to the theme of complication. More could surely be said here, but if nothing else, I hope to have established the convergence of these themes in Deleuze’s work.

4.3 Lost time

The most important objection concerns my interpretation more directly. In short, it could be credibly charged that my account is flatly contradictory. I spent much of last chapter discussing Bergson and examining arguments for Deleuze’s Bergsonian theory of the pure past.

\textsuperscript{122}There are oblique discussions of “temporal linearity” as it relates to signs in chapter three of ATP. The rich temporal semiology of the \textit{Cinema} volumes deserves its own monograph.
If this theory is correct, the past survives and subsists in itself, not because of any human intervention. The present passes into the past, but present events survive virtually. If this is true, however, then what has been the point of my argument that the past must be wrapped up in signs to be preserved? Is it not the case that the whole past is virtually subsistent, no matter what? In theory, should not any event from any point in the past be actualisable in any present? Why all this business about actors and signs? In a way, the whole of this chapter and the next is a response to this problem. In short, I am simply trying to make it more plausible to think that what is pulled out of the past and re-actualized in the future must be selected, and that this selection requires freedom. This is why it matters so much to Deleuze that the third synthesis supplant the second synthesis of the pure past in *Difference and Repetition*. But what becomes of the times that are not selected and recovered?

Here is my answer: I do not believe we can abandon the thesis that time can be lost, if we believe that time can be regained. I do not mean “time lost” in Deleuze’s sense, as in “time wasted.” I mean lost: gone forever, unrecoverable, inaccessible. If it virtually persists, we can never know about it one way or the other. Like Kant’s noumenon, it may as well not exist.

The danger of losing time is revealed by the value we attribute to historians. Historians (along with archaeologists, cosmologists, storytellers, and others) can use linguistic signs to preserve past events and record them for the future. Of course, these signs do not create the events they document; instead, they interpret those events, and through these interpretations, the events are made available for actors to draw upon. Since actors can change the world, the past has real effects on distant futures insofar as expressions of the past are preserved. Beyond memory, signs allow events in the past to be regained and, through that reclamation, transformed.

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123 See chapter six.
But if Bergson is right, why would anyone value the work of historians? Why do people praise those who risk their own lives to preserve traces of the past, like Hypatia of Alexandria or Chelsea Manning? Why do we consider it a loss when a species goes extinct, or we find just enough evidence of an earlier culture to conclude that it was wiped out? It will be said that I am responding to an ontological problem with questions about value. Whom we do and do not praise has no bearing on the reality of past and present. However, this is not about value judgments, it is about the particularity of what cannot be recovered. In short, I think that we value traces of the past because we know, at a basic experiential level, what it feels like to lose the past. Lost time is not time that never happened; it is time that is not recovered. It still refers to the subject, but precisely as that which is eternally inaccessible to the subject. On a sufficiently long cosmic scale, everything in the eternal present will almost certainly be lost in this fashion.

If the pure past is real, but a subject must pull events out of the past and counter-actualize them for the events to be eternal, then there must be a kind of shadow of eternity, or dark matter of time. Just as dark matter is what actually takes up most of space, lost time is what most of the past is made of. It is because we intuit the black nothing of lost time that we teach history, make up myths about the times that passed before we came, keep logs on explorations, and tell our stories on walls with graffiti. Lost time is better evidenced by human practice than time regained.

It is also truer to the reality of death, a reality that Deleuze’s philosophy of time is frustratingly ambiguous about. Perhaps the events in which a person participates survive beyond them, in fortuitous circumstances. But for Deleuze, frozen contractions (signs) refer back to phenomenological contractions, and these rest on the organic contractions that we are. We end up with a twisted variation on Merleau-Ponty. I am myself time—but in my nerves and cells, not my consciousness. So, too, will I exist right into my own undoing; those cells will die, and their
contractions will be released. The same is true for every living thing, and every part of every organism. A death is a living present that ends forever—and the one thing that cannot survive in the pure past is a present.
Chapter Four: The Universal Present

1. Introduction

This chapter continues last chapter’s focus on the present. Last chapter focused on the eternal present. Here, I focus on the universal present. The eternal present was explicated as a description of subjective time: it designated not only a maximal extension of chronos, the variable living present, but also a contraction of this extended duration into subjective presence—the all-encompassing "now." Contrarily, the theory of the universal present implies an irreducibility of past and future to the present. It does not deny subjective contractions of time, but it says there is something more to time than what can be contracted: something objective that eludes presence. This objective element is the event. Events are what happen out there in the world, where we act and interact with each other. Since the eternity of an event presupposes counter-actualization by the actor, as I proposed in chapter one (and argue in chapter six), we need an account of this objective time in which an actor’s action reshapes the world.

If the eternal present implies the simultaneity of events in the present, the universal present implies a delay in the present. If there is something more to time than present events, it is because there are also those events which are ongoing, or which have not fully developed yet, whose outcomes are delayed indefinitely. There may be events not happening all at once because delay is part of their structure (as with time-release medication). There may also be forgotten events awaiting resurrection, events that survive only in the signs they produced. That we must wait out such events is part (though not all) of what it means to say they are eternal. Indeed, I have defined eternity as the delay between the instant and the moment. The introduction of delay
in this chapter will be complemented by the discussion of the instant and moment next chapter, while chapter six focuses on the between.\textsuperscript{124}

Delay opens up in the gap between the intention or decision to pursue a course of action and the eventual outcome of that action. The delay is a function of the need to wait out real time—to wait for the dice to fall, as it were, after we have thrown them. But delay is represented within the immediacy of the present by what Deleuze calls the “other-structure.” This structure captures the possibility that what we perceive in the objective world can always be other, i.e., it can always be seen from a different angle, at a different point in the course of its existence, or with a different focus. To say that things can always be seen differently than I see them, even in the moment I perceive them, is to identify those things, and the world they inhabit, as objective.

Using Sartre and Husserl, I will explicate a concept of objective time to account for this otherness of objects. Objective time is best understood as a time where you can get in the way of my plans, and I can interfere with yours. Because it is first identified at the heart of presence, but exceeds the time of the individual, objective time is described as a universal present by Sartre (BN 357).\textsuperscript{125} The universal present is thus, it should be noted, more of a Sartrean than a Deleuzian idea. Nevertheless, I will show that it both illuminates, and is illuminated by, Deleuze’s own discussions of intersubjective temporality.

Fully objective time is a time that is dated and ordered; the order of time is the final determination of the objectivity of time, even as it is the first stage of the pure form of time. Things happen in the order they happen, but we record and organize the order of events using linguistic expressions such as dates. One of the ways we can access and renew events is to extract them from the flat succession of a dated timeline and—by cutting and pasting facets of

\textsuperscript{124} “Between” as in entre-temps, between-times, "meanwhile." See chapter one, part two.
\textsuperscript{125} BN refers to Sartre's magnum opus, Being and Nothingness.
the events in novel ways—generate something new from relations between events gone by. This “cutting” is a matter of retrospectively determining discrete turning points for events, thereby proactively determining what will be harnessed for repetition.\footnote{Cf. chapter one, section 2d on “cutting” as a tool for manipulating events.} By intermittently stamping being on becoming, we help give order to the history of the world. We can tell the history in different ways, but the order of events remains the same forever. This eternal fixedness of the order of time is, as we will see later, the threshold between time and the pure form of time.\footnote{See chapter six, introduction: eternity is developed around the pure form of time, which is constituted by an order, totality, series, and content.}

2. Delay and the other

The first task is to show that there is delay within the isolation of a subject's living present. As in the previous chapter, I will start with phenomenology, the closest thing we have to a science of presence. But where I have focused on thought, memory, and anticipation until this point, I will now begin to consider the element of action. The delay I seek is internal to action in the sense that it denotes the gap between the moment of commitment to a course of action and the actual moment of resolution (success, failure, or abandonment) for that course of action. Delay is not exclusive to action, but the delay of action is particularly important because it pits an agent against the resistance of the objective world. And it is through this resistance, this need to force the event into actual reality, that the passively constructed subject becomes a counter-actualizing actor.

The specific version of the argument for delay I present here is one that Bruce Baugh draws out of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* and *The Imaginary*.\footnote{See Baugh, "Freedom, Fatality and the Other."} I will supplement Baugh's presentation of Sartre with similar considerations by Husserl, before circling back to look for an
objective time in Deleuze.

2.1 Delay and decision in Sartre

It is a common idea in phenomenology (and in Ancient Greek metaphysics) that objects have present meanings in terms of the future ends toward which they are directed. I pick up the screwdriver because I know it will achieve the task of removing screws from the wall; the ready-to-hand screwdriver fits into the ongoing flow of my future-directed plan. In general, we act in the present to achieve future goals. They are future goals because if they were present, I would not need to act. I would, Sartre says, be as someone in a dream, where every desire or fear is immediately given shape in the dream’s present.\(^{129}\)

In waking life, the future guides the past and present insofar as I am projected forward in my involvements. Sartre says this is the “reverse of the causal order” (BN 384). (Deleuze might call it quasi-causal.)\(^{130}\) But if the future determines the past and present, then the past and present seem to lose the independence that makes free decisions possible in the first place (Baugh, “Freedom” 203). For when we act, the whole point is that we want to shape the future, not the other way around. There must, then, be a gap between the future as it is determined, conceived, or projected from the present, and the real future in which the objective of my decision may or may not be realized.

In Baugh’s reconstruction of Sartre, this gap is the “thickness of a delay”:

Sartre argues that the distinction between real action and mere wishing is that real action requires a temporal intermediary separating the present projection of an end from its future realization… In other words, freedom requires that the future result be separated from the present intention by the thickness of some delay or temporal gap. (203)

\(^{129}\) Baugh 203–204, citing Sartre’s The Imaginary (Sartre 2004).

\(^{130}\) See LS 94–100 on the quasi-cause.
If this gap appears as a delay *inside* consciousness, this is because it a real span of time that must unfold *outside* consciousness. As Sartre says, a future end is “separated from us” by “a set of real existents,” i.e., moments unfolding in successive time (BN 621). It is the thickness of time, the time it takes to get through time, that puts us on the other side of a divide from our goals.

Now, a question remains: how do we represent this delay-structure of the present from within the present itself? How does the thickness of time become a phenomenological object? If my actions as I move into the future are guided by my own decisions and desires, what represents the *otherness* of all the potential obstacles to my goal, and all the different outcomes that I cannot control? For both Deleuze and Sartre, this is the function of the *other*, or what Deleuze calls the other-structure. The incompleteness of my perception of a given object or process is filled in by the endless possibilities of other moments of perception, other possible perspectives; the other-structure is this possibility matrix, this “structure of the possible” (LS 307). Here is how Baugh puts it:

> It is the Other who causes things to overflow themselves by having real aspects that are not present to me and do not depend on me, aspects that exist in relation not to my ends or my future but in relation to those of another freedom bearing another future. (214)

Baugh’s formulation illustrates how much is implied in the idea of the other-structure as structure of the possible: freedom, the future, and the overflowing of things in time. We will come to all of these consequences by the end of this dissertation. At this point, I want to look at Deleuze’s own theory of the other to expand on its temporal function.

### 2.2 The other as margin

In twentieth-century French philosophy, "the other" (*l'autre*) is a term that refers both to people that are not me and to their "otherness," their alterity with regard to me, in its own right.
Sartre, Levinas, Derrida, Merleau-Ponty and others developed theories of the other on the foundation of phenomenological theories of intersubjectivity in earlier thinkers like Husserl and Heidegger. Deleuze’s own theory of the other is developed in an essay on novelist Michel Tournier that was later included as an appendix to Logic of Sense. Deleuze considers a series of what he calls “effects” of the other. Following the double sense of l'autre, these effects are regular and constant features of experience, not contingent products of interactions with real people.

The fundamental effect of the other on my existence is the establishment of a "mantle" or "background" around the margins of every object I perceive and every idea I think (LS 305). The function of this "marginal world" is to "regulate the passage" from one idea or object to the next:

I regard an object, then I divert my attention, letting it fall into the background. At the same time, there comes forth from the background a new object of my attention. If this new object does not injure me, if it does not collide with me with the violence of a projectile (as when one bumps against something unseen), it is because the first object had already at its disposal a complete margin where I had already felt the pre-existence of objects yet to come, and of an entire field of virtualities and potentialities which I already knew were capable of being actualized. Now, such a knowledge or sentiment of marginal existence is possible only through other people. (LS 305)

This passage reads like a traditional phenomenological analysis, except for the distinctly Deleuzian reference to virtuality and actuality. In Husserl, an object adequately conceived is a field of possibilities that can never be intuited all at once, but necessarily remains open in accordance with the irreducibility of the object's sense or noema to its presentation. To take the simplest kind of example, I can never see every side of a basketball at once, and so any presentation of the basketball is necessarily partial and incomplete. Nevertheless, when I am

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131 See appendix II.4 in LS 301–320, "Michel Tournier and the World Without Others." The original title of this piece was "A Theory of the Other."
132 See Ideas 331–340. Husserl's Cartesian Meditations and Ideas are both crucial to Deleuze's argument in this section, and in Logic of Sense as a whole.
looking at the basketball I do not understand myself to be looking at a basketball-side or basketball-slice, nor am I doing so in fact. I am looking at the basketball, the whole basketball, just in one mode of its noetic expression. Deleuze repeats a version of this Husserlian argument in the text, arguing that the other fills the perspectival roles I cannot: other people "introduce the sign of the unseen in what I do see, making me grasp what I do not perceive as what is perceptible to an Other" (LS 306). The sides of the basketball that I cannot see are the sides perceivable by a possible other; the whole basketball has a complete spatial reality insofar as we can imagine it being perceived from every angle simultaneously by as many observers as that would take.\footnote{Cf. Cartesian Meditations 117: "I do not apperceive [the other] as having...the spatial modes of appearance that are mine from here; rather...I apperceive him as having spatial modes of appearances like those I should have if I should go over there and be where he is."}

For Deleuze (following Husserl), it is not enough for there to be a series of possible object-presentations, or even a series of complete world-presentations expressing all possible facets of experienced objects. There must first be a perceptual structure which holds together the series of determinations and synthesizes them into a continuous experience of a persistent world.\footnote{It may seem strange to present Deleuze as an advocate of synthetic continuity in experience. But we will see in chapter six that what he calls the pure form of time disrupts this continuity in a complex way, thus presupposing its initial existence.} In Deleuze's explanation, this structure functions through the relative displacement of possibilities. When an object is replaced by another object, I can comprehend this change because I had "already felt the pre-existence" of the second object by virtue of its place in the structure of the possible (LS 305).

This does not mean, of course, that I consciously anticipated the second object. For example, if I get lost during a routine drive to work, my problem will be that the space I find myself in is not the space I anticipated. But I will still be able to keep driving because the
elements of my surroundings—the road, stoplights, street signs—will all be familiar from my understanding of the possibilities of vehicular transportation. On the road, the possibilities are the operations that I can perform using the equipment and spaces provided. But these rule-governed possibilities apply to me only insofar they apply to everyone, including those who come before and after me.

If the knowledge of "marginal existence" and the regulation of the transition from margin to presence is "possible only through other people," it is because the other is "the structure of the possible" as such (LS 307). Other people are people, but the Other is not fundamentally a person: "The Other is neither an object in the field of my perception nor a subject who perceives me: the Other is initially a structure of the perceptual field, without which the entire field could not function as it does" (LS 307). This is one of the places where Deleuze's account can be cleanly separated from the similar theories of Sartre and Levinas. For these thinkers, the effects of the other are very much bound to particularities of their human presence: the gaze, for Sartre, or the face for Levinas.135 But Deleuze will have none of this: "It seems that the structure Other precedes the look; the latter, rather, marks the moment at which *someone* happens to fill the structure" (LS 366). Unlike Levinas, Deleuze will derive no ethical or religious duties from the structural condition of a "someone."136

2.3 The other as obstacle

Delay is introduced into the living present through the necessary gap between the initiation of a course of action and the outcome of that action. Within the living present, that

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136 For Levinas, the encounter with the face of the other creates an ethical imperative to respect their alterity. See Levinas 194–220. In his later works, Levinas gives this argument an explicitly theological dimension.
delay is represented through the other-structure, which denotes all the alternate perspectives on present objects as well as possible perspectives on future objects. This other-structure forms a marginal world that ensures the continuity of experience by making it possible to see what I see from all other angles, and in all the different stages of existence. In this sense, the other-structure is the structure of the possible: we act in a world of possibilities because things can always be other.

It seems that Deleuze’s account of the other is missing something essential here. Deleuze presents the other as a “structure of the perceptual field,” a margin that ensures the smooth functioning of perception by complementing what is with what could be (LS 307). But if the other has the ability to stand in different positions I cannot assume, some of those perspectives will find him blocking my light. Action, in other words, is not perception: perception involves a comprehension of the world as being possibly other, but action involves making the world other.

As I discussed above, action is directed toward a future outcome whose realization depends on conditions beyond my control. We can now say that one of these conditions—indeed, the necessary and a priori condition of genuine action—is that the other might get in my way. The flipside to the other as margin is the other as obstacle.

It is not an accidental or contingent fact that other people can get in the way of my plans. On the contrary, it is a necessary ontological correlate to the objectivity of the world. This seems like an abstract argument, but I think it goes to the heart of what we generally mean when we

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137 As Lampert has suggested, putting this argument in terms of angles may be problematic for Deleuze in ways that it would not be for Husserl, since Deleuze does not necessarily argue for continuous space like Husserl does. (See chapter fourteen of ATP for Deleuze’s own theory of "smooth" vs. "striated" space.) Perhaps a better metaphor to draw on would be one that Deleuze uses in adapting Leibniz: we do not exchange different perspectives on the same city, rather, each perspective presents a different city, since each individual is a monad, and every monad reflects the whole world from a particular angle. This kind of figure is developed in Logic of Sense and The Fold.
talk about objectivity. In short, to say the world is objective is to say that things really are “out there,” existing, being, in a world that would continue to exist and be if I went to sleep or died. We accept that things may not, in themselves, be exactly the way they appear to us, but this difference between the way something is and the way it appears testifies all the more to the thing’s independence from me. In science, logic, and mathematics, where consensus is typically taken to be an indicator of a theory’s truth, intersubjectivity is institutionalized as a corrective on subjective bias or error precisely because of the Sartrean idea that others, looking from other perspectives, will catch what I missed.  

But if you and I are both operating in a world that is independent of either of us, and we have different plans about the way that world should be, there will come a point where the multiplicity of possibilities gives way to the actuality of finite outcomes. Planning for the next ten seconds, I decide that the basketball should make its way into my hands so I can run up the court and drop it into the net. You, as a player on the opposing team, have the opposite outcome in mind. Because we are, objectively speaking, playing on the same court with the same ball, it is inevitable that you are going to foil my plan or I am going to foil yours (unless, of course, other people foil us both).

Objectivity implies both limited outcomes (the rules of basketball restrict what we can do with the next ten seconds) and uncertain outcomes (either team and any player could score, or no one could score.) If we could do anything we wanted in the future, and we always got what we wanted, we would just be dreaming; in real life, we often fail, often in ways we did not plan for. But failure is the flipside of successful action: if I feel good for having accomplished something, it is because I have overcome the resistance of the cold, uncaring, objective world by shaping it

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138 I discuss the role of consensus in math, science, and philosophy in “Disagreement and Philosophical Progress.”
to my will. The cruelty of life is that overcoming this resistance sometimes means negating the wills of others and making them fail.\footnote{While Deleuze's own treatment of these issues is relatively minimal, I should note that one could find many in-depth discussions in continental philosophy of the deleterious effects of the other-structure on subjective time. In addition to Husserl's \textit{Cartesian Meditations}, one could consult the work of Levinas, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, the later Derrida, and so on.}

3. The universal present

From a delay opened up as a space for action, I have moved through two functions of the other: as margin, and as obstacle. Together, this other-structure defines the objectivity of the world. The final step in Sartre’s argument is the construction of the universal present, or what Husserl calls objective time. This idea follows naturally from the account above: if the world is objective, then it must be the case that the time that passes in the delay between intention and outcome is, in some basic sense, the same time everyone else is acting in. If I can get in the way of you achieving your plans, and you can affect the outcomes of my plans, then our timelines must cross in a time that is common to both of us. This is no longer the eternal present, which referred back to subjective contractions frozen in signs; this is the universal present—time as universal object—and involves a new sense of simultaneity that is different than the complication of the eternal present.

For Sartre and Husserl, objective time is irreducible to “your” living present, or “my” living present. We might add that it is not reducible to Deleuze’s eternal present. Objective time is not of the same nature as the time of what Deleuze called passive synthesis: it is not an operation of consciousness, or even of an impersonal transcendental field (as in Deleuze’s reading of Sartre). Rather than being a gathering into presence, objective time is precisely a limit on presence: it says that there is a time beyond my protentive and retentive contractions of time,
and it is because this objective time transcends subjective time that you, me, a fern, and my pet goldfish contract the “same time” in different ways. Just as the guarantee of the “objective transcendency” of objects is not their constancy, but the fact that they can always be other, the persistence of objective time through different rhythms and ranges of contraction is what holds it apart as a reality unto itself.

On the other hand, insofar as we are still working within a phenomenological framework, we must give an account of how objective time is immanently constructed. Interestingly, Sartre and Husserl both accomplish this task using a distinct concept of simultaneity. In the account of the eternal present, where (as Deleuze claimed) everything is simultaneous, simultaneity is a gathering-into-presence. In this respect, we saw that even Deleuze could not resist references to the “divine” present of God, where all events are wrapped up, happening all at once. But the objective sense of simultaneity is not a gathering into presence; rather, it directs consciousness or the subject outward. If subjective simultaneity involves presence, objective simultaneity is defined by a mutual co-presence-to something in the world: I observe you observing something which is also present for me. In other words, if subjective simultaneity implies that I perceive or think several events happening at once, objective simultaneity implies a single event happening at two times—namely, your time and my time. The co-presence of two temporalizing subjects to a third thing happening for them both defines objective time.

3.1 Sartre against Kant: co-presence as simultaneity

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre argues that intersubjective co-presence is primordial

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140 Cf. DR 77: contemplative contraction forms “a present of a certain duration which varies according to the species, the individuals, the organisms and the parts of organisms under consideration.”

141 Deleuze cites Husserl on objective transcendency in LS 113, though not in relation to time.
Simultaneity. Sartre suggests that the individual "links all beings by the unity of its single presence" (BN 357). The individual is always "present to" a world in which multiple beings are reciprocally co-present for it (Ibid.). But this means that the solitary individual in its own world could not "comprehend simultaneity, but only co-presences" (Ibid.).

Simultaneity supposes the temporal connection of two existents which are not bound by any other relation. Two existents which exercise a reciprocal action on one another are not simultaneous because they belong to the same system. Simultaneity therefore does not belong to the existents of the world; it supposes the co-presence to the world of two presents considered as presences-to...This supposes therefore a foundation for all simultaneity which must of necessity be the presence of an Other. (BN 357)

Here Sartre is responding to Kant's discussion of simultaneity in the *Critique of Pure Reason.* The argument of Kant's third analogy is that "all substances, insofar as they are simultaneous, stand in thoroughgoing community (i.e., interaction with one another.)" Lampert distinguishes the subjective and objective claims implicated in this argument. On the subjective side, Lampert defines Kantian simultaneity as "reversible succession" (*Simultaneity and Delay* 75). Simultaneous appearances are those which can "succeed one another reciprocally" (Kant A211). The earth and the moon exist simultaneously because it is possible for me to look from the earth to the moon, or from the moon to the earth, in the same time. The succession of my perceptions is tied into "a possibility-sequence that I do not actualize all at the same time" (Lampert, *Simultaneity* 77).

The fact is that we can only define reversible succession as simultaneity if reversibility functions as its own kind of temporal synthesis. In other words, I must actively retain or anticipate the subsequent appearance of earth or moon at the moment I perceive either moon or earth. As Lampert writes, I have to "overlay a meta-temporal simultaneity-structure onto the

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142 *Critique of Pure Reason* A211 (Kant 316). References are to the Cambridge edition of this work (translated by Guyer and Wood).
temporal succession-structure that I experience" (Simultaneity 77). In Lampert's theory of time, this meta-temporal structure that enables recursion is delay: "The establishment of simultaneity is in each case delayed" in the sense that the appearances of moon and earth must be present one after the other (Ibid.). The structure of delay reconciles simultaneity and succession.

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In Lampert's reading of Kant, reversible succession is not a sufficient explanation for simultaneity, for it is not objective: "There has to be something in the object that is simultaneous, not just something about our subjective capacity to perceive things in arbitrary order" (Simultaneity 78). In addition to reciprocal succession, we need reciprocal causation. Kant writes that "the simultaneity of substances in space cannot be cognized in experience otherwise than under the presupposition of an interaction among them" (A211). On this account, "interaction" means causal determination. But this requires a much stronger set of conditions for perceptual simultaneity than seems necessary, and since causal relations are also successive, only delays the problem.

Sartre rejects Kant's account of simultaneity altogether. Two things which "exercise a reciprocal action on one another are not simultaneous because they belong to the same system" (BN 357). Sartre is not attempting to refute Kant here; he is simply suggesting a different sense of simultaneity. And his definition is an odd one: why would it be necessary to define simultaneity by the "temporal connection" of two things that are "not bound by any other relation"? Surely this is too restrictive. But Sartre seems to mean that we need a way of defining simultaneity in its own terms, rather than by reducing it to some other kind of non-temporal interaction.

Sartre's suggestion is that it makes no sense to talk about simultaneity within the temporal frame of reference of an individual world. If I contract past and future into the present, the
multiple times become one time. "At the same time" therefore has no meaning unless there are two different times, and moreover, a third time in which those two times converge. This third time is the "same time" we refer to when we say two things happen at the same time: "The original phenomenon of simultaneity is the fact that this glass is for Paul at the same time that it is for me" (BN 357). There is my time, your time, and the third "same" time where our timelines objectively converge.

Arguably, Sartre equivocates here with the phrase "at the same time." If the "same time" just means the same objective timeline, then the glass might be present for Paul in the morning and Jean-Paul in the evening. The phrase must have this meaning in addition to meaning "in the same duration" if we are both in front of the glass now. For Sartre, it seems, this is what is guaranteed by co-presence: I must be able to see you seeing the glass as I see it. Or, to use a more complex example, if we are in different time zones while talking on the phone, we might observe the sun at different points in the sky. The fact that the location of the sun varies in a predictable way with our positions reduces the pseudo-temporal difference of a time zone to an objective multiplicity of perspectives on the same temporal object (the sun). Even without their immediate presence, the co-presence of the other, and our common directedness toward some event in the world, produces a "universal time" or "universal present" (Ibid.).

3.2 Husserl: objective time

Husserl makes a similar argument in his Cartesian Meditations. Husserl's argument is that the establishment of objectivity within the immanent sphere of consciousness is conditioned upon the temporal possibilities given by the other-structure, or what he calls "pure others" (107). In Husserl, this co-presence of my time with the time of the pure other produces "objective time"
and "omnitemporality," or the time in which mathematical proofs and logical propositions can be thought and verified: "After the constitution of the Objective world with its Objective time and its Objective men as possible thinking subjects, that obviously carries over to ideal structures, as themselves Objectivated, and to their Objective omnitemporality" (127).

However, the manipulation of ideal possibilities in omnitemporality is only possible through the antecedent togetherness of synchronization: "It is essentially necessary that the togetherness of monads, their mere co-existence, be a temporal co-existence and then also an existence temporalized in the form: 'real temporality'" (139). Real temporality, or the "primordiality" of the "common time-form," would therefore be the time in which objective temporal distinctions could be made from within the immanent present (128). But real temporality must be produced in a temporally untemporalized co-existence—i.e., the "mere co-existence" of monads or subjects—that cannot itself be measured in time. This is what Sartre called original simultaneity. In both texts, the crucial point is that we can only make temporal distinctions pertaining to nature itself if we step outside the bounds of our immanent present, but that this resulting objective time reciprocally structures subjective time. Objective time is no longer merely a field for exchanging perspectives with the other, but for creating a third, objective “= x” common to our worlds.143

3.3 Time as object

We have found a sense for the universal present in phenomenology. It may seem to the reader that this demonstration has, once again, strayed far away from the concept of eternity—not to mention Deleuze's texts. But the opposite is the case. The conceptual links forged in the

143 I have mentioned the object = x already; Deleuze contrasts the object = x with another x that is “common to several worlds” in Logic of Sense (114).
first part of this argument—the links between freedom, action, and delay—will be at the core of the final chapter on eternity. Eternity will be defined, at last, as the delay between the instant the moment; the subject will become an actor, thrown into delay once she looks to the future and makes a decision; freedom will be explicated as the necessity of selecting one course of action out of multiple futures.

In the remainder of this chapter, however, I want to expand on the workings of objective time as it pertains to the preservation and retrieval of events. To be more precise, I will examine how we make time itself an object of action once it has been universalized. It is, admittedly, not obvious that Deleuze saw this as a problem in need of addressing (especially since he tends to avoid the dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity). However, there are textual indications that Deleuze shared a conception of the universal present as objective phenomenon. A quick look at these texts will be helpful, even if I cannot develop all of Deleuze’s arguments, or touch on all the differences between the texts. Significantly, both of these indications find Deleuze contrasting two states of the present—just as I am contrasting the eternal and universal presents.

The first indication comes from a late-career definition of the present in *Cinema 2*. Deleuze offers two images of the present. The second image presents an image of time in "peaks of present,” which Deleuze describes as a kind of overlapping of incompatible evental determinations. I have already noted this passage as one of the points Deleuze employs the concept of complication to explain time. More relevant at this point is his first, un-complicated image of the present:

If the present is actually distinguishable from the future and the past, it is because it is presence of something, which precisely stops being present when it is replaced by *something else*. It is in relation to the present of something else that the past and future are said of a thing. We are, then, passing along different events, in accordance with an explicit time or a form of succession which entails that a variety of things fill the present one after another. (C2 100)
There is no reference here to the other, or the requirement of intersubjective co-presence. But if we took the liberty of replacing “the present of something else” with “the present of someone else,” we would end up with something close to the universal present. This present is not a gathering of past and future into presence; rather, it is “actually” distinguishable from the past and future because something “fills the present.” The present is defined by something objective, something outside presence itself. Other presents would just be presences-to something else by someone else.

An even clearer reference to the Sartrean-Husserlian conception of the universal present comes directly from Deleuze’s theory of the other. As in Cinema, Deleuze juxtaposes two senses of the present, but the senses are different. Deleuze suggests that time considered apart from others is an “eternal present,” which accords with his presentation of chronos in Logic of Sense (LS 311). The eternal present of solitude is like the situation of Sartre’s dreamer, where desire and outcome are identical because there is no gap separating the present from the future. But if we add the co-presence of the other, objectivity is split from subjectivity, and the present from past and future:

In the Other’s absence, consciousness and its object are one. Before the appearance of the Other, there was, for example, a reassuring world from which my consciousness could not be distinguished…The Other…assures the distinction of consciousness and its object as a temporal distinction. The first effect of its presence concerned space and the distribution of categories; but the second effect, which is perhaps the more profound, concerns time and the distribution of its dimensions—what comes before and what comes after in time. (LS 311)

Deleuze does not offer much explanation for these claims in the text. But if we read the passage in the light of Sartre’s argument for objectivity, it makes sense that Deleuze would tie together these two differences: the distinction between the present and past-future, and the difference between subject and object. It is because the other-structure as structure of the possible organizes
an objective time in which we both cooperate and collide, and in which objects have the "resistance" that delays realization of intentions. Post-other, there is a "temporal distinction" between my projection of intentions onto the future, and the actual realization of those intentions in a real future (LS 310). This is because the other has the *a priori* capability of getting in the way of my plans. The temporal distinction is the real difference between intention and outcome opened in action and secured by the other-structure.

But perhaps this interpretation is not strong enough. Deleuze claims more than that the other-structure differentiates present from past-future. He says it governs the "distribution of its dimensions" in the first place. In other words, the engagement with the other distributes events "in accordance with an order of space and time" (LS 306). There is a weak and a strong reading of this claim. The strong reading is that the order of events in time is really determined by intersubjective interactions; obviously this claim is implausible beyond a very limited scope. (We can determine whether the parade follows the festival, but not whether it will rain before or after the parade.) The weak reading would be that it is *objective time* that is ordered by the interaction with the other. This is the reading I will pursue in the final section of this chapter. Since objective time is intersubjectively constructed on the basis of co-presences to events, we have to put all those events in order before or after the fact from the island of the present. I will argue that this involves cutting and pasting segments of the objective timeline, and that, insofar as this cutting slices out certain parts of events rather than others, it also affects the way those events will be repeated. A corollary to the delay-structure of action is retroactive determination.

The assumption behind this argument is that once objective temporality has been constructed, it can become an object of intention and action like any other. We can look back to past times of our lives with as much fondness as individual people or events ("that was a good
year”); we also structure our futures around certain times that have no extra-temporal significance, as with annual awards ceremonies. In order to do this, we must be able to cut up the timeline, slicing out durations and evaluating their effects in the present. The domain of this operation is fully objective time: i.e., a timeline that is ordered and dated. The timeline represents a totality of before-after relations between events that have singular positions relative to each other and the present, but also have a unidirectional order from past to present. This order of time is the objective correlate of Deleuze’s chronos-God: not everything together, but everything spread out, in its proper place, set at a precise distance from everything else.

4. Ordering time

Things happen in the order they happen. Sometimes we have control over this order—as when I decide to brush my teeth before breakfast instead of after—but more often, we adapt to the flow of what transpires from day to day in the world. However, there is another sense in which we have control over the order of time. Events do not have definite starting and stopping points; they have, instead, fuzzy zones of actualization and open-ended counter-actualizations, junctures of disruption and critical turning points. When we reach back in time to cut up events and carry them forward, the point of the event we choose to cut out, and the way we position it in relation to the future, determines what will be preserved. Similarly, history is composed not so much of a homogenous succession of indifferent events, but of historical patterns and rhythms that only become clear as we trace their contours in retrospect. In this section, I use Deleuze and Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaus to explore how the final manifestation of objective time—a dated and ordered timeline—is constructed through this kind of retrospective cutting. The
construction of the order of time will provide a bridge to the discussion of the pure form of time in chapter six.

4.1 Instantaneous transformations and continuous modifications

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari make a distinction between corporeal modifications and incorporeal transformations (ATP 85). This distinction re-articulates the division between chronos and aion from *Logic of Sense*, but with critical differences. Corporeal modifications are mixtures of bodies in space and time. An incorporeal transformation is an ideal change in the sense or meaning of these spatio-temporal mixtures. If corporeal modifications concern the physical properties of bodies, incorporeal transformations concern what Deleuze will call attributes: "In expressing the noncorporeal attribute, and by that token attributing it to the body, one is not representing or referring but *intervening* in a way; it is a speech act" (ATP 86).

In philosophy, speech act theory generally deals with types of social situations where someone effects real changes in the world just by saying a certain combination of words at the right time and place. When the jury says they find the defendant not guilty, the defendant is immediately freed from legal constraint; when the minister says, "I now pronounce you husband and wife," the couple is married. The important thing about such acts is that their effects are not at all subjective or imaginary, as the freed prisoner can attest; occurring in a moment, they nevertheless create real divisions in being. Deleuze and Guattari will therefore emphasize the link between their *instantaneity* and the *simultaneity* of their effects: "The incorporeal transformation is recognizable by its instantaneousness, its immediacy, by the simultaneity of the statement expressing the transformation and the effect the transformation produces" (ATP 81).
corporeal mixtures can be called continuous modifications, incorporeal transformations can also be called instantaneous\textsuperscript{144} transformations.

We organize objective time through these instantaneous or incorporeal transformations. They allow us to redefine our understanding of the world in a single stroke: the Roman Inquisition names Galileo a heretic, and his whole cosmology is outlawed. Of course, the actual historical development of ideas is not so clean-cut. That transformations are instantaneous does not mean that the whole world changes its mind about something at once: even in the internet age, new information takes time to travel and to be integrated into existing knowledge. Moreover, it is not necessarily true that everyone accepts such decrees. But the point of Deleuze and Guattari seems to be that within a particular “regime of signs” or rule-governed system of meaning, changes of meaning are synchronic.\textsuperscript{145} Just as a legal decision in common law systems sets an immediate precedent for future cases, even before it has been publicized or interpreted, or just as the introduction of a new letter into the alphabet would immediately change the relations between other letters, the incorporeal transformation of a situation yields a revised set of rules for interpreting meaning that must be reckoned with even by those who reject them.

Later, of course, Galileo's revolution was reclaimed from the past and celebrated as a transformative event. If transformations produce something new, they become events; however, some transformations—like the church's decree—simply impede novelty. The effects of transformative events, however, extend out from the moment of their occurrence across time, redefining our concepts of objects, and the objects themselves. I will try to expand on how this works through Deleuze's discussion of attributes.

\textsuperscript{144} I should note that the sense of "instantaneity" used by Deleuze here will be put into question throughout next chapter, where I explore the wider use of instants in Deleuze.

\textsuperscript{145} On regimes of signs, see chapter five of ATP.
4.2 Attribution

Instantaneous transformations are inserted into continuous modifications: this is attribution. The instant puts limits on becomings, and carves out beings and qualities from the blooming, buzzing confusion of unfiltered experience. If we took a time-lapse video of a tree over the course of a year, for example, we would see it gradually turn green and then lose its color as winter approached. Based purely on this observation, at what point could we definitively say the tree is green? Nature never stops, so we could almost say the tree is always becoming green, for even if it is green now, its cycles will cause it to wither and become green again next year. But this would mean it is always withering simultaneously, which is absurd. Furthermore, the truth values of our statement would change with the continuous modifications of the tree: "the tree is green" will sometimes be true, sometimes false. If we drew up a table of properties of a tree, it would include “green” and “not green,” with only time sorting out the contradiction.

Deleuze's intuitive point is that we do not experience the world this way. When I say “trees are green,” I am not simply making a false statement. I am intervening in the cyclical becoming-green-and-becoming-not-green of a tree to attribute it the attribute of being green. Attribute is both verb and noun because our limit-setting intervention comes to define the real boundaries of the phenomenon. In this sense, the greenness of the tree is a product both of the flowing mixtures of bodies and the punctual limits on those mixtures effected by language.

The independence of continuity and instantaneity combined with their staggered interaction in experience is what generates the need for two readings of time. There is a time in which there are nothing but continuous changes, and a time of discontinuous, instantaneous change: chronos and aion. But what is the connection between instants (as in instantaneous transformations) and language? Both have the function of ordering by setting limits. Aristotle
says that it is the task of the instantaneous "now" both to set limits on time and to overcome those limits. Deleuze says the exact same thing about language. We set limits not just when we say "now," but any time we use temporal language, and perhaps even just when we use the copula. But contextualized redefinitions of objects and subjects have reverberations that retract through their present contexts into the past and future.

When the minister says "I now pronounce you..." he creates a marriage, a real fact of being, which itself can subsequently serve as a singular temporal marker. We say "Jack was more fun before he was married," or "Jack got boring after he got married," retroactively marking a transformation in the continuous modification of Jack. Of course, the change in Jack would not actually be instantaneous. But we represent it as such by giving it a date aligned with the singular threshold representing the event that caused fun Jack to become boring Jack. The incorporeal transformation is like one of Bergson’s shining points, which were described in chapter two as points of access for specific spans of memory. When I look back on my friendship with Jack, I will comprehend his gradual becoming-boring in relation to the shining point of his boring marriage. The boringness does not itself result from the transformation, like his groomhood; it is simply an organizing point, an anchor in the stream of time.

In this way, incorporeal transformations serve as singular “points” or critical junctures of events that give sense to the ordinary events around them. And for every incorporeal transformation accomplished at a particular time, there is an actual or potential date; dates are the condition of the possibility of an anniversary, a centennial and so on. A date is the particular kind of linguistic expression that allows us to divide time up, and give it an order, by making

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146 *Metaphysics* 222a 10–12.
147 LS 2–3: "It is language which fixes the limits...but it is language as well which transcends the limits and restores them to the infinite equivalence of an unlimited becoming."
objective temporal distinctions.

4.3 Lampert: dating the event

Dates allow us to organize the universal present through the determination of distances between events. In his study of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of history, Jay Lampert thematizes Deleuzian dates in relation to the repetition of events. Lampert argues that a date has two reciprocal functions: it "removes the event from the flow of bodily states of affairs," and then "it puts it back" (*Philosophy of History* 77). When events are extracted from the present through a date, Lampert says, they are "reoriented on a virtual plane where all events co-exist" (71). Virtual simultaneity in the pure past—which is distinct from the simultaneities of presence and co-presence—makes it possible to talk or think about different eras together without regard for chronology. Lampert suggests that simultaneity is therefore what lends events their autonomy: "If the event can be *thought* independent of before and after, it can have *effects* independently of its predecessors and successors, and so it can *exist* independently of them" (77). The event is not a subjective construction, since we really pulled it out of history. But insofar as it is taken up by thought, it has real ramifications beyond the presence of its original components: the event "sends its spin-offs systematically across time" in the incorporeal transformation (73).

But if it takes events out of time, dating also determines the temporal location of the event relative to past and present. These are not two contrary functions, but one and the same: the singularity of the dated event within time is precisely what allows it to function as a point of differentiation for other dates. The date therefore marks a point of convergence and communication between virtual simultaneity and actual succession. Succession and simultaneity
converge in the transformation, but they communicate across all of time through their objects:
the transformation creates a new object to be modified, while modifications lead us progressively
to the singular thresholds of transformations.

For example, dating a marriage or the beginning of a war marks it as something that
stands out within the continuity of corporeal modifications as a point of no return; time will
never be the same. A war or a marriage do not happen suddenly; on the contrary, they are
anticipated well in advance. But as singular thresholds of change, such events can "remake
history with a new focal point" (73). In retrospect, we say, everything was leading up to the Great
War. Furthermore, the date pulls the event out of history in such a way that it can return in time.
Couples frequently honor the dates of their anniversaries precisely by going back out on another
"date."

Lampert argues that a date makes an event repeatable in three ways. First, the dated event
becomes a fixed point against which we measure subsequent time lapse. This suggests that
events are ultimately dated relative to other events, and not within a homogeneous field of
objective time. Socrates died in 399 BC, but it was not 399 BC when Socrates died. We attribute
calendar dates a kind of objectivity just to get around in the world, but this is because it is
awkward to ask someone to meet up 740,000 days after Jesus might have died. And different
cultures will date events relative to different base events, which is why different cultures have
different calendars. In sum, then, dating an event "tears the event out of homogeneous time and
places it in a culturally specific time segment" (76).

Second, a repeatable date is like a "re-usable formula." If we see an amateur fireworks
show we did not expect, we might say it is like the Fourth of July. When there was a bombing at
the Boston Marathon, certain pundits were heard to say that it was "9/11 all over again." Such
statements are not really assertions of identity—singularities cannot, strictly speaking, be identical to one another—but they do depend on commonalities in the events being compared.

This takes us to the crucial third point. If dating an event makes the date re-usable, this is only because it makes the dated content repeatable: "By singling it out, we make the particular event a universal type that can be instantiated more than once" (76–77). Events are not suspended in the heavens like traditional essences, waiting for their turn; they are extracted from time in a transformative intervention. But the instantaneous transformation changes subject, object, and world in a particular kind of way, and events exist independent of what changes. As evidence for this, Lampert points to the reciprocity of names and dates for events: "Naming an event implies that it has a date, and citing a date implies that something nameable happened on it" (76). Perhaps we do not normally think of names as universals, but Deleuzian events are concrete universals: ideal, not abstract. Their concreteness is their actuality in mixtures of bodies, but they express something universalizable.

The universalizability of events is different than that of general essences (which are not to be confused with Proustian or Spinozian essences) like "greenness" or "squareness." This is where possibility and virtuality diverge. A possibility is a state of something that could be actual, but is not presently so. But a virtual event is something that really subsists in the objective past-future. We use dates to draw selected evental content out of the past, but the objectified past contains the whole event, from beginning to finish. To actualize events, we must therefore be selective, picking off sections or facets of the event in exclusion of others that would be incompatible. "The date," Lampert writes, "only succeeds in marking off an event if some fragment of the [event's] description is separated out" (78). February 3, 1959 will always be "The

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148 See chapter three, section two.
day the music died,” but every time a young musician dies tragically, the music dies a little more, on a slightly different note.

### 4.4 The order of time

We do not have to put events in order once they are all dated; the dates are the order. And the order of time is the final realization of the objectivity of time. To say that history happened in a particular order—that it is permanently constituted by that order, and only makes sense when understood in that order—is to affirm an autonomous structure for time that permits real temporal distinctions outside of subjective presences and possibilities. As Lampert argues, all temporal facts—facts about what events happened before and after other events—are true at all times (Philosophy of History 5). Dating simply concretizes this eternal truth.

For example, it is true now that World War Two happened before World War One, but it was also true in 1900, before either war began. After all, the difference is right there in the proper names of these events: War One and War Two. Of course, most events are not ordinally labeled, so this is why we have the timeline and the notches on it.\(^1\) Even when no one dates an occurrence, the timeline ensures the possibility of doing so. Criminal investigators often try to piece together a sequence of events that no one would have individualized as a sequence before it became necessary to retrospectively determine its effects. Points, and the distances between them, can be put back on the timeline after they already happened.

It seems natural to associate the order of time with the objective past: the present does not need to be put in order, and the future cannot be put in order, since it has not happened yet. The order of time is the timeline, and the timeline only tells us what has happened so far. It is true

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\(^1\) See chapter one, section two for my discussion of the basic timeline model.
that events may be planned for certain times in the future, but as I will argue in chapter six, multiple futural possibilities really exist in determinable form within what Deleuze will call the "empty" present. Since we do not know beforehand what will happen, the order will incorporate some irreducible degree of chance. Moreover, order implies permanence, and what has not happened yet could still happen in a different order than we anticipate, or not happen at all. Thus, an objective order of time can only be established with regard to the past from the vantage point of the present.

The order of time is the link between my discussions of the present in these chapters and the final discussion of eternity in chapter six. As I will show, Deleuze identifies eternity with what he calls the pure form of time, which is constituted by an order, totality, series, and content. It will take more preparation to understand exactly what this means. The relevant point is that the order of pure time is not the order of historical time; in what Deleuze calls the totality of pure time, one can go from any point in time to any other, and from real pasts or presents to alternative presents and pasts that might have been real. If I have given an account of how objective time gets put in order, eternity signifies time out of order, or—in Shakespeare's much-quoted phrase—time "out of joint."¹⁵⁰

What happens to the timeline when we introduce disorder into temporal order? Deleuze and Guattari call this "freeing the line." This freeing of the historical line makes its content "transhistorical" or "superhistorical" in the sense that what is produced on the freed line "always goes down in History but never comes from it" (ATP 296). The event is recorded in the past, in other words, but it comes from the future, going against the common order of experience.

I would add a second slogan to Deleuze and Guattari’s account. Free the line, yes: take

¹⁵⁰ From Hamlet: "The time is out of joint; O cursed spite! / That ever I was born to set it right!" (I.V.211–2)
the order out of the order of time, let events comeingle, overlap, and recombine in the virtual totality of time. But also, *multiply the line*. As I will argue in the final chapter, "superhistoricity" is composed of all the alternate histories of the world: impossible presents, incompatible futures, “not-necessarily-true pasts” (C2 131). For Deleuze, there is indeed an actual, objective world, but there is a virtual “universe” of worlds, or a universe of virtual worlds, at the borders of the actual (Ibid.). Actual and virtual timelines, history and superhistoricity, can cross into one another at singular turning points in accordance with relations of compatibility (or “compossibility”) between events.

Action will still be part of this account. But I will focus more narrowly on the internal workings of the decisions which initiate action. Decision becomes important because the determinable future is really constituted by mutually exclusive worlds lined up alongside each other, demanding that the actor select from among them. It is this excess of the future with respect to the present that holds open eternity as a space of possibility within time.
Chapter Five: The Instant and the Moment

1. Introduction

Eternity is the delay between the instant and the moment. The purpose of this chapter is to define the concepts of the instant and the moment. The final chapter will round out the essay with a discussion of the delay that is between them. These two chapters therefore present the core of my positive interpretation of Deleuze's theory of eternity. I should emphasize from the beginning that this is an interpretation: Deleuze does hint at a distinction between l’instant and le moment, but he does so ambiguously and inconsistently. My aim will be to make this distinction sharp, systematic, and above all, useful for understanding eternity. I will do so by drawing on the resources of Deleuze’s texts. Nevertheless, the delay between the instant and the moment does not match up with any clearly defined idea in Deleuze’s body of work. The burden of proof for this theory must fall squarely on my shoulders.

At the very end of the twenty-third chapter of The Logic of Sense, Deleuze identifies three senses of the present: the living present, the instant, and the moment. The living present (discussed in chapter three) is chronos, a continuous field of presence formed through subjective contractions of time. Instants and moments are defined against chronos.

On my interpretation of Deleuze, instants are retroactively and proactively imposed "cuts" on the continuous timeline. The instant is not the present because the instant is not a time, but rather an indivisible limit between times. Instants are constructions—tools used by the actor to slice out singular points in the actualization of an event and project them forward. Although instants are constructions imposed on time, it is not arbitrary where we place them. The "cuts" that pick out the most significant turning points in an event become "privileged" instants as we
select them. This selection distinguishes the privileged instant from the "any-instant-whatever," which is simply an instant that cuts out nothing special. If instants are cuts, privileged instants are like the dotted lines showing the best places to cut. Deleuze suggests that past events "preserved" through such cutting are given, "even if it is only for an instant, a chance which is itself eternal, a virtuality which will be valid forever even if it is not actualized" (C2 91, my emphasis).

In the relevant passage of Logic of Sense (quoted in full later in this chapter), Deleuze says the moment is a "third present," to be confused with neither the instant nor the living present (LS 168). I will draw several meanings from this, not all of which are directly implied by Deleuze. First, and primarily, the moment is the point in time at which an actor makes a free decision to counter-actualize an event. For this reason, the moment is always located at the heart of the living present. (Deleuze also calls the moment the "empty present" in this passage; elsewhere, he directly identifies the empty present with eternity (LS 63).) However, the moment is not the living present because it refers to the virtual past and future that overflow the present. This is where the moment links up with the instant: instants are retroactively and proactively placed from the vantage point of the moment. In the moment, the actor cuts out an aspect of the actualized event to counter-actualize, and projects it forward into an uncertain future. The instant and the moment thus presuppose each other, and the moment is always surrounded on either side by the instant. The moment is the point in the present through which the past is relayed into the future. Since I am arguing that the virtual event must touch down in the actual to be eternal, this relay through the moment is essential for the eternity of the event.

Deleuze calls the moment the "present of the aion representing the instant" (LS 168). This is a difficult claim for which I will offer an original reading (though there could certainly be
others). If the moment just goes on indefinitely, it is simply chronos; if it is instantaneous, it is simply aion. If the moment "represents" *(représente)* aion's instant in the present of chronos, it must be instantaneous in one sense, and in another sense, have duration. I suggest that it is instantaneous insofar as counter-actualization involves a decision, and a decision occurs in an instant. But carrying out a decision—going through the work of ushering something new into the world—is a process that takes time. Thus, the "third present" designates the time it takes to make and work out a counter-actualizing decision. I hope to show that this explanation has practical utility for describing the evolution of events, so long as we are careful to distinguish the sense of instantaneity involved in decision from the "constructed" instants described above.

### 2. The instant

In the opening pages of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze writes promisingly about "the eternity which belongs to an instant."[151] We read about “an instantaneity opposed to variation, and an eternity opposed to permanence.”[152] This single time contains “the infinite,” and marks a moment of "singularity" or "universality" opposed to the ordinary and general (DR 2–3, 8). But the reader who expects to find an account of this instantaneous eternity will be disappointed by *Difference and Repetition*. Deleuze discusses instants only in relation to the first synthesis of habit, while all his positive mentions of eternity pertain to the third synthesis or pure form of

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151 “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” (DR 8). Deleuze’s reference here is to Kierkegaard’s *Repetition*. Deleuze and Kierkegaard’s conceptions of eternity have interesting similarities. Kierkegaard argues that “eternity is the true repetition” (305), and that eternity is essentially identified with the future. But Kierkegaard is also a Christian, and several of the mentions of eternity in *Repetition* quite clearly link this “eternity” to salvation through the Christian God (229, 324). This religious orientation toward salvation distinguishes Kierkegaard from Deleuze, since for Deleuze, it is the event that is eternal, not the actor. 152 “If repetition exists, it expresses at once a singularity opposed to the general, a universality opposed to the particular, a distinctive opposed to the ordinary, an instantaneity opposed to variation, and an eternity opposed to permanence” (DR 2–3).
time. As he elaborates this pure form, Deleuze will even criticize Descartes for "reducing the Cogito to an instant" (DR 86). Aside from this, there remain a few references to the "intensive instant" that go unexplained (DR 145, 234). Nowhere do we find an explanation of why instants and eternity belong together.

In his next original work, *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze fills this conspicuous gap. Aion, one of the two readings of time along with chronos, is precisely the eternity which belongs to an instant. On one hand, aion is equated with the "pure empty form of time" (LS 165). It is thus identified with the event, and with eternity: "The event is that no one ever dies, but has always just died or is always going to die, in the empty present of the Aion, that is, in eternity" (LS 63). On the other hand, Deleuze consistently differentiates aion from chronos by differentiating the instant from the lived or extended present. This difference between two senses of the present is at the core of the two readings of time. It will later be rounded out with the "third present," or moment.

### 2.1 Two presents in Bergson

The distinction between an instantaneous present and an extended present had already been outlined by Bergson, among others.\(^{153}\) Bergson notes that there is the "ideal present," and there is the "real, concrete, live present" (MM 176). The ideal present is the instant. Bergson defines it as "the indivisible limit which separates past from future" (Ibid.). The instant is like a point of a line: it is a center of division, a locus for splitting the left side from the right, but it has no extension of its own. The ideal present is a "pure conception," and for Bergson, it "cannot

\(^{153}\) The tension between the instant and the extended present was already a recurring theme in ancient Greek thought: Deleuze cites Plato's *Parmenides*, and one could look at Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. In LS, Deleuze claims to be drawing these conceptions of time from Stoicism. But although there are interesting tensions in, for example, the surviving fragments on Chrysippus' theory of time, there is no real equivalent to the living present. Nor is there any indication he thought of time as having two dimensions. (See Sellars on Deleuze's appropriation of the Stoics.) This is why I use Bergson instead of the Stoics.
have real existence" (*The Creative Mind* 151). We will see why Bergson takes this position in the analysis of "concrete movement" below.

The other sense of the present identified by Bergson is the one he says we are familiar with from experience. This is the living present, or what Deleuze calls chronos; this was the sense of the present I began with in chapter three. If the instant is immediate, the present "necessarily occupies a duration" (MM 176). But this duration is variable: the essence of the living present is that it contracts and expands in accordance with our attention to what we are doing. If I get a phone call and someone asks what I am doing, I might say "I am working on my dissertation right now." Even though I am not actually working at the instant I give that answer, since I am talking, there is no falsehood involved. The "now" to which I am referring is a larger span of time that includes the smaller interval taken for the phone call. The already variable present can thus include within itself an indefinite number of other presents.

Bergson notes that when we combine the ideal instant and the living present, the instant splits the present into past and future:

[The] present necessarily occupies a duration. Where then is this duration placed? Is it on the hither or on the further side of the mathematical point which I determine ideally when I think of the present instant? Quite evidently, it is both on this side and on that; and what I call 'my present' has one foot in my past and another in my future. (MM 166–167)

The present has a foot in the past because even at the time I write or speak about it, the instant has already passed. And since the instant has passed before consciousness can even acknowledge it, we are already in the future even as we mark it in thought. If the living present allows us to reach back indefinitely into memory, the instant—that "infinitesimal element of the curve of time"—directs us toward the action of the future (Ibid.). However, both this past and this future co-exist within the extended present. This would seem to imply that any given instant of time can be both present and past, or both present and future, at the same time. But Bergson shies away
from this conclusion, since he denies that the instant has real existence.

2.2 Two readings of time in Deleuze

In *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze presents Bergson’s two presents as two independent “readings” of time as a whole: chronos and aion. Chronos contracts past and future into the present, while aion splits the present into past and future:

In the one case, the present is everything; the past and future indicate only the relative difference between two presents...In the other case, the present is nothing; it is a pure mathematical instant, a being of reason which expresses the past and future into which it is divided. (LS 62)

[This is] the most limited possible present which is the most precise and the most instantaneous, the pure instant grasped at the point at which it divides itself into future and past, and no longer the present of the world which would gather into itself the past and the future...One stops going from the greatest present toward a future and past which are said only of a smaller present; on the contrary, one goes from the future and past as unlimited, all the way to the smallest present of a pure instant which is endlessly subdivided. (LS 147)

On the evidence of the text, it seems reasonable to think that aion is the “eternity which belongs to an instant” that was promised in *Difference and Repetition*. The difficult task is to determine what that actually means. If "the present is nothing," then how can it "contain the infinite"? If the instant is a mere "being of reason," does that mean eternity is only in our heads? *Logic of Sense* does not offer clear answers to these kinds of questions. However, Deleuze discusses instants from a variety of perspectives throughout his corpus. My next task, then, will be to review other key discussions of instantaneity in *Difference and Repetition* and *Cinema* to see if these texts shed some light on the instant of aion.
2.3 Instants in *Difference and Repetition: the first synthesis*

Deleuze offers his first analysis of instants at the beginning of *Difference and Repetition*, chapter two. In his elaboration of the first synthesis of time, Deleuze argues that the living present is constituted through a contraction of successive instants. On its own, he says, "a succession of instants does not constitute time any more than it causes it to disappear" (DR 70). Given two instants, the second instant can only begin when the first one disappears. But time does not begin anew at every instant—and even if it did, what happens between times? There must be a source of the continuity between successive instants that we experience in the living present. In chapter three, I touched on the phenomenological account of how this temporal continuity arises through the protentive and retentive contractions of a subject (or God).

We can now add instants into this account, as Deleuze does in the first synthesis. In short, the continuity of the lived present is formed through what Deleuze calls a "passive" synthesis in which an organism "contracts the successive independent instants into one another, thereby constituting the lived, or living, present" (Ibid.). This contraction or passive synthesis has the function of homogenizing instants by gathering them within a common field of presence. In principle, Deleuze says, this present could be conceived as perpetual, "coextensive with time," like the eternal present of chronos: "it would be sufficient to consider contemplation applied to the infinite succession of instants" (DR 76). But Deleuze says here that such a present is not "physically possible."

I think there are problems with this account, but let us try to understand it before criticizing it. In the beginning, there is an "infinite succession" of instants laid out one after another like a straight line (DR 76). Then an organism comes along and draws together a certain interval of these instants into a present of a certain duration (a segment of the line). It might be
more plausible to say that contraction precedes division into instants, but this is not what Deleuze says: for him, the living present is really “constituted” by gathering together “independent” instants into a duration. This duration retains past instants and anticipates future instants, albeit only insofar as those pasts and futures are contained in the present. Deleuze therefore says that the first synthesis is the "for-itself" of repetition, meaning that two successive events (e.g., the tick-tock of a clock hand) can only be thought as the repetition of a single case against the backdrop of the homogeneous time projected through contraction (DR 72). It is not the contraction of the repetitive cases themselves that constitutes time, but rather "a fusion of that repetition in the contemplating mind" (DR 74). This is why, as Deleuze had also argued in *Proust and Signs*, there is an "originary subjectivity" that enters into the constitution of time (DR 70).

Lampert does not read this section so straightforwardly. He presents Deleuze's argument as a "critique of individuated instants," or even a "reductio against instants" (*Philosophy of History* 15, 27). On Lampert's reading, instants do not pre-exist the contraction of the passive synthesis but are constituted within that contraction as points of division between the present, past, and future. Instants are "non-originary and non-eschatological constructions that the present retroactively and proactively targets as elements in order to interpret itself." (15) If the present is a contraction of multiple times, it contains multiplicity. When we focus on a certain event in the past or future, we divide up this multiplicity at a certain point. The instant is this point of division, an indivisible limit between past and future. On this reading, instants are like the "shining points" in *Matter and Memory* that give us a specific point of insertion for our leaps into the past.\footnote{See chapter two, section two.} I will return to this sense of instantaneity later, for this is precisely the sense that is
operative in my definition of eternity as the delay between instant and moment.

If Deleuze is not openly critiquing instants in the text, he certainly relies on them too much, and too simplistically. On what basis could we define time as an "infinite succession of instants" (DR 76)? Does the infinity here derive from the perpetuity of time, or from the limitless divisibility of time, or both? If it is the former, Deleuze is offering a cosmo logical thesis that would require more support. But if instants are infinitely small, then it would be hard to understand those claims where Deleuze straightforwardly quantifies them. Deleuze says, for example, that two successive presents can be "contemporaneous" with a third present that is "more extended by virtue of the number of instants it contains" (DR 77). But how do we isolate instants so that they can be counted? How do we measure them, if contraction constitutes the continuous time in which measure becomes possible?

In sum, Deleuze's account of the relation between living present and instant creates a number of problems on its way to solving others. But it does leave us with two valuable points that will be important when we turn to Logic of Sense. The first is that the ontological status of the instant must be different than that of the living present if there can be any sense to the claim that instants "precede" time. This suggests the sharp division between chronos and aion—except that there is no succession in aion, which alters the whole model.

The second point takes us beyond the simplistic conception of instants as points on a line, which is a model borrowed from space. For Deleuze, instants must always be thought across a delay, namely, the delay between the first appearance of a case and the first repetition of that case. The ultimate "case," of course, will be the event itself. The event first appears in time when it is actualized, but this actualization must be repeated—"doubled," as Deleuze says (LS 161)—by a counter-actualization that propels the actualized event back into the virtual. The instant is
the slice of the event we cut out to carry forward. In the account I develop later, we pick out that retroactively determined instant from the standpoint of the moment, creating a necessary delay between instant and moment.

In the next chapter, we will see how this delay takes a different turn in the interval between the moment and the future instant. If the past instant is a "cut," the future instant is like an “x” that marks the spot at which we plan to "paste" our chosen piece of event. Despite this difference, it is the same delay that is suspended between the past instant and moment, on the one hand, and the moment and the future instant, on the other hand. In the heat of the moment, the event pulls the present in both directions at once. This is how I will interpret Deleuze's insistent claim, in Logic of Sense, that the instant of aion splits the present of chronos into past and future.155

3. Instants in Cinema 1

Deleuze's most expansive discussion of instants is not found in Difference and Repetition or Logic of Sense, but in a much later work. In the 1980s, Deleuze wrote two volumes on the philosophy of cinema that are both filled with rich ruminations on time. The first of these, Cinema 1, begins with a discussion of instants and their relation to movement. The immediate point of this discussion is to provide a temporal model for conceptualizing "motion pictures," which are (or used to be, before digital video) composed of instantaneous frames run in sequence to create the appearance of continuous movement. The frames are real, but Deleuze follows Bergson in arguing that instants themselves are "illusions" or constructions. Reviewing this section of Cinema will thus illuminate the sense of instantaneity I use in my definition of

155 See chapter two, section 2e for an analytic dissection of this splitting.
eternity.

3.1 Movement and immobile sections

Deleuze frames the discussion in *Cinema 1* as a reading of Bergson. He analyzes three "theses on movement" that are attributed to Bergson. I am not interested here in whether these are really Bergsonian claims, but in what they tell us about Deleuze's late position on instants. This is not because Bergson is not important; on the contrary, I devoted much of chapter two to his early work. But Bergson's mature philosophy of duration is too complex to do justice to in this space.

The first Bergsonian thesis extracted by Deleuze involves two related claims. First, "movement is distinct from the space covered" (C1 1). The space covered in movement is infinitely divisible, but movement is "indivisible" in the sense that it cannot be divided without changing qualitatively. The second claim is that "you cannot reconstitute movement with positions in space or instants in time, that is, with immobile sections" (Ibid.). In order to constitute movement, there must be "added" to the instants "a time which is mechanical, homogeneous, universal, and copied from space" (Ibid.). This homogeneous time is nothing more than "the abstract idea of a succession" (Ibid.). This argument begins as the first synthesis does, by constructing time through the combination of successive instants and a universal time that encompasses or contracts the instants. But the first synthesis gave us a living present, a present intimately bound to the vital rhythms of organisms, while here we get nothing more than the abstract idea of a present copied from space. Nevertheless, it is notable that it is the extended present which Deleuze describes as "abstract," rather than the instants from which that present is constructed.
Homogeneous time "misses movement" in two ways (Ibid.). First, as Bergson argued, we cannot make a flowing movement out of discrete points: "You can bring two instants or two positions together to infinity; but movement will always occur in the interval between" the instants (Ibid.). Instants are discrete, but if movement is indivisible, then it must be genuinely continuous across times. So the second claim is that, however finely we divide time, "movement will always occur in a concrete duration" (Ibid.). In his account of the first synthesis, Deleuze had argued that the concrete durations of different organisms varied according to the number of instants they contracted. But here, "concrete" duration seems to be independent of the instants that we can divide it up with: "each movement will have its own qualitative duration" (Ibid.).

3.2 Privileged instants and any-instant-whatevers

In the second Bergsonian thesis, Deleuze introduces a distinction between two types of instants: "privileged" instants and "any-instant-whatevers" (les instants quelconques) (C1 3). This is a more explicitly temporal version of the distinction in Logic of Sense between singular points and ordinary points. (Difference and Repetition also contains a passing reference to the "privileged instant.") In Cinema 1, Deleuze says that it is an illusion to reconstitute movement from either type of instant. The instants themselves are illusions. But they are "at least two very different illusions," Deleuze says, and useful in different ways (C1 3).

Deleuze differentiates the two types of instant with a sweeping reference to the difference between ancient and modern thought. For ancient thinkers, Deleuze alleges, movement is referred to "intelligible elements, Forms or Ideas which are themselves eternal and immobile" (C1 4). The Platonic idea is a privileged instant, or "pose" (Ibid.). Insofar as eternal forms direct

156 "Repetition...is formed...from one distinctive point to another, from one privileged instant to another" (DR 17).
the becoming of beings toward their teleological ends, the forms are like frozen images that the changing particulars try to imitate on their own terms. Movement becomes “the regulated transition from one” privileged instant to another (Ibid.). We can think of Greek sculpture as an example here. Greek artists wanted to represent human beings at what was thought to be their best, so they built images of strong men and women frozen in eternal poses. To break up duration according to poses is to stamp being on becoming and affirm the temporal precedence of essences over their instances. For Deleuze, however, this precedence is an illusion determined retroactively: in essence, we go backwards in time and say that we were working up to the pose all along.

Deleuze argues that the second type of instant, the any-instant-whatever, was a product of modern science. The any-instant-whatever is still an illusion insofar as it implies movement can be "recomposed" from non-mobile elements, but it is an illusion that fits better into a world where nearly everything is quantifiable. Here, movement is reconstituted not through "formal transcendental elements" like Platonic ideas, but "from immanent material elements (sections)" (C1 4). The “transcendental” sense of the instant is identified with the pose (Ibid.). To modify the previous example, if I am an athlete training for years to achieve “peak condition,” then I can say it was a certain imagined pose—say, me flexing in the mirror and looking as tough as Arnold Schwarzenegger—that guided me through the changes. Schwarzenegger is the transcendent point of perfect actualization, the poster on the wall I want to approximate without being frozen in place. Conversely, I might continuously train for the sake of staying healthy without worrying about a stopping point or end-state. From this “immanent” perspective, instants are sliced out of the time I am passing through, and do not formally pre-exist the moment of their own appearance. “I look pretty fit right now,” I might say to myself spontaneously, but not
necessarily because I have reached a pre-ordained peak.

Deleuze argues that the outcome of the shift from “transcendentally” constructed instants to “immanently” constructed instants is that we begin to see time as a "mechanical succession of instants," rather than a "dialectical order of poses" (Ibid.). In the light of Deleuze’s other works, it is surprising that immanence should be associated with quantitative and homogenous succession. But Deleuze seems to use the concept in a weak sense here: what is immanent is what is picked out of time within time. He goes on to give various scientific examples of the mechanical homogenization of instants, including Cartesian geometry, which allows us to determine "the position of a point of a moving straight line at any moment in its course" (Ibid.). (Note that this is not a technical use of moment by Deleuze.) This movement can be plotted, unlike the movement of Bergson's concrete duration. But what makes the difference?

3.3 Any-instant-whatevers and any-moment-whatevers

Although Deleuze begins by opposing the privileged instant to the any-instant-whatever, he proceeds to argue that the any-instant-whatever may also be privileged. The point that is the any-instant-whatever can be, recasting the terms of Logic of Sense, an ordinary point or a singular point. In Logic of Sense, Deleuze says on several occasions that a singular point “stretches” itself out “over the whole line of ordinary and regular points which depend on it, but which also dilute and divert it” (LS 76). In practice, this means that there are crucial turning points, or thresholds of change, within events that stand out as definitive markers of those events. The American Civil Rights Movement, for example, had many small struggles, but we tend to remember the major or singular moments: Rosa Parks refusing to change seats on the bus, or Dr. King giving his “I have a dream” speech. All the other moments in the progression of the event
come to be defined by these crucial turning points—especially, as I will later argue, in retrospect.¹⁵⁷ Those same regular points, over the course of time, begin to “dilute” the singular moments in the sense that the original victories become more and more entrenched, thus less shocking or radical. In this way, there is a kind of entropy to the event.¹⁵⁸

Deleuze’s division of the singular and ordinary is not fundamentally different in Cinema. However, the description of singular and ordinary points in Logic of Sense is presented in spatial terms: points and lines. Cinema works in temporal terms, and explicitly connects “points” to instants:

The privileged instants of Eisenstein, or of any other director, are still any-instant-whatevers; to put it simply, the any-instant-whatever can be regular or singular, ordinary or remarkable...Now this production of singularities (the qualitative leap) is achieved by the accumulation of banalities (quantitative process), so that the singular is taken from the any-whatever, and is itself an any-whatever which is simply non-ordinary and non-regular. (C1 6)

Deleuze's key example here is, naturally, the cinema. Before digital cameras, the moving pictures we saw on screen were produced by projecting an extremely rapid succession of "photogrammes" or frames one after another at equidistant intervals. Cinema can thus be "defined" as "the system which reproduces movement by relating it to the any-instant-whatever," where the frames stand in for instants (C1 6). And yet, Deleuze suggests that cinema "thrives" on the privileged instant. This could be the climax of a sports documentary—the instant when the basketball falls through the hoop right as the timeclock strikes zero—or a moment of perfect tranquility at the quiet heart of an Andrei Tarkovsky project. Either way, Deleuze's point is that the privileged instant is privileged not because it imitates a pre-determined image, but because of its immanent position relative to all the other instants which compose the film. The medium of

¹⁵⁷ See section 3f–3e of this chapter on the retrospective function of instantaneous “points.”
¹⁵⁸ On Deleuze’s use of the concept of entropy in relation to the arrow of time, see DR 318.
film as such is composed of any-instant-whatevers; the aesthetic challenge of directors is to evoke and distribute singular instants that stand out from those beside them.

How does the distinction between privileged and ordinary instants account for the possibility of measuring concrete movement? Deleuze's answer is somewhat ambivalent: he claims that Bergson hesitated between two approaches. The first approach is to maintain that movement cannot be reconstituted through instants, whatever kind of instants they might be. Real movement is possible only if "the whole is neither given nor givable" (C1 7). But if we define the whole as an "eternal order of forms" or "set of any-instant-whatevers," then either "time is no more than the image of eternity, or it is the consequence of the set" (C1 7). In either case, there is no room left for "real" movements—like a dance. Of course, Plato and other classical thinkers who believed in ideal essences did not deny that people move around when dancing. Deleuze’s point seems to be that for these thinkers, the movements themselves are simply delays between static poses. A dance becomes a “regulated transition from one form to another, that is, an order of poses” (C1 4). The Platonist is like the impatient moviegoer who just wants to fast forward to the good parts.

In any case, Deleuze claims that Bergson's work opens up another approach:

If the ancient conception corresponds closely to ancient philosophy, which aims to think the eternal, the modern conception, modern science, calls upon another philosophy. When one relates movement to any-moment-whatevers, one must be capable of thinking the production of the new, that is, of the remarkable and the singular, at any one of these moments: this is a complete conversion of philosophy. (C1 7)

There is a subtle textual shift here, almost imperceptible: instead of referring to any-instant-whatevers (les instants quelconques), Deleuze refers to any-moment-whatevers (des moments quelconques). Perhaps the two terms are identical, and this shift means nothing. Or perhaps it is significant that this shift occurs right at the point where Deleuze invokes a "complete conversion
of philosophy" born from thinking "the production of the new" (C1 7). The text, unfortunately, does not offer us the resources to decide either way. In the second half of this chapter, however, I will argue that we should differentiate between the instant and moment. In *Cinema*, Deleuze makes moments sound like privileged instants, and this is *not* the interpretation of moments I argue for. As I have suggested above, the moment (in my original sense) is the point from which we reach back to past presents and cut out events; privileged instants are the dotted lines for this cutting. This cutting process is what takes the actualized potential of an event and counter-actualizes it, thus effectuating the "doubling" required for the "production of the new."

**3.4 Freeze frames**

Let us briefly conclude this look at *Cinema 1*. The third Bergsonian thesis is that movement expresses a qualitative change in the whole of time, which is determined here as duration. This thesis is complex, but in short, Deleuze distinguishes three levels of time. First, there are "sets" or closed systems defined by objects and their distinct parts. Sets are "in space" (C1 11). Deleuze says that “the instant [is] an immobile section of movement,” and that the “parts” of closed sets are immobile sections. (Ibid.) So, temporally speaking, the "parts" of sets are instants, which Deleuze also calls “instantaneous images” (Ibid.). If a set is like a single shot in film, the instant is like a single still frame cut out of that shot.

Here, then, an instant is no more than a freeze-frame of an actual extended arrangement of objects. It is more spatial than temporal: if sets are in space, "the whole, the wholes are in duration, are duration itself" (C1 11). The whole at the third temporal level (duration) is defined as a "spiritual reality which constantly changes" (Ibid.). In between, at the second level, are the movements of "translation" which simultaneously express the modifications of the positions of
objects and the corresponding qualitative state of the whole (Ibid.). This tripartite structure yields a Bergsonian model familiar from chapter two: the virtual whole is actualized in particular parts, the modifications in the parts reflect on the whole, and novelty is born between the two movements.

3.5 Evaluation

There are many points one could expand upon in these imaginative readings of Bergson. For my part, I want to consider four objections to the account of instants Deleuze develops in Cinema 1. First, how do we pick out the privileged instant in an event? A dance is obviously not instantaneous, so we have to cut it up somewhere. Should we count the moment a dance begins as the privileged instant? This seems like an artificial solution, and not one that Deleuze or Bergson would endorse, since "the essence of a thing never appears at the outset, but in the middle" (C1 3). So we have to take the immanent approach to instants, which means picking out the privileged or singular instants (I take these to mean the same thing) as they impress themselves on us, or through retrospective discussion and interpretation. Even then, it will remain true that many singular moments in film, and in life, are not instantaneous. But I do not think Deleuze was committed to this implausible claim, which is why I argue for a sense of instants as constructions imposed on time.

Following on this, the second objection is that the context of the discussion is too narrow. Deleuze's reinterpretation of Bergson clearly has its virtues for the analysis of cinema. But these same virtues can make it difficult to evaluate the account as a theory of time. It is tempting to suppose that there is an analogy between the constitution of film and the constitution of perception: we construct continuity by overlaying a continuous duration onto a succession of
evenly divided instants. But Deleuze makes it clear that "natural perception and cinematographic perception are qualitatively different" (C1 2). Film "immediately gives us a movement-image," while the "illusion" of continuity being constructed from instants "is corrected 'above' [natural] perception by the conditions which make perception possible in the subject" (Ibid.). Deleuze seems to refer here to the conditions of the passive synthesis, namely, a homogeneous form of succession that contracts past and future instants. Such a form is unnecessary in film, where "the image appears for a spectator without conditions" (Ibid.). But does it really seem plausible that film presents us with an unconditional image, while natural perception is beholden to certain conditions? Is not the perception of a screen, after all, a natural perception?

If the analogy between perception and film is a false analogy, then we need to resist the identification between the instant and the photogramme or photograph. The third objection, then, is that the frame is too big for the instant. If we press pause on a single frame of film, we get an image that is perceivable, thinkable, affective, and so on. But one of Deleuze's favorite descriptions of aion's instant in *Logic of Sense* presents it as "smaller than the minimum of continuous thinkable time" (LS 63). The instant, he says, is a pure point of division, infinitely dividing and subdividing continuous time. The smallest measurement of time in contemporary physics is referred to as the Planck time or Planck unit, which is the time it takes for light to travel one Planck length; this is calculated as $5.39 \times 10^{-44}$ seconds. If this is the "minimum of continuous thinkable time," then Deleuze's instant would have to be even smaller.

There is obviously no way for Deleuze to make such a determination with any meaning. For Deleuze to make the distinction between privileged and ordinary instants intelligible, he needs a firmer division between duration and instantaneity as such. They should not overlap, such that we are stuck in the impossible position of trying to measure instants. This division is
precisely what we will get with the two readings of time in *Logic of Sense*. The second reading, aion, gives us an account of instants in which they are seen not as times, but limits on time, or cuts between times.

The final objection concerns the place of space in this account. The half of Deleuze indebted to Bergson argues that instants are an illusion produced by the spatialization of time—a mere freeze-frame of a perception-image that has unfolded a section of duration. Bergson, like Kant, suggests that space is present all at once. Bergson thinks this makes space a homogeneous field, and this belief underpins his arguments about the derivative character of clock time. But the other half of Deleuze criticizes Bergson on precisely this point in *Difference and Repetition*. In that work, what Bergson says about concrete duration—that it cannot be divided quantitatively without changing qualitatively—is said about intensity. But intensive magnitudes (degrees) are magnitudes of the “pure *spatium*”—pure space, not pure time. Pure intensive space, far from being homogeneous, is the “form of difference” (DR 222). Singularities are as much spatial as they are temporal.

It would, in further research, be very fruitful to examine the relation between the pure form of time and what Deleuze calls pure space. Deleuze's passing reference to “the intensive instant” suggests that the instant would have a key role to play here (DR 234). But his account of intensity is complex and, more to the point, seems entirely absent in *Logic of Sense*. I will therefore keep the focus on Deleuze's philosophy of time. And it is clear that *Cinema 1* leaves us with many questions, not only about the status of the instant, but about what the instant might have to do with eternity. The key to answering these questions will be to explore the difference between the instant and the moment, as well as the role the latter plays in the production of the

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159 See DR 239: “This is why the Bergsonian critique of intensity seems unconvincing...”
new.

4. The moment

Throughout this dissertation, I have been defining eternity as the delay between the instant and the moment. So, how do I define the moment? In the terms of Logic of Sense, the moment (moment) "represents" the instant of aion in the present of chronos. By translation, the moment represents eternity in time. In at least two places, Deleuze identifies eternity and the moment (or "empty present") directly (LS 63, NP xii). In my reading of this concept, the moment arises when an actor makes a decision in the present to counter-actualize an event, producing transformational effects that extend into the past and future. Each of the pieces of this definition will be given an explanation in this section.

The basic picture that emerges is one where a present moment is surrounded on either side by instants. These instants are not real times (they do not exist); they are limits retroactively and proactively imposed on continuous time from the perspective of the present moment. These limits are imposed because, to counter-actualize events, we have to cut out certain facets of the events and paste them at a certain projected point in the future. The retroactively assigned instant is the cutting point; the futural "x" that marks the spot is where we "paste" what was cut out. The delay between the instant and the moment is suspended between these instants in the past-future of aion, but it must—so I will argue—touch down in the present moment.

4.1 The instant and the moment

It needs to first be established that there is a genuine distinction between the instant and the moment in Deleuze. If there is no Deleuzian distinction between the instant and moment,
how can I define eternity through that difference? No doubt, both of these terms have multiple
senses in Deleuze’s work, and Deleuze uses them inconsistently (even mixing them up!) But he
also sets them specifically in opposition to each other, forming a specific and irreducible
difference that matters more than the slippery signification of the words used.

We saw above how, in Cinema 1, Deleuze switches from writing about des instants
quelconques to des moments quelconques at precisely the point where he invokes “the
production of the new, that is, of the remarkable and the singular, at any one of these moments:
this is a complete conversion of philosophy” (C1 7). Elsewhere, in a lecture, Deleuze connects
the moment to the Greek term kairos, which refers to the opportune time to do something:
“Intervene at the right moment, seize the opportunity, be the man of kairos.”¹⁶¹ This usage
echoes English expressions like “moment of truth” or “critical moment.” In relation to Cinema, it
would designate the singular moment of counter-actualizing a nascent event and, thereby,
preserving its novelty for future generations. (“Kairos” is also used by philosophers from Badiou
to Agamben in connection with radical politics.)¹⁶²

But it is in Logic of Sense that the distinction assumes its full significance. It is
impossible to understand one of the most crucial passages on time in the book if we do not make
this distinction. I quote this passage at length here for the purpose of analysis:

The notion of the present therefore has several meanings: the measureless or dislocated
present as the time of depth and subversion [bad chronos]; the variable and measured
present as the time of actualization [good chronos]. But there is perhaps yet another
present. How could there be a measurable actualization, unless a third present prevented
it constantly from falling into subversion?...It would seem, no doubt, that the aion cannot
have any present at all, since in it the instant is always dividing into future and past. But
this is only an appearance. What is excessive in the event must be accomplished, even

¹⁶¹ From the Vincennes lecture on December 20, 1983. Available at http://www2.univ-
paris8.fr/deleuze/article.php3?id_article=276
¹⁶² For more on “kairos” in contemporary French philosophy, see Calcagano as well as “Nihilism, Revolt, and the
Spectacle” by Bulent Diken.
though it may not be realized or actualized without ruin. Between the two presents of chronos...there is a third, there must be a third, pertaining to the aion. In fact, the instant...must itself be represented...This present of the aion representing the instant is not at all like the vast and deep present of chronos: it is the present without thickness, the present of the actor, dancer, or mime—the pure perverse “moment.” (LS 168)

Having defined two senses of the present earlier in the book (chronos and “bad chronos” or “becoming-mad”), Deleuze now wants to articulate a “third present.” Deleuze says this is a present of eternity (aion), a present “pertaining to” eternity. Specifically, the third present represents the instantaneous eternity of aion: “the instant...must itself be represented,” and so we need this new concept, “this present of the aion representing the instant.” He concludes by identifying this third present with the moment: “the present without thickness, the present of the actor, dancer, or mime—the pure perverse ‘moment’” (LS 168). While “moment” is not always used in a temporal sense for Deleuze, it clearly does have a temporal sense here, where it is opposed to the instant.

At the same time, it must be emphasized that Deleuze himself is not always consistent with these terms in Logic of Sense. For example, he says that the actor’s present is “the most instantaneous” and that the actor “maintains himself in the instant in order to act out something perpetually anticipated and delayed” (LS 147). If the moment represents the instant of aion in the present, Deleuze should have said that the actor is positioned in the moment, not the instant. Similarly, he writes elsewhere of the “mobile instant which represents” the event; in the passage quoted above, the instant was represented rather than being the representative (LS 151). But this is far from the only terminological inconsistency in Logic of Sense, and many concepts develop over the course of that book: Deleuze begins by distinguishing two readings of time, for example, and it is not until the twenty-third chapter that he corrects himself by distinguishing...
aion from “bad” chronos. Lampert has noted similar inconsistencies with Deleuze’s concept of the object = x. In my view, we can either take these inconsistencies to mean that the concepts in question are senseless, or we can try to sharpen the senses to generate differences. I opt for the latter approach, if for no other reason than that Deleuze’s “third present” needs a name.

4.2 The moment in Nietzsche

If we were able to trace the origin of Deleuze’s use of “moment,” that would certainly help to clarify the situation. After all, Deleuze does put the term in quotes in the passage discussed above. The term “moment” has various meanings for different continental philosophers. But it is possible that Nietzsche was the source of Deleuze’s concept of the moment. The relevant passage comes from Thus Spoke Zarathustra:

Behold this gateway, dwarf! It has two faces. Two paths meet here; no one has yet followed either to its end. This long lane stretches back for an eternity. And the long lane out there, that is another eternity. They contradict each other, these paths; they offend each other face to face; and it is here at this gateway that they come together. The name of the gateway is inscribed above: 'Moment.' (157–158)

Nietzsche offers us an image where the moment (augenblick in German) is a "gateway" between two paths. It is evident that these two paths are the past and future: one path "stretches back for an eternity," while the other—the "long lane out there"—is "another eternity." Just as in Deleuze,

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164 In the opening chapters of the book, Deleuze distinguishes two readings of time. Later, he corrects himself, suggesting that in the original opposition, chronos could have been opposed either to “bad chronos” or aion because they were not sufficiently differentiated. See LS 164–165: “At the outset of this study, we were able to proceed as if...”

165 See Lampert, “Power of Decision,” footnote 16 (275). Deleuze mixes up the object = x with the x “common to all worlds” (115).

166 In continental thought, the term is associated with Hegel, where a moment is a non-separable stage of a logical development. In Sebastian Gardner’s terms, the Hegelian moment is “an essential but partial aspect, a stage, a part of a whole. A moment is therefore not necessarily temporal” (Gardner, “Glossary”). This sense of the term has little to do with the event, for events do not admit of division into parts and wholes. The same considerations apply to Husserl, who separates “parts” into separable “pieces” and non-separable “moments” (Sokolowski 95). Kierkegaard, whom I discuss in note 150 above, is another possible source.
aion or eternity is the past-future. Situated between the eternal paths of past and future is the present that opens onto both. As in Deleuze's *Logic of Sense*, the present is split into past and future: the gateway has "two faces." And even though the past and future "contradict each other," since the future integrates events that were unactualized in the past, it is within the empty present that they both subsist. Nietzsche will go on, in this chapter of *Zarathustra*, to further explain his concept of the gateway-moment in terms of his theory of eternal return. The eternal return is also crucial in Deleuze's theory of eternity. However, as I will argue next chapter, it is questionable whether Deleuze's version of eternal return really resembles that of Nietzsche. Thus, I will continue to explicate the moment by focusing on Deleuze's discussions.

4.3 A third present

If the concept of the moment is operative in Deleuze, it is certainly underexplained. Yet it is also, in my view, crucial for understanding his theory of time. My strategy for overcoming this impasse is to present this section on the moment as a kind of methodological pivot point, just as the moment itself is a pivot point between the past and future of an event. That is, I will expand on Deleuze’s brief invocations of the moment by linking it with several concepts that have already been explicated in detail earlier in this dissertation: the meanwhile, singular points, incorporeal transformations, cutting, and the pure past. All of these concepts were discussed for a reason, and the discussion of the moment, because of its central place in the relay of an eternal event, provides a nice opportunity to bring these disparate ideas together. I begin with some basic definitions.

The moment is a third present, Deleuze says, to be confused with neither the extended present nor the punctual instant. A moment represents an instant, but it is not an instant. How do
we interpret this claim? By "represent" (*représente*), Deleuze clearly means more than that we simply form a mental image or concept of the instant, or of something that happened in an instant. Deleuze says in *Logic of Sense* that the event forms "on the edges" of representation, or within a "crack" in representation, suggesting that thinking it directly is always going to leave something out.¹⁶⁷ To bring it into the living present, then, must mean that we re-present it as something objective in the sense discussed last chapter: something present but irreducible to presence, like a parcel too big for its container. I offer two complementary interpretations of how this claim might accordingly be read.

First, that the instant is represented in the moment means that the actor is taking a present that is past and re-presenting it, or bringing it back in the present moment, to counter-actualize the event that was already actualized. This redundancy—between presence and re-presentation, actualization and counter-actualization—is internal to the structure of the event, which is why Deleuze frequently refers to counter-actualization as a doubling (*LS* 161, 168). As in my reading of Deleuze's first synthesis above, instants must therefore be constituted across a delay. In this case, the delay is between the past present that the retrospectively assigned instant carves up and the actual placement of that instant from the present moment.

There is another way to read Deleuze's claim, however; this second reading complements the first, though they assign different roles to the instant. If the moment just goes on indefinitely, it is simply chronos; if it is instantaneous, it is simply aion. If there is a "third" present, it must be formed through a dialectical resolution: the moment is instantaneous in one sense, and in another sense, it has duration. It is instantaneous insofar as counter-actualization involves a decision, and a decision occurs in an instant. But carrying out a decision—going through the work of ushering

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¹⁶⁷ See chapter 22 in *LS*, "Porcelain and Volcano." This odd text on time and the breakdown ("crack-up") of the apparently healthy life is an underappreciated gem in Deleuze.
something new into the world and leaving signs of this work for future actors to pick up on—is a process that takes time. So the third present designates the time it takes to work out a counter-actualizing decision.

To recall an earlier example of mine, a woman who finds a wolf cub in the woods might decide to start a shelter for wounded wild animals. But if she does not go through with her plan, there was no event, just a virtual potentiality left untapped. If she does go through with it, then the retroactively determined point of actualization for the event would be the finding of the original cub; it is this instant in time that we would call, looking back, the beginning of the novelty she brought into the world. Conversely, there is often no fixed ending point for an event when we are still in the process of defining it: the proactively determined instant is like an uncertain x that marks a potential future repetition of the event. What could be a better outcome of this woman’s actions than for someone else to build their own shelter? I expand on this futural sense of the instant in the following chapter.

What makes the extended moment different than mere chronos is that it creates a discontinuity in the flow of continuous modifications (chronos). To build up her shelter, the woman might think back on different lessons learned at various points in her life, stringing together those non-contiguous moments around the singular new problem of caring for wild animals. Moreover, the moment itself is not continuous like chronos because the realization of a counter-actualizing decision is often broken up into disconnected times as a simple matter of practice. I have been writing this dissertation for four years, but I have also slept once or twice during that process. Not all discontinuous occurrences are events, of course; an event is unique because even as it is broken up into segments within chronos, the whole of the event remains in

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168 See the last section of chapter four.
communication with distant futures and pasts insofar as they are both determinative of, and determined by, their virtual integration into the ongoing event. For example, I flatter myself that I am producing a small ripple in the philosophical understanding of eternity with this dissertation. If I am successful, that ripple will intersect with the much larger waves of Plato or Spinoza’s eternity in the great philosophical puddle that gathers outside of time.

Ultimately, the sense of discontinuity proper to the moment pertains to what Deleuze will call the totality of time (discussed in chapter six). That is, the gap or discontinuity in question is not just between past and future (e.g., before and after finding the cub), but between the past arrangement of virtual relations as a whole and a future arrangement of those relations: a world with wild animal recovery shelters has something new and repeatable to integrate. The moment, then, is the gap between a time that exists as a totality and the repetition of that totality in a world that puts a new face on it.

4.4 Action and decision: from objective time to virtual time

In the chapter on objective time, I used Baugh’s reading of Sartre to establish a connection between delay, action, and freedom. The argument was that every free action implies a delay between the decision to act and the outcome of the act. That delay, I argued, is represented within the present by what Deleuze calls the other-structure, or structure of the possible, insofar as the latter presents us with all the alternative perspectives on objects we see from a certain point of view. The delay also gave us a concept of objective time, which I characterized as a time where the other can get in the way of my plans. This argument contributed to the larger goal of the chapter, which was to demonstrate that the subject can effectuate cross-temporal changes in the incorporeal transformation because the objective past-
future really subsists in the present.

What I am now calling the moment can be precisely identified as the point of decision for a freely enacted counter-actualization. If the objective past-future subsists in the present, this provides an ontological ground for the intervention of aion’s instant into the present of chronos. And the delay between the moment of decision and the outcome of a decision becomes the delay between the moment and the instant of an event’s future re-actualization. But this final move implies a shift in focus that reorients us from objective time to virtual time.

First, it is not necessarily the case that every free action is tied to a counter-actualization. On the contrary, I have been defending an account where events are relatively rare. The concept of the moment encompasses only those decisions which specifically involve the recognition and repetition of events. Secondly, however, the outcome of a decision for the one who makes it does not necessarily correlate with the future repetition of the event that the actor decides to counter-actualize. In other words, one can counter-actualize an event by accident. Erwin Schrödinger intended his famous description of a cat that is both dead and alive (in a state of quantum superposition) to be a refutation of a certain physical theory (the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics), and yet “Schrödinger’s cat” is now often cited as the key example to illustrate that theory.169 The strange event of 20th-century quantum mechanics had its most memorable moment courtesy of a man swept up in a wave of theory larger than himself.

Following from this de-emphasis on the individual, the significance of the other-structure and the objective time it represents also fades to the periphery. It is undoubtedly true that other people can get in the way of my attempt to repeat an event, just as they can with any other event. But the priority of the event over the subject also means that the event may be repeated at any

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169 On all these subjects, see Gribbin, *In Search of Schrödinger’s Cat*. 
appropriate point in the future with or without my contributions; this is why the event is eternal, but the subject, as I have maintained, is not. This has an interesting corollary: if it happens that I assume the role of an actor who counter-actualizes an event, and I am also present when the event is actualized anew at some future point, these two “I”s will exist in an entirely different world. I exist now, when the consequences of the event are not clear; my future self subsists in a world that has not only felt the effects of that event, but integrated them into the continuity of chronos. But if my future self subsists in a different world than the world in which I exist now, there is little reason to identify that future “I” with the “I” I am now. What is an actor that is not transformed by her own event? We can therefore say, adapting Sartre, that the actor effectuating a counter-actualization is setting up a rendezvous with her future self.\textsuperscript{170}

The transition from objective time to virtual time thus involves a de-emphasis of the subject’s intentions and the interference of the other-structure. Our problem will no longer be to trace through time the particular line of decision a subject wants to follow to some outcome. Instead, the problem will be to understand the virtual co-existence of all the future’s lines. In virtual time, as I will argue at length next chapter, it is no longer just a matter of divergent perspectives on a common unfolding world; it is a matter of different worlds distributed in a virtual pluriverse.\textsuperscript{171} The future will be characterized not by one objective time, but by many incompatible times which cross and intercross at singular evental points. The delay between a decision and its outcome will be set free of the linear timeline, and in its free traversal through the virtual past-future, be detoured through all of history before it finds its way back to the actual. Or it may never find its way back.

\textsuperscript{170} In Sartre’s War Diaries, 222. Cited in Lampert, Many Futures 38.
\textsuperscript{171} See C2 102 on “a plurality of worlds constituting the universe. It would be a pluralist cosmology, where there are not only different worlds (as in Minelli), but where one and the same event is played out in these different worlds, in incompatible versions.”
4.5 Evental transformation

We are still pivoting: there is another concept that must be repeated and made different. In this chapter, I am associating the moment with the notion of the incorporeal transformation that I discussed in detail last chapter. The theory of incorporeal transformations and continuous modifications was Deleuze and Guattari’s restatement of the theory of chronos and aion, so it is appropriate to associate the concept of the moment with the incorporeal transformation. The moment is discontinuous in the same way the incorporeal transformation is discontinuous: it has cross-temporal effects that interrupt the continuity of duration’s straight line to qualitatively redefine the whole. The moment is not outside of duration, but as the site of an event, it overreaches duration: the opportunity afforded by an event effectuates a nonlinear point of communication between pasts and futures, just as the incorporeal transformation redefined the sense of the world.

With the shift from objective time to virtual time, however, fractures appear in the links between these concepts. The incorporeal transformation is presented as a kind of speech-act by Deleuze and Guattari: the minister says, “I now pronounce you…”, and a marriage is enacted. But not all counter-actualization must be accomplished through language. Furthermore, just as not all free actions are counter-actualizing, not all incorporeal transformations create something new. The judge who sentences a young man to death is not shepherding something formerly unseen into the world; rather, his words serve to take someone out of that world.

Once again, we must say that the event effectuates a unique type of incorporeal transformation, one where the new meaning given to the world is still implicated and interpretable, and still holds a potential for future development. Evental counter-actualization need not be linguistic, but the counter-actualized event can always be given a proper name (since
it is unique), and the meaning of the event can always be “translated” into the “scientific” domain of language.\textsuperscript{172} In short, there need not be a speech act to consecrate the evental transformation because the event is its own transformation. A speech act only functions against a background of what Deleuze and Guattari call a “regime of signs,” or socially organized semiotic power structure (ATP 65). But an event, as I argued in chapter three, generates its own signs. And some events even generate new regimes.

This gives us a sense of one key difference between mere transformations (which concern objective time) and counter-actualizing transformations (which concern virtual events). Beyond this, I think one should be wary of drawing firm theoretical lines between the transformations that create something new and those that do not, or the actions that counter-actualize events and those that merely realize intentions. Perhaps some marriages are themselves something new: the first gay marriage in Canada, for example, certainly created something new—something that would be repeated many times, differently every time. Other marriages lead to more predictable results. These kinds of differences must be worked out in practice, especially since what counts as an event is (on my interpretation) always determined retrospectively. As much as we try to pin down a sense for the event, events would not be events if they did not retain the capacity to surprise us.

4.6 Privileged instants

How are instants distributed in time? Can any point in time serve as an instant? Because the instant is tethered to the moment, there are problems with knowing how to place the instant.

As I have argued, events do not really begin at a single point; there are always precursors,

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{172} See ATP 62: language has a unique power of “translatability,” which is the "ability of language, with its own givens on its own stratum, to represent all the other strata and thus achieve a scientific conception of the world."\end{footnotes}
anticipations, build-ups, and crescendos before the consecration of a moment. This is exactly why we must choose where to cut the event up. In an essential way, this cutting will always fail to capture the event: with respect to the position of any given instant, an event is that which has just happened and that which is about to happen. Deleuze makes this point often, including at the point where he links the moment (or "empty present") to eternity: “The event is that no one ever dies, but has always just died or is always going to die, in the empty present of the Aion, that is, in eternity” (LS 163).

What I am arguing is that this evental extraction is necessarily selective: the effective function of the instant is relative to the actor's stance on the past. This does not mean that different people will respond to events differently, although this is undoubtedly true. It means that any given event presents multiple possibilities for counter-actualization that are not necessarily compatible with each other, and that there must be a selection of certain possibilities in exclusion of others. In other words, an event can be cut up in different ways when we look back to carry it forward. The role of the instant is to be this cut. Paraphrasing Lampert's interpretation from above, we can say that instants are constructions that the moment retroactively and proactively slices out in order to interpret itself. There is thus a necessary delay between the beginning of the event—or the beginning that is an event, the beginning of a new world that is transformed through an event—and its consecration in the moment because retrospection imposes measure, and order, on the chronology of the event.

However, when we talk about the retroactive function of the instant, it is not simply a question of determining the origin of an event more or less precisely. It is a matter of picking out the singular points from the ordinary points, the privileged instants among the any-instant-whatevers. Any-instant-whatever can become a privileged instant if the actor counter-actualizes
that point of the event. This is how I interpret the argument (in *Cinema 1*) that the any-instant-whatever becomes the any-moment-whatever on the condition that it is implicated in the production of something new: the instant picked out of time at the right point, and relayed through the moment, carries some aspect of that event’s novelty along with it into the future. This retroactively determined turning point of the event, which is cut up by a privileged instant, is my interpretation of what Deleuze calls a singular point.

It might be said that I am making too many connections here that Deleuze does not. But in *Cinema 2*, we find a remarkable passage that reinforces this interpretation more clearly and succinctly than any other text in Deleuze's corpus. This passage discusses the use of tracking shots and fixed shots by the Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini. Deleuze writes of "characters" and directors rather than events and actors, but the logic is the same:

In Fellini, it is the present, the parade of presents that pass, that constitutes the *dance macabre*. They run, but to the tomb, not towards the future. Fellini is the author (*auteur*) who was able to produce the most prodigious galleries of monsters: a tracking shot surveys them, stopping at one or another, but they are always caught in the present...Salvation can come only from the other side, from the side of the pasts which are preserved: there, a fixed shot isolates a character, takes him out of the line, and gives him, even if it is only for an instant, a chance which is itself eternal, a virtuality which will be valid forever even if it is not actualized. (C2 91)

In the first place, it is striking to see Deleuze claim that the presents which pass move, not to an eternal pure past, but "to the tomb." This tomb is what I called lost time in chapter three: past presents may retain some kind of virtual subsistence, but mere survival is not eternity. Eternity requires an intervention—it requires an actor to "isolate" something in a privileged instant, to "take (it) out of the (time)line," and "give" it an eternal virtuality. This "virtuality which will be valid forever," which "is itself eternal," is nothing other than the eternal truth of the event I have been defending since chapter one. It is clear from this passage that this eternality of the event is produced retrospectively—by acting on "the pasts which are preserved," and indeed, through that
very preservation. By contrasting the fixed shot with the extended living present of the tracking shot, which always leaves its objects "caught in the present," Deleuze even emphasizes that counter-actualization requires us to focus on a discrete turning point of the event. And just as the moment reconciles duration with instantaneity, a fixed shot typically takes time to unfold, but still has the power to make a single frame eternal—"even if it is only for an instant."

Singular points or privileged instants, then, are not glitches in the fabric of time: they are ways of marking turning points and critical transitions in the development of an event. Marking off these points with instants is a way of measuring the serial and progressive nature of an event by dividing that progression of the event into critical stages. But the determination of singular points is not subjective, even if their distribution on the line of time is accomplished through the subjectively grounded functions of memory and interpretation. The capacity of humans to think across time—to pick a point in the past and seize on it, irrespective of the duration that subsumes it—is a capacity conditioned upon the real coexistence of present and past.

4.7 The moment and the pure past

With the postulate of the coexistence of present and past, I return to our temporal starting point in chapter two. Considering this theory in relation to the moment will bring this section’s “pivot” to an end, for I will finally have the foundation to explicate eternity in the final chapter.

When I say that eternity is a delay between the instant and the moment, this is a way of committing to the reality of the coexistent past-present, whether it is recognized by human beings or not. The delay may be nearly imperceptible, or it may be greater than the longest lifespan; either way, the event remains suspended in time as a well of future potentiality. This would not be possible without the coexistence of the present moment with a time that is not
adjacent to it. As I explained, Deleuze takes the coexistence of present and past to be the fundamental position of time. But this fundamental stance of time is counterbalanced by what he calls the fundamental operation of time. “The most fundamental operation of time: since the past is constituted not after the present that it was but at the same time, time has to split itself in two at each moment as present and past” (C2 78).

I offered several criticisms of the theory of the pure past in chapter two, focusing on Horkheimer’s charge that it represented a regression to the dogma of immortality with a vitalist spin. I suggested that Deleuze’s principal metaphysical argument for the reality of the pure past is self-defeating in the sense that it seems to undercut its first postulate—the passing of the present—by making that present already past when it is present. (If it is already past when present, why would it need to pass? How could it?) And yet the subsistence of eternity in chronos does require a point of real contact between present and past that is antecedent to memory and anticipation. In short, the basic Bergsonian intuition that the past survives in itself, rather than in in our heads, still seems necessary here.

So, is eternity the pure past, or is it not? My answer will probably be unsatisfying: it is, and it is not. Aion is the past, and aion is the future: aion is the past-future (LS 150, 166). On one hand, if eternity is a delay between the onset of an event and its representation or repetition in the moment, then the event must be somewhere while it floats in this suspended state. This “somewhere” is a virtual somewhere, to be sure—but where else could virtuality persist such that it is readily available for reclamation in the future except in the past? The present gives us all it has to offer in presence. And the past evidently can be revisited such that we can discover new events, or new facets of known events. Archaeologists are able to piece together narratives of

173 See chapter two, section three.
societies long gone by combining material artifacts with outside knowledge learned and remembered over time; memory and matter converge on a common reality for the past. But even if these societies were never rediscovered, they still existed, and what happened in those times really happened. This is not in question.

To see what is at issue, we should consider a different kind of example. There is a narrative that Elvis Presley and his band invented rock and roll by accident. After an unsuccessful session of blues and rockabilly covers, Elvis and the band began goofing around, playing the blues standard “That's All Right” in an exaggerated and deliberately lewd way. Their producer, Sam Phillips, was listening and intervened in the following exchange with guitarist Scotty Moore:

Phillips: “What are you doing?”

Moore: “We don't know.”

Phillips: “Well, back up, try to find a place to start, and do it again.”

Let us suppose that this short event really represented the beginning of rock and roll. There is an instant and a moment in which that instant is repeated. Phillips even recognizes the need for the retroactive determination of a cutting point—“Try to find a place to start”—and an originary repetition that brings out the sense of the event: “...and do it again.” Obviously, there will be many more moments in the development of rock and roll; conversely, there will never be a time at which it would become impossible for this style of music to be reborn, transformed, and mixed with other styles. Yet this is its first moment.

But consider a scenario where Phillips had not intervened. The band messed around, then they got back to business before anyone heard the stray rendition of “That's All Right.” The

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174 Guralnick 97.
question is, was this still the event in which rock and roll was created? If we are fully committed to the thesis of the pure past, then I think we would have to say yes—the event was there, just never recognized. But if eternity is suspended between an instant and a moment, then this occurrence would not represent the beginning of rock and roll. In Deleuzian terms, this is because there would be no counter-actualization. The actor here is not Elvis and the band; it is Sam Phillips, who seizes on a dimly understood potential at a critical moment. And because of Phillips' intervention, rock and roll is veritably eternal: it represents a well-defined, easily repeatable, and endlessly variable source of musical inspiration.

In sum, eternity must touch down in the actual to be eternity. Other theorists of eternity might disagree, of course, and I will offer some general responses to such objections later. But for a philosophy of immanence, eternity must have a foothold in time. There must be a moment of counter-actualization in which events are pulled out of the virtual ether, given consistency, and repackaged for delivery into every future. An event that is entirely virtual is no event at all. This position seems irreconcilably at odds with the Bergsonian thesis that the entire past co-exists with the present at every instant. But Deleuze makes it quite clear that the empty present of counter-actualization is just as much part of the event as the instant of its actualization:

With every event, there is indeed the present moment of its actualization, the moment in which the event is embodied in a state of affairs...But on the other hand, there is the future and past of the event considered in itself, sidestepping each present...(The event) has no other present than that of the mobile instant which represents it, always divided into past-future, and forming what must be called the counter-actualization. (LS 151)

Deleuze's terminology here is, once again, inconsistent with other texts we have reviewed: as we have seen, it is the moment which represents the instant, not vice versa. But the dichotomy is

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175 The name of the book by Guralnick that relates this anecdote is *Sam Phillips: The Man Who Invented Rock ‘n’ Roll*.

176 See part 1 of the conclusion.
unmistakably drawn between the present and actualization, and between the instant and counter-actualization; the difference persists despite the changing identity of its terms, and in Deleuze, this is surely what matters. More to the point, it is clear than an event is suspended between the two.

What does this mean in relation to the pure past? On my interpretation of Deleuze, it is indeed necessary to suppose that the past co-exists with the present. But it is not necessary to suppose that the entire past always co-exists with every present. As I argued at the end of chapter three, if there is eternity in regained time, there must also be lost time, a temporal dark matter that may virtually subsist but remains actually inaccessible. If an event that has not been counter-actualized is to remain accessible, there must either be a memory or some kind of sign in which the event is folded up so that it can be unfolded; otherwise, it is lost forever. That sign may be a person, or an artifact, or a scroll at the bottom of the ocean. If the past does not leave a trace in signs, it cannot be regained. This is one of the radical consequences of separating eternity from the eternal present, and indeed, from presence altogether.

For these reasons, I find it ultimately difficult to commit to Deleuze's thesis that the fundamental operation of time consists of the past and present splitting apart “at each 'instant’” (B 52). None of our discussions of the instant make it plausible that such a splitting occurs at every instant. Splittings are privileged, always picked out retrospectively at a critical moment, and in relation to the expression of a particular event. There may be no a priori way to determine the position of these privileged instants, or even to say what made them special after the fact. But we have seen that for Deleuze, it is enough that they be picked out once to lend the event, "even if it is only for an instant, a chance which is itself eternal, a virtuality which will be valid forever even if it is not actualized" (C2 91).
The past, then, is only eternity when the past is also the future that repeats the past. Deleuze makes this point clear by consistently identifying aion, not with the past or the future, but the “past-future”—one hyphenated entity, one eternity split in two (LS 150, 166, 77). Insofar as the moment or empty present serves as the juncture of these two poles of eternity, and insofar as past and future only subsist in the present, Deleuze is right to identify the empty present with eternity itself (at LS 63). If the function of the instant is to split the present into future and past, the function of the moment is to “pervert the present into inhering the future and past” (LS 165). What is cut up returns anew. For by selecting a particular facet of a past event to counter-actualize, we seize a free-floating virtuality that has to be reterritorialized in a new state of affairs. And we can only change the future, and thus introduce novelty into the present, by selectively cutting up the past into new shapes. But we have yet to see how this works, as we have yet to discuss the future. This will involve reversing the perspective—not determining how the instant is formed retrospectively from the moment, but how the moment is formed in relation to a future instant.
Chapter Six: Eternity

1. Introduction

With this chapter, we come to the heart of my interpretation of Deleuze's theory of eternity. This chapter focuses on Deleuze's concept of the future. Past chapters have examined Deleuze's ideas about the past and present. I argued that both the pure past and the eternal present could plausibly be identified with eternity, but I concluded in both cases that there was something missing in these accounts. This missing element was the unique conception of the future introduced in the second chapter of *Difference and Repetition*. In this text (and certain associated passages in *Logic of Sense*), Deleuze theorizes the future in terms of what he calls the pure form of time. If we set aside his works on other philosophers and artists, every instance of Deleuze using the word "éternité" positively in writing is found in these passages on the pure form of time. To the extent that Deleuze had his own theory of eternity, it is developed in the texts I examine here.

However, Deleuze never comes out and defines *éternité*. This is why I have offered my own definition: eternity is the delay between the instant and the moment. But this definition must now be doubled: there is a past side to the delay, and a future side. In chapter five, I explicated the past sense of the delay, which arises from a retroactive placement of the instant. The second sense of the delay refers to what happens between the moment and the *future* instant, which is nothing more than a point of projection for a counter-actualized event. The pure form of time refers to the virtual transformation of an event between the moment it is counter-actualized and the future point at which it is repeated. This transformation has the peculiar effect of rendering...
the event eternal whether or not the point of repetition is ever reached: the delay between the moment and instant may be stretched out indefinitely, which is why we can call it eternal.

This account is complex, but some illustrations may help the reader form a preliminary picture. If the past instant is a "cut" out of the actualized event, the future instant is where the event is "pasted," re-actualized or reterritorialized, at some uncertain future point. To use a different metaphor, the futural instant is like an "X that marks the spot" at which an eternal event will be pulled out of the virtual and re-actualized. But since there is no map for the future—since we do not know what will happen, or whether we will be around to see it happen—this x becomes unassignable, harboring an objective indeterminacy, as though there were many paths and many endings all superimposed on the same map.

The future is really many futures, many virtual lines branching out from the present, and the role of the actor is to help select which lines becomes actual. The capacity of an actor to freely select a future from among multiple possibilities will thus be the final piece of this long puzzle, as the theory of decision provides the most concrete evidence that Deleuze's theory of virtual futures is valid. The actor does not create the event or see it come to an end, but insofar as she relays it from the pure past, through the empty present, and into the virtual future, she propels that event into an eternity that outlasts her.

2. The pure form of time

What Deleuze calls the pure form of time has four dimensions: the content of time, order of time, totality of time, and series of time. As I noted in the introduction, all of Deleuze's invocations of the concept of eternity (outside of his aesthetic and historical works) are found in discussions of this pure form. The one time he mentions aion in Difference and Repetition,
moreover, it is identified with the "form of empty time" (DR 284). For Slavoj Žižek, perhaps the most famous of Deleuze's many interpreters, this means Deleuze's eternity simply is the pure form of time. But Žižek is only half right: eternity is directly identified only with the totality and series of time. Accordingly, those dimensions of the pure form will be the focus of this chapter.

As a prelude, however, I want to try to convey at a very general level how Deleuze thinks these concepts all fit together. Deleuze discusses a great many subjects and themes in connection with the pure form of time. We find arguments about the ontology of time blended with aesthetic, political, psychoanalytic, biological, psychological, and praxiological theses. I should emphasize that I will not even attempt to touch on all this material, and that my interpretation of the pure form is willfully selective.

Even the name “pure form of time” is somewhat misleading. What Deleuze articulates is not really a “form” in the sense that idealist philosophers might say the form of Beauty is the essence of individual beautiful things. The pure form of time is really a virtual process that is initiated by counter-actualization: not a process that happens in time, but more like a process that happens to time, opening it up to make room for the novelty of the event.

The pure form of time is introduced in Difference and Repetition in four parts: order, totality, series, content. This sounds like a list of categories—these are, after all, time schemata from Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason. But in Deleuze's account, there is a clear directionality from order, to totality, to series. The categories themselves are a three-part ordered series describing stages of the counter-actualization of an event, which is the content of time. This is

177 Or pure "structure" of time, as Žižek loosely puts it. See Organs Without Bodies 11.
178 See part one, book two, chapter one of the Critique of Pure Reason: “On the schematism of the pure concepts of the understanding.”
179 See the account at DR 89 especially, which is the most linear and pragmatic of Deleuze’s presentations.
the interpretation I will pursue. Instead of elaborating on these categories in *Logic of Sense*, however, Deleuze gives them an entirely different formulation. According to the model of *Logic of Sense*, there are still three stages to the pure form. But these stages are given a geometric model: point, line, frontier (*frontière*; Deleuze also uses *surface*, whose English cognate is more familiar in geometry). It seems that the point represents the order of time, the straight line represents the totality, and the frontier corresponds to the series.

These are flexible figures that have multiple interrelated meanings in Deleuze. Here are a few. The point primarily represents the instant, which orders time by delimiting past from future; the line represents the totality of past and future events in their variable relations (the complete timeline); the frontier represents the border between that totality and the entirely different totality that will have to emerge to integrate something new. Or again, from a different perspective: the point represents a “turning” point for a subject faced with a decision an event has forced upon them; the totality represents an opening up of multiple resolutions to the event (contingent futures); the frontier represents the determinability of the event, its yet-to-be-filled-in character, in the manner the Western frontier did for American settlers. Or, finally, from the culminating perspective of the empty present: the point represents the moment of an incorporeal transformation, which is like an official consecration of the order of time; the line represents the cross-temporal effects of the transformation, which bind the timeline into a contracted whole; as the effects of the transformation are progressively understood, they advance the frontier of knowledge, the limits of what we think and know about the world.

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180  LS 167: “The entire organization, in its three abstract moments, runs from the point to the straight line, and from the straight line to the surface: the point which traces the line; the line which forms the frontier; and the surface which is developed and unfolded from both sides.” One would have to go back all the way to Euclid’s *Elements* for the origin and significance of these figures.

181  See ATP 19 on “the rhizomatic West, with its Indians without ancestry, its ever-receding limit, its shifting and displaced frontiers.”
All of these meanings are at play in my account. What is needed is to be more precise about each dimension within this three-part virtual development of the event. I have been discussing the content of time—the event—since the first page of this dissertation. The order of time was discussed at the end of chapter four.

In brief, I argued there that an ordered and dated timeline is the full realization of objective time. The connection to eternity arises from the fact that the order of time never changes: all facts about before-after relations between events are eternally true—at least, after they have happened. Since future events have not happened, an actor helps to order time in the active sense by making a counter-actualizing decision at a certain crucial juncture. This active sense of ordering seems to be the one emphasized by Deleuze. (Deleuze also links the order of time to the instant, which I discussed at length in chapter five.) We should not overestimate the subjective contribution to time. Events happen in the order they happen. But since it takes an actor for an event to be repeated, and since counter-actualized events pile up in eternity, there is a more complex order of virtual relations that is constantly being redefined with each new moment.

This emergent virtual network of relations between events gives rise to the totality of time. The totality and series of time are my focus in this chapter because it is only in relation to these two dimensions of the pure form of time that Deleuze mentions eternity approvingly. The totality and series of time come together in Deleuze's theory of eternal return. All of these concepts are very complex. Instead of trying to summarize them here, then, I will proceed directly to an explication of the totality of time. I hope that the extended examples offered in support of these concepts help to persuade the reader not only that these strange ideas are tenable, but that they might have value in our difficult times.
3. The totality of time

The second stage of the pure form of time is the totality of time. The totality of time, on my interpretation, refers to the series of alternate pasts, presents and futures that co-exist alongside our present. It is the single virtual “universe” containing multiple “incompossible worlds” at the borders of our actual world (C2 131). Deleuze defines incompossible events as those which "diverge, and from then on belong to two possible worlds" (F 60). The totality of time is our world and all other possible worlds, with all their divergent events, existing together in a virtual state of chaotic entanglement.

This totality must be distinguished from chronos. We have seen that the contractive present of chronos can be extended beyond any individual's relative present all the way to the beginning and end of the universe. What else could the totality of time be but the story of the cosmos from beginning to end, with nothing omitted? Deleuze answers that the totality is all the different ways the story could be told, all the variations on the narrative. This totality would be exponentially “larger” than the history of the universe because it includes all the timelines not taken, all the alternate histories and possible futures, all the “incompossibles” mixed in with compossibles. The totality would therefore be, as Deleuze says of aion, larger than the maximum of continuous thinkable time (LS 59, 63).

3.1 A pluralist cosmology

Before we examine arguments for the reality of time's totality, I should note that my interpretation of this concept is somewhat loose. Deleuze names the totality in *Difference and Repetition*, but like many of the concepts in that book, it is given multiple senses. Conversely, he

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182 Deleuze actually says this about series, not events, but I will argue in section three that series are precisely the elements or building blocks of Deleuzian events.
discusses what I am calling the totality in several other works, but he avoids calling it a totality, most likely for Bergsonian reasons. If we do not worry too much about what to call it, however, it is clear that Deleuze believes our actual world co-exists with other, virtual worlds, and that this co-existent totality is opened up when events create a need for actors to decide among several possible futures.

The first introduction of the totality of time is the least helpful:

The idea of a totality of time must be understood as follows: the caesura, of whatever kind, must be determined in the image of a unique and tremendous event, an act which is adequate to time as a whole...Such a symbol adequate to the totality of time may be expressed in many ways: to throw time of joint, to make the sun explode, to throw oneself into the volcano, to kill God or the father. (DR 89)

In a few lines, Deleuze identifies the totality of time with an image, an event, an act, and a symbol. The discussion of the third synthesis operates on many different levels at once (metaphysical, political, psychoanalytic, historical), and this is one of the points where all the levels converge. Deleuze cites Hölderlin on this point, but this approach may also be part of a more general response to Kant's own explanation of the time schemata. In the Critique of Pure Reason, the schemata are intermediate representations that allow pure categories of the understanding to be applied to sensible intuitions in accordance with time as the form of inner sense. With his symbolic act-image that draws together time, Deleuze offers an intermediate representation that serves to dissociate concepts from sensibility; the caesura throws time out of joint, the totality multiplies joints, and eternal return severs the joints between past and future for

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183 For Bergson, time requires the Open, so the fact of change disproves the postulate of a totality. Real movement is only possible “if the whole is neither given nor giviable” (C1 7).

184 Deleuze refers to Hölderlin's commentaries on Sophocles' Antigone and Oedipus Rex (which Hölderlin also translated) as well as Jean Beaufret's commentary on Hölderlin's commentary. Beaufret bases his own interpretation on Kant, whom I discuss here instead, although these texts do much to illuminate Deleuze's discussion of the "caesura" in relation to the order of time. I am mostly ignoring this concept in order to focus more directly on the nature and role of the instant.
good. We have yet to examine these concepts, but whether or not this interpretation turns out to be correct, it is tangential to our purposes. Before we can form an image of time as a whole, we first need to understand what “time as a whole” means.

Other mentions of the totality in *Difference and Repetition* bring us closer to the point. We read that “the compossible and the incompossible testify to a specific sufficient reason and to the presence of the infinite—not only in the totality of possible worlds, but in each chosen world” (DR 263). Deleuze takes the concepts of compossibility and incompossibility from Leibniz. The idea behind these terms is that if there are multiple possible worlds, but only one actual world, the events that are actualized must compatibly coexist in the same world. A world where the Axis powers won World War II is incompossible with a world where America rose to post-war dominance; a world where Husserl never wrote is incompossible with the existence of *Being and Time*. Incompossibility is, as Deleuze notes, a weaker notion than contradiction (LS 111). There is, then, a certain looseness to these concepts. But there is also one firm rule, which is that whatever events exist in the actual world must be compossible with all other actualized events. Contrarily, the virtual totality of time is constituted by *nothing but* incompossible worlds, all tangled up and waiting to be sorted out.

The virtual totality is immanent to the actual world that nature and our choices have produced. The mode of its immanence is subsistence. It is the subsistence of the totality in chronos that, as we will see, allows for genuine selection in eternal return. Elsewhere, Deleuze defines “the totality of a system” like time as “the unity of the divergent series as such” (DR 124). The totality of time is not the divergent pasts, presents and futures laid out in succession; if the totality subsists in the present, and does not exist, then all these virtual worlds co-subsist

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185 See LS chapter 24, especially 171–173. On the original Leibnizian theory, see Look.
186 For a precise definition of subsistence, see chapter three, section two.
now. They are rhizomatic, meaning that any point of time can be connected to any other point.\textsuperscript{187} Incompossible pasts lead into incompossible futures, and impossible futures wind back into alternate presents. This sounds implausible, even fantastical, but I will show (in section c below) that this rhizomaticity of incompossible presents, pasts, and futures has concrete effects in contemporary politics.

Another formulation of the idea comes from the passage in \textit{Cinema 2} cited above. Deleuze says that “incompossibles belong to the same world, that incompossible worlds belong to the same universe” (C2 131). This is echoed in Deleuze's invocation of a “pluralist cosmology, where there are not only different worlds (as in Minelli) but where one and the same event is played out in these different worlds, in incompatible versions” (C2 99). These incompatible variations on the event do not belong to the same actual world; there are, within this actual world, singular turning points where the potential of a world-transformation becomes contingent upon the responses of actors to the event.

This is also the picture we get in \textit{Logic of Sense}: the “merciless straight line of the Aion” is “trace(d) between the series, and for all disjunctions” (LS 176). When tracing branching series out of the present, there is a disjunction between incompatible actual futures: the baseball game might tip one way or another, or a meteor might strike the field. Conversely, to understand the virtual unity of these incompatible branches is to think the unity of these divergences: the totality of time, for a baseball game, includes scenarios where both teams win.

How do we think the unity of disjunctive or divergent futures? We must acknowledge what Deleuze will call the object = x or dark precursor, which is the “absolutely common object...with respect to which all worlds are variables” (LS 115). This “absolutely common

\footnote{\textsuperscript{187} See the introduction to ATP.}
object” is common precisely because it “stands for” the totality of time: Deleuze says in *Difference and Repetition* that “the co-existent levels of a...totality...are liable to resonate under the influence of a fragment or 'dark precursor' which stands for this totality in which all the levels coexist” (DR 291). This adds a new dimension to the totality: we are no longer postulating a complete field of time, for there is now a lack—or an excess—which is like a dark core around which the totality of time rotates. I will explore this difficult concept of the dark precursor in the following section on eternal return. But first, I want to pause to evaluate and elaborate upon Deleuze's concept of a totality of time.

### 3.2 Historical fiction

It is not hard to see why the concept of a totality of time would be important in the discussion of counter-actualization. If the seizure and propagation of an event necessitates subjective intervention, it is because an event objectively has multiple outcomes. When we postulate multiple worlds to account for these outcomes, it is a way of saying that there are multiple lines—chains of events, or stages of a serial event—that can be followed out of the present into the future. But it is not as though these lines stop existing after the event has been recorded in the moment: we can just as easily look back and say, “It could have gone this way, if only this or that had happened.” This in turn implies a host of alternate *presents*, since the present present is one single hinge between possible pasts and futures. The whole of time projects a host of shadows, virtual worlds alongside our own, and offers us singular points at which the worlds cross and re-cross.

To evaluate this account, it would have to be shown that alternate realities exist in the past, present, and future. The futural version of this argument will be considered in subsequent
sections, where it will be argued that multiple outcomes of a decision must really exist for that
decision to be free. The argument that past events admit of infinite combinations and
variations—systematizations, states, planes, plateaus, sections, etc.—was explored in chapter
two, as part of my discussion of Bergson’s *Matter and Memory*. But the most difficult task is to
prove that multiple timelines, or world-lines, really exist right now, and that even as our present
moves forward along one line, other timelines unfold differently.

One way to support this kind of argument would be to draw on the many-worlds
interpretation of quantum mechanics, which has some parallels with Deleuze’s idea that
representation and actualization select actualities from nebulous states of potentiality; such a
discussion, however, would take us far beyond my level of scientific competence.188 One could
also compare Deleuze’s theory with David Lewis’ metaphysical account of multiple worlds, as
Lampert has done.189 I will try, more modestly, to make Deleuze’s thesis plausible through some
real-world examples.

Let us consider a mundane event to begin with. I am, at this present moment, engaged in
writing my dissertation. My work has not been continuous since its starting point, nor is there
really a determinate starting point: there were multiple beginnings, but also precursors to the
beginning (other theses, other subjects, vague and abandoned ideas), that could have led to very
different projects. There have also been dead ends, delays, discontinuities and interruptions
breaking up the extended present of the project. Moreover, there are many possible outcomes for
this present act: I might finish and get an academic job, or I might finish and starve in the streets.
Alternatively, I might decide that Deleuze is too difficult and abandon the thesis, whereupon I

188 For an introduction to the subject, see DeWitt and Graham, “The Many Worlds Interpretation of Quantum
Mechanics.”
189 See *The Many Futures of a Decision*, chapter nine.
might find a non-academic job, or join a monastery, or jump into the ocean. The proposal of Deleuze’s theory of the totality of time is that I will end up taking several of these incompossible routes—and moreover, since there is another possible present where I already gave up, that I am already a monk, a plumber, and a corpse in different virtual worlds.

The idea here is not just that each point of time which involves a decision branches into multiple incompossible futures; it is that incompossible presents must already exist alongside this present, where I continue on the straight path of the dissertation despite everything. If an event, even one as mundane as writing a Ph.D. thesis, is an occurrence that requires decisions, then it must really offer me multiple worlds to choose from. In practice, I will only have limited and imperfect knowledge of all these worlds. But this is just further evidence that these incompossibilities have an objective, if ideal or virtual, reality of their own: it is I who must adapt to the serial exigencies of the worlds I choose among, not the other way around.

These are obviously controversial arguments. Perhaps they are better framed in terms of a controversial problem. Consider the legacy of the American Civil War. The common belief is that there is only one world, and in this world, the South lost the Civil War. It says so in the history books! Any position which states otherwise is historical fiction, not history. But what happens when history and historical fiction become too closely intertwined to be distinguished from each other?

This question assumed an acute relevance in July of 2017, when the television network HBO announced plans to begin work on a new series called Confederacy.\(^{190}\) As it was originally introduced, the series would depict a modern-day America where the South had won the Civil War, slavery was still legal, and the nation was bound for a third Civil War. This premise alone

\(^{190}\) This occurrence was widely covered in the entertainment press. See Coates for an explanation and critique.
was enough to spark an intense backlash to the show on social media and in the entertainment press. Although the show was not officially canceled, its creators seem to have committed their time elsewhere since the original announcement, leaving the show’s future in doubt. But why?

The reason for the backlash was likely the same as the reason for the show's creation: the rise to power of Donald Trump and his backwards-looking coalition of white nationalists. Trump’s rise has often been described as an historically significant event, and it is difficult to argue with this assessment. Yet one might say that this is an event with too much past and not enough future, or rather, an event whose future is stuck in the past. Instead of producing something new, the Trump campaign and administration have dredged up the worst features of America’s history, promising a return to a past that was never present. For those at HBO, this presented a fine opportunity to capitalize on past conflict by repeating it in narrative: who would not want to watch a modern-day Civil War on a high-definition television screen?

But for those objecting to the show, Trump’s success simply brought to light the repetitions of the Confederacy that were always already occurring: the Jim Crow laws that disenfranchised black citizens for decades after the war supposedly ended; the mass imprisonment of young black men for non-violent (or non-existent) offenses; the ongoing segregation of black Americans in cities; the outright slaughter of black people by the government employees put on the streets to protect them; and so on. If the critics of Confederacy found the show objectionable, it was because many of them were living in a world where the Confederacy had won the war. If it had not, they might point out, why are black Americans still so massively disadvantaged relative to the descendants of Grant, Lee, Davis, and Lincoln—who were, for all their differences, property-owning white males? If the nation was really re-united in the wake of the war, how could we grant office to an unapologetic bigot in 2016?
Perhaps the best conclusion to draw from this situation is not that the history books are all wrong and the South really won the Civil War, but that this event, like every event, really has multiple outcomes, any of which can have effects in the future. The South won and did not win, and this is why America is still in such a difficult place in many aspects of race relations: the War is still playing out, albeit through discourses, institutions and economics rather than bayonets and cannons. This does not imply a relativism about history, and I am not promoting conspiracy theories about what really happened at the Appomattox Courthouse on April 9, 1865. I am suggesting that events on the magnitude of the Civil War are too complicated, and too powerful, to be brought to a tidy resolution by a few people signing pieces of paper. Indeed, it is not clear that the American Civil War will be coming to any kind of resolution in the near future.

It might be said that there is no ground for indulging in this kind of counter-historical speculation. If there are alternate presents, pasts, and futures, then we have no firm reference point to distinguish historical fiction from history. On the one hand, this does seem to be Deleuze's thesis. In reference to Borges, he invokes a “line which forks and keeps on forking, passing through incompossible presents, returning to not-necessarily-true pasts” (C2 131). Deleuze calls this a "straight line," but it is described as a forking line, i.e., one which can move between actual events on one level and their virtual alternatives on another level. The forking line also moves against the order of time, since Deleuze describes it moving from present to past. But when Deleuze himself gives examples to illustrate these figures, it is frustrating to find that he uses fictional examples: Borges' "Death and the Compass," Last Year at Marienbad, and of course, the stories of Lewis Carroll. My example of the Civil War was designed to illustrate, in a more concrete way, the explanatory possibilities offered by a virtual totality of time.

Perhaps, however, this kind of example will not be convincing to some. It is, admittedly,
difficult to directly demonstrate that there are multiple virtual worlds alongside our present world. For skeptical readers, then, I propose that we should take seriously the fact that Deleuze ultimately identifies the pure form of time with the future, and only the future, in *Difference and Repetition*.\(^{191}\) It seems more defensible to postulate the existence of multiple virtual worlds in the future, for the reason that the future, unlike the past, has not touched down in the actual. The past has passed through the actual and had the chance to leave its trace. But contingent futures are ideal, existing only in thought, and answer only to the quasi-logical rules of compossibility and incompossibility, convergence and divergence, that qualify the event. If we could show that multiple worlds exist in the future, would these arguments not apply to the past as well? If virtual or possible worlds really exist, then the whole point is that their occurrences subsist independently of ours, and they would have had to come from somewhere. The demonstration of multiple real futures is thus an indirect argument for the existence of alternate present worlds.

### 3.3 More arguments for multiple worlds

Lampert offers an argument for the existence of multiple futures of a decision. His claim is that an actor “enters all his possible futures at once” in the moment of a decision (290).\(^{192}\) This multiplication of the actor is a corollary of the thesis that multiple futures of my decision exist. If the different futures exist, and the actualization of one of those futures depends in some way on my decision, then I must not only be projected beyond myself (as in phenomenology), but

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\(^{191}\) See DR 90: “For even though the doctrine of eternal return may be expounded as though it affected the whole series or the totality of time, the past and the present no less than the future, such an exposition remains purely introductory...Eternal return, in its esoteric truth, concerns—and can only concern—the third time of the series.” And again: “The Proustian formula ‘a little time in its pure state’ refers first to the pure past, the in-itself of the past or the erotic synthesis of time, but more profoundly to the pure and empty form of time, the ultimate synthesis, that of the death instinct which leads to the eternity of the return in time” (DR 122).

\(^{192}\) See “Deleuze’s ‘Power of Decision’, Kant’s = X and Husserl’s Noema.”
multiplied, diffracted through that futural projection. And if it is true that these futures really exist, then at the moment I decide to embark on one timeline, the other will run parallel beside me. If I only live out one of the branching timelines, then the moment of decision would have to occur before the branching begins. This means that there really is no branching at all, just an actual straight line (290–291). But this is intuitively wrong: what could a decision be without at least two alternatives forced upon us? Why decide if we are not “torn,” as the colloquial phrase has it, between two very real outcomes? It would make no sense to agonize over accepting a college admission offer, for example, if everything compelled us to attend. Not every decision is an event, but all events require a decision.

As Lampert notes, the deterministic reply is possible here: it actually is true that I was going to reject the offer no matter what, because I am as predictable an outcome of the laws of nature as everything else; I just did not know I was going to do it yet. Deleuze, unfortunately, never enters directly into the free will debate. But supposing that we do make decisions—as Deleuze and most non-philosophers certainly do—the branching futures must already be contained in the present. Lampert concludes that “the decision-maker at the instant of decision is already on both paths...and once we are on both paths, how could we believe we follow one all the way and the others a short way?” (291).

The virtual persistence of lifelines not taken is also supported by the fact that people can, and very often do, end up switching over from one line to another, even after a decision has been made. To continue with my earlier example, if chance had taken me along a few different turns, I would still be back in my home state of Colorado, working and spending time with my family. If, however, I were to lose funding or legal status in Canada, it is probable that I would end up back in Colorado doing just those things. It is as though there are two different “roles” co-existing
alongside each other, both ready to be assumed if decisions and conditions converge in the right way. Of course, I will only ever actually live out one of these roles, or some non-simultaneous mixture of the two; there is not actually another Brent in Colorado right now. And even if I went back to Colorado, I would not be the same Brent as the Brent who stayed there the whole time; in this sense, decisions are irrevocable. But the moment at which I decided to take one path rather than another is still implicated in the actual in the sense that I can change my mind and merge into the other lane.

This suggests a different kind of function for the instant as it pertains to the future. Previously, I have argued that instants are dividing points that retroactively determine the order of time from the vantage point of the moment. They are cuts or divides between one state of the world and another state. Although they pinpoint a discrete change, the change involved would not really have been instantaneous: it happens over a duration. But the future has not happened yet, and so it has no duration. The whole future subsists at the same time. Thus, instants are no longer divisions between one stretch of chronological time and another. They are cuts between one world and another, one complete crystallization of the totality and another.

The key point here bears repeating: these projected worlds are not hypothetical, and not even just possible. Since the construction of one or another evental outcome is partially dependent on a subject’s decisions, the events have an authentically ambiguous ontological status. Future instants are projections in thought that guide action toward realizing that thought through serial selection, making the ideal real and rejoining mind to matter across a delay. But in themselves, these projections are necessarily indeterminate, floating variables and unknown Xs that serve as asymptotic ideas guiding the serial construction of a world. Following the trail of the unknown x also guides us to the final stage of the pure form of time.
4. Time-series: eternal return

The final dimension of the pure form is the series of time, or what Deleuze (following a certain interpretation of Nietzsche) calls eternal return. What Deleuze means by eternal return is not easy to sort out, partly because he gives the concept so many different dimensions in an unsystematic way, and partly because his formulations can seem deliberately impenetrable.\footnote{Deleuze juxtaposes the cyclical time of the eternal present with “a less simple and more secret, much more tortuous, more nebulous circle, an eternally excentric circle, the decentered circle of difference...” (DR 91).} And it is questionable how much Deleuze, over the course of his career, was really committed to the importance of this concept. It seems to disappear after the convergence with Guattari. However, what is undeniable is that Deleuze takes eternal return to be the culminating “moment” of the sequence he calls the pure form of time: "The eternal return is...the moment or the eternity of becoming which eliminates all that resists it" (NP xii). It is the truest sense of eternity, if eternity does have a sense.

While eternity is also identified with the totality of time, Deleuze says “we simplify matters in expounding the doctrine of eternal return as though it affected the totality of time; we make a hurdy-gurdy song of it” (DR 91). While eternity is also identified with the pure past—“the Proustian formula 'a little time in its pure state' refers first to the pure past”—it refers "more profoundly" to the “pure and empty form of time...which leads to the eternity of the return in time” (DR 122). Deleuze makes several statements to this effect: the doctrine of eternal return “may be expounded” as though it affected past and present, but “in its esoteric truth,” it is “properly called a belief of the future, a belief in the future” (DR 90). Aion may be the past-future, but it seems to be more future than past.

I do not claim to have a profound grasp of the "esoteric truth" of eternal return, but I will attempt to explain how the concept fits into the model of eternity I have drawn out of Deleuze.
4.1 Eternal return in Nietzsche

The concept of eternal return is not Deleuze’s creation. It was introduced by Friedrich Nietzsche in *The Gay Science*, and frequently appeared in Nietzsche’s later works, assuming a more pronounced role as time went on.\(^{194}\) In Nietzsche’s work, eternal return refers to the hypothesis that everything that has happened since the beginning of time will repeat down to the smallest detail—including each of our lives. For Nietzsche, this presents a kind of test for action: before I act, I should ask myself whether I would be willing to relive the outcomes of my acts an infinite number of times. The goal is not so much to avoid all mistakes, but to live without regrets, embracing everything that happens and holding no resentment. Nietzsche calls this *amor fati*, the love of fate: “that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity.”\(^{195}\)

Now, Deleuze is famous as an interpreter of Nietzsche. But Deleuze is also known for being somewhat loose with his source material, and in my opinion, Nietzsche is the worst victim of this tendency. Deleuze’s strategy in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition* is essentially to argue that Nietzsche means the opposite of what he wrote. For Deleuze, Nietzsche’s eternal return does not imply that there will be “nothing different...for all eternity.” Quite to the contrary, eternal return is “the repetition of difference” and the abolition of all identity (NP 46, 49). Deleuze suggests that Nietzsche, a classical scholar by trade, would not simply have repeated the Greek theory of a cyclical cosmos as his own idea.\(^{196}\) Instead, he was really arguing for an “eternity of becoming,” and offering a proof *against* the eternal recurrence of everything that is (NP xviii).

\(^{194}\) See section 341 in *The Gay Science*.
\(^{195}\) From *Ecce Homo*, reprinted in *Nietzsche 714*.
\(^{196}\) *DR* 242: “Why did Nietzsche, who knew the Greeks, know that the eternal return was *his* own invention, an untimely belief or belief of the future? Because his eternal return is in no way a return of the same.”
It would take us too far afield to analyze these claims in depth. I would have to consider Paolo D’Iorio’s persuasive argument that Deleuze takes his interpretation of Nietzsche’s eternal return from a single fragment of The Will to Power—a posthumous collection of notes whose publication was guided by Nietzsche’s fascist sister—and that Deleuze misinterprets even this passage.\textsuperscript{197} We would also have to take a detour through the work of Pierre Klossowski, a theorist much admired by Deleuze and Foucault, whose reading of Nietzsche influenced Deleuze’s position.\textsuperscript{198} But although Nietzsche and Philosophy has some rich ideas about time, it is still a very early work (1962), and it is evident (as it was in 1964’s Proust and Signs) that Deleuze had not yet developed his unique theory of the future.\textsuperscript{199} Nietzsche will not help us understand the pure form of time.

There is, however, a second temporal concept that Deleuze takes from Nietzsche's work. This is the concept of the untimely. Almost every time he mentions the untimely, Deleuze emphasizes that it is not to be confused either with the historical or with the eternal (NP 107, ATP 296, DR 130, WP 111). Untimeliness is not time, but neither is it eternity. To be untimely is "not to be modern at any cost, no more than to be nontemporal" (LS 265). Instead, untimeliness is always defined negatively: it means to act "against the present" (F 98); to be "non-present" rather than present (N 107); to be "superhistorical," "transhistorical," or "unhistorical" instead of historical (ATP 296); to be "at the edge of critical modernity" instead of contemporary (LS 265). Deleuze takes this negative impetus from Nietzsche's "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life" (though he erroneously cites a different text), where untimeliness means "acting counter

\textsuperscript{198} See Klossowski, Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle.
\textsuperscript{199} In the discussion of the complicated state of time in chapter three, I argued that Deleuze’s early works had to be re-read in the light of the later theory of the future.
to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come."

Untimeliness is a way of acting, a way of being in time but against time. To echo Thomas Pynchon, it is a matter of getting through the day by living "against the day." 201

It is unusual for Deleuze to define a key concept by negation or opposition. But Nietzsche's own definition emphasizes that untimely action is carried out, "let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come." Nietzsche, ever the careful writer, would not have put this profession of hope in by accident. The fact is that we never know what effects our actions in the present will have on the future, because (as I argued in chapter four) acting in objective time implies the possibility of something getting in my way. To the extent I act in favor of a time to come, I am acting on a hope, a belief, that things will really get better. But since we can only work with what we have now, this pro-future action necessarily involves a rejection of some aspect of the present.

Perhaps this is why Deleuze calls eternal return "a belief of the future, a belief in the future" (DR 90). More precisely, it is a belief in the novelty of the future—a belief in "a future which does not consist of a present to come" because it offers something that we cannot even anticipate at the present time (C2 36). The untimely future is, rather, a future "to come" (a venir) (C2 50, 259). The future to come is also a theme in the work of Jacques Derrida, who shares Deleuze's reverence for Nietzsche. Indeed, this is the subject discussed at the very beginning of the eponymous documentary film made about Derrida in 2002:

In general, I try to distinguish between what one calls the future and "l'avenir." The future is that which—tomorrow, later, next century—will be. There's a future that is predictable, programmed, scheduled, foreseeable. But there is a future, l'avenir, which

200 Deleuze cites "Schopenhauer as Educator," which is the third of Nietzsche's Untimely Meditations, while this phrase appears at the end of the foreword to the second meditation. The translation quoted here is from the Cambridge English edition (p. 60).
201 See Pynchon, Against the Day, along with the rest of the novelist's work.
refers to someone who comes whose arrival is totally unexpected. For me, that is the real future. That which is totally unpredictable.\textsuperscript{202}

In his own language—which concerns events rather than a "someone"—Deleuze says that the untimely event of the future-to-come "goes down in history, but never comes from history" (ATP 296). So where does this event come from? The answer is double. On the one hand, if the event does not come from history, then it comes from the "superhistorical" dimension of time: namely, the virtual totality of time discussed in the last section.\textsuperscript{203} But the virtual totality, as a stage of the pure form of time, stretches from the pure past to the future-to-come. The harder question, then, is: how is the untimely future already operative within the totality of time that co-exists with our actual timeline? How does the future that cannot be reduced to the present end up in the present without going through the past? Such questions require us to take a more detailed look at Deleuze's philosophy of the future.

\section*{4.2 The future}

What Deleuze calls the third repetition in \textit{Difference and Repetition} is the future—but the future viewed in a certain way. It is not the more or less predictable future of our actual world, which is already contracted into the present through anticipation, and which we are prepared for. Nor is it the untimely future, which is like a big question mark eternally hovering just out of our view. This is rather the \textit{virtual} future, which is to say, all the branching timelines that radiate like spokes out from the empty present. When Deleuze says that eternal return involves a selection, he does not just mean that subjects must pick an event, or a facet of an event, out of the past to counter-actualize it. He also means, I think, that the counter-actualization can be realized in

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{From Derrida (directed by Dick and Kofman). Derrida translates several terms into English himself when speaking.}
\footnote{On superhistoricity, see also the last section of chapter four.}
\end{footnotesize}
many different ways, along many different lines, since an event that demands a choice positions us simultaneously atop multiple decisional pathways.

There is no contradiction between saying that aion subsists in the present and saying that the future is the absolutely new. This present is an “empty present,” or an empty dimension of the complex present, which has to be filled in. For if the eternity that we find in Deleuze must be an immanent eternity, then we must suppose it is not only the past that subsists in the present, but also the future. Immanence requires that “as soon as there is something, there is everything” (Lampert, Philosophy of History 17). If there is chronos, then there is the whole of chronos, including the parts that have not happened yet. But the more we delve into the interpretation of an event, the more the present gets filled in, making the future that much more predictable until the next event.

It is indeed challenging to suppose that the entire past survives beside or inside the present. But it is all the more paradoxical to suppose that the future does so, for it seems to violate our bedrock metaphysical intuition that something (the presence of the future in the present) cannot come from nothing (the future in itself). And we cannot suppose that the future actually does exist without our knowing about it except by reintroducing a kind of Platonism where time is perpetually catching up to eternity and nothing is really new. In response to these challenges, Deleuze develops a strange idea: the presence of the future inside the present can only be a non-presence, an empty square, a determinable or variable object = x, and this “x” is necessarily “mobile” because the future changes as new possibilities are opened up or closed off. The x is mobile not in the sense that it moves alongside us in the present, but on the contrary, in the sense that it strays throughout the past-future without regard for chronology. This open mobility of the dark precursor in the virtual totality secures the subsistence of eternity in time.
4.3 For all times

Why is eternal return “eternal,” and why is it a “return”? Immanence requires that eternity be that which is withdrawn from the actual, but also that what is withdrawn be recoverable in the actual, so that it is suspended between two non-contiguous presents. But in being recovered, it carried this suspended state, this delay, along with it. This is the return: the event leaps across itself, then doubles down.

If eternity is a delay between the instant and the moment, then eternal return is both: a) the retroactive ordering of time effected by the instant from the vantage point of a moment and b) the projection of that moment’s future as a determinable = x, an instantaneous, aleatory limit point that is neither hypothetical nor imaginary, but retroactively effective due to the capacity of human beings to think ahead of ourselves. It is only through the doubling effectuated by counter-actualization—that is, through the extraction of the event from the past—that the indefinite future of the event is secured across the delay the extracted event carries with it. To signify this bi-directional action of the empty present, Deleuze says the moment turns upon itself, like a joint or hinge: “only the third repetition which turns upon itself returns for all times, for eternity” (DR 297). (On this point, Deleuze directly echoes Nietzsche.) Of everything that does not return, we can say forever that it truly happened “once and for all.” The return is eternity because once it happens twice, it can happen again forever—“for all times.”

204 See Thus Spoke Zarathustra 158. I quoted part of this paragraph in chapter five when introducing the moment. It goes on to describe the future: "And if everything has been there before—what do you think, dwarf, of this moment?...Are not all things knotted together so firmly that this moment draws after it all that is to come? Therefore—itself too?"

205 "There is a difference in nature between what returns 'once and for all' and what returns for each and every time, or for an infinite number of times” (LS 301). “If there is an essential relation between eternal return and death, it is because it promises and implies 'once and for all' the death of that which is one. If there is an essential relation with the future, it is because the future is the deployment and explication of the multiple, of the different and the fortuitous, for themselves and ‘for all times” (DR 115).
5. Eternity

In the final section of this chapter, my goal is to precisely determine the nature of eternity by expanding on the abstract concept of eternal return given above—and specifically, on the notion of the object = x or dark precursor. I will situate these concepts within the context of Deleuze's ontology and my own model of the instant and moment before applying them to everyday experience. The delay between the instant and the moment becomes, finally, the delay between the moment and the instant. This is the purely virtual delay between a decision made in the moment of counter-actualization and the aleatory focus point for that event, a futural x that marks the spot where the event, in its eternity, can be repeated anew.

5.1 The object = x

The object = x is a slippery concept in Deleuze, and one that (as Lampert has shown) he employs inconsistently. Like the concept of eternal return, it mostly disappears after Logic of Sense. The first version of the idea was formulated by Kant. In the original (A) version of the transcendental deduction, Kant argues that there must be a pure objective correlate to the unity of self-consciousness, or apperception. If time provides the basic field of unity for apperception, the object = x effects a synthetic unity of the objective in accordance with the categories. It is not an object, but the "concept of an object in general" (A251). This gives it a strange status as "corresponding to and therefore also distinct from the cognition" of representations (A104). It "corresponds" to cognition because it provides a common set of a priori rules that all possible objects of experience must follow in order to be represented. In that sense, it is a kind of eternal object: "The pure concept of this transcendental object...is really always one and the same = x"

207 See A104–105 and A109–A110 in Kant.
(A109). But it is also distinct from cognition, because it is nothing but its objective ground, and "cannot contain any determinate intuition at all" (A109). Thus it forms the element of determinability that permits the unity of consciousness to be expressed in the manifold within which consciousness subsequently recognizes its own synthetic activity.

Deleuze likes the strange duality of the object = x. As a correspondent to the consciousness from which it is nevertheless distinct, it is perpetually "missing from its own place." As that which "invisibly" precedes every event and becomes visible only in the wake of the event's effects, but never appears, it is eternally that which has just happened and that which is going to happen. It is therefore temporally manifested by the non-time of the instant, although it must be represented in the empty present or moment.

At the crucial juncture in Logic of Sense where Deleuze lays out the point-line-frontier model representing the pure form of time, he says that the instant as object = x is "the paradoxical instance or the aleatory point, the nonsense of the surface and the quasi-cause" (LS 166). Let us take these points one by one to better understand this strange concept.

1) The instant is paradoxical because the logic of the event is paradoxical: the event is both now and in the past-future, both in the past and in a time that does not yet exist. Correlatively, I exist in this world, but also in another world, meaning that a truly inclusive account of the properties of Brent Ables would include contradictory, and thus paradoxical, properties in incompossible virtual worlds. Deleuze would call this cross-world Brent the “Brent = x.” The futural instant, I have suggested, is a kind of cut between these incompossible worlds. It is, paradoxically, positioned atop contraries.

208 LS 166: “The entire line of the Aion is run through by the instant which is endlessly displaced on the line and is always missing from its own place.” Cf. LS 168: “The quasi-cause is missing from its own identity.”
209 See LS 114 on the “Adam = x.”
2) The instant is an “aleatory point” because the realization of the projected endpoint of a course of action depends partially on chance, just as it is a matter of chance which events are actualized to begin with. We know neither when the moment will come nor what it will look like, for both the when and what depend as much on chance as on action. The reference to chance here does not necessarily imply that Deleuze is not a determinist. Hume defines chance as the ignorance of real causes; Deleuze's twist on this is that the future may well be fully caused, but it is also quasi-caused.

3) The instant is the “quasi-cause”: only matter causes alterations in matter, and mind does not directly affect matter, but there can be cross-temporal causality when ideal facets of past events subsistent in thought direct the material action of present subjects toward the aleatory future. Human beings and other thinking subjects do not create or imagine events; we are merely the relay points for the repetition of events because (as in Spinoza or Leibniz) we happen to be uniquely positioned between mental and physical realities.

4) Finally, the instant is the “nonsense of the surface” because the event—which is, in the geometry of Logic of Sense, suspended at the purely virtual “surface” of being—necessarily contains an excess over its chronological actualizations. This excess of an event over its actualizations is what makes it possible for different resolutions to the Civil War to continue to have effects in the present, despite one actual history in which the South officially lost. More positively, it is also what allows an event like the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s to persist and even expand into modern politics. The spirit of Martin Luther King (and that of Malcolm X) is alive, for example, in the Black Lives Matter movement. At the same time, it would be

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210 On the role of chance in the third synthesis, see DR 199–200.
211 See Hume 287: “We conclude, that the chance or indifference lies only in our judgment on account of our imperfect knowledge, not in the things themselves, which are in every case equally necessary.”
212 See LS 94–99 on “double causality.”
nonsense to say that King or X lead that movement after their deaths. To avoid such nonsense, we have to respect the difference between actual chronology (history) and virtual simultaneity in the event.

5.2 Time-content

While *Logic of Sense* has some tantalizing discussions of the $= x$ and its role in the event, there is very little said in that work about the temporality of this paradoxical element, or about the future at all. *Difference and Repetition* offers us a variation on the concept that once again situates us within the pure form of time. In *Difference and Repetition*, the $= x$ is what “fills” the empty present; it envelops the future in the present by exceeding the interpretive matrix of our past experience. The theory of the object $= x$ is developed in an account of the processual systems in which those objects are encountered, interpreted, and redefined. Such systems are sites for the actualization of events. The unknown $= x$ is the enveloped virtuality that, being explicated and interpreted in the future, will retrospectively redefine the event that it serves to repeat.

Deleuze uses various names for this transformative “system,” or systematic process, throughout his career: simulacrum, machine, structure, etc. The specific stages of the process vary. But in simplest terms, what is being described here is an event. An event is an emergence of something new that is sparked by the subject’s encounter with something unknown—i.e., a determinable object $= x$. The event is the content of the pure form of time. In both *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze presents the structure of the event in three core steps.\(^{213}\)

The first condition for any event is the existence of at least two series (LS 50). "Series" is

\(^{213}\) See LS 36–41 and 50.
the basic element of Deleuze's early ontology, rather than "word" or "thing" (or "abstract machine" or "assemblage"). The term is therefore extremely broad and can designate any gathering of elements in which the grouped things are defined by their relations to each other. To revisit an earlier example, we might think of the players available in a given year for the draft of the National Football League (in the United States). These players form a collective pool out of which certain singular individuals will be selected: the first-round draft picks. These singular points are complemented with “ordinary” picks in the later rounds. The series of players is heterogenous to begin with—some players are receivers, some quarterbacks and running backs—and the skill and value of any given player is defined relative to those available and those already chosen. To take a different example, past, present and future are themselves three heterogeneous series of time because they each account for the contents of time in different ways while constantly interacting.

The necessary thing for an event is that there be at least two heterogeneous series organized into a structure. Deleuze describes the state of such a structure:

In the first place, singularities-events correspond to heterogeneous series which are organized into a system...endowed with a potential energy wherein the differences between series are distributed. (Potential energy is the energy of the pure event, whereas forms of actualization correspond to the realization of the event.) (LS 103)

In *What Is Philosophy?* Deleuze will relate this "potential energy" to physical energy. But even here, the "energy of the pure event" is not initially a material energy, or a vital energy, or even a political energy. It is a purely metaphysical potentiality that expresses the productive power of the virtual singularity in its actualized form. If virtuality is an essentially productive

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214 See WP 122–124.

215 WP 122: “In general, a state of affairs does not actualize a chaotic virtual without taking from it a potential that is distributed in the system of coordinates. From the virtual that it actualizes it draws a potential that it appropriates.”
or expressive state of being, then it must be actualized as something which enables the possibility of further expression or production. This is why it is the energy of the “pure event,” i.e., the incorporeal and repeatable ideality of the event. It is a requirement of immanence that nothing be separated from what it can do, but some things can do things that have not yet been done; this potentiality is a real fact of present being.

In the second step, the referee blows the whistle, and the heterogeneous series come into contact. Deleuze has various names for this convergence of series: communication, resonance, becoming. This leads to the third step, where, as the values of the relations between all terms change, there is a reorientation and redistribution of singular points that transforms the whole structure. The game is played. New possibilities come to light, old rules become obsolete, and sometimes we are forced to rethink everything. This is the production, not of a new object, but of a new sense for the object and its milieu (subjects, languages, worlds). This third step is the moment in which the incorporeal transformation is effectuated. But how does it happen?

5.3 The dark precursor

How do series converge? One might think that an event arises in the order of time: first there are two divergent series, defined by their relations to each other (e.g., protesters and prison guards); then the two series enter into communication in such a way that the relations or differences in each series come to be determined by the relations in the other (the protesters storm the prison, the guards ward off the protesters); finally, this second-order difference comes to define the whole system in retrospect (past and future are synthesized into the pure event, "storming the prison"). But in Deleuze's explanation, it seems that the effect produces the cause: this makes it a quasi-cause, operative through thought. This ideal and quasi-causal fragment of
the future event is the "dark precursor" which ensures the communication between series:

Thunderbolts explode between different intensities [series of singular points], but they are preceded by an invisible, imperceptible dark precursor, which determines their path in advance but in reverse...Because the path it traces is invisible and becomes visible only in reverse, to the extent that it is travelled over and covered by the phenomena that it induces within the system, it has no place other than that from which it is 'missing', no identity other than that which it lacks. (DR 119–120)

The dark precursor is the second-order "differentiator" which relates the series to each other in all their constitutive differences. It is the universal operator of every event: "This mobile and precise point, where all events gather together in one..." (LS 153). In the following section, I offer some examples to explain this retroactive determination of the event by the dark precursor.

The dark precursor is the object = x (DR 124). What is present to consciousness is the actualized event, but its meaning is a dark unknown, an excess over the sense-content of our memorial past. As a correspondent to the consciousness from which it is nevertheless distinct, the precursor is like an empty square, or conversely, an occupant "missing from its own place" (LS 166). Interpreting it is a matter of explicating what was already there to begin with in the form of an objective, problematic impetus. Interpretation is not a passive activity, as though we were reading a book. It requires making decisions, as every event does, about how to fit an event into a world that does not yet have a place for it. Following the trail of the x thus requires an affirmation of the excess over the present in the present.

The event is really happening right now, but it is also, right now, not happening yet. And since we are always drawing on the past to interpret it—since the future never arrives, as it were—searching for the unknown = x is the same as searching for something ephemeral that just happened or grasping for a remembered word lingering on the tip of our tongues. Since the event is divided into past and future by a delay, the dark precursor or object = x can really precede its own manifestation by retroactively determining its material ground as quasi-cause. But since the
instant must be represented, we do not become aware of this element of determinability until it is already determined, or actualized, in chronos. Thus, the seizure of the meaning of the event represents a return. From the perspective of chronos, the object = x manifests the essential excess of the pure event. But from the heights of the surface of aion, it signifies the non-continuous repetition of virtual realities over time, which is to say, the eternity of events.

5.4 Eternity and the dark precursor

Let us now redirect this discussion of the dark x back towards eternal return. In what might be his most concise summation of eternal return, Deleuze assigns it two functions. The first is “distributing repetition among the three times of the pseudo-cycle” (DR 297). The first function gathers present, past, and future together into a non-chronological totality in which a line can be drawn from any point to any other point. It breaks the “pseudo-cycle,” which is the conception of time as an endless present eternally returning to itself (as in Nietzsche’s original conception). This is like a distribution of repetition because, without chronology, the first occurrence of something is as much a repetition as the third or last; events are variations on a theme, not chapters in a story, and variation in itself is not something that begins or passes away—it is always in the middle, in the meanwhile.

Deleuze says the following in regard to the achronological totality of distributed repetitions:

The essential point is the simultaneity and contemporaneity of all the divergent series, the fact that all coexist. From the point of view of the presents which pass in representation,

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216 “The expulsive and selective force of the eternal return, its centrifugal force, consists of distributing repetition among the three times of the pseudo-cycle, but also of ensuring that the first two repetitions do not return, that they occur only once and for all, and that only the third repetition which turns upon itself returns for all times, for eternity” (DR 297).
the series are certainly successive, one before and the other after...However, this no longer applies from the point of view of the chaos which contains them, the object = x which runs through them, the precursor which establishes communication between them or the forced movement which points beyond them: the differentiator always makes them coexist. (DR 124)

The precursor that anticipates the communication between series in the evental structure does not just show up on the scene conveniently. Rather, all points in time coexist in relation to the object = x that harbors the presence of the future in the present.

In practice, this means that when I am faced with a genuine decision imposed on me by an event, I can take any thinkable pathway through history to construct the best response. When the American founding fathers set to writing their country's constitution, they drew a unique line across time to do so: starting with ancient Greek and Roman democracies, then skipping over feudalism to Montesquieu, Locke, and Hobbes. From the perspective of 1787, ancient civilizations and nascent European liberals were assignable to different points in time. But those ages co-existed in relation to the document = x that was in the process of being formed—and which is still an = x today, continually re-interpreted in the light of new pasts and futures.

Similarly, there was nothing necessary about a cross-temporal line being drawn between Greek antiquity and 14th century Italy. But frequently, we now take that line called the Renaissance, disengage it from its context, and project a new model of change within this linear delay between counter-actualization and its revitalization (the Harlem Renaissance, the Tamil Renaissance, the Nepal Bhasa Renaissance…). The modality of change which has the proper name of Renaissance is pure repetition that was born out of historical repetition; it is Return appearing for itself in history.

The second function of eternal return counters the first: it consists in “ensuring that the first two repetitions do not return, that they occur only once and for all, and that only the third
repetition which turns upon itself returns for all times, for eternity” (DR 297). This echoes other statements made by Deleuze to the effect that the series of time somehow undoes the other dimensions of the pure form, or that, while all syntheses of time are repetitions, the future is the “royal” repetition (DR 97). One meaning of this claim is that the future stays future even when the present becomes the past. The potentiality of the event which holds it open to the future in its moment of return cannot be cancelled out, even if all memory of the event's past is lost and its present incarnations destroyed.

But I think there is a deeper meaning pertaining specifically to the pure form of time. When we say that the pure form of time consists of a content, an order, and a totality, we have not really left the perspective of chronos. The content of chronological time is the grand happening that is the cosmos. The totality of chronological time is the immense duration that covers the billions of years in which this happening happens. The order of chronological time is the unidirectional and precise sequence of sub-happenings within this universal happening. But when we put together Deleuze's different accounts of the pure form, what we get instead is a kind of impurification of these dimensions.

In the pure form, the order of time is not a precisely delimited sequence of occurrences; on the contrary, it is an irruption of chance in the continuity of duration, a caesura or cut in time that compels us to understand the disparity between our past world and the one we are interpreting now.\textsuperscript{217} The totality of time is not the elegant unity of causes from beginning to end, but rather a vast labyrinth of branching futures and unexplored pasts. This totality is thinkable in any order whatsoever; the nearly infinite orderings of time make any totalization inconceivable. And yet even this totality is not really a totality, for it is organized around the non-presence of

\textsuperscript{217} See DR 85–87.
the dark precursor whose trail we follow into a future that subsists without existing. By re-situating past, present, future as co-existent series of time, then, the object = x undoes time's limits, ensuring only the eternity of the virtual future returns.

The future must therefore be identified with eternity because it is what holds time open for all the times that are to come. Any theory of eternity which would identify its scope with what has happened, or even with infinite variations on what has happened, is unacceptable for the simple reason that we have not seen all of what time has to offer. The mobility of the dark precursor is also, then, a condition of the possibility of the untimely future or future-to-come, which we cannot even anticipate at present. Yet we know this futural eternity is real because we can think it, at least in problematic form, by letting our thoughts follow the roving circulation of the object = x on its erratic lines through time. And we can live it, or live in such a way as to create it, by continually cutting up the past in different ways, extracting new possibilities of change, and projecting aleatory limit points to direct the application of that change in new states of affairs. To the extent that we do so, and only to this extent, it can truly be said that we are living in the moment.

5.5 Note on real experience

Deleuze's account of the third synthesis of time is so technical that it is easy to forget he claims to be describing real experience. But I think there is something eminently relatable in this account. In fact, most of our lives happen in cycles. We wake up, work, eat, sleep, do it all again. Those of us who fall out of these normative cycles fall into worse circles: addiction, obsession, regret. But we all develop habits and fixed opinions which form a local region of order, making the world's chaos into something predictable and non-threatening. We do things over and over
again for no other reason than that we have done them, it seems, forever.

Life is thus a circle, until we come to one of those rare turning points where we are forced to make a decision about the future that the past has not adequately prepared us for. The circle snaps, and for just a moment, time becomes a straight line—or, more accurately, a fork in the road. This is the moment at which subjective novelty becomes possible. But for it to become actual, we must act. We must open up to the overwhelming event with which we are faced, affirming it by selectively embodying it, and transforming ourselves in that affirmation. After this self-transformation, it is as though time begins again in accordance with the new possibilities opened up by the event.

Now, it is always dangerous when philosophers (or philosophical interpreters) try to generalize about what “we” do and do not do. In this case, there are at least two objections to the account of experience given. The first is that many people, perhaps even most, are never presented with the kind of evental opportunities described in this chapter. For many, there are no big surprises in life, no “moment of truth” requiring a life-changing decision; there are only habit-cycles and small variations on those cycles. It could even be argued that the account given here presupposes a certain kind of social and economic privilege. Making radical changes in one’s life presupposes the flexibility to do so, and poor people tend to have less flexibility in determining the course of their lives than wealthy people.

The heartless response to this objection is that it is true—but so what? Events are necessarily rare, for if they were not, the world would not be as predictable as it now is. Radical change is uncommon; therefore, it is uncommon for individuals to be part of radical change. None of this would show that the account of eternal return given is inaccurate. In this dissertation, however, I have tried to take a slightly different line of response to this objection,
which is to emphasize the importance of micro-events in addition to the revolutions and upheavals celebrated by Deleuze’s generation.

Events can involve anyone, not just those that are widely recognized as “making history.” Having come from a lower-class background myself, I do not doubt that there is as much ingenuity and novelty in that milieu as there is among the upper and middle classes. Most of us academics would have no idea how to efficiently get heavy minerals from the deep earth to the surface, or how to diagnose a hyper-specific automotive problem from the rattle in an engine. To organize the equal sucking of his favorite pebbles, Samuel Beckett’s character Molloy developed a methodology as refined and Byzantine as any symphony.218 If we hear more about the inventions and discoveries beloved to the upper classes, perhaps it is because the lower classes tend to be more immersed in the problems that provoked the novelties in the first place, rather than with leaving signs behind to trumpet their accomplishments.

A second objection to my interpretation of Deleuze’s account is more explicitly political. It might be said that the account is more or less accurate as a description of events, but that it is dangerous, because events are always dangerous. Is stability and predictability really such a bad thing, after all? Lenin’s transformation of the Russian state was a paradigmatic event, and one that seemed right at the time; should the millions who died in Communist states in the 20th century be thankful for the Revolution? I am sympathetic to this criticism, which is why I have tried to steer this dissertation away from the militant dimension of Deleuze’s ontology—the dimension where a “battle” is the paradigm of the event, the “Event in its essence” (LS 100)—in order to emphasize the more benign novelties of art and culture. In short, I have tried to read Deleuze as an ontologist rather than a revolutionary; if it is the case that political revolutions and

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218 See Molloy 93-100; Deleuze mentions this passage at DR 79.
styles of music come into being through the same virtual mechanisms, that would be an important finding for every political persuasion.

If this response does not quite feel adequate, perhaps it is because, at the end of the day, we do not choose the events in which we become involved. Perhaps Lenin’s actions ultimately had unfortunate consequences, but life in the Russian Empire was no picnic either. At the time he acted, Lenin was probably choosing the future that he thought would create a better life for his people. Like Lenin, we all have to make decisions about our lives, and the lives of those around us, based on the knowledge we have “in the moment.” No doubt, it is risky to pick up on the potential of an event in order to preserve it for eternity. If human beings reach a terminal state of peaceful (and environmentally sound) co-existence someday, then perhaps we could start discouraging events. But we live in a world that is decidedly not perfect, and many people around the world are quite miserable. (Animals have it even worse.) If that needs to change, then the best we can hope for is an event, and the best we can do is become equal to the event that finds us. Through eternity, the continued survival of this hope is possible.
Conclusion

My interpretation of Deleuze’s theory of eternity is now complete. All that is left is to gather and survey the ideas about time and eternity presented here. I would like to leave the reader with something more than a rote summary of the points made in the preceding chapters since this summary can already be found in the introduction to this dissertation. Instead, I will put the focus squarely back on the concept of eternity, as this focus may have been obscured here and there in otherwise necessary technical discussions. Quite simply, I will say what eternity is and is not. Following this, I offer a final statement and illustration of my original definition of eternity as the delay between the instant and the moment. I will conclude with a few brief words on the wider relevance this theory of eternity might have in our confusing times.

1. What is eternity?

The general approach of this dissertation has been to examine Deleuze's writings on the past (chapter two), present (chapters three and four), and future (chapters five and six) for material relating to eternity. The common thread in all of these discussions was the event (chapter one): the event is what is eternal. There were indications in Deleuze's work that all three syntheses of time—past, present, future—could be identified with eternity in some way.

The pure past is like eternity because it is always there, forever trailing behind the present and preserving all that happens in the present, while also serving as a virtual "ground" or ontological source of the events that come to be actualized in new presents. The pure past would thus be analogous to either a Platonic or Spinozian conception of eternity—that is, a conception where eternity is the temporal mode of Being, the permanence of the substance or idea that persists behind all of what originates from it.
Meanwhile, the present is like eternity because time never escapes the present. It is always now, and if past and future have reality, it is because they are contracted into presence by an organism (in DR), by the Chronos-God (LS), or—in my reading of *Proust and Signs*—by the signs that freeze the foldings of complicated time. The eternal present would be most analogous to the conception of eternity as all-encompassing "now" formulated in late antiquity by Augustine and reawakened in 20th century phenomenology.

At the end of chapters two and three respectively, I offered reasons to reject the identification of eternity with past and present. But it is important to be clear on the sense of this rejection. Deleuze says eternity is the past-future, and moreover, that the past-future subsists in the present. So even if it is true that eternity should fundamentally be identified with the future—as I have maintained, following Deleuze's lead—then we should expect that past and present would share in this eternity. In other words, it would be misleading to draw absolute dividing lines between the three syntheses. All of time shares in eternity in some way: this is the consequence of an ontology of immanence. Thus, it is true at some level that the pure past is eternal, and that there is an eternal present. What I have argued is that there are strong interpretations and weak interpretations of both the pure past and eternal present, and that in each case, the weak interpretations are more tenable.

What differentiates the strong and weak interpretations? In a word: selection. The eternal present is not eternity because there is no plausible way for the entirety of time, from the beginning to the end of the universe, to be contracted into the present. Deleuze's "divine present" requires a *Deus ex machina* that is merely postulated rather than demonstrated. On the other hand, there is a sense in which the past and future are contained in the present that goes beyond subjective and organic memory: namely, they are folded up in signs existing in the present. The
eternal present or complicated state of time is the sum total of temporal relations between the existent present and subsistent past-future insofar as those relations are "frozen" or implicated in present signs. Now, the specific events preserved in signs will vary greatly depending on the efforts of preservers. Without the inevitably selective efforts of scholars, artists, and the other chroniclers of history, we would have nothing but memory and habit to go on. But even the robust access to the past made possible by modern scholarship and modern science leaves much of history in the dark. It thus seems wrong to identify eternity with the present, because so much is left out of the present, and what is included is highly variable. Presence and eternity only seem to work together on the supposition of an omniscient being.

It might seem as though the Bergsonian theory of the pure past solves this problem. On the strong interpretation of this theory, a) the virtual past retains every event that passes through the present; b) every newly actualized event is pulled out of the pure past; c) within the past, there are infinite variations on and systematizations of the totality of virtual events. Not only is nothing left out, but there is an immense excess of virtual possibilities over actual states of affairs. The pure past is always there, and contains everything—what else could eternity be?

Much of the argumentative work of this dissertation has been devoted to tempering this thesis. If these arguments did not previously find their mark, it would be superfluous to repeat them here. In short, I have defended the co-existence of past and present while denying that the entire past is recoverable on the basis of this co-existence. I argued that if we really believe in the possibility of "time regained," then we must also acknowledge lost time. Lost time is analogous to dark matter in space: even as we postulate its existence to account for what happens in the small sections of the universe we can see, the integral matter itself is forever hidden to us.

219 What I would consider the most important arguments concerning the pure past can be found in: chapter two, section three; chapter three, section 3c; and chapter five, section 3g.
Unlike distant spaces, however, the events which persist in eternity can be—indeed, must be—selected for preservation in the complex relay operation called counter-actualization. If an event is not counter-actualized, has left behind no signs, and does not persist in memory, it is lost. If an event is not counter-actualized, but has left behind signs, it belongs to the eternal present. If an event is counter-actualized and launched into the future by an actor, it is eternal. And if this conclusion is ultimately incompatible with the Bergsonian vision of time, it is certainly more amenable to human freedom.

Does this mean the conclusion is necessarily correct? Obviously not. In its own way, my interpretation of Deleuze may be as controversial as anything in Bergson. I have given dozens of examples to make this interpretation more plausible. Yet I recognize that it will still be strange to think that an agent could give the event "a virtuality which will be valid forever even if it is not actualized" (C2 91). What I hope to have conveyed is that this is less a claim about the wondrous powers of actors than it is about the subordination of the subject to an eternity that is greater than all of us. No one is immortal, and actors are fated to be absent for the evolution of the events they participate in. All actors can do is select which lines of time will run from past to future, and which lines will fade into the cycles of presence. The event itself arises out of being and stretches into the unknown; we are merely torchbearers, passing on the light.

The virtual mechanisms of the pure form of time, described in chapter six, are what ensure the eternality of the event once it is counter-actualized: first by integrating the event into the totality of time, then by setting into motion, as the futural event's determinable core, a free-roving dark precursor which draws new lines through that totality. Determinability, in a word, is what is missing from the pure past. What has happened can still be so much more. How could we say that eternity includes all the times that have been, but excludes all the times to come?
If counter-actualized events are preserved, it is because they are unfinished. The delay between the actualized event and its eventual outcome(s) is as fundamental to the eternal truth of the event as the event's ideal determination in the labyrinth of the virtual world-memory. This is why aion is the past-future, not just the past. Along with the future, then, there must come delay. If the present and pure past are defined by distinct senses of simultaneity, then the virtual future is defined by indefinite delay. It is because this delay really is indefinite that we can speak of l’avenir, the unforeseeable future-to-come, as something like a promise rather than a simple article of faith. At the most fundamental level, and setting all technicalities aside, this eternal promise of the yet-to-be better deserves the title of eternity than that which always is, or always has been. For only what has not happened can truly be located outside of time.

2. The delay between the instant and the moment

Moving on from general considerations about eternity, I now want to consolidate the specific concepts and themes that have structured this dissertation. For there have been many moving parts in this interpretation of Deleuze's theory of eternity—too many, it might be said. I have argued at length against conceiving eternity as the mere perpetuation of lived time, but at least that conception has the virtue of being easily comprehensible. (At an unconscious level, Freud says, everyone is convinced of his or her own immortality.)\(^{220}\) The eternities of Augustine, Plato or Spinoza, though complex in their own ways, do not fall back on the kind of multi-leveled apparatus that Deleuze calls the pure form of time. Is this apparatus really necessary?

This question has some basis. The complexities of Deleuze's text do require the kind of technical legwork I have undertaken in these chapters. But this work will be for nothing if the

\(^{220}\) See Freud, “Our Attitude Towards Death.”
reader cannot come away with a singular vision of what eternity means: singular not only in the Deleuzian sense of being a unique organizing point for other concepts, but in the more basic sense of being something cohesive, something multiple that is also one. In this spirit, I want to offer a final, concise illustration of the definition of eternity I have offered since the very first page: the delay between the instant and the moment. To illustrate this definition in a relevant and concrete way, I will briefly explicate what seems to me the most widespread and historically significant event that is occurring, in part, during my lifetime: feminism.

Feminism is an event that been occurring discontinuously for close to two hundred years. In its American form (which I focus on here), it may be said to begin in 1845, at the instant when Margaret Fuller’s *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* was published.221 Fuller’s book was a critical self-examination that called for a new place for women in American society—one where “inward and outward freedom for Woman as much as for Man shall be considered a right, not yielded as a concession” (20). Every event creates something new, and here, Fuller states the novelty that would never stop being pursued by feminists: the right to “inward and outward freedom for Woman.” One might add: the right to never not be free again—to be free for all eternity.

With this novel proposal, the delay creeps in. The eternality of the order of time means that the publication of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* can be fixed as the instant when a call for inward and outward freedom was made for American women. Yet there would be a significant delay between the publication of this book and the first major, world-transforming moment of American feminism, which was the passage of the nineteenth amendment in 1919. Conversely, Fuller’s book was itself compared to Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights*
of Woman, a work published in England the previous century that could nonetheless be considered a precursor for American feminism insofar as it outlined the theoretical and practical requirements for freedom before there was any kind of societal context—i.e., any present state of affairs—in which such freedom could have made any sense. As feminism continued to develop, scholars would find other such precursors, like Christine de Pizan's The Book of the City of Ladies (1410), which could only be identified as feminist retrospectively once that movement had been established. Thus, we begin to see how the initially linear delay between instant and moment takes on non-linear detours.

Between the original instant and moment, female activists organized what would later be called the “first wave” of feminism. Significantly, this appellation was coined in 1968, in the same magazine article where the author identified the movement of her own time as “second-wave feminism” (Lear, “The Second Feminist Wave”). The event of feminism, like all events, is eternal because it is repeatable; the repetition of feminism in the 1960s' second wave did not create a new event, but reawakened the eternal potential brought into the world by the first wave. That potential had been dormant for several decades after the first major moment of feminism, in line with the entropy of the event, where the new tends to be assimilated to the old over the course of continuous, actual time. And on February 19, 1963, that potential would be counter-actualized by Betty Friedan's publication of The Feminine Mystique. Not only did the book directly inspire the second-wave repetition of feminism, but it was concerned precisely with the potential of women, in addition to simply their legal rights.

The Feminine Mystique focused on the articulation of what Friedan called “the problem with no name.” The problem with no name is a nice example of Deleuze's dark precursor: literally unidentifiable, the “problem” concerned the widespread feeling among American
housewives that *something* had to change, something was missing, though no one quite knew what it was. As it would turn out, that something was the very possibility for women to define their own social roles independent of, and often in defiance of, the prevailing social order of the day. It was as though women saw themselves in the roles they had been assigned—housewives, mothers, caretakers—and suddenly began to imagine *alternate presents* where they were doctors, soldiers, and senators instead. What would the world have been like, women began to ask, if—in some timeline that never became actual, some past that was never present—their voices had been represented at crucial moments in history gone by? They envisioned futures where men continued to dominate all aspects of political and social life and began to construct *divergent futures* where they sat at the important tables instead.

It came to be seen that the *totality* of possible roles for women was much greater than what the culture of the times offered them. Models for such roles could be taken from past figures like Joan of Arc or Sappho just as easily as they could from figures that had not yet been born, like Wonder Woman. The creation of a new identity, women realized, can draw on differences freely without respect for limits of time, place, and tradition. On the other hand, since the future in which these roles could be assumed did not yet exist, women also began to work for the actual instatement of their inclusive visions. Any individual woman's decision to become a feminist would transpire in a mere instant, but it would take years of hard, practical work to ensure the freedoms that they sought were achieved in practice. The delay between the moment of decision and the future instant of realization—the point at which one finally could look at oneself and say, “I am what I wanted to become”—might have been relatively short, or it might have continued, through the forced indecision of death, into perpetuity. Along the way, it might have taken any number of detours through past and future.
The third wave of feminism was the most radical. It might be said that the third wave was born in the instant Anita Hill opened her mouth to testify to the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee that Clarence Thomas, then-nominee to the Supreme Court, had sexually assaulted her. The moment of counter-actualization for this event came in Rebecca Walker's aptly titled "Becoming the Third Wave." After lauding Hill, Walker wrote, "I am not a post-feminism feminist…The fight is far from over" (41). She explicitly recognized that the feminism-event of the preceding waves had to be repeated with a difference. The difference between the third wave and the preceding waves was that the very sense of the word "woman," and the identity that was referred to by that word (i.e., the fixed essence of woman), would be challenged by thinkers like Judith Butler, who argued that such identities were historically constructed and socially performed. And if it is true that identities are constructed, feminists reasoned, then they can also be deconstructed. The third wave would thus seek to critique and ultimately transcend the very definitions of "woman" and "man," along with the binary characteristics used to distinguish the two. "Woman" became its own = x, its own precursor within the ongoing event of feminism, insofar as it become both a performative concept (one realized within the flow of time, and in states of affairs) and a futural point of aspiration: not the archetype of "the eternal feminine" critiqued by Simone de Beauvoir, but the untimely woman, the woman yet to come.

Whether we are still living out this radical third wave, or whether we have entered a fourth wave, seems to currently be a question of how one chooses to cut up time: the order of waves will eventually be retroactively determined if the fourth wave finds its footing in

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222 For the transcripts of this incident, see Totenberg.
223 See Butler, Gender Trouble.
224 The term "deconstruct" is often used very loosely, but here I intend to refer specifically to the Derridean critique of "phallogocentrism" and its conceptual inheritance in feminist theorists like Butler and Hélène Cixous.
225 See De Beauvoir, The Second Sex. This work was arguably as influential as The Feminine Mystique.
history. And as it does so, this nascent fourth wave can look for inspiration to any of the singular points that have defined the past two centuries of feminism. This is how an eternal event persists in time. The event “feminism” is, without any question, a permanent part of history. Yet the event exceeds history because it is not over, and will never be over, as long as “inward and outward freedom for Women” has yet to be attained. And this is unlikely to happen, since the very sense and definition of “woman” has revealed itself to be both constructed and deconstructable. On the one hand, then, “woman” is always a local phenomenon, a product of forces and discourses. On the other, it is an eternal potential of self-definition, an empty present that can be filled in by impossible pasts and nonexistent futures alike: becoming-woman.

There are, then, three stages—three waves, as it were—to the delay that is eternity, and all these stages concern the event as content of time. The first delay is between the instant of actualization and the moment of counter-actualization. This delay concerns the presentness of an event, for the beginning of the event—the beginning that is the event—is always determined retroactively from the present moment once the event has been recognized and relayed forward by an actor. The second delay therefore operates on the past, or in the virtual element of the pure past, as it allows an actor to draw upon any point in time (real or imagined, historical or fictional, possible or incompossible) to selectively synthesize the version of the past event that is relayed through the present. Finally, in the third stage, the delay between the instant and the moment becomes the delay between the moment and the instant. This is the meanwhile (entre-temps) suspended between times that do not yet exist: not only between the multiple incompossible futures that require a selection, but between the virtual totality of time as a whole and the new

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226 See Baumgardner, “Is There a Fourth Wave? Does it Matter?”
227 See *A Thousand Plateaus* 291–293 on the concept of becoming-woman. This text might be considered to be Deleuze and Guattari’s own feminist manifesto.
totality that will integrate the transformative event. Because this delay stretches across a purely virtual distance from the “now” to the “not yet,” it can range across the entire labyrinth of time's totality “at infinite speed,” in an instant.\textsuperscript{228} Conversely, because the “not yet” is contained in the “now,” the moment reveals itself to have a dimension of determinability that holds open a space for a future to be selected. This open mobility of the dark precursor in the totality of virtual time, which holds the future open for all the times to come, is eternity.

3. A belief in the future

Although Deleuze would not circle back to the pure form of time after his convergence with Guattari, he would not be content to linger in the past. The two philosophers would never cease to remind us that there is \textit{something more} to time than what can be remembered: “Wherever we used the word 'memories' in the previous pages, we were wrong to do so; we meant to say 'becoming', we were saying becoming” (ATP 324). To be sure, as this quote shows, Deleuze eventually lost his taste for calling this “something more” eternity. He would mostly, with the notable exception of \textit{Cinema 2}, stop writing about the future. But at the time of this writing, it seems more important than ever that we maintain the link between eternity and the future.

Never in the history of humankind has so much of the past been available to us as it is now, in the age of the internet, of archaeology, of scientific cosmology. And yet this moment is marked by an astonishing political regressiveness in the Western world, to the extent that even essentially futural ideologies like Marxism have given way on the left to a politics founded on the preservation of identity. Popular Western culture has become obsessed with recycling the

\textsuperscript{228} Cf. ATP 281, 381 on “infinite speed” as instantaneous virtual movement.
past, as evidenced by the endless remakes of remakes that populate movie theatres. Perhaps there is no connection between these phenomena. But it is easy to think that the immersion of present minds in the past has made it harder to imagine, and to actualize, new futures.

It is easy to feel suffocated by the totality of time. It is easy to say that there is nothing new under the sun—and this is always true, since what is new is not what is. What is new is the untimely: that which is yet to come. Despite what Deleuze says, eternity must finally be thought in terms of the untimely. The event must “go down in history, but never come from history,” since the future-to-come is history yet to be made (ATP 296). If eternity did not encompass what has yet to happen, in all its objective uncertainty, it would be nothing but dead time—the abstract order of frozen poses that Deleuze finds in Platonism. But if eternity is thought as eternal return, then it allows us to maintain a shred of hope that the apparent exhaustion of the present is simply a moment in history, and not the end of history, or its tragicomic recurrence.
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