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The Ontological-Ontic Character of Mythology

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Graduate Program in Theory and Criticism

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Abstract

This thesis submission interrogates the concept of *mythology* within the opposing philosophical frameworks of the *world* as either an abstract totality *from which* ‘truth’ is derived, or as a chaotic background *to which* the subject brings a synthetic unity. Chapter One compares the culturally dominant, classical philosophical picture of the world as a necessary, knowable totality, with the more recent conception of the ‘world’ as a series of ideational repetitions (sense) grafted on to material flows emanating from a chaotic background (non-sense). Drawing on Plato, Kant, and Heidegger, I situate *mythology* as a conception of the *false*—that which fails to correlate with the ‘world’ as a necessary whole. Working with Deleuze, I reconsider the conception of mythology from the perspective of absolute contingency—mythology as a set of reductive *rules* or principles which, rather than apprehending the world in its *hiddenness*, instead constitute the world as a series of repetitive, but ultimately ideational subjective objects *grafted on to* a background chaos.

Chapter Two examines *mythology* within the perspective of what Deleuze refers to as the *aleatory moment* (the conditions of chance contained within every sensuous ontic encounter). Here I introduce the concept of the *aleatory circle*—an ontically necessary foreclosure of the conditions of possibility (the multiplicity) contained in every sensuous encounter (or ‘event’). I compare the *rules of the game* with the ontically necessary opening of the conditions of possibility (the aleatory moment or point of *chance*) and its necessary foreclosure as dictated by the rules of *time and space*. Here I introduce the concept of the *mythological apparatus*—a framework of ideational *rules* derived from the repetitions of the aleatory circle encountered by the subject in its sensuous mode. The myth apparatus is, in my view, both *constitutive of*, and *constituted by*, the ‘world’, governing the position of the subject within a framework established by ontic repetition.

Keywords

Mythology, Deleuze, Heidegger, Derrida, Lévi-Strauss, Nietzsche, Kant, Schelling, Ontology, Aleatory, World-picture, Corporeality, Chance, Games, Being, Grounding, Representation, Eternal Return, Post-Structuralism, Materialism, Phenomenology.

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Preface

The conception of mythology that drives current understanding relies on a supposition of ‘truth’ derived from the concept of the world as a necessary totality, from which emerges the possibility of an understanding of the *real* as a grounded, knowable object. *Myth*, as conventionally conceived, is the position of the abstraction—of the *fantastical* or *false*. Epistemological schemes that demand a correlative methodology conceive of the ‘world’ as a ground *from which* knowledge, in its expressive mode, may be attained. The *truth* of the world is therefore singular—a homogeneous space that dictates the structural frame by which the subject apprehends its necessities. As we will see, however, the history of the structural apparatus is also the history of the *mythological ground*—a metaphysical presupposition reliant on a conception of the ‘material’ of the world as a ground from which *true* knowledge emanates. It is through the ‘reality’ of the material that a cohesive, totalized and knowable picture of the world is meant to emerge. In this regard, mythological thought may be conceived in two ways: 1) as metaphor, describing a cohesion of phenomena that intervenes ahead of natural inquiry, presenting the world as an abstract totality through logical synthesis of ‘determinate’ objects, and 2) as lateral, or fantastical speculation regarding the *origin* of the ground of *phenomena*.

The logic of the mythological apparatus parallels what we will refer to as the *natural image of thought*—a classical conception of knowledge that presupposes the positions of *truth* and *falsity* within a world comprised of knowable, grounded empirical phenomena emanating from a necessary world. The mythological apparatus’ character remains sutured to a presupposition of the world as a *totality*, intervening in a constitutive mode ahead of any subjective interpretation of ontic ‘events.’

Chapter One of this work discusses the concept of *world*, examining two opposing views: 1) the world as a grounded, knowable totality *expressing* its necessities, and 2) the world as a background *chaos*, or ‘non-sense’, *to which* the subject applies *rules* or

judgment. Chapter Two re-views what we refer to as the ‘mythological apparatus’—a set of ontic rules ‘determined’ by the false repetition of the *same*. Here we examine the role of *chance* within an ontic conception, and consider the possibility for subjective world-building operating within a background of *non-sense*.

Chapter One: The World Picture with Respect to Ontological Demarcation

1.1 An Image of the World

It seems that whatever we designate as *the world* must be accessible and adequately describable under proper conditions and with a thorough methodology, and yet the history of Western philosophy marks the abject failure of this endeavor. Science, as the preferred epistemic mode of the late modern period, solidifies the possibility for an ‘ontic’ understanding of the world under given conditions, but retains as its first postulate the impossibility of knowing the *world* as an ontological precept and as a coherent, self-enclosed whole. *Scientism*, the belief in the methodology of science, is the religion for an age that has largely abandoned the possibility of an ontological understanding of the world as a concrete *object* of knowledge. As such, we pursue adequate *ontic* descriptions,¹ favoring a system of cataloguing the modalities of the natural world. *Magnitude* marks the master dialectic of the natural view, a view in which empirical phenomena are elevated to the order of *world-constructing* ahead of any notions of a totalized unity. In its difference, the world of becoming instantiates an absent totality: the world is comprised of *brute fact*—a collection or series of real-existent, yet banal, positive empirical phenomena that, when taken as a ‘whole’, represents the fellowship of the human “subjective” experience with its ‘objective’ material conditions. The natural view is cautious in its approach, consistently refining

¹ I understand *ontic* as that which is ‘real’ and ‘factual,’ as opposed to *ontological*—the possibility of the ‘Being of beings” (see Chapter Two, p.21 footnote for a description of Heidegger’s definitions and my usage)

its various *frameworks* and methodologies.² The *world*, as such, inhabits a place of a *fractured totality*. It is a subjectively unconstituted field, broken into bits made digestible to human cognition. Despite its various contractions and expansions, the natural sciences have a tendency toward a notion of truth that predicates *the world* as a concrete totality. There is a teleological bent to the cultural mode of scientific inquiry. Despite its various changes, ‘revolutions,’ and retractions, *real objective knowledge* seems to always lie just beyond the horizon. This type of *frontierism* avoids an inconvenient space of confrontation: when every horizon has been crossed, and when all the forces which govern our existence have been confronted and catalogued, have we really learned anything meaningful about *the world* as it exists *in itself*? If I master the game of chess, have I come to understand the *meaning of chess* in its entirety?

We take another view: the world as it is *in itself* is a background chaos, a *non-ground from which* emanates only a false *veneer* of a concrete totality. The world, in this sense, is fractured at its very beginning. Knowledge is not a *great crusade*—the opening of the world and the conquering of its secrets. It is more of a game—the traversing of chaos with a touch of aesthetic flair.³ Plato famously inaugurated a concept of the *world* founded on a model / copy distinction. The question of *Being* saturates Plato’s *Sophist*.⁴ The Eleatic Visitor proposes a number of divisions in which he attempts to distinguish the *sophist* from the *philosopher*. First among them is the sophist’s *imitative* quality. This movement relies on an explicit *origin* of self-same

² Gilles Deleuze refers to the *dogmatic image of thought* specific to the modern era as follows: “all we need to think well, and to think truthfully, is a *method*. Method is an artifice but one through which we are brought back to the artifice of thought, through which we adhere to this nature and ward off the effect of the alien forces which alter it and distract us. Through method we ward off error. Time and place matter little if we apply method: it enables us to enter the domain of “that which is valid for all times and places.” See Deleuze, Gilles, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 103.

³ Here I reference Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, “From Chaos to the Brain”, in *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 201-218.

⁴ Here I tie the notion of *Being* to that of the *world* as it exists *in itself*, as a necessary totality from which ‘models’ emerge in representation. Plato, as conventionally received, founds his philosophy on the *expressive* nature of the world with respect to *Ideas*.

Being accessible to the dialectician, and made explicit through language.⁵ The sophist, in his imitation, drains the dialectic of any essential *Being* in favor of the movement of images lacking an essential (worldly) ground—which the Visitor refers to as “likeness making.”⁶ The sophist, according to the Visitor, elides truth in favor of a production of *images* with no relation to Being as such. The Visitor’s division of language into the philosopher’s speech, with its attendant *presence*, and the sophist’s, which does not, ignores a fundamental tension in ontological inquiry: language penetrates ‘knowledge’ of the world, but knowledge cannot deduce Being as a substantial property. It is only, according to the Socratic method, through dialogue that Being is made to appear. The model from which the sophist derives his copy is *hidden*. In *Phaedrus*, Lysias’ oratory adopts two distinct metaphysical tones: one of the *authentic*, of the true with respect to *Being*, and the other as mere sophistry—the form without the content. The former conception is reminiscent of the modern dominant cultural view: the world is a place of conquest, a knowable but presently hidden, necessary and complete entity within which ‘true’ models may be distinguished from ‘false’ copies.⁷ As Deleuze characterizes it:

The function of the notion of the model is not to oppose the world of images in its entirety but to select the good images, the icons which resemble from within, and eliminate the bad images or simulacra. Platonism as a whole is erected on the basis of this wish to hunt down the phantasms or simulacra which are identified with the Sophist himself, that devil, that insinuator or simulator, that always disguised and displaced false pretender. For this reason it seems to us that, with Plato, a philosophical decision of the utmost importance was taken:

⁵ This mirrors the concept of *reification*. *The world* is brought in to being through language. Being, in this sense, is a background which ontic existence *covers over*. It is the job of the dialectician to establish authentic Being not in language, but through the confrontation of difference.

⁶ Plato, “Sophist”, in *Plato Complete Works*, 235-293, ed. John M. Cooper, and D. S. Hutchinson, trans. Nicholas P. White (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 256.

⁷ See Plato, “Phaedrus”, in *Plato Complete Works*, 506-556, ed. John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson, trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997).

that of subordinating difference to the supposedly initial powers of the Same and the Similar, that of declaring difference unthinkable in itself and sending it, along with the simulacra, back to the bottomless ocean.⁸

Deliverance from the fractured world has taken myriad forms, but the structure of belief that has historically served to move humanity toward ‘transcendence’ has remained largely the same. There is a fundamental motion within the human spirit, one endeavoring to ascend to a forgotten unity of the *world* together with its impoverished corporeal subjects. We observe this in many myths and legends. It is the story of the *Book of Genesis*, and of the *fall of man*. It is the story of *lost* unity, of the fracture of the world and the loss of *togetherness* with *God*.⁹ The story of the *original*, of the *model*, is the story of the unity of the subject with the ‘world’ (allegorized as *God*). The *father* is the original ground that delivers man in to the world, providing structure and guiding the subject away from the dangers of the simulacra. The sovereign position of God, the father, mirrors that of the sovereign position of *Being*, the *creator*. This original unity has guided Western thought and remains within aspects of the scientific worldview. Derrida characterizes it as follows: “the name of man being the name of that being who, throughout the history of metaphysics or of ontotheology—in other words, throughout his history—has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation.”¹⁰

⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 127.

⁹ In philosophical terms we refer to *togetherness* as the adequation of the subject with *Being* as it exists in itself. Being should be understood as an ontological property—a *bringing together* of the subject with the world in an ontologically complete manner. This view is often considered ‘religious’ or mystical, but as we shall discuss in Chapter Two, the origins of the myth of Being share a common ground with the *myth* structure of human cognition and relies on the same supposition of the world as a necessary, concrete totality from which ‘man has fallen.’ As opposed to this view, the world conceived as a chaotic field, or background noise *to which* the subject brings a fictitious, ‘mythological’ unity, offers a unique understanding of the role of *myth* and what we will refer to as the *mythological apparatus* in Chapter Two, with respect to the ontic/ontological genesis of mythologies.

¹⁰ Jacques Derrida, “Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,” in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 290.

Despite traces of the (classical) Platonic view remaining in Western metaphysics, the question of totality, it seems, has largely been abandoned.¹¹ An emphasis on observable, measurable phenomena has separated ‘knowledge’ of the world from an understanding of the world as an authentic, knowable totality. As such, allegorical myths and legends which have historically provided a defining character of the world have been given secondary status—they lack empirical determination; they are based in fantasy; they have a ‘scientific’ explanation, etc. The conquest of the world has adopted a different tone. We no longer seek the definition of the world through mythico-historical means, but rather as a collection of *brute facts* that comprise a *great machine* of unknown character and origin. As Adorno and Horkheimer note of the *enlightenment*:

Mimetic, mythical, and metaphysical forms of behavior were successively regarded as stages of world history which had been left behind, and the idea of reverting to them held the terror that the self would be changed back into the mere nature from which it had extricated itself with unspeakable exertions and which for that reason filled it with unspeakable dread.¹²

In its cultural presentation, the ontological world-picture of the scientific age is one of confusion. We have, on the one hand, the tools necessary for a rigorous but incomplete picture of a world comprised of empirical phenomena and the rules

¹¹ Deleuze emphasizes the ‘non-Platonic’ tone in Plato’s later works, arguing that Plato himself understood the fissures in the model/copy distinction. Deleuze writes “The Sophist himself is the being of the simulacrum, the satyr or centaur, the Proteus who meddles and insinuates himself everywhere. For this reason, it may be that the end of the *Sophist* contains the most extraordinary adventure of Platonism: as a consequence of searching in the direction of the simulacrum and leaning over its abyss, Plato discovers, in the flash of an instant, that the simulacrum is not simply a false copy, but that it places in question the very notations of copy and model.” It is possible that Plato succumbed to the dialectic and ultimately delivered Western thought over to the primacy of the simulacra. See Deleuze, “Appendix 1. The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy,” in *The Logic of Sense*, 253-279, ed. Mark Lester, trans. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 256.

¹² Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1989), 24.

governing them. On the other hand the concept of world has become impoverished—conceived as a hangover from more dogmatic, uncritical times. The demarcation of what constitutes proper knowledge of the world and what is *possible* to know has been made explicit by countless philosophers and scientists. We grasp the limitations of human understanding, and along with the conquest of the worldly frontier, focus our efforts in other areas. We *understand* the world in a reduced manner and fail to grasp it as an object of relevant inquiry in its own right. This is not to say that myths and legends are the safeguard of *secret knowledge*, containing the keys to a forgotten understanding of the world. It is only to comment on the shift in academic tone permeating the academy and mass culture. Alongside the notion of a totalized, knowable and necessary world, allegories which have historically given rise to the definition of the world are entirely suspect. We should consider religious myths as categorically similar to the notion of the original *model* or self-same property and, accordingly, afford them the same critical treatment.

Commentators of Kant and his successors have lauded his critical project as one of delivering philosophy over to ‘science’ in its sharpening of the lines which separate “truth” from illusion.¹³ The whole of philosophy, on this view, adopts a scientific quality in its determination of the difference between knowledge of the world and pseudo-scientific empirical extrapolation. Whatever phenomena may be, it is argued, a definitive line must be drawn between what constitutes the world as a real, semi-causal, translatable apparatus, and the supplemental subjective ideations the flawed human-animal brings to bear upon that world. Kant’s critical project re-situated the locus of *world* to within the ‘universal’ structures of human cognition, inaugurating a

¹³ Here I consider the preface to *The First Critique*, wherein Kant is explicit in his aim of the discovery of universal structures of human cognition. One of Kant’s strongest contribution, in my view, is the distinction between ‘analytic’ and ‘synthetic’ deductions, which allowed Kant, notably, in *The Third Critique*, to distinguish between aesthetic (synthetic) and natural (analytic) judgments. See Chapter Two, pp.30-31 for a brief introduction to *The Third Critique* and Kant’s *Aesthetic Idea*. *Truth*, in this reduced sense, is the name given to the proper representation, or correlation of the subject with the object, which Kant sought to demarcate from fantasies of the Ideal.

critique of the metaphysics of Being and of the Cartesian *I*. As Adorno and Horkheimer note:

Kant combined the doctrine of thought's restlessly toilsome progress toward infinity with insistence on its insufficiency and eternal limitation. The wisdom he imparted is oracular: There is no being in the world that knowledge cannot penetrate, but what can be penetrated by knowledge is not being.¹⁴

In Kant the picture of the world is radically transformed. Being no longer enjoys a privileged status within the context of *universally valid structures* of thought. We refer to Kant's 'Copernican revolution' as the re-situating of the world to *within* the subject, absent the cohesion of the Cartesian *I*. The *world* is a site of transcendental illusion and error, with only the subject bringing unity to chaos. As Adorno and Horkheimer note: "the transcendental subject of knowledge, as the last reminder of subjectivity, is itself seemingly abolished and replaced by the operations of the automatic mechanisms of order, which therefore run all the more smoothly."¹⁵

Natural science enjoys the privileged position of a metaphysics which presents as a non-metaphysics: a collection of methodologies under which the truth conditions of the world may be adequately fulfilled (in time) because they have been reduced to the point of the elimination of a large section of human subjective experience, and, as I will argue, of the conditions which give rise to the picture of the world itself. For Heidegger "metaphysics grounds an age, in that through a specific interpretation of what is and through a specific comprehension of truth it gives to that age the basis upon which it is essentially formed. This basis holds **complete dominion** over all the phenomena that distinguish the age."¹⁶ On the assumptions made within the scientific

¹⁴ (Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 19)

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁶ Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1977), 115.

worldview, the precepts of its metaphysics intervenes as a framework *ahead* of any individual interpretation of the world. The scientific world-picture marks the systematic erasure of the indeterminate. *Incomplete* phenomena like dreams, myths, legends, etc. are relegated to the position of fantasy—a grouping of often spectacular but ultimately meaningless distractions from any ‘authentic’ understanding of the world. Here, criticism of the interpretation of ‘immaterial’ phenomena adopts the position of a warning against the dangers of a naïve idealism—of equating chaotic phenomenal touchstones as ontologically similar in kind to representations of empirical substance. As such, the scientific world-picture often engenders a type of hostility to that which seemingly lacks empirical determination.

The inclusion of ‘mythological’ interpretations as a relevant area of inquiry follows a conception of world based on the traditional *model / copy* formulation. If the world is, as classically conceived, a discrete totality capable of expressing its ‘essential’ properties, then mythological thought falls into the category of the *false*. If, on the other hand, what we consider as *the world* marks an ideal synthesis—a synthetic construction blending empirical experience with transcendental interpretation—then mythological thought adopts a different tone. It is, in this way, elevated to an ontological status similar to phenomena ‘perceived’ in representation.¹⁷

Markus Gabriel notes, “anything we encounter in the world and to which we are capable of referring by some singular term, i.e. anything to which we concede existence, is part of a certain domain.”¹⁸ The relevant domains we concede to the natural sciences are those that present possible empirical determination. As a cultural motif, scientism suffers the unfortunate distinction of believing in science as a type of messianic productive apparatus—a type of world-constructing mechanism that brings

¹⁷ I refer here to Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of psychoanalysis and its relation to *myth*. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, “Savages, Barbarians, Civilized Men,” 139-272, in *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

¹⁸ Markus Gabriel, *Mythology, Madness, and Laughter: Subjectivity in German Idealism* (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2009), 15.

‘objective’ fact into the subjective view. Scientism tends to neglect ‘non-sense’—that which fails to cohere with an ontic frame that is itself established through fine-tuning of the metaphysical scientific apparatus.¹⁹ The importance of phenomena that fall outside its stated domain of interrogation tend to be pathologized or mythologized in such a way as to drain them of any ‘real’ meaning. These myths amount to transcendental illusion or biological malfunction and, as such, are relegated to a particular domain of knowledge that carries secondary status to the ‘hard sciences.’

The scientific world-picture appears to be inadequate to the task of forming a conception of world as a concrete totality. If we consider Gabriel’s definition of the world as a set of domains, then it follows that the domain of all domains—the world—should emerge as an area of inquiry into which human cognition may make some progress. Speculative ontological systems have offered brilliant images of the world, but have failed to ground their systems adequately to the world as a totality. Through the various movements of philosophies of fundamental ontology, through epistemology, and finally through philosophies of difference, Western thought has attempted to situate the world conceptually by defining the play of phenomena against a speculative background of a given type. The teleological negative of Hegel, Deleuze’s transcendental-empiricism, Plato’s One, are different names for the World as an incomplete conceptual field from or within which productive phenomena proceed. Despite the variations found within the tradition, and with few exceptions, the *World* remains a complex, presently unknowable entity within which human cognition has emerged. As Gabriel characterizes it: “Despite the turbulent rapture we

¹⁹ The question of *sense* is best penetrated by Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense*, specifically in his discussion on the work of Lewis Carroll (Alice both “grows” and “shrinks” at once.). Writes Deleuze: “A false proposition remains no less a proposition endowed with sense. Non-sense would then be the characteristic of that which can be neither true nor false. Two dimensions may be distinguished in a proposition: *expression*, in which a proposition says or expresses some idea; and *designation*, in which it indicates or designates the objects to which what is said or expressed applies.” (Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, ed. Mark Lester, trans. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 153.

experience in our personal life and despite the utter contingency of the roles we play, there ultimately is a background in front of which we enact our lives.”²⁰

We have, in various times, witnessed attempts to ground phenomena within a concrete totality, providing definition for the character of the world as it exists *in itself*. Attempts to situate the world in an ontologically and epistemologically sufficient manner have constantly returned philosophy to its perennial questions. That which is *supposed* to ground experience or intuition in *Being* (as world), whether the ‘material,’ *time*, or otherwise, eludes the prospect of a complete determination. It seems that under the weight of *becoming*, Being is radically effaced. As Nietzsche put it, “the idea that everything becomes show us the vanity of Being.”²¹ The capture and cataloguing of the various modes of becoming mark the domain, or domains, of relevant inquiry pursued in the natural sciences. These are quantitative or qualitative *advancements* of a representative apparatus whose correlate is supposed as ‘the world’. *Objects* of relevant inquiry, whether in physics, biology, the social sciences, etc. take as their point of departure a grounding frame established first as a metaphysical structure (i.e.: *empiricism*). The *world* as a concept fades to the background as the frame which provides the natural sciences its justification in ‘world-building’ is reinforced. ‘The vanity of Being’, as Nietzsche put it, is the pretension of any inquiry into the world, whether philosophical or otherwise, that it may come to know *Being* as such. As Schelling argued: “Every organic individual exists, as something that has become, only through another, and in this respect is dependent according to its becoming but by no means according to its Being.”²² In this sense the natural sciences, whose ground is the cataloguing and proper re-presentation of the modalities of becoming, lacks privileged access to *Being* or the *world* as such.

²⁰ (Gabriel, 28)

²¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, quoted in Gilles Deleuze, *What is Grounding?*, transcript by Pierre Lefebvre, trans. Arjen Kleinherenbrink, ed. Tony Yanick, Jason Adams, and Mohammad Salemy (Grand Rapids: &&& Publishing, 2015), 81.

²² F.W.J Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (New York: SUNY, 2006), 17.

The natural sciences aim at the forces underwriting phenomena with respect to governing *laws*. As Schelling notes:

The direction of all natural activity will aim toward *mean products*, toward materials which are absolutely compostable and absolutely decomposable at once, and *permanent processes* will appear in Nature (as object), through which the incompostable is constantly decomposed, and the indecomposable constantly composed.²³

Understood philosophically, laws of nature represent the determination of the fluctuations of the natural world picture—no final product, only the *force* that underwrites phenomena as such. In Schelling's work on the philosophy of nature (*naturphilosophie*) he emphasizes the possibility of *driving forces* determining quantitative modalities expressed by nature. It is not an ontological but an ontic chaos which determines the constant state of becoming observed in the natural world.

Since each actant is highly individual, and since each strives to produce what it must produce according to its nature, this will furnish the dram of the struggle in which not force entirely conquers the other nor completely submits to the other. The egotism of each individual actant must join itself to that of the others; what is produced is a product of the subordination of all under one and one under all, i.e.: the most complete *mutual* subordination. No individual potency could produce the whole or itself, but all together can produce it. The product does not lie in the *individual*, but in the *all together*, for it is indeed itself nothing other than the **external phenomenon or the visible expression**

²³ F.W.J. Schelling, *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Keith R. Peterson (New York: SUNY Press, 2003), 32. (My emphasis)

of that constantly operating combination and decomposition of elements.²⁴

The characterizing and cataloguing of infinite flows of seemingly fixed laws does not represent an adequate picture of the world, as Schelling notes. The totality of the world consists not only in the movement of phenomena and the rules that underwrite their actions, but also the domain within which these flows occur. In Schelling's *naturphilosophie*, the governing structure of becoming is not the qualitative or qualitative modalities of overlapping, mutual or contradictory *expressions*, but is instead the necessity of an *a priori* natural apparatus from which necessary causes that give rise to the *effects* as experienced in human cognition. Schelling aims at the *forces* which 'drive' the compulsions discovered in nature. He notes: "This drive will not be *free* in its direction; its direction is determined for it by the **universal hierarchy**; there is, as it were, a **sphere circumscribed for it in advance**, beyond whose limits it can never step and into which it constantly returns."²⁵

The sphere *circumscribed* in advance are the rules of the ontic game, and represents the 'structure' from which natural fluctuations 'become.' We understand *games* as philosophical construction. A game is a structured totality within which mathematical or interpretive 'moves' operate in *free play*. In a sense, the *rules of the game* operate as an *a priori* governing structure not unlike the 'rules' of the natural world. The rules for the game of chess, for example, fabricate a 'structure' within, or through which a set of ontic possibilities are created. These possibilities are not 'real' in the way we classically understand the term. They are grounded only by the *conditions of possibility* created by the structure of the rule *set*. The set of rules governing the movement of chess pieces is a fabrication. Though the game, with its inexplicably large number of moves, counter-moves, strategies, and possibilities, plays out in the 'real world,' we understand that in the absence of the rule-set, nothing of consequence would have

²⁴ Ibid., 33.

²⁵ Ibid., 34.

occurred. In much the same way, the ontic rules which govern the various processes of becoming expressed in the natural world mirrors the logical structure of the preconditions of the *game*. As such, were we to establish the first causes, or necessary structure, of the ontic game, it still would not constitute an adequate picture of the *world* as it exists in its totality. Whatever forces *drive* the conditions of free play found within the game of chess, and despite the presupposition of a structured totality with respect to governing rules, it is apparent that whatever lies *beyond* the game of chess is an inaccessible domain unexplainable absent the rules of the game itself. Natural science is pursuit of the mastery of the ontic game. It cannot consider the domain within which the authentic *meaning* of the world comes in to view, much in the same way theology and philosophy, in their speculative modes, fall short of the task.²⁶

Deleuze characterizes human games as follows:

First, human games presuppose pre-existing categorical rules. Second, these rules serve to determine the probabilities – in other words, the winning and losing ‘hypotheses’. Third, these games never affirm the whole of chance: on the contrary, they fragment it and, for each case, subtract or remove the consequences of the throw from chance, since they assign this or that loss or gain as though it were necessarily tied to a given hypothesis.²⁷

A rule set given by positivist science always complies with a governing principle—a frame of postulates that defines a specific mode of inquiry. Absent metaphysical

²⁶ Philosophy has an advantage over both theology and the natural sciences in this regard. As I note in Chapter Two, the adherence to rigorous analysis of the breadth of human experience has allowed philosophy to *glimpse* the ontological, not as substantial Being coming in to view, but as pure possibility. Whereas theology sutures the rift separating the ontological with the ontic with moral imperatives, philosophy aims, in a systematic manner, at the *conditions of possibility* which give rise to concepts of *Being* and of the *world* as objects of relevant inquiry, thus opening a field of questions which provide definition to the *world* in a lateral way.

²⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 282..

presuppositions, or what we have referred to as the *rules of the game*, the world descends into ‘non-sense’, with only a corporeally grounded fixed point of reference persisting in time and space. Deleuze notes:

Nothing is more fragile than the surface. Is not this secondary organization threatened by a monster even more awesome than the Jabberwocky—by a formless, fathomless nonsense, very different from what we previously encountered in the two figures still inherent to sense? At first, the threat is imperceptible, but a few steps suffice to make us aware of an enlarged crevice; the whole organization of the surface has already disappeared, overturned in a terrible primordial order. Nonsense no longer gives sense, for it has consumed everything. We might have thought at first that we were inside the same element, or in a neighboring element. But we see now that we have changed elements, that we have entered the storm.²⁸

Deleuze splits *corporeal* actions, modes, and sensations (causes) from incorporeal *effects*. *Sense* proceeds over the surface, providing *unity* to the world. In its absence, the world fragments. There can no longer be a distinction between *true* and *false*, only the movement of pure becoming instantiated by the corporeal. As Deleuze writes:

In this collapse of the surface, the entire world loses its meaning. It maintains perhaps a certain power of denotation, but this is experienced as empty. It maintains a certain power of manifestation, but this is experienced as indifferent. And it maintains a certain signification, experienced as “false.” Nevertheless, the word loses its sense, that is, its power to draw together or to express an incorporeal

²⁸ (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 82)

effect distinct from the actions and passions of the body, and an ideational event distinct from its present realization.²⁹

With respect to the fragmentation of the world absent a given ruleset, two cultural views have emerged: systems of thought which cohere with ‘reality’—the underwriting laws which govern the rules of the game, and frameworks of “mythology”—speculative constructions meant to provide definition of the *world* as such. What motivates my work in Chapter One is to provide definition to the *world* as a domain of relevant inquiry. In Chapter Two I chart the *conditions of possibility* for the creation of what I refer to as the *mythological apparatus*—a type of ontic / ontological world-building frame grounded in the multiplicity contained in every sensuous *encounter* with the world. In my view, the concept of the world as a necessary, totalized object *from* which emanates expressive phenomena that a subject may apprehend is not coherent with what is given in ontic experience. Failures to *ground* positive phenomena in essential Being have been consistently spurred, I argue, because our concept of *world* has not been sufficiently updated to account for the radical contingency of the *event* and of ontic experience in general.³⁰

1.2 Fragmentation of the World

To consider the world in its absolute totality is to digress from what is given in ontic experience. The everydayness of the individual is punctuated by a break from real-existing epistemic certainty in its failure to grasp concrete objects. When Plato seeks Being in the dialectic he seeks a definition of the *world* which is not *present*, expressive, or manifested, but *hidden*—a secret knowledge to be gleaned by skillful logical moves. This *classic* conception of the subject-position remains in Western thought today. It presupposes the world of totality *in advance* of ‘subjective’ apprehension. Kant famously overturned this logic. His ‘Copernican revolution’ re-

²⁹ Ibid., 87.

³⁰ See Chapter Two for a discussion on the character of the event, its relation to the ontic / ontological, and what Deleuze refers to as the *aleatory point*.

situated the *world* to within the subject in the form of a critique of the *a priori* conditions of possibility that give rise to apprehension of ‘the world’ in the first instance. Kant sought the *universal*, and hence, *necessary* preconditions which govern the various *faculties* of knowledge. The *a priori* conditions of possibility developed conceptually by Kant fractured the world itself. The self-same Being emanating from a world of necessity has, post Kant, become a latent conceptual illusion formulated by the various faculties. Kant did maintain the possibility of wholly determinate concepts of nature which, properly appraised, might render the world, as a collection of *things in themselves*, knowable.³¹ For Kant, *reason* differs from aesthetic judgment in that ideas bear some trace (or sign) of nature (which Kant refers to as ground “for lawful correspondence” with our satisfaction). The conditions that give rise to correspondence are found in the field of representation. As such, the *world* is constituted not as a set of *hidden* phenomena expressing a necessary totality, but as a grouping of *natural* laws that may fail to find correspondence in the *a priori* ‘transcendental’ structures of the subject. Kant’s revolution is what has allowed Deleuze to argue that “representation is a site of transcendental illusion.”³²

Knowledge of the world, whether derived from its particulars, or as a concrete totality within which human cognition persists, begins with the question of *grounding*. In a post-Kantian framework, grounding should be understood as the conformity of *things in themselves* (the “in-itself) with their adequate representation and possible re-creation as expressed by the world and *apprehended* by the subject (things as they are “for them-selves”). Kant’s critical project re-situated the locus of possible understanding of the world as an expressive totality to within the mediative universal ‘transcendental’ structures of the subject. As Deleuze notes: “for Kant the form of the

³¹ See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 160.

³² (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 265)

illusion (of thought) is more profound. He wants to reach the transcendental root.”³³ For an adequate picture of the world to persist, the task of philosophy following Kant has been the universal attainment of a picture of the world *beyond finitude*. In sum, by short-circuiting the fundamental principles of mediation, representation, reflection, etc., modern philosophy has attempted to regain a picture of the world that seeks to overcome the limitations defined by Kant. In order to adequately ground a picture of the world, we have witnessed the rise of so-called ‘speculative realist’ philosophy. This brand of thought takes as its starting point the world as it presents itself in a *positive* manner. We consider this line of inquiry, grounded in experience of the ontic, as constructing the *world* in a way that departs from the classical philosophical conception of the world as a necessary totality. As such, it is more in line with inquiry pursued by the natural sciences—a focus on the world as a construction of positive modalities and the laws governing their possibilities.

The structure of subjective apprehension of the world has made only minor changes since Kant’s Copernican revolution. Accordingly, philosophical and scientific descriptions of the *world* tend to develop under a methodological rubric distrustful of *aesthetic*, (synthetic) concepts derived of phenomenal experience. At its core, natural science is a mode of inquiry aimed at positive phenomena but only as ‘effect’. Governing laws that set the parameters of ‘surface’ possibility make up the constellation of real-existing objects considered for scientific review. The re-presentation of Ideas, as such, forms a singular line from its epistemological center toward a conclusive determination regarding its point of genesis. As with the game of chess, the rules governing the structure of the natural world produce significant variation—complex emergent phenomena that lack an analytic relation to the law (rule) that is supposed to have formed it in the first instance. This dynamic produces a picture of the world with an ‘*a priori*’ rule-set meant that are meant to explain, but not

³³ Gilles Deleuze, *What is Grounding*, From transcript notes taken by Pierre Lefebvre, trans. Arjen Kleinherenbrink, ed. Tony Yanick, Jason Adams, and Mohammad Salemy (Grand Rapids: &&& Publishing, 2015), 116.

contain, the variable possibilities of play.³⁴ As with Kant's attempt to reach the transcendental root, the game of chess analogy serves another purpose: to displace the question of first causes in favor of an adequate description of the structural forces that govern the rules of play, offering predictions as to the variability of possible outcomes.

A problem persists: the *center* point which serves as the proper beginning of any adequate scientific explanation regarding particulars in the world is never fully self-contained. No entity contains, as an analytic determination, its *essence* within its phenomenal *expression*. As Derrida writes: "One cannot determine the center and exhaust its totalization because the sign which replaces the center, which supplements it, taking the center's place in its absence—this sign is added, occurs as a surplus, as a *supplement*."³⁵ The concept of a structured totality is, accordingly, the concept of the single point of reference predicated on a self-same property.³⁶ We might refer to this property as the originary *real*-existing center-point from which Ideas proceed. Derrida characterizes it as such: "The concept of centered structure is in fact the concept of a play based on a fundamental ground, a play constituted on the basis of a fundamental immobility and a reassuring certitude, which is itself beyond the reach of play."³⁷ The supplemental nature of an ideational concept presents as a self-same certitude regarding a particular phenomenon's *essence*. As Deleuze writes: "A is A as a proposition is true and gives us the form of identity, of every analytical proposition."³⁸ As a point of center, A marks a given phenomenon as a self-enclosed entity. This is the free play of surface effects, absent a necessary link to a determining *world*.

However, and as Derrida noted, A is also the form of a proper name that is already a metaphor: representation marks the intervention of the 'transcendental' upon

³⁴ See Gilles Deleuze, "Sixth Series on Serialization," in *The Logic of Sense*, ed. Mark Lester, trans. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 36-41.

³⁵ Jacques Derrida, "Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1980), 289.

³⁶ Cf. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp.301-303.

³⁷ (Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 279)

³⁸ (Deleuze, *What is Grounding*, 102)

whatever eludes the subject in its absolute certainty. The world as presentational phenomena is supposed to contain within its expression an analytic determination—one based on a necessary totalized and knowable world. States Derrida:

...the proper names are already no longer proper names, because their production is already their obliteration, because the erasure and the imposition of the letter are originary, because they do not supervene upon a proper inscription; it is because the proper name has never been, as the unique appellation reserved for the presence of a unique being, anything but the original myth of a transparent legibility present under the obliteration; it is because the proper name was never possible except through its functioning within a classification and therefore within a system of differences, within a writing retaining the traces of difference, that the interdict was possible, could come into play, and when the time came, as we shall see, could be transgressed; transgressed, that is to say restored to the obliteration and the non-self-sameness (*non-proprieté*) at the origin.³⁹

Self-sameness marks the ground of particulars that comprises the picture of the world. Ontic inquiry imposes an imposition: to name *A* as a self-enclosed, positive entity that, in its co-mingling, opposition, change, etc. becomes an object of legitimate thought. The destruction of the logic of the self-same entity proceeding over the surface of the *world* returns us to non-sense and to the chaotic background within which we seek a determinate ground. Hence, in *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze can separate the *incorporeal* (sense) from the *corporeal* only as an ontic line of inquiry.

³⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 109.

The ‘structure’ of the world, absent surface ‘effects’ dissolves into a chaotic, inaccessible morass within which all human cognition is dissolved.⁴⁰⁴¹

Our task here is not to discredit the scientific world-view, but instead to offer a supplement in the form of a critique of its underlying suppositions. My concern is not, as yet, with the positive representation of the particulars of the world, whether as real-existing self-enclosed entities, simulacra, or otherwise. What concerns me here is, for the moment, the background within which positive phenomena emerge. Following Kant and his successors, I concern myself with the *transcendental root* of the domain of the world itself. As Gabriel noted, unless we concede to an absolute embrace of *nothingness*, we are forced to make at least one grand presupposition: there is a background, some negative which is essential to the world, one which produces positive instantiations of particular phenomena, structured by time in space, governing human subjective experience. In more theological terms, Schelling writes:

After the eternal act of self-revelation, everything in the world is, as we see now, rule, order and form; but anarchy still lies in the ground, as if it could break through once again, and nowhere does it appear as if order and form were what is original but rather as if initial anarchy had been brought to order. This is the incomprehensible base of reality in things, the **indivisible remainder**, that which with the greatest exertion cannot be resolved in understanding but rather remains eternally in the ground. The understanding is born in the genuine sense from that

⁴⁰ It is worth noting that Deleuze does approach the subject of *world* within *The Logic of Sense*. Alain Badiou, in *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, notes that Deleuze is fundamentally committed to a picture of the world as a single, “univocal” object (alternatively the ‘plane of immanence’). See Alain Badiou, *Deleuze, The Clamor of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

⁴¹ Deleuze refers to the subject-position absent the ‘sense’ of the world as the position of the *schizophrenic*. See his discussion on the work of Antonin Artaud and Lewis Carroll in “Thirteenth Series of the Schizophrenic and the Little Girl,” in *The Logic of Sense*. pp.82-93.

which is without understanding. Without this preceding darkness creatures have no reality; darkness is their necessary inheritance.⁴²

On this view the background world as *picture* necessarily cannot come in to focus. The chaotic flows that form the background over which all positive phenomena emerge engenders an understanding of the purely ideal type. The grounding of positive phenomena in a totalized and necessary world, in this frame, is given over to a different quality of the universe: *chaos*.

In its most radical form, the picture of the world as chaos drains all essential ontic realisms of the world, repositioning Ideas as ideational constructions. As Deleuze and Guattari note:

All that the association of ideas has ever meant is providing us with these protective rules—resemblances, contiguity, causality—which enable us to put some order into ideas, preventing our “fantasy” (delirium, madness) from crossing the universe in an instant, producing winged horses and dragons breathing fire.⁴³

If chaotic, the background over which the play of positive phenomena emerge engenders an ultimate non-totality. The picture of the world, as such, fragments in to as many pieces, leaving the grasping subject to a field comprised of illusion and error. As Deleuze notes: “Do not count on thought to ensure the relative necessity of what it thinks. Rather, count upon the contingency of an encounter with that which forces thought to raise up and educate the absolute necessity of an act of thought or a passion to think.”⁴⁴

⁴² (Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 29) (my emphasis)

⁴³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 201-202.

⁴⁴ (Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 139)

For an adequate picture of the world to emerge, the *thing* that forces the subject to think becomes a central concern. Positive phenomena cannot, it seems, emerge sporadically into whatever mode of apprehension we believe as primary. If indeed the material of an “outside” consists of an essence, and if indeed our apprehension thereof consists in a mediated form of representation, then the scientific worldview is on the right track. However, the inadequacy of a metaphysics of non-mediation relies on a large supposition, namely, that the *noumenon* supposedly correlated in thought enjoys a quality of *non-thought* whose representation is self-same with some correlating substance of the mind. The mind, as the mediating mechanism within which material objects become ‘themselves’ in a representative image would have to disown any possibility of epistemological error. In short, self-same properties would be apprehended as given without need for recourse to an epistemological framework within which these properties *make sense*. Things would be *in-themselves* and *for themselves*—the subject merely a means of apprehension. A quick glance around the room reveals this is definitely not the case. Simple *objects* like plant, or computer operate as *metonymies*—placeholders that reduce massive complexity to a short-hand understanding providing *relevance* to the subject. *Ideas* like *plant* or *computer* do share a definite phenomenal coherence, however, which supplies an illusion of structural necessity. In this way, an object of concern to a subject maintains an interactive quality. We understand that *plant* and *computer* do not enjoy a necessary structural link—they enjoy no positive phenomenal interaction (outside of an “accident”). They are *incommensurate*. However, the *singular* nature given by incommensurability does not in itself demonstrate the *discreteness* of the object in question. Each *plant* and each *computer* suffers the same lack of grounding as any positive structural relation between the two.

1.3 The World as Being

The most sustained attempt at grounding the world was convincingly offered by Heidegger in *Being in Time* (1927), where he argues for a ground of Being within. Heidegger’s strategy charts *Dasein* (being-there), as a primary “subject,” existing both

as its world and “in” the world itself. Heidegger takes up the Kantian challenge and inverts the subject-object dichotomy that had previously served to limit possible understanding of the world in its concrete totality. As opposed to a world-picture of the negative, Heidegger proposes Dasein as a positive instantiation whose privileged access to *logos* allows for a world-picture both grounded and essential. As Heidegger characterizes it: “only because the “senses” belong ontologically to a being whose kind of being is an attuned being-in-the-world can they be “touched” and “have a sense” for something so that what touches them shows itself in an affect.”⁴⁵ Dasein’s fundamental attunement does not, for Heidegger, look directly at the things in themselves. Rather, in its “turning away,” Dasein discovers Being *through* its ‘average everydayness.’ This mode of discovery is reminiscent of a Platonic understanding of Being, but whereas Plato posited the genesis of Being as emanating from an otherworldly *One*, Heidegger situates Being within the world itself as a fundamental existential property, grounded in the structure of temporality.

Heidegger’s strategy in *Being and Time* is to separate *authentic* from *inauthentic* modes of Dasein’s Being, but he is careful to remove any onto-theological suppositions. In its inauthentic form, Dasein has not *fallen* from a purer, otherworldly or perfect Being. Rather, Dasein has “fallen prey to the *world* which itself belongs to its being.”⁴⁶ Heidegger is insistent on proposing Dasein *as world*. A unique picture of the world emerges: free from any metaphysical supposition regarding an *out there*, Dasein becomes the essential primordial fact of existence, leaving behind any chaotic negative or background over which the subject emerges.

The fracture of the world is still present within *Being and Time*. Heidegger’s split of authentic from inauthentic Being allows him to further a system in which the picture of the world remains phenomenally inaccessible, but maintains the possibility of a possible totalized vision of Being:

⁴⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: SUNY, 2010), 137.

⁴⁶ (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 176)

To put it negatively, it is beyond question that the totality of the structural whole is not to be reached phenomenally by means of cobbling together elements. ...the being of Dasein (which supports the structural whole as such), becomes “accessible” by completely looking *through* this whole *at a* primordially unified phenomenon which already lies in the whole in such a way that it is the ontological basis for every structural moment in its structural possibility.

What is relevant for our inquiry is Heidegger’s re-situating of the subject to a primary position within the ontological order. Rather than assume a chaotic background, in *Being and Time* Heidegger opens a space in which apprehension of phenomenal Being becomes possible.

1.4 The Ontic / Ontological Suppositions of Myth

Whatever the world is, whether totality or chaotic background, some *thing* forces us to think. We can provisionally define the world as a domain within which phenomenal contact proceeds. As opposed to a conception of world relying on the necessity of its positive phenomena, we consider the world to be, at least in its provisional definition, a *field* comprised of epistemologically inaccessible *rules* that give rise to ontic experience. If the world is the *domain of all domains* it must, by definition, include what we have referred to as the *ontological* (the Being of all beings). It is entirely possible that *Being* marks a concept of pure fantasy or illusion—a surplus constructed by the imagination in order to suture the persistent lack of sensuous with any greater *meaning*. The interpretive mode of human cognition, nonetheless, persists. Its point of genesis, in our view, is the absurdity of the dynamic that encloses each subjective relation to the *world*: the question of the necessity of *existence* at its very beginning. “Why is there something rather than nothing?” has been the final problematic of many philosophers, and indeed, by any metric of human understanding, an oddity that such a thing as *the world* should exist. Religious and technocratic dogma has pursued this question in wild speculative move, often taking

as their starting position the ontic ‘world’ as it is perceived.⁴⁷ The preference for knowledge of first causes has offered up both onto-theological and scientific explanations. The latter mode has been quick to diminish the veracity of myth or legend, while the former tends to suffer unfortunate elaborations on unverifiable claims.

Mythologies, as opposed to positive scientific explanations for existence, however, tend to exploit a *blind spot* persistent in human experience. In mythology, something of an *over-saturation* takes place. Judgements of an aesthetic quality tend to guide foreclosures on the meaning structure of myths or legends. What is lost in this calculation is the richness of world-historical phenomena as they were presented to a given subject or set of subjects within bodies and situated *in time and space*. Lévi-Strauss poses the following question: “If the content of a myth is contingent, how are we going to explain the fact that myths throughout the world are so similar?”⁴⁸ A world of radical contingency would mark disparate and non-linear phenomena presenting in unaccountable ways and yet, throughout the world structurally similar images persist in the mode of mythology. As Lévi-Strauss describes it: “But what gives myth an operational value is that the specific pattern described is timeless; it explains the present and the past as well as the future.”⁴⁹ It is tempting to discount myth as a complete ideation or as an aesthetic construction of synthetic propositions. The question for the present work is to ask whether mythological thought, as classically conceived, illuminates any essential knowledge about the world as such. Despite our differing conceptual frameworks, it does appear as though, historically, a variety of ‘myths’ across disparate cultures contain a semblance of likeness, enough to warrant the question of their *necessity*. It is also possible, as Kant’s project demonstrates, that

⁴⁷ See Nick Bostrom, “Are you Living in a Computer Simulation?” in *Philosophical Quarterly* Vol. 53, No. 211, 243-255, 2003. [simulation-argument.com](http://www.simulation-argument.com/simulation.html). Accessed July 17, 2017. <http://www.simulation-argument.com/simulation.html>.

⁴⁸ Claude Lévi-Strauss, “The Structural Study of Myth,” in *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson (New York and London: Basic Books, 1963), 208.

⁴⁹ (Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 209)

‘universal’ subjective faculties give rise to similar mythologies. If true, the ground from which these myths appear should be elevated to the status of a structurally necessary, universal ontic *object* and a natural space for inquiry. Myths operating as *metaphor*, for example, could describe, in a stylistic way, ‘real’ phenomena necessary to the human-subjective mode of existence. Whether this dynamic says anything about the *world* as the domain of domains, as pure *Being*, or as the meaningful/meaning-giving entity within which subjective experience plays out, is another question.

In his anatomy of myth, Lévi-Strauss writes that the true constituent units of myth are not isolated relations but *bundles of such relations*, and it is only “as bundles that these relations can be put to use and combined so as to produce a meaning.”⁵⁰ The primary mode of structural mythology is to offer a universal structure of meaning under which the subject applies particulars. As a *master reference*, the myth (structure) serves as a metaphysical frame under which concrete particulars come into being. Much in the same mode of thought compared in Plato above, this logic relies on a necessary totality from which is derived existential ‘meaning.’ In the same manner as engendered by the scientific worldview, structural mythology intervenes *ahead* of the subject, creating the ground over which representational phenomena are interpreted. The frame sets the point of reference from which meaning is derived. It is the self-same *thing* that underwrites phenomenal experience and supplies *unity* under a regime of apparent chaos. What differs in a mythological worldview, compared with that of the scientific worldview, is the admissibility of ontically ‘groundless’ phenomena—*illusions* and *fantasy* are given the same ontological status as “facts” of the world.⁵¹ These are moral and philosophical ‘decisions’ that impose a leading postulate. In other words, it is the radical *fixing* of an original, self-same object from which a structure is erected. A confusion generally persists in this dynamic:

⁵⁰ (Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 211)

⁵¹ See Chapter Two for a reconstruction of the *mythological apparatus* from the position of the ontic-ontological.

paradoxical or incommensurate ontic facts which contravene the original supposed self-same object of reference adopt a threatening quality: they oppose not just the original ground, but the structure constructed on its shoulders. When *A* is no longer purely *A*, the apparatus which binds together *sense* fractures, along with the ‘world’ it had previously constituted.⁵²

Mythology is predicated on an originary, self-same and essential product from which abstractions are made possible. The mythological worldview tends toward a *closed* ontology, admitting complex phenomena only with reference to the confines of its historical precedents. In this sense the predication of an original *object* or *event* that precipitated the dissemination of a given myth adopts the quality of a *dogmatism*. The belief in an original *event* provides the myth structure its justification. Because the original *meaning* is supposedly derived a sensuous experience, it is taken on *faith* as a factual ground.

The reliance on self-same phenomena lends to the criticism of structural mythology. Mythology often adopts the character of *completion*—a belief in the certainty of an enclosed, self-same, ‘infinite’ event or property pervades the structure of myth. As Nietzsche notes:

Here one can certainly admire humanity as a mighty architectural genius who succeeds in erecting the infinitely complicated cathedral of concepts on moving foundations, or even, one might say, on flowing water; admittedly, in order to rest on such foundations, it has to be like a thing constructed from cobwebs, so delicate that it can be carried off on the waves and yet so firm as not to be blown apart by the wind.⁵³

⁵² A large question looms over this dynamic: in Chapter Two we discuss the role of corporeality in its ontic movements, and wonder whether even the ‘material’ can provide an original ‘real’ ground from which a ‘necessary’ structure may be erected. It seems that there is a mediation already at play in the subjective representation of even the body, with its ontic ‘necessities.’

⁵³ (Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lie in the Non-Moral Sense*, 147)

Lévi-Strauss' connection of disparate myths fails to prove a structural certainty. The structure of mythological thought is twofold: 1) an adherence to the belief in an original sensuous event which is self-enclosed and necessary, and 2) open to abstractions which conform to the logic of the original model. The mythological frame *precedes* ontic experience as a metaphysical structure. It is at once the faith of the subject in the veracity of claims made with respect to an original event, and fidelity with abstractions allowed by the logic of the original model. Nietzsche states:

As a creature of *reason*, human beings now make their actions subject to the rule of abstractions; they no longer tolerate being swept away by sudden impressions and sensuous perceptions; they now generalize all these impressions first, turning them into cooler, less colourful concepts in order to harness the vehicle of their lives and actions to them. Everything which distinguishes human being from animals depends on this ability to sublimate sensuous metaphors into a schema, in other words, to dissolve an image into a concept.⁵⁴

Mythological worldviews tend to posit *complete truths*—a set of master predicates that enclose the entirety of the world. An example from Jean-Luc Nancy: “The structure of all our mythology is the myth of abandonment...”⁵⁵ This original myth finds its corresponding allegories not just in the Christian story of the *fall of man* contained in the Book of Genesis, but also across other onto-theological systems and within philosophy itself. Noting Lévi-Strauss, might we argue that the structure of the myth of the abandonment of man (from Being) adopts the quality of an existential universal? “The *selfsame* of the affective soul is the sleeping same that confounds itself—because it has never distinguished itself, never having *been*—with the totality of the other that affects it.”⁵⁶ It might be the case that myths and metaphors stand in for

⁵⁴ Ibid., 146.

⁵⁵ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Birth to Presence*, trans. Brian Holmes (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 42.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 18.

an original representation of a structurally necessary *event* expressed by the *world*. The *world* as we provisionally defined is the field within which human subjective experience persists. As such, *events* contained ‘within the world’ might persist as ontologically significant entities. However, this logic remains in the conception of the world presupposed as a necessary totality, and not, as we will argue for in Chapter Two, as a chaotic background *to which* the subject applies an artificial unity.

Given the problems at the origin of the proper name and of a concrete center to any conception of the world, one wonders if any metaphysical system can get us closer to an adequate picture of the world. As Nietzsche notes:

What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms, in short, a sum of human relations which have been subjected to poetic and rhetorical intensification, translation, and decoration, and which, after they have been in use for a long time, strike a people as firmly established, canonical, and binding; truths are illusions of which we have forgotten that they are illusions, metaphors which have become worn by frequent use and have lost all sensuous vigour, coins which, having lost their stamp, are now regarded as metal and no longer as coins.⁵⁷

Chapter Two will explore the constitution of the *world* as *meaning-giving* (expressive) in a different way. The ‘mythological apparatus’, absent a necessary totalized world, adopts a different logic, one in which the subject finds *the world* only through *being-in* the world. It is ontic experience, the surface, from which a picture of the world must be developed. Myth, according to Lévi-Strauss, “gives man, very importantly, the illusion that he can understand the universe and that he *does* understand the universe.” In our view, *mythological thought* has been ill-conceived *as illusion*. Chapter Two will re-situate myth to within ontic experience, not as an ontologically

⁵⁷ (Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lie in the Non-Moral Sense*, 146)

necessary entity, but as the closure of the point of confrontation inherited by the multiplicity of sensuous contact with the *world* in its conception as *chaos*.

Chapter Two: The Mythological /

2.1 The Aleatory Circle in its Ontic-Ontological Character

Myth, with its always circular structure, is indeed the story of a foundation. It permits the construction of a model according to which the different pretenders can be judged. What needs a foundation, in fact, is always a pretension or a claim. It is the pretender who appeals to a foundation, whose claim may be judged well-founded, ill-founded, or unfounded.⁵⁸

The world is a series of phenomenal conditions within which the ‘subject’ finds itself. Whatever the nature of the composition of the *real*, the only persistent determinate ontic modality is the omnipresence of the subject in itself.⁵⁹ Sensuous contact, phenomenal flows, reflection and mediation, among others, mark the equiprimordial conditions within which the subject is located within time and space. Regardless of the constitutive nature of the subject, the net sum of phenomenal sensation, sensuous contact, etc. does not indicate a concrete totality fragmented into partial representations encountered by the ‘subject’, but instead composes a *synthetic construction* comprised of contradicting, paradoxical, or nonsensical real or material

⁵⁸ (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 255)

⁵⁹ This notion is made explicit by Heidegger throughout *Being and Time*. I draw here from the sections (Division One) entitled “The Ontological Priority of the Question of Being” and “The Ontic Priority of the Question of Being.” Heidegger provisionally defines *ontology* as the question of the “Being of beings.” Heidegger writes, “To be ontological does not yet mean to develop an ontology. Thus if we reserve the term ontology for the explicit, theoretical question of the being of beings, the ontological character of Dasein referred to here is designated as pre-ontological.” We use *ontic* to distinguish between the *Being of beings* and that which persists as ‘actual’ or real’. In *Being and Time* Heidegger’s strategy is to trace the ontic to the ontological (existential) through an analysis of the ‘existentiell’ (ontic): “...the roots of the existential analysis, for their part, are ultimately *existentiell*; i.e. they are *ontic*. Only when philosophical research and inquiry themselves are grasped in an existentiell way—as a possibility of being of each existing Dasein—does it become possible at all to disclose the existentiality of existence and therewith to get hold of a sufficiently grounded set of ontological problems.” We adopt Heidegger’s notion of the position of the subject as the ultimate arbiter of *meaning* and of Being as such, but reject his ‘tool analysis’ as fundamentally based on a notion of objects that is incommensurate with philosophies of difference as developed below. *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: SUNY Press, 2010), 8-13.

flows which the subject *brings to bear* on the ‘world’ through a given epistemological framework. We have thus far compared two opposing conceptions of *world*, and given a brief explication of the role of *myth* within the concept of world as a totalized, knowable and necessary entity. The second chapter of the present work will explore the ‘myth apparatus’ within the dynamic of ontological chaos, offering a different take on the conditions of possibility which give rise to ‘mythological’ thought in the first instance. We do not take aim at *a priori* subjective structures nor the role of mediation and reflection, but rather examine *myth-making* from the starting point of ontic *multiplicity* and the *event*. It is within this dynamic, we will argue, that the conditions for *ontological* ‘knowledge’ become possible.

In classical thought, mediation marks the position of the philosophical decision, the point of ‘free will’. The philosophical decision is the spatio-temporal modality of the subject as it completes and contains a type of sensuous or empirical event. The *event* indicates the point of genesis that presupposes the world as either a complete but partially inaccessible totality, or as a fragmented, chaotic flux. On the former view, a determinate, necessary *world* precedes the subject ahead of mediation or philosophical decision. The *world*, in this sense, persists as an objective real or material *thing* awaiting discovery and classification. On the latter view, the world is understood as a synthetic unity grafted on to the chaotic flows of a contingent universe.⁶⁰

To understand the world as a series of chaotic ‘events,’ underwritten by material or real forces which gives rise to an ideational unity is to glimpse the world of pure ontic contingency. Chaos engenders multiplicity—the opening of ontic experience to the totality of possible outcomes contained within the event. The *aleatory* point marks the position of the chaotic multiple in its absolute ideational form. When one imagines *throwing the dice*, for example, the aleatory point names the position of the

⁶⁰ Cf. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1996), 15-60.

multiplicity of every possible outcome, governed in turn by ontic rules. As Deleuze defines it: “An aleatory point is displaced through all the points on the dice, as though one time for all times.”⁶¹ In the case of the dice throw, a set of presupposed *rules* govern the conditions of possibility for every outcome contained within the precursor to the throw. The aleatory point names that point that includes the distributive possibility of every dice throw, every car speed, every lottery pick, etc. As Deleuze characterizes it:

The games with which we are acquainted respond to a certain number of principles, which may take the object of a theory. This theory applies equally to games of skill and to games of chance; only the nature of the rules differs. 1) It is necessary that in every case a set of rules preexists the playing of the game, and, when one plays, this set takes on a categorical value; 2) these rules determine hypotheses which divide and apportion chance, that is, hypotheses of loss or gain (what happens if...); 3) These hypotheses organize the playing of the game according to a plurality of throws, which are really and numerically distinct. Each of them brings about a fixed distribution corresponding to one case or another. 4) the consequences of the throws range over the alternative “victory or defeat.” The characteristics of normal games are therefore the preexisting categorical rules, the distributing hypotheses, the fixed and numerical distinct distributions, and the ensuing results.⁶²

The aleatory point is fundamentally ontic—it exists within a set of preconditions that govern the *rules of the game*. It is also, however, ideational: the conditions of possibility for the multitude of outcomes contained within the aleatory point persist only insofar as the game *play* remains suspended with respect to time and space. The

⁶¹ (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 283)

⁶² Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (London: The Athlone Press, 1990), 58-59.

moment the dice is thrown marks the moment of foreclosure of the aleatory point, along with the conditions of possibility contained in the multiplicity. We refer to this movement of the aleatory moment through to the point of ‘philosophical decision’ as the *aleatory circle*.⁶³

The *event* names the point of sensuous contact between subject and world, the aleatory moment names the multiplicity of ontic possibility created by the event, and the aleatory circle names the dissolution of the possible through philosophical decision—an ontic necessity which simultaneously ‘completes’ the event, dissolving the multitude of possibilities contained within the aleatory moment. This ontic *completion* closes the aleatory circle by way of the *free play* of the decision-process of the subject, which serve to demonstrate the radically contingent character of the ‘outcome’ of the aleatory circle.⁶⁴

⁶³ I refer here to the ‘philosophical decision’ with an understanding that *chance* dictates the conditions of the outcome of the aleatory moment. I use philosophical decision to indicate the point of *free will* of the subject: the point of (moral) intervention which (necessarily) forecloses on the aleatory circle and the multitude contained within. I use *philosophical decision* because the ideational quality of representation (say, for example, in a number on a dice throw) is indicative of ontic contingency. I distinguish my concept of the *philosophical decision* from François Laruelle, who defines it as “...an operation of transcendence that believes (in a naïve and hallucinatory way) in the possibility of unitary discourse of the Real.” “Philosophical decision as structure involves the coupling, then the Unity, of contraries, and its function is to hallucinate the One-real and to foreclose it in this way. To philosophize is to decide on the Real and on thought, which ensues from it, ie., to believe to be able to align them with the universal order of the principle of sufficient philosophy.” François Laruelle, *Dictionary of NonPhilosophy*, trans. Taylor Adkins (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2013), 117.

⁶⁴ Here I distinguish the neologism ‘aleatory circle’ from Heidegger’s *hermeneutic* understanding of knowledge. With respect to scientific inquiry he states, “Fundamental concepts are determinations in which the area of knowledge underlying all the thematic objects of a science attains an understanding that precedes and guides all positive investigation. Accordingly these concepts first receive their genuine evidence and “grounding” only in a correspondingly preliminary research into the area of knowledge itself. But since each of these areas arises from the domain of beings themselves, this preliminary research that creates the fundamental concepts amounts to nothing else than interpreting these beings in terms of the basic constitution of their being.” (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 9) The *aleatory circle* is characterized by the ontic multiplicity, or *governing rules* which give definition to a finite set of possible outcomes. It is not a fundamental *positive* postulate (ground) from which a determinate outcome may proceed. The aleatory circle is a structure of another kind: grounded only in sensuous empirical contact with ontic multiplicity. It the position of *truncated ontological possibility* and its ultimate necessary ontic foreclosure—a meeting point of time, space, and the body within the conditions of ontic possibility. Heidegger’s concept of the *hermeneutic circle* does mirror aspects of the aleatory circle as a ‘necessary fore-structure’: “The circle of understanding is not a circle in which any random kind of knowledge operates, but it is rather the expression of the existential *fore-structure* of Dasein itself.” (*Being and Time*, 148). Though I agree with Heidegger in the ‘necessity’ of the circle as an essential fore-structure of

The subject names the concept of the locus of the experience of time and space. The conjugation of time and space refers to an ontically contingent movement of relative indeterminacy. The subject *encounters* the world in its chaotic complexity, not as a structured totality, but rather as a movement of forces that operate in a quasi-determinate mode. This mode is characterized by the interplay of time, space, and corporeality. Corporeality determines a set of ontic principles that play out necessarily in time and space. Bodies *require* particularities relative to biological determinations: sustenance, rest, movement, excitation, etc. These attributes, taken as given or 'natural', rely on the capacity of the corporeal subject to enact its *will* in the world in order for the 'subject' to persist in time and space. For our purposes, 'will' names a metonymy which designates the relationship of the subject to the flow of 'natural' forces which give rise to the 'effects' of subjectivity as such.⁶⁵

The *event* marks the opening of an ontic decision-process that is 'determined' by the modalities of corporeality. The corporeal body is demonstrative of a set of *becoming* properties inherent to biological existence as experienced in its ontic mode. Time and space govern possible experience of the body, but do not fully determine the reflective quality of mediation. There is no analytic governance with respect to the interaction between body, 'mind', and time and space. As such, when one *encounters* 'the world', we suppose that a multiplicity of possible corporeal determinations is opened along with the ontological conditions for *all possibility*. As Deleuze characterizes it:

the subject, I disagree that it contains an essential *ontological* quality. The aleatory circle relies on the contingency of the encounter, and not on any *essential, necessary* or *universal* characteristics of the subject which give definition to empirical contact. The 'necessity' of the fore-structure is, in all probability, a corporeal difference which we observe in non-human animals and the sensory apparatus of plants or other 'non-sentient' beings. The key difference for the human subject lies in the mediation between empirical contact and the *interpretation* of events. See Chapter Three for a discussion on the role of representation and reflection.

⁶⁵ I set aside, for the moment, the complex relationship between the subject, the corporeal body, natural forces or flows, and *desire* as such, instead focusing on the mediation of subject, body, and the multiplicity of the aleatory certain which traverses the 'real' and the 'ideal'.

We have seen that past, present, and future were not all three parts of a single temporality, but that they rather formed two readings of time, each one which is complete and excludes the other: on the one hand, the always limited present, which measures the action of bodies as causes and the state of their mixtures in depth (Chronos); on the other, the essentially unlimited past and future, which gather incorporeal events, at the surface, as effects (Aion).⁶⁶

The ontologically infinite event contained within the finite state of affairs is presupposed as an a priori condition of experience—of the event of the bodily encounter itself. In its sensuous mode, the corporeal body acts as the locus within which ontic time proceeds. This contact also includes the ontological conditions of all possibility with respect to time—the position of pure potentiality thought as an imaginative real. Deleuze understands *the surface* as the point of convergence of the infinite, the gathering point of ontic, linear time with time immemorial. The governance of the faculty of the imagination births the concept of the *world* as infinite time by suturing partial ontic determinations into a cohesive ‘whole.’ Hence, a *mythological* epistemological apparatus *precedes* the subject in a *repetitive* mode. The ontic quality of the linear nature of time as experienced by the body adapts the subject to the worldly state of chaos through the constitution of a synthetic mythological apparatus—a constitutive and constituted ‘structure’ that correlates to sensuous experience, but lacks original ground in a self-same property.

The repetition constituting the myth apparatus emerges through the interplay of partially determinate concepts—it is a synthetic proposition that grafts the ‘objects’ of linear sensuous experience—the outcome of the aleatory circle and the foreclosure of the event—on to the world as a perceived, necessary totality. In a sense, the myth structure both *precedes* and *proceeds* the subject, simultaneously absorbing and dissolving empirical difference in a linear procession *in time*, while also reinforcing

⁶⁶ (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 61)

the repetitive structural constitution of the apparatus itself. In the absence of the proper name, of the original model or self-same *thing*, the subject, in its corporeal existence, subjugates ontic difference to the false principal of the repetition of *essence*. As such, the mythological apparatus contains the multiple only insofar as it can be brought to heel under an epistemological frame of reference. The presupposition of self-same objects subordinates difference to repetitive ontic rules, dissolving the multiple while constituting the governing structure of the myth apparatus. What emerges is the world of what Deleuze would call *common sense*, of short-hand ontic rules that simultaneously forecloses both the ontic multiple and the ontological conditions of *all possibility*.

Not only does thought appropriate the ideal of an ‘orthodoxy’, not only does common sense find its object in the categories of opposition, similitude, analogy and identity, but error itself implies this transcendence of a common sense with regard to sensations, and of a soul with regard to all the faculties whose collaboration [*syllogismos*] in relation to the form of the Same it determines.⁶⁷

At the outset, the aleatory point is a point of the multiple—of the disruption and displacement of ontic repetition, of the erasure of the apparatus in advance of its re-suturing upon the closing of the aleatory circle in a moral or philosophical decision. We refer to the concept of moral or philosophical decision to mark the foreclosure on both the ontological preconditions for the aleatory moment, as well as a closing off of the multiplicity of possible ontic outcomes—the erasure of the aleatory moment and the closing of the possibility for *free play* by the subject.

As a rule, the mythological apparatus constitutes the subject in two modes: 1) as the arbiter of clarification and ‘meaning’ with respect to ontic repetition, and 2) as the guarantor of safety for the subject against the onslaught of ontological chaos. The

⁶⁷ (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 148)

agnostic mode of thought modifies the mythological apparatus, creating a set of preconditions lacking determination as a baseline for general understanding. In its theistic mode, the philosophical decision adopts the quality of synthetic deduction: ontic properties of empirical events are sutured to create an *a posteriori* construction. We refer to these dogmatisms as *aesthetic* in nature. What Kant refers to as the synthetic application of partially determinate concepts⁶⁸ (those which lack an analytic deduction, grounded in nature), we position as the synthetic collaboration of a linear series of philosophical decisions made in the ontic mode. **The ‘repetition’ of the foreclosure of the aleatory circle, the abandonment of the multiple in favor of a repetition of the ‘same’, constitutes the myth apparatus with positive, collaborative and correlated ‘reasons’ for belief.** In short, the event, which is characterized by the sensuous, bodily encounter of the subject with the ‘world’, is the foundation for the construction of the theistic mythological apparatus. This logic depends on the foreclosure of the conditions of all possibility in favor of an aesthetic determination of positive value. In this sense, the concept of *God* persists as an ontic construction grounded not in the ontological opening of all possibility, but rather in the repetition of the conditions of the philosophical or moral decision. Sense-phenomena that lack determinacy are characterized by an ontic multiplicity which, when (necessarily) closed, forms the basis for an apparatus comprised of partially determinate concepts. The ground of this type of *aesthetic Idea* is, as Kant rightly described, indeterminate:

In a word, the aesthetic idea is a representation of the imagination, associated with a given concept, which is combined with such a manifold of partial representations in the free use of the imagination that no expression designating a determinate concept can be found for it, which therefore allows the addition to a concept of much that is

⁶⁸ See Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, section 5:316, p.194.

unnameable, the feeling of which animates the cognitive faculties and combines spirit with the mere letter of language.⁶⁹

Losing one's faith describes the return to the *free play* of the moral or philosophical decision with respect to its ground—the *de-ranging* or de-suturing that opens the stitches binding ontic repetition. It is only through *affirmation* that the closure of the aleatory circle occurs, constructing the basis for the myth apparatus. In the absence of affirmation, the subject confronts the nature of chaos in all its radical contingency.

This *lack* demonstrates the ideational quality of *affirmation* with respect to corporeality in its ontic mode. Deleuze characterizes the ideational quality of affirmation as follows:

Each thought emits a distribution of singularities. All of these thoughts communicate in one long thought, causing all the forms or figures of the nomadic distribution to correspond to its own displacement, everywhere insinuating chance and ramifying each thought, linking the “once and for all” to “each time” for the sake of “all time.” For only thought finds it possible *to affirm all chance and to make chance into an object of affirmation*. If one tries to play this game other than in thought, nothing happens; and if one tries to produce a result other than the work of art, nothing is produced. This game, which can only exist in thought and which has no other result other than the work of art, is also that by which thought and art are real and disturbing reality, morality, and the economy of the world.⁷⁰

Value denotes the preferred corporeal consequence of the philosophical decision, which serves to banish the multiplicity of the aleatory moment *through* affirmation.

⁶⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 194.

⁷⁰ (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 60)

The subject *self-affirms*, bringing coherence and unity where only chaos persists. In its repetitive mode, the myth apparatus provides the rationale for the moral or philosophical decision, based on the supposition of a totalized, necessary world within which **the essence of objects eternally returns**.⁷¹

It is here that the concept of humour exposes the fundamental contingency characterizing value judgment as such. Humour serves to dissolve the ‘necessary’ link between ontic multiplicity and the affirmation of the philosophical or moral decision. It operates as the reversal of the philosophical decision and the re-opening of the aleatory in imaginative form. Ironic satire, pastiche, *impressions* rend the stitches of ontic repetition and glimpse the aleatory moment and its ontological conditions of possibility. As Deleuze notes:

Humour is the art of the surfaces and of the doubles of Nomad singularities and of the always displaced aleatory point; it is the art of static genesis, *savoir-faire* of the pure event and the “fourth person singular”—with every signification, denotation, and manifestation suspended, all height and depth abolished.⁷²

Affirmation contains the conditions for the dissolution of the aleatory moment. Affirmation relies on the supposition of a governing world within which repetition is representative of causal determinacy.⁷³ Humour intervenes on behalf of chaos and

⁷¹ In his early work on Nietzsche, Deleuze notes of *value*: “Truth is never related to what it presupposes. But there is not truth that, before being a truth, is not the bringing into effect of a sense or the realization of a value. Truth, as a concept, is entirely undetermined. Everything depends on the value and sense of what we think. We always have the truths we deserve as a function of the sense of what we conceive, of the value of what we believe. See (Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 104).

⁷² (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 141)

⁷³ Here I conceive of *affirmation* in a manner which departs from Deleuze. For Deleuze, affirmation adopts a joyous quality, affirming difference, disparity, and decentering over the subordination of difference to the identity of concepts and the return of the Same. See Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 288. In my conception, affirmation marks the closure of the multiple and the constitution of the myth apparatus. Deleuze also characterizes *affirmation* with respect to the “univocity of Being: “The univocity of Being merges with the positive use of the disjunctive synthesis which is the highest affirmation. It is the eternal return itself, or—as we have seen in the case of the ideal game—the affirmation of all chance in a single moment, the unique cast for all throws, one Being and only for all forms and all times, a

serves as a reminder of ontic multiplicity and the contingency of the subject-position relative to the event in its temporal phases. The corporeal body, which is supposed to ground necessary ontological conditions, is exposed as a contingent phenomenon whose modalities mirror that of randomness. The myth apparatus *covers over* this dynamic by stitching indeterminate ontic concepts together by way of repetition of the philosophical or moral decision, which are themselves a function of a rationality based on value judgments founded in the ‘best practices’ of the corporeal body. In this sense, *myths* precede the ontic, but not the ontological. The ontological—the *background noise* which gives rise to the modalities of the ontic, is effaced in favor of a structure whose supposed determinacy lies in the ‘necessary’ conditions of the corporeal body.

2.2 Chance, or the Condition of the Aleatory

“Nothing is exempt from the game,” writes Deleuze, “consequences are not subtracted from chance by connecting them with a hypothetical necessity which would tie them to a determinate fragment; on the contrary, they are adequate to the whole of chance, which retains and subdivides all possible consequences.”⁷⁴ The *philosophical decision* is the closure of the opening of all possibility and the return to the ontic mode. *The whole of chance* names the condition of all possibility absent its corporeal conditions.

single instance for all that exists, a single phantom for all the living, a single voice for every hum of voices and every drop of water in the sea.” (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 179-180). We depart here from Deleuze in his *logic of the surface* and his positioning of the primacy of the ontic, of factual existence, and the ontological, the Being of beings as a concrete totality. For Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense*, only *non-sense* persists relative to the surface, which forecloses on the possibility of ontological knowledge. In his scheme, the *event*, as an ideal entity, cannot yield ontological knowledge due to its ideal nature. Deleuze encloses the surface as follows: “Univocal Being inheres in language and happens to things; it measures the internal relation of Being. It is *extra-Being*, that is, the minimum of Being common to the real, the possible, and the impossible. A position in the void of all events in one, an expression in the nonsense of all senses in one, univocal Being is the pure form of Aion, the form of exteriority which relates things and propositions. In short, the univocity of Being has three determinations: one single event for all events; one and the same *aliquid* for that which happens and that which is said; and one and the same Being for the impossible, the possible, and the real.” (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 180)

⁷⁴ (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 283)

When choosing option *A* over option *B*, the subject *closes* the circle within which all possible decisions are contained. In this way, the constraints of time and space, which act either on or within the subject, *become real*, dividing the infinite into the finite and generating a series grounded in the repetition of the philosophical or moral decision. The totality of the game contains not only the infinite possibility of its ontological genesis, it also includes each possible completion of the ontic philosophical or moral decision as part of its 'structure'. This structure is one of ontic commitment—of the quasi-necessity of the subject as a corporeal entity persisting in time and space. The *affirmation* or philosophical decision that relinquishes the aleatory point from its privileged ontological position forecloses on the multiplicity of seen and unseen possibility. Affirmation marks the point of enclosure that completes the ontological-to-ontic movement from *all possibility* to one of corporeal contingency. This *aleatory circle* is the primordial mode of the subject-position *thrown* into ontic necessity. If the world is characterized by chaotic flows within which a synthetic unified subject persists, then the aleatory circle marks a point of ontological-ontic confrontation that serves to express the absolute contingency of the subject-position. On the other hand, if the world were a structured and necessary totality, partially graspable by the subject, the aleatory circle would instead mark the place of the encounter or contact with *partial determinate* fragments of the world in its ontological necessity. This split determines two modes of mythological thought.

In the first mode, the encounter with a totalized structural and necessarily whole world positions the subject within a strict *truth / falsity* dichotomy. In this formulation, *mythology* denotes the position of the *false*—that which lacks correspondence with the necessary world in its totality. *Myths* become abstractions or fantasies lacking reference to empirical phenomena whose ground persist within the totalized world. The history of Western thought has privileged this epistemological mode, preferring a moral admonition that elevates the primacy of the self-same *model* above the groundless *copy*. This conceptual apparatus is the original framework that assumes the world in its concrete totality. In his review of Plato, Deleuze notes:

The whole of Platonism, by contrast, is dominated by the idea of drawing a distinction between 'the thing itself' and the simulacra. Difference is not thought in itself but related to a ground, subordinated to the same and subject to mediation in **mythic** form. Overturning Platonism, then, means denying the primacy of original over copy, of model over image; glorifying the reign of simulacra and reflections.⁷⁵

In the second mode of mythological thought, the subject of ideational unity, bringing synthetic, aesthetic, or moral cohesion to a non-totalized or radically contingent nominalist world, forms a mythological apparatus which is itself constitutive of the *subject* as such. Using a series of 'short-hand'—metonymies, allegories, religious symbolism, etc.—the myth apparatus provides an epistemological framework within which ideational repetition proceeds. On the latter view, mythology adopts the quality of a *groundless structure*, applying the rules of synthetic deduction in the construction of the mythological apparatus. The aleatory circle, on this view, conceptualizes the conditions for the encounter of a non-totalizeable ontological chaos with its ontic counterpart: the corporeal. The mythological apparatus is the series of repetitive philosophical decisions—moral, synthetic unities of consistent enclosures constituting the unity of the subject. *Myth* is the grafting of this apparatus on to the 'event' of the aleatory circle in its ontic mode ahead of the event's meaningful interpretation *played out* in time.

In a totalized, necessary world, the mythological apparatus loses its consistency. *Error* or *falsity* mark the master concepts for objects either included in an ontic schema or banished to the realm of fantasy or illusion. Within this logic, 'mythologies' become the post-facto position of the subject of the *unreal*—of that which lacks correspondence to the totality of the world as given in ontic experience.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 66, my emphasis.

In its empirical mode, mythologies that persist independent of the necessary world adopt the quality of *non-sense*—no correlate presents to ground or determine a mythological concept, and no persistent ‘rule’ to govern their necessity. Within the fractured world of chaos, mythology necessarily *precedes* the subject. The synthetic unity grafted on to indeterminate ontological conditions by the subject opens up a field of *sense* within which *events* are interpreted. As Kant interprets this as follows:

The aesthetic idea (archetype, prototype) is for both grounded in the imagination; the shape, however, which constitutes its expression (ectype, afterimage) is given either in its corporeal extension (as the object itself exists) or in accordance with the way in which the latter is depicted in the eye (in accordance with its appearance on a plane); or else, whatever the former is, either the relation to a real end or just the appearance of one is made into a condition for reflection.⁷⁶

The aleatory circle demonstrates both the transcendental ontological conditions for the possibility of the infinite, while simultaneously foreclosing on this possibility in the movement of the ontically-necessary philosophical or moral decision. The aleatory circle contains both the creation and the destruction of the ontological through its ‘opening’ of the ontological conditions which precede the multiplicity of the aleatory point and the ‘closing’ of these conditions necessarily in time. There can be no suspension of the aleatory circle outside of a pure ideation that considers the multiplicity of the aleatory point as its own, real-existing object. It is an object that is only ever an instance of the possibility of a repetition of a different type, of the *free play* of the subject within a set of given parameters prescribed in advance. It is, however, a contingent object grounded only in the meeting point of the corporeal, time, and space.

⁷⁶ (Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 199)

In order to ground a concept of a totalized world, the subject relies on the supposition of the existential necessity of the ontic experience of time and space. Rather, corporeality, in its finite and fractured determinations, demonstrates both the conditions of the ontologically *all possible* and the ontically *impossible*. Far from determining the world as a structural necessity, the aleatory circle posits a multiplicity that is contained within the radical finitude of ontic contingency. *Myth* enters as the constitution of a 'world' within a series of 'repeating', yet contingent phenomena—based specifically on corporeal conditions. Hence, when Heidegger seeks to ground the concept of *Being* within a temporal structure, he relies on a classical view of the world as a necessary totality within which the subject discovers ontological necessity ('Being-there').⁷⁷ As we have noted, however, the aleatory circle radicalizes ontic contingency and demonstrates the reliance of the structure of time as one of corporeal determination, itself a constituent part of the mythological apparatus. As such, the conceptualization of time as ontologically necessary and determinate of ontic contingency reveals itself as a subjective presupposition of the world as a concrete totality. In the absence of this totality, the concept of time re-inhabits its place as one other in a countless chain of indeterminate ontic phenomena whose only ground appears in corporeal experience. As Deleuze characterizes the experience of subjectivity *in time*:

Here begins a long and inexhaustible story: I is an other, or the paradox of inner sense. The activity of thought applies to a receptive being, to a passive subject which represents that activity to itself rather than enacts it, which experiences its effect rather than initiates it, and which lives it like an Other within itself. To 'I think' and 'I am' must be added the self - that is, the passive position (what Kant calls the receptivity of intuition); to the determination and the undetermined must be added the form of the determinable, namely time. Nor is 'add' entirely the

⁷⁷ See (Heidegger, "Dasein and Temporality," in *Being and Time*, 221-226)

right word here, since it is rather a matter of establishing the difference and interiorising it within being and thought. It is as though the I were fractured from one end to the other: **fractured by the pure and empty form of time**. In this form it is the correlate of the passive self which appears in time. Time signifies a fault or a fracture in the I and a passivity in the self, and the correlation between the passive self and the fractured I constitutes the discovery of the transcendental, the element of the Copernican Revolution.⁷⁸

Deleuze's fractured *I* is precisely the opening within which the confrontation of the ontological with the ontic plays out in the aleatory circle. *Time* reveals its own indeterminacy while simultaneously illuminating the conditions for its ontic possibility: the fractured *I* which presupposes time as ontologically given. Likewise, the world as a concrete totality demands the fidelity of time to its necessary structure. It is *within time* that the model of the world expresses its necessities. What is expressed, however, are not the representations of a knowable, fixed, totalized world, but instead a reality in which modally different expressions impress upon passive subjects in a sensuous mode. The locus of this confusion lies at the confrontation between the ontological and the ontic, demonstrated in the aleatory circle.

The mythological apparatus of serialized repetitive events presents an overdetermined epistemology—ontically necessary, repetitive, moral or philosophical decisions encase the fractured *I* within a fantasy framework, one which abolishes the multiplicity—the pure, ideational aleatory moment—in favor of a theory of varying consequences.

The phenomenon of *Regret* enters as an attuned sensuous remainder indicating that the philosophical decision can never re-fold itself back into the multiplicity of the aleatory point. The *superposition* of the aleatory marks an atemporal ontic necessity—

⁷⁸ (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, my emphasis, 86)

it is always determined by circumstance of a corporeal character. However, regret also informs the subject of the transcendental conditions of *all possibility*. In the moment of dissolution of the multiplicity (necessarily), the subject *glimpses* the transcendental conditions for the possibility of the ontologically *all possible*. It is because we make the aleatory circle an object of relevant inquiry that we are able to understand that which *might be otherwise*. Because difference is the first priority of the *world*, the subject stretches out its cognition *in advance*, anticipating *possible* difference before it becomes 'real.' This dynamic often results in transcendental error, but also allows the construction of alternative ontological conceptions of the *world*, and inaugurates the question of existence in the first instance.

Despite the enclosure of the ontologically infinite within the ontically necessary, the aleatory circle which includes both the "problem" and its possible "solution" is never a self-enclosed totality, containing both the aleatory point which characterizes the philosophical decision, and the affirmation or completion. *Completion* marks a temporal moral imposition of a subject of unique experience, and generally adopts the form of "I chose to do this because..." This *because* marks the conjugation of experience with a synthetic proposition. Despite the ontological opening created by the aleatory circle, which allows the subject to *glimpse* the conditions of all possibility, the ontic necessity of time determines the constitution of the mythological subject in advance of the event. The *because* of the philosophical decision relies on a predicate which contains both the repetition of the mythological apparatus, itself constituted by empirical precedence, and the ontological glimpse of all possibility contained in every sensuous encounter. Deleuze notes:

In depth, it is through infinite identity that contraries communicate and that the identity of each finds itself broken and divided. This makes each term at once the moment and the whole; the part, the relation, and the whole; the self, the world, and God; the subject, the copula, and the predicate. But the situation is altogether different at the surface where only infinitive events are deployed; each one communicates with the

other through the positive characters of its distance and by the affirmative character of the disjunction.⁷⁹

The locus of ontological difference is the interplay of the ontological with the ontic contained within the circle of the aleatory point and the philosophical decision. The indeterminacy of the ontological *all possible* is inscribed within the closure of the aleatory circle. In its philosophical ‘decision-making,’ the mythological apparatus preceding every sensuous encounter is further constituted as a repetitive motif. As such, the ontological *all possible* is diminished in favor of what is ‘real.’ Hence, the constitution of the subject relies on repetition of a presupposed same (the decision) as a type of ‘world building’. The *world*, in this sense, is not constituting, but rather constitutive of (the subject).

Mythology, misunderstood as a lack of correlation to that which is *real*, is confused within the dynamic of the interplay between the ontological and the ontic discovered in the aleatory circle. On this view, phenomena that fail to correspond to the repetitions of the dominant mythological apparatus are considered *fantastical* or otherwise. The weakness of the scientific worldview is a reliance on the supposition of the ontic as necessary—correlated to a totalized and knowable world in which the subject persists. *Reductionism* is the concept for those methods privileging the givens of ontic experience over the dynamic of the aleatory circle in its exposure of the all possible. If *affirmation* were to contain an analytic judgment, it would be expressed within a self-enclosed epistemic certainty. The necessity of the *question*—the superposition of the aleatory point—consists in a prior determination given in experience. As Deleuze notes:

Whereas Analytics gives us the means to solve a problem already given, or to respond to a question, Dialectics shows how to pose a question legitimately. Analytics studies the process by which the syllogism

⁷⁹ (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 175)

necessarily leads to a conclusion, while Dialectics invents the subjects of syllogisms (precisely what Aristotle calls ‘problems’) and engenders the elements of syllogisms concerning a given subject (‘propositions’).⁸⁰

A closed totality would demonstrate epistemic certainty of a particular kind, one which constitutes the subject based on the richness of corporeal experience only, rather than what we observe: a constitution of the self based on the conjugation of experience with synthetic proposition. When the subject faces the philosophical decision, it cannot be experience alone that dictates affirmation. In the case of brute experience, a teleological analytic science could easily replace philosophical ethics as the primary mode of inquiry into the philosophical decision. If indeed experience marks the suture of the world in its expressive mode with the sense-proposition of a subject persisting in time and space, we would encounter a multitude of pure analytic determinations. Properties of the world, given in its positive form, rather than present as paradoxical or aporetic, would express a formal grouping of phenomena given to their natural essence. In his work on *sense* Deleuze notes: “Paradox is opposed to *doxa*, namely, good sense and common sense. Now, good sense is said of one direction only: it is the unique sense and expresses the demand of an order according to which it is necessary to choose one direction and to hold onto it.”⁸¹ In our language, *paradox* represents the incommensurability of variable ontic philosophical or moral decisions played out in time and space and serialized within the subject. This logic relies on the necessary closure of the aleatory moment, which contains its own form of paradox: that of the impossibility of the containment of the multiplicity outside an ideational arrangement. The ‘necessities’ which constitute the myth apparatus are fundamental *doxa*—the formation of a grouping of reductions which serve to eliminate the possibility of the *otherwise*. “It could not have been otherwise” is the cultural motif enamored with the mythological apparatus and the *good sense* from which it derives its

⁸⁰ (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 160)

⁸¹ (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 75)

rationale. *Paradox* always threatens the fictitious ground of *good sense* and of *doxa*, marking the return of the multiple and of the *otherwise*. Two or more incommensurate ontic philosophical or moral decisions may only co-exist in a subjective apparatus that embraces the moment of the multiple and of pure, ideational ontic possibility engendered by the aleatory.

Experience denotes a sensuous measure of partial or indeterminate contingent objects, consistently at odds with one another. As opposed to an analytic mode of perception, the subject draws on its *wealth of experience* of partial and paradoxical elements to inform a philosophical decision, subsuming this experience within a synthetic proposition. This conjunction of experience with what Kant referred to as *transcendental structures* marks the philosophical decision as a fundamentally *affirmative* mode. The aleatory point, which contains the multiplicity of possible outcomes, is thus modified in two ways: 1) under the diktats of a historico-subjective experience that is governed exclusively by sensuous modes of time and space, and 2) within an ideal synthetic proposition—an iterative, non-causal, positive imposition grafted on to the world of experience as a means toward closing the perennial openness of the aleatory point. This moment of synthetic proposition marks the locus for the inquiry into the modalities that characterize *mythological* thought. As a quasi-determinate empirical mode, the event of the affirmation of the aleatory point away from its openness and toward its foreclosure in synthetic proposition is none other than the application of the generation and repetition of the mythological apparatus governing the subject in time and space. Consider Schelling:

Determinism counters this system of equilibrium of free will and, indeed, with complete justification, since it claims the empirical necessity of all actions because each is determined by representations

or other causes that lie in the past and that no longer remain within our power during the action itself.⁸²

One *regrets* a decision when the opportunity for perceived beneficial experience has been decidedly closed. The *abandonment* of the aleatory point takes the form of the determined affirmation—a singular decision that serves to reduce the multiplicity of the aleatory to a mono-logical event. This mode of the event arrives, however, by way of an ontic temporal necessity: the openness of the aleatory point persists solely as an atemporal entity containing every possible outcome of decision. The philosophical decision marks the ontic temporal point within which the circle of the multiplicity of the aleatory point is closed with its necessary outcome. Though the outcome is differential—allowing for variation across the multiplicity of possible outcomes, the aleatory point-to-philosophical-decision apparatus is an ontic necessity—a closed circle within which the entire ‘structure’ of the temporal event is contained. This structure is seemingly determined in advance of the subject by time and space, appearing phenomenally as an ontic necessity, and grounding the event of philosophical decision within a transcendental apparatus. In this conception, the *event* precedes the subject as a real-existing entity of unknown determination. Something *forces the subject to think*. “This object is an object not of recognition,” writes Deleuze,

What is encountered may be Socrates, a temple or a demon. It may be grasped in a range of affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering. In whichever tone, its primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed. In this sense it is opposed to recognition. In recognition, the sensible is not at all that which can only be sensed, but that which bears directly

⁸² (Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 49)

upon the senses in an object which can be recalled, imagined or conceived.⁸³

It is often presupposed that this *thing* marks a determinate ground—material or otherwise—which coerces the ‘subject’ into action related to the event. As such, the basis for empirical analysis grounds itself within the structure of the relationship between that which forces the subject to consider, and the subject as a transcendental framework of perception which interprets the ground according to rules fixed in time and space.

Problems persist in time and space as a quasi-determined extension of corporeality, itself a product of a seemingly essential ontic necessity. The production of difference within corporeal existence relates to two specific ontic modes: time and space, each of which serves as a governing ‘cause’ of ‘effects’ experienced by the body. Thus, the body, as the locus of the aleatory point and the philosophical decision, enjoys a privileged status with respect to epistemological understanding. The perceived necessity of time and space marks a reduction of the differential modes of the subject to within the enclosure of the event as characterized by the aleatory circle. The body is the center of sensuous contact with the ‘world’—a *field* of contact within which time and space proceed. *Space* is the correlate concept of bodily movement—its excitations, enjoyment, pain etc. *Time* is the unique force adding *relevance* to the subjective encounter, acting as the moderator of meaning with respect to the sensuous encounter of body with space. These two ontic ‘necessities’ birth the modulations of the mythological apparatus and ground ontic experience. As such, the ‘world’ expresses itself only insofar as it may be interpreted within a dynamic framework enclosed within the confines of time and space. Analysis of the fluctuations which inhere in the relationship between time, space, and the body, we refer to as *empirical inquiry*.

⁸³ (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 139)

The first postulate of the empirical mode of analysis is the abandonment of the variation of possible ontological difference in favor of a metaphysics of the *event* and its genesis. The *aleatory circle* emerges as the result of the event, which demands the subject to consider the world as a concrete, observable and experiential object, forgetting the non-ground of the aleatory moment which fixes the multiple in time and space. Within empirical metaphysics corporeal sensuous experience is presupposed as the underwriter of the phenomenon of the event. Within the multiplicity of possibility the beginning and end of ground is the body, through which the world expresses its essential properties. As such, corporeality enjoys a privileged position within the hierarchy of human understanding. Phenomena of possible concern are thus inscribed within a *serialized* mode: reference to the event and its outcome persist within a *repetitive* ideation that reduces the multiplicity of the aleatory to the mark of its preferred outcomes—specifically those with historical precedent. Deleuze is correct, therefore, in his definition of *repetition* as an original means of mediating difference in itself. As Deleuze notes: “Repetition is never a historical fact, but rather the historical condition under which something new is effectively produced.”⁸⁴ And, as Deleuze notes,⁸⁵ the moment of repetition is the moment of ideational foreclosure: when the philosophical decision is made, closing the aleatory circle, repetition emerges as the moral ‘lesson’, or in more refined terminology, as the creation of a fundamental *mythology*. As the closure of the aleatory moment with the philosophical decision an original ‘repetition’ finds its ontic genesis. As a serialization of linear historical *moments*, the generative function of the aleatory circle becomes clear: the philosophical or moral decision, itself an ontic necessity resulting from the closure of the multiplicity—itsself encountered as temporal necessity through another ontic necessity: corporeality—*constitutes* a grouping of ideal moral lessons which themselves inform the mythological apparatus.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 90.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 76.

Deleuze writes:

The role of the imagination, or the mind which contemplates in its multiple and fragmented states, is to draw something new from repetition, to draw difference from it. For that matter, repetition is itself in essence imaginary, since the imagination alone here forms the ‘moment’ of the *vis repetitiva* from the point of view of constitution: it makes that which it contracts appear as elements or cases of repetition.⁸⁶

To grasp the concept of the aleatory enclosure is to glimpse the relative ‘universal’ simplicity of corporeal existence. The body, situated as an ontic necessity within time and space, functions as the *ground* over which phenomenal moments proceed. It is no coincidence, then, that the *gambler* archetype enjoys a particular position of scorn within bourgeois rationality. The gambler exposes the perceived necessary condition of the aleatory enclosure as one of corporeal contingency. At once satirizing the groundlessness of economic determinism, while simultaneously demonstrating the contingent character of corporeal determination, the gambler, in a single throw of the dice, forecloses on the possibility of ontic subjective *superposition*—with *bodies like these* and *time like that*, the gambler demonstrates the impossibility of maintaining the multiplicity of the aleatory moment and illuminates the conditions for the openness of ontological *all possibility*. Even in its limited sense, bound by determinations of time, space, bodies, and rules, the affirmation of the dice throw serves as metaphor for the ontic necessity of the philosophical decision. In its ontic mode, the affirmation marks the temporal completion of a circle which is comprised of the aleatory point and the multiplicity of possible outcomes.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 76.

2.3 The 'I' of the Corporeal

Historical views from theology and philosophy posit an ontologically necessary *I* where only a contingent *this* persists. The *cogito* is a non-essential atemporal abstraction that stands for the mark of unity between ontic experience and its supposed ontological genesis. Phenomenally, the *I* encounters a range of differential empirical stimulus, providing a seemingly necessary, yet always relative mode of understanding attuned to the ontic world, itself divided into two human-centric essential properties: time and space. Corporeality stratifies existence into an existential doubling: overlapping and relational empirical 'events', 'materially'-derived ontic necessities which persist relative to time and space, and the ontological suppositions endemic to empirical understanding of the 'event' as such, allegorized as the *cogito*. Despite the formation of a field of grounding ontic modalities, the body does not constitute a philosophical *substance* which captures a world of totality. As Gabriel argues: "If the self was a substance, our cognitive access to it would have to be the grasp of substance. Yet, our cognitive access to any substance is fallible insofar as it has to *represent* the substance in question."⁸⁷ The representation of the self as derived from the ontic modalities of the body relies on a logical synthesis of variable properties that provide an aesthetic veneer of corporeal totality. We neither observe a fractured *I* reaching out in to a cohesive total world, nor do we experience a fixed, determinate subject 'thrown' in to a chaotic world. Both conceptions are fundamentally based on mythological structures of thought of another variety: the supposition of substance with respect to the subject assumes an existent, yet unobservable ontological given where only ontic difference persists. Likewise, positing the world as a necessary totality confuses the *essence* of causation with the contingent nature of *effect*. As Deleuze notes: "For Kant as for Descartes, it is the identity of the Self in the 'I think' which grounds the harmony of all the faculties and their agreement on the form of a supposed same object."⁸⁸ The body has, in our era, become the stand-

⁸⁷ (Gabriel, *Mythology, Madness and Laughter*, 31)

⁸⁸ (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 133)

in for an elusive *I*—the ground which stretches along time as a supposed self-Same object within which the world becomes known. Corporeality produces *sense*, but that sense remains ideal. The body is the *quasi-cause* of incorporeal schemes that govern the subjective relation to the body as an object of representation. In the cataloguing of the various modalities of the body, the subject adopts various “best practices” (*doxa*) that reinforce the view of the body as an essential object *to which* positive affirmations may be applied.

In its specific mode of understanding, the corporeal *I* is the producer of *sense* with respect to its *reference*, understood traditionally as the world as it exists in itself. In an onto-theological framework, the *I* finds its strongest dualism: the world of the corporeal—of phenomena derived from sensuous encounters,⁷ and that of the *spiritual* or *mystic*—speculative flows of meaning operating independently of the confines of time and space. The concept of the *infinite* is the concept of an onto-theological supposition of an *I* immemorial, preceding and proceeding the corporeal life of time and space. The aleatory circle demonstrates the nature of the corporeal encounter: strictly contingent, persistently bound by the confines of time and space, and mediated by a decision-mechanism of unknown origin. The reference of sense is always that which forces the philosophical decision: the multiple and the different. It seems apparent that the *world*, whether conceived as material, real, virtual, etc. marks the grounding point for empirical sensation and, as such, adopts the character of that which grounds corporeal existence: namely, the body.

The enclosure of the aleatory circle demonstrates the rigid structure of corporeal ontic experience. The emergence of the event marks the beginning point of an ontic *encounter* that has its ground in sensuous contact with an object of some definition. We have provisionally defined the *event* as the moment of expressive encounter within which the subject discovers the real or material world as the base that constitutes the mythological apparatus—always relative to the contingency of the subject in time and space, and as a quasi-determinate temporal object containing both the aleatory moment in its multiplicity and the closure engendered by the

philosophical or moral decision. But what dynamics describe the *event*? What are its possible points of contact with the ‘world’ as we have provisionally defined it? What characterizes the event relative to a grounded determination of positive value?

We have noted that the mythological apparatus contains a serialized form of repetitive ontic philosophical or moral decisions, but to this point have neglected the question of the *genesis* of the event *in itself*. We have tied the notion of the event to time and space and to the body and corporeality, but should we consider the *body* as a determinate, necessary ontic entity? Deleuze poses the question in the following manner:

...all bodies are causes in relation to each other, and causes for each other—but causes of what? They are causes of certain things of an entirely different nature. These *effects* are not bodies, but, properly speaking, “incorporeal” entities. They are not physical qualities and properties, but rather logical or dialectical attributes. They are not things or facts, but events. We can not say that they exist, but rather that they subsist or inhere (having the minimum of being which is appropriate to that which is not a thing, a nonexisting entity). They are not substantives or adjectives but verbs.⁸⁹

Deleuze separates the *cause* (depth) with the *effect* (surface), and positions *events* within the process of *becoming*. As such, Deleuze *frees* the event from a total determination based in the corporeal view. Deleuze continues:

Incorporeal effects are never themselves causes in relation to each other; rather, they are only “quasi-causes” following laws which perhaps express in each case the relative unity or mixture of bodies on which they depends for their real causes. Thus freedom is preserved in

⁸⁹ (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 3-4)

two complimentary manners: once in the interiority of destiny as a connection between causes, and once more in the exteriority of events as a bond of effects.⁹⁰

The event is comprised of a point of sensuous contact wherein the subject encounters an indeterminate entity situated in time and space. What provides *relevance* to the subject is an opening of the multiplicity of ontic variation which demands the subject to consider a decision in a moral or philosophical manner. The mythological apparatus informs the subjective interpretation of an event in two ways: 1) by relating the multiplicity of possibility to the precedence of past experience, and 2) by informing the subject as to the relevance of the components which comprise the aleatory moment. In the case of the dice throw, the basis for the totality of the aleatory is contained within a set of given parameters. The number of sides and corresponding numerals determine a complete framework of possibility. As such, the mythological apparatus is constituted on the basis of pre-set *rules* that relate the aleatory moment to empirical precedent. If, for example, a subject had never encountered a die before, and threw five consecutive *one* throws, we could suppose that the subject would determine that the *ones* were *caused* each time as an ontic necessity contained within the 'essence' of the throw, not as random chance or a chaotic closure of the possibility for variation. We 'learn' that the possibility contained in each throw is unique only by reconfiguring the mythological apparatus to accept the multiple pursuant to the aleatory moment. The dice throw relies on a point of sensuous contact informing the subject as to the possibilities contained within the rules of the game, but only via repetition and difference. In simple games, the totality of possibility finds correlation in the myth apparatus as a simple abstraction. We understand, even if we see just a few throws of the dice, and based on the relation of the dice, the rules of the throw, and the world of time and space which govern its modalities, that the dice throw contains a finite multiplicity of basic proportions. However, as complexity increases,

⁹⁰ Ibid., 6.

difference has the tendency to overwhelm the subject, forcing the myth apparatus into a truncated view of the multiple, amending the myth apparatus into using a series of short-hands or shortcuts. It is clear that the rules of the game governing ontic existence are significantly more complex than a simple throw of the dice. The myth apparatus appears as necessary in order to ‘make sense’ of the world in its complexity. The fractured subject cannot contain the multiplicities of ontic possibility within which increasing complexity works to undermine the structures of understanding. The mythological apparatus represents a defensive matrix—a field of interpretation that simultaneously brings ‘understanding’ to the world while also providing a veneer of personal cohesion. The self persists as the constitutive and constituted mythological apparatus—a serialized, linear, open and closed mode of adopting and rejecting variability based on the conjugation of precedence and the value judgments inherent to the moral or philosophical decision.

We have described the philosophical or moral decision as the ‘completion’ or enclosure of the multiplicity contained in the aleatory moment. However, the ‘outcome’ of an event should not be considered as an absolutely *free* decision undertaken by the subject. As a rule, the framework established by the ‘game’ designates a particular type of determinacy. The rules of the game establish a ground from which the philosophical or moral decision proceeds. These are *quasi-determinate*, incorporeal moments of affirmation. In this way, the subject simultaneously creates *doxa* or *good sense* based on a quasi-determinate outcome, while simultaneously reaffirming the *set* of ontic rules that constitutes the game in the first instance. As such, we observe an ontic doubling which includes the serialization of ontic processes along with the re-affirmation of the ontic preconditions establishing this dynamic at its very beginning. The *origin* of the rules of the game relies on a designation of the multiple as one of necessity. This necessity, however, in its elimination of variables outside its domain, reveals itself as ontic contingency. A subject that has never encountered a dice game, for example, would lack any conceptual fore-knowledge of the rules governing the multiplicity of outcomes. The

subject relies on experience in order to *discover* a constructed framework within which ‘necessity’ is *expressed*.

We return here to the failure of the self-same object to ground the multiplicity of possible events. This dynamic is punctuated by an essential lack: it is only through discovery of the *differences* expressed by finite sets of rules that the subject informs their conceptual framework, constituting an imaginative understanding of possibility that supposes complete determinacy where only *quasi-determinacy* persists. On the concept of *structure*, Deleuze notes: “It is thus pleasing that there resounds today the news that sense is never a principle or an origin, but that it is produced. It is not something to discover, to restore, and to re-employ; it is something to produce by new machinery.”⁹¹

Whatever the world is, as a real or virtual totality or framework, it seems to present phenomenally to the ‘subject’. That which forces us to think also forces us to the philosophical decision. This mode, however, does not in itself present the world as a complex, yet knowable totality. If anything, the contingent nature of the encounter with respect to corporeality demonstrates the chaotic nature underwriting pure ontic possibility. Exposed as a series of aleatory possibilities, the empirical event situates the corporeal subject within its necessary ontic modes: time and space. The concept of the encounter is intimately tied with that of *expression*. That *which forces us to think* denotes a set of determinations that are supposed to exist independently of the subjective view. As Deleuze characterizes it:

On the one hand, events-effects maintain a relation of causality with their physical causes, without this relation being one of necessity; it is rather a relation of expression. On the other hand, they have between them, or with their ideational quasi-cause, no longer a relation of

⁹¹ Ibid., 72.

causality, but rather, once again and this time exclusively, a relation of expression.⁹²

Despite the expansions and contractions of the relative nature of time and autonomous ‘experiences’ of space, likely at least two ontic universals persist with respect to human existence: The first is the linear nature of the experience of time. Despite debates regarding memory, repetition, anamnesis, the eternal return, etc., it seems likely that the concept of linear time is a necessary supposition with respect to corporeal inquiry. The second ontic universal is the consciousness of space and time as they conjugate into empirical events, thus forming the basis for the aleatory moment and its moral completion. As noted above, the enclosure of the aleatory circle is an ontic necessity. The gambler, for instance, cannot not throw the dice, lest he or she walk away from the game in its entirety. It is here, perhaps, we encounter Heidegger’s *looking away* formulation. It is only in the dynamic looking away (from the ontic) that the ‘subject’ glimpses the ‘world’ (the game) in its entirety. As Deleuze characterizes it: “The philosopher takes the side of the idiot as though of a man without presuppositions”.⁹³ Could we read the refusal to confront the aleatory moment as an abject rejection of the ontic game? Perhaps the gambler is the comedian of the ontic parlay, whereas the recluse encounters an element of the sublime? Recalling that Kant defined the sublime as that sensation which overcomes the subject on realization of the unbridgeable gap between the subject and nature, might the recluse mark a mode of subjective *resistance* to this dynamic in its entirety? The ascetic mode may be one of non-attunement to the ontic world.

The mythological apparatus is grounded in the enclosure of ontic serializations. It is both *constituting* and *constitutive*, responding to the ‘world’ and forming the basis of the ‘subject.’ The subject should not be understood as *substance*—as a cohesive totality in itself, reaching out in to a chaotic world. The complex totality of the subject

⁹² Ibid., 169-170.

⁹³ (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 130)

is none other than the synthetic cohesion of the mythological apparatus in its ontic mode. The *world* designates the *situating* of the fractured subject within a set of ontic circumstances governed by time and space, yet always open to the conditions of the possible found within the multiplicity of the aleatory moment. The ontological, alternatively foreclosed on as unobservable, unmeasurable, unquantifiable, etc., designates the possibility of the infinite, of *authentic* unity, or of the completion of the fractured *I* with respect to *Being*. As Nancy remarks: “What is born has no form, nor it is the fundament that is born. “To be born is rather to transform, transport, and entrance all determinations.”⁹⁴

We observe two dynamics with respect to Being: 1) *God*, as the allegorical concept of completed Being, stands for a synthetic unity of ontic concepts—ideations which persist outside the ontic necessities of time and space, and 2) *God* as the ontological concept of *all possibility*—of completed Being which persists in its indeterminacy *ahead* of the multiplicity of the aleatory moment as well as the philosophical or moral decisions whose repetitions form the mythological apparatus. In the former conception, *God* operates in a determinate mode—giving rise to modalities of the event and the providing a basis for the value judgments inherent to the philosophical or moral decision. In the latter conception, *God* adopts the quality of the indeterminate, of the chaosmos or of the non-ground.⁹⁵

We may not be able to chart the flows of ontic experience back to primordial Being and the *world* itself, but we can mark the conditions of possibility that allow the human subject to glimpse the ontological *all possible*. It is only through the complex interactions formed within the ontic world, and the subject persisting within its governing structures, that allow for a concept of *total unity* to emerge. If there is any substance to Lévi-Strauss’ claim—that originary myths persist across culture and thus demonstrate a structural (ontic necessity)—perhaps the allegory of the fall of man

⁹⁴ (Nancy, *The Birth to Presence*, 3)

⁹⁵ Cf. (FWJ Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, p.69)

points to an original lack, or *negative*, which births the concept of *God* and of a world of complete Being over and above what appears to be the case: the *world* is a construction drawn together from a field of chaos, a unity of corporeal experience with a repetitive, constituted and constitutive mythological apparatus expressing *meaning* as a reflection of the moral and philosophical affirmations of the subject.

Conclusion: The Myth of the Eternal Return

We have focused primarily on the concept of ‘world’—its possible form, exigencies, and the implications for a new philosophy of mythology. Chapter One introduced the concept of *world* critical to an understanding of the metaphysical and cultural apparatuses informing the modern era. Chapter Two separated the concept of world into two distinct conceptualizations: that of a totalized, necessary whole, and that of a chaotic series punctuated only by *events*, situating the *mythological apparatus* within the dynamic of the *aleatory circle*.

Rather than conclude with an approach to the concept of *mythology* from the dual perspectives of *whole/chaos*, we will instead accept the world as ‘given’—as an ontically necessary *object* within which subjective *meaning* persists. Following Deleuze, we characterized the *event* as an incorporeal ‘quasi-caused’ phenomena, grounded in forces the subject encounters in a chaotic world. As such, the *event* describes a *phantasm*: “It describes as such to an ideational surface over which it is produced as an effect. It transcends inside and outside since its topological property is to bring “its” internal and external sides into contact, in order for them to unfold onto a single side.”⁹⁶ The event is characterized by a point of phenomenal contact with an ontic multiplicity that we have referred to as the aleatory point or the opening of the ontic multiple. The event also contains the necessary ontic foreclosure of the aleatory or multiple point of contact through what we have referred to as the *moral* or *philosophical decision*—a closing of the multiple in favor of the singular. We

⁹⁶ (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 211)

positioned the *mythological apparatus* as an ontic framework or ruleset that is constituted as a series of historical ‘outcomes’ of the foreclosure of the aleatory circle, but also as a constituting frame preceding the subject in the guise of the return of *the same*. We have described, in a preliminary way, the genesis of the event as an ontic given—a series of chaotic, yet existent, points of contact where time, space, and the body (corporeality) meet at the subject position. Despite the incorporeal character of the *event*, we observe that the *world*, whatever its conception, must act as the basis or (quasi) *cause* of the *event* as such. In the absence of *world*, no ontic understanding is possible, and no ontological inquiry may proceed. In Chapter Two we described the *mythological apparatus* as an ontic frame that serves to capture *repetition* (as *doxa*, or *good sense*) as a series of “best practices” that exclude the ontic multiple.

The question for a new philosophy of mythology is to interrogate the conditions of the *event* in its relation to the master concept of *Being*. We can provisionally define *Being* as the essence of meaning—a self-same real-existing ontological object. Objects that persist in the world lack *Being* as an essential characteristic—they are *simulacra* that, according to Deleuze are “those systems in which different relates to different *by means* of difference itself.”⁹⁷ Two philosophical errors describe the essence of Being: 1) as the ground that provides meaning to real-existing *objects* within the world, and 2) as the necessary *whole* of the world from which the contingency of particulars emanates. On our view, Being can only describe *meaning* in its most fundamental form: as the unity of a necessary self-same property that ‘completes’ the fracture of the world. We have derivatives of meaning describing ontic objects, but not Being. We also have a type of meaning derived from *sense*, which represents the *play of the surface*: language games or formal logic. *Meaning*, in its grandest conception, must be understood as a fundamental, existential or phenomenal *thing* whose *essence* is self-expressive and infinite, immobile and immemorial. Philosophy errs when it looks for Being in physical properties of material or ‘real’ objects. Likewise, when philosophy

⁹⁷ (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 299)

seeks the essence of the forces (causes) that underwrite the phenomena (effects) (alternatively ‘depth’/’surface’) it misses the fundamental character of *meaning* and of *Being* itself.

We have described the *glimpse* into the ontological *all possible* as a primary characteristic of the aleatory circle, but a description of the conditions for the ontological all possible is not adequate to a description of Being as such. The *glimpse* of the ontological all possible expressed in the structure of the aleatory circle is only an opening that operates negatively on the ontic multiple. This *negative* is not a determinate negation—it does not contain a logical affirmation from which ontic particulars flow. Likewise, this negative is not a cognitive process proceeding to a complete, ideal product. Instead, the negative of the ontological all possible is *chaos*. *Chaos* gives definition to the false unity of the essence of the same. It is the destruction of the *eternal return of the same* and of meaningful *repetition*. Chaos is the ontological all possible without *depth*. It is the background to the ‘noise’ of the surface and to representation. The aleatory circle, persisting in the event, catches sight of the all possible as an opening—as **the destruction of the rules which govern the ontic game**.

The glimpse of the ontological all possible is both a blessing and a tyranny. In its absence, the subject *falls* into the ontic world—a world of paradox, of positive affirmation grounded only in a belief in the necessity of time, space, and the body. In glimpsing the ontological all possible, the subject comes to understand the limitless nature of existence brought finite in its corporeal mode. In this sense, the ontological acts as an ironic negative from which various philosophical or moral positions emerge: nihilism, cynicism, and stoicism. Likewise, the ontological all possible affords theological thought its founding *doxa*. *Unity* of the subject against ontological chaos allegorizes the primal *will* of the creator. The proper name of *God* stands for that which cannot exist in the ontic game: *infinite unity*. This logic relies on *chaos* as a determinate negation of that which is supposed to persist. Against all empirical observation, the unity of the subject is taken as a necessary ontological object from which emanates the fundamental *meaning* of Being as such.

The subject relies on *repetition* in grounding the theological apparatus. Here, mythology adopts a *doxa* of another type. In Deleuze's work on time he describes *Aion* as "the past-future, which in an infinite subdivision of the abstract moment endlessly decomposes itself in both directions at once and forever sidesteps the present."⁹⁸ He describes *Chronos* as "the present which alone exists."⁹⁹ Repetition persists only with the present, within *Chronos*. *Aion* is the break—the fracture that disrupts the present and forces linear repetition. It appears that the nature of the subject is binary, existing in two places at once. The present moment is a conjugation of past, present, and future—an incomplete whole grounded only in meaningful repetition. A critique of the *metaphysics of presence* amounts to a dissolution of the unity of the subject as a coherent totality with respect to the conjugation of time and space. There is no expression of *subject* other than as the fractured meeting point of time, space, and body. *Aion* is simultaneously the creator and the destroyer—the moment of conflict that disrupts the ideal unity of the subject while also creating the groundless firmament on which the subject stands. Deleuze notes:

It is the decentered center which traces between the series, and for all disjunctions, the merciless straight line of the Aion, that is, the distance whereupon the castoffs of the self, the world, and God are lined up: the Grand Canyon of the world, the "crack" of the self, and the dismembering of God.¹⁰⁰

That which calls the subject to *Being* is already the creation of its impossibility. As with the aleatory circle, *Aion* forces the enclosure of repetition back into the tyranny of the present.

A subject who speaks of 'being present' refers to close proximity with a mythological apparatus rich in repetition. This apparatus has its ground in the

⁹⁸ (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 77)

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 176.

conjugation of ontic ‘rulings’ with representation and reflection. *Representation* is the image of thought that proceeds from sensuous contact—a mediating mechanism that offers short-hand understandings of ontic modalities. The positive affirmation of sensuous experience adopts the form of metonymy, metaphor, or allegory, prompting a synthetic deduction ascertained in the moment of reflection. Deleuze writes, “A representation on its own is not enough to form knowledge. In order to know something, we need not only to have a representation, but to be able to go beyond it...”¹⁰¹ This *beyond* is the point of synthesis which binds together representation with reflection. What lacks in the proper name finds apotheosis in the conjugation of partial objects. In this sense, a positive *thing* becomes an object of representation through its encounter with *that which it is not*. The subject of representation mixes the flux of difference with historical precedent in order to *make sense* of the world in a concrete manner. Incommensurate Ideas grounded in representation are endemic to a formal system of thought that lacks a determinate grounding mechanism. As such, the mythological apparatus that ‘represents’ the rules of the ontic game tends to abort incoherent Ideas in favor of a serialized heterogeneous framework within which “correct” representations are contained. Reason tends to intervene on behalf of value judgments in order to rationalize the myth apparatus. Hence, *doxa* or *good sense* is always laden with a moral imposition of indeterminate grounding. Vacillations within ontic representation are given secondary status to a set of *master predicates*, from which the *frame* of the world takes shape. Here we observe the return of the picture of the world as an ontological whole, one expressing its necessities in a coherent manner. In this scheme, the subject need only *fine-tune* its mythological frame in adaptation to the ‘world’ of repetitive ontic *events*.

The reduction of ontic multiplicity to serialized repetitions affords the subject a brand of cultural primacy over the ‘world.’ What presents as *mastery* is nothing more than *false unity*—a means by which the subject eliminates ‘non-sense’ or ‘irrelevant

¹⁰¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Kant’s Critical Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: The Athlone Press, 1984), 4.

details' from the mythological apparatus. Paradoxical or 'nonsensical' phenomena which fail to cohere with the unity provided by the mythological apparatus are given secondary ontic status—leftovers of an ever-greater teleological endeavor.

Invariably described as *illusions* or *fantasies*, 'mythological' thinking is defined through its relation to a pre-supposed, objective reality. As outlined in Chapter Two, the adherence to a supposition of a totalized, necessary and knowable world has positioned mythological thought *outside* the realm of meaningful understanding. Likewise, in a concept of the world as fractured and chaotic, mythologies become ideational repetitions, grounded in the 'best practices' of corporeality. There is a third form of myth that bears very little relation to the *world* as such, insofar as we understand *world* as the background within which subjective meaning persists. This variety of myth is deeply personal, mystic, or borne of the *other*. It is, in our conception, the *eternal return* that lacks an essential grounding property in the self-Same or *original*. Philosophy and the natural sciences generally circle the question of ground as the starting point for the construction of a framework of analysis. In the existentialist and phenomenological traditions of philosophy, however, what is given in thought as a relation to phenomena is elevated to a higher status. As Merleau-Ponty notes on the *illusions of subjectivity*:

...he must appeal beyond them to himself who is their titular and therefore must know what motivates them from within; he must lose them as a state of fact in order to reconstruct them as his own possibilities, in order to learn from himself what they mean in truth, what delivers him over to both perception and to phantasms—in a word, he must *reflect*.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968) 29.

Classically conceived, reflection brings together the *expressed* with the *representation* as a synthesis that comprises the subject. It is supposed that the *Same* returns, as a knowable ground whose properties are brought into synthesis by way of the faculties of cognition. But what is *reflected* is a mirror of *repetition*. If the world is a given, then it follows that what is ontically ‘necessary’ finds its proper place within the subject. In this sense, the expressive quality of the world finds its correlate *through* a proper methodology. *Repetition* is the pattern of that which persists *in time*. It is corporeally bound, subject to the conditions of space and physiological ‘necessity.’ It is not the eternal return of the Same but the ideal synthesis of ontic contingency playing out through the conditions of time and space. The myth of the eternal return is the myth of the repetition of phenomena in their idealized, unconditioned form. It is supposed that the *eternal return* illuminates the forces that underwrite phenomenal repetition, but as Deleuze notes of *mechanism*:

Why is mechanism such a bad interpretation of the eternal return?

Because it does not necessarily or directly imply the eternal return.

Because it only entails the false consequence of a final state. This final state is held to be identical to the initial state and, to this extent, it is concluded that the mechanical process passes through the same set of differences again.¹⁰³

It is the ontic multiple with births the mythological apparatus through the necessary foreclosure of the conditions of possibility contained in multiplicity. The eternal return represents another *ruling*—a mythical repetition within which ontic difference is subordinated to the logic of the Same, the logic of the world as a necessary totality expressing its existent properties. The eternal return is *sense* of another type, bringing unity to the *non-sense* that precedes ontic multiplicity. What returns eternally, in our view, is the ontological *all possible*, illuminated by the destruction of the ontic

¹⁰³ (Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 49)

multiple and by the expression of time, space, and corporeality as ontically contingent phenomena grounded solely in subjective *sense*.

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