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Plato and the Simulacrum*

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translated by ROSALIND KRAUSS

What is meant by the "overthrow of Platonism"? Nietzsche thus defines the task of his philosophy, or more generally, the task of the philosophy of the future. The phrase seems to mean abolishing the world of essences *and* the world of appearances. Such a project would not, however, be Nietzsche's own. The double objection to essences and appearance goes back to Hegel, and further still, to Kant. It is unlikely that Nietzsche would have meant the same thing. Further, this way of formulating the overthrow has the drawback of being abstract; it leaves the motivation for Platonism obscure. To overthrow Platonism should, on the contrary, mean bringing this motivation to light, "tracking" it down—as Plato hunts down the Sophist.

In very general terms, the motive for the theory of Ideas is to be sought in the direction of a will to select, to sort out. It is a matter of drawing differences, of distinguishing between the "thing" itself and its images, the original and the copy, the model and the simulacrum. But are all these expressions equal? The Platonic project emerges only if we refer back to the method of division, for this method is not one dialectical procedure among others. It masters all the power of the dialectic so as to fuse it with another power and thus to represent the whole system. One could initially say that it consists of dividing a genus into opposing species in order to place the thing under investigation within the correct species: thus the process of continuous specification in the search for a definition of the angler's art. But this is only the superficial aspect of the division, its ironic aspect. If one takes this aspect seriously, Aristotle's objection is clearly applicable; division is a bad and illegitimate syllogism, because it lacks a middle term that could, for example, lead us to conclude that angling belongs to the arts of acquisition and of acquisition by capture, and so forth.

The real goal of division must be sought elsewhere. In the *Statesman* one finds an initial definition: the statesman is the shepherd of men. But all sorts of

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rivals—the doctor, the merchant, the laborer—come forward to say, "*I* am the shepherd of men." In the *Phaedrus* it is a matter of defining madness, and more precisely, of distinguishing well-founded madness, or true love. There, too, many rush forward to claim, "*I* am the possessed, *I* am the lover." Division is not at all concerned, then, to divide a genus into species, but more fundamentally with selection from among lines of succession, distinguishing between the claimants, distinguishing the pure from the impure, the authentic from the inauthentic. Hence the repeated metaphor which likens division to the testing for gold. But Platonism is the *Odyssey* of philosophy. The Platonic dialectic is not a dialectic of contradiction nor of contrariety, but one of rivalry (*amphisbetesis*)—a dialectic of rivals or claimants. Division's essence appears not in breadth—in the determination of the species of a genus—but in depth—in the selection of the lineage: the sorting out of claims, the distinguishing of true claimant from false.

To accomplish this, Plato proceeds once again by means of irony. For, when division arrives at this actual task of selection, everything occurs as though the task has been abandoned and myth has taken over. Thus, in the *Phaedrus,* the myth of the circulation of souls seems to interrupt the effort of division; so, in the *Statesman,* does the myth of archaic times. Such is the second trap of division, the second irony, this evasion, this appearance of evasion or of renunciation. For the myth really interrupts nothing. On the contrary, it is an integrating element of division itself. It is the property of division to transcend the duality of myth and of dialectic and to join, internally, the power of dialectic with that of myth. The myth, with its constantly circular structure, is really the narrative of foundation. It allows the construction of a model according to which different claimants can be judged. In effect, that which must be founded is always a claim. It is the claimant who appeals to foundation, and it is on the basis of his appeal that his claim is seen to be well or poorly founded, not founded. Thus in the *Phaedrus* the myth of circulation reveals what souls, prior to their incarnation, could see of Ideas, thereby giving us a selective criterion by which well-founded madness, or true love, belongs to those souls who have seen much and thus have many dormant but revivable memories; while sensual souls, forgetful and narrow of vision, are denounced as false claimants. It is the same thing in the *Statesman.* The circular myth shows that the definition of the statesman as "shepherd of men" literally fits only the archaic god. But from it, a criterion of selection emerges according to which different men within the City share unequally in the mythical model. In short, an elective sharing corresponds to the matter of the selective method.

To share is, at best, to have secondhand. From this arises the famous Neo-Platonic triad: the unsharable, the shared, the sharer. One could just as well say: the foundation, the object of the claim, the claimant; the father, the daughter, and the fiancé. The foundation possesses something firsthand, allow-

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ing it to be shared, giving it to the claimant—the secondhand possessor—only insofar as he has been able to pass the test of the foundation. The shared is what the unsharable possesses firsthand. The unsharable shares; it gives the shared to the sharers: justice, the quality of being just, just men. Of course, within this elective sharing, we must distinguish all sorts of degrees, a whole hierarchy. Is there not a third- and fourthhand possessor, continuing to the nth degree of debasement, up to the one who possesses no more than a simulacrum, a mirage, himself mirage and simulacrum? *The Statesman* distinguishes this in detail: the true statesman or the well-grounded claimant, then the parents, the auxiliaries, the slaves, all the way to the simulacra and counterfeits. A curse weighs on these last. They embody the evil power of the false claimant.

Thus the myth constructs the immanent model or the foundation test, according to whch the claimants must be judged and their claim measured. It is on this condition that division pursues and achieves its goal, which is not the specification of concept but the authentification of Idea, not the determination of species but the selection of lineage. Yet how are we to explain the fact that of the three great texts on division—the *Phaedrus,* the *Statesman,* and the *Sophist,* the method of division is paradoxically employed not to evaluate just claimants but, rather, to hunt down the false claimant as such, to define the being (or rather the nonbeing) of the simulacrum. The Sophist himself is the simulacral being, the satyr or centaur, the Proteus who intrudes and insinuates himself everywhere. Construed thus, however, the ending of the *Sophist* may well contain the most extraordinary adventure of Platonism. Plato, by dint of inquiring in the direction of the simulacrum, discovers, in the flash of an instant as he leans over its abyss, that the simulacrum is not simply a false copy, but that it calls into question the very notions of the copy . . . and of the model. The final definition of the Sophist leads us to the point where we can no longer distinguish him from Socrates himself: the ironist operating in private by elliptical arguments. Was it not inevitable that irony be pushed this far? And that Plato be the first to indicate this direction for the overthrow of Platonism?

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We have proceeded, then, from a first determination of the Platonic motive: to distinguish essence from appearance, the intelligible from the sensible, the Idea from the image, the original from the copy, the model from the simulacrum. But we have already seen that these expressions are not equivalent. The distinction moves between two sorts of images. *Copies* are secondhand possessors, well-grounded claimants, authorized by resemblance. *Simulacra* are like false claimants, built on a dissimilitude, implying a perversion, an essential turning away. It is in this sense that Plato divides the domain of the *image-idols* in two: on the one hand the *iconic copies* (likenesses), on the

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other the *phantasmatic simulacra* (semblances).[1] We can thus better define the whole of the Platonic motive—it is a matter of choosing claimants, of distinguishing the good from the false copies, or even more, the always well-founded copies from the simulacra, ever corrupted by dissemblance. It is a question of insuring the triumph of the copies over the simulacra, of repressing the simulacra, of keeping them chained in the depths, of preventing them from rising to the surface and "insinuating" themselves everywhere.

The great manifest duality—the Idea and the image—is there only for this purpose: to guarantee the latent distinction between the two types of images, to give a concrete criterion. For, if the copies or icons are good images, well-founded ones, it is because they are endowed with resemblance. But resemblance must not be understood as an external correspondence. It proceeds less from one thing to another than from a thing to an Idea, since it is the Idea that comprises the relations and proportions that constitute internal essence. Interior and spiritual, resemblance is the measure of a claim. A copy truly resembles something only to the extent that it resembles the Idea of the thing. The claimant only conforms to the object insofar as it is modeled (internally and spiritually) on the Idea. It merits a quality (for example the quality of justness) only insofar as it is founded on essence (justice). In short, it is the superior identity of the Idea that grounds the good claim of the copies, grounding it on an internal or derived resemblance. Let us now consider the other type of image, the simulacra. Their claim—to the object, the quality, and so forth—is made from below, by means of an aggression, an insinuation, a subversion, "against the father" and without passing through the Idea.[2] Groundless claim, covering over the dissemblance of an internal imbalance.

If we say of the simulacrum that it is a copy of a copy, an endlessly degraded icon, an infinitely slackened resemblance, we miss the essential point: the difference in nature between simulacrum and copy, the aspect through which they form the two halves of a division. The copy is an image endowed with resemblance, the simulacrum is an image without resemblance. The catechism, so fully inspired by Platonism, has familiarized us with this notion. God made man in His own image and to resemble Him, but through sin, man has lost the resemblance while retaining the image. Having lost a moral existence in order to enter into an aesthetic one, we have become simulacra.

1. *Sophist,* 236b, 264c.

2. Analyzing the relation between writing and logos, Jacques Derrida finds this very figure of Platonism: the father of logos, logos itself, writing. Writing is a simulacrum, a false claimant, insofar as it tries to capture logos through violence and trickery, or even to supplant it without going through the father. See "La Pharmacie de Platon," *Tel Quel,* no. 32, pp. 12ff. and no. 33, pp. 38ff. (Translated into English by Barbara Johnson in Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination,* Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1981, pp. 61–171). The same figure is to be found in the *Statesman*: the Good as father of the law, the law itself, the constitutions. Good constitutions are copies, but they become simulacra from the moment they violate or usurp the law, in escape from the Good.

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The remark of the catechism has the advantage of stressing the daemonic character of the simulacrum. Doubtlessly it still produces an *effect* of resemblance; but that is a general effect, wholly external, and produced by entirely different means from those that are at work in the model. The simulacrum is constructed around a disparity, a difference; it interiorizes a dissimilitude. That is why we can no longer even define it with regard to the model at work in copies—the model of the Same from which the resemblance of the copy derives. If the simulacrum still has a model, it is another one, a model of the Other from which follows an interiorized dissimilarity.[3]

Take the grand Platonic trinity: user, producer, imitator. If the user is at the top of the hierarchy it is because he judges the results, making use of a true *knowledge* which is that of the model, of the Idea. Copies can be said to be imitations to the extent that they reproduce the model; since, however, this imitation is noetic, spiritual, and internal, it is a true production guided by the relations and proportions that constitute essence. There is always a productive operation in the good copy and, corresponding to this operation, a correct *judgment,* if not knowledge. Thus we see that imitation is determined as having a pejorative meaning only to the extent that it is nothing but a simulation, or that the term applies to nothing but the simulacrum and designates the effect of resemblance only in an external and unproductive way, obtained by trick or subversion. In that case, not even correct opinion is at work, but a sort of ironic encounter that replaces the modality of understanding by an engagement outside of knowledge and opinion.[4] Plato specifies the way in which this unproductive effect is obtained. The simulacrum implies great dimensions, depths, and distances which the observer cannot dominate. It is because he cannot master them that he has an impression of resemblance. The simulacrum includes within itself the differential point of view, and the spectator is made part of the simulacrum, which is transformed and deformed according to his point of view.[5] In short, folded within the simulacrum there is a process of going mad, a process of limitlessness, as in the *Philebus* where "the more and the less always lead to a further point," a constant development, a gradual process of subversion of the depths, an adept avoidance of the equivalent, the limit, the Same, or the Like: always simultaneously more and less, but never equal. To impose a limit on this development, to order it to sameness, to make it resemblant—and, for that

3. The Other is, indeed, not only a defect that affects images; it, itself, appears as a possible model as against the good model of the Same. See *Theaetetus,* 176e, *Timaeus,* 28b.

4. See *Republic,* X, 602a; and *Sophist,* 268a.

5. X. Audouard has clearly demonstrated this aspect: simulacra "are those constructions that include the angle of the observer, in order that the illusion be produced at the very point where the observer is located . . . It is not the status of nonbeing that is stressed, but this slight deviation, this slight dodge in the real image, that is tied to the point of view occupied by the observer, and which makes it possible to construct the simulacrum, work of the Sophist" ("Le Simulacre," *Cahiers pour l'analyse,* no. 3).

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part which might remain rebellious, to repress it as deeply as possible, to confine it within a cave in the bottom of the ocean—such is the goal as Platonism strives for the triumph of icons over simulacra.

Platonism thus grounds the entire domain that philosophy recognizes as its own: the domain of representation filled by iconic copies defined not by an extrinsic relation to an object, but rather by an intrinsic relation to the model or ground. The Platonic model is Sameness, in the sense that Plato speaks of Justice as nothing other than justness, or of Courage as courageousness, and so forth—the abstract determination of the foundation being that which possesses at firsthand. The Platonic copy is the Like—the claimant who receives at one remove. To the pure identity of the model or the original there corresponds exemplary similitude, to the pure resemblance of the copy there corresponds a similitude called imitative. But for all that, one cannot say that Platonism continues to develop this power of representation for itself. It is content to stake out the territory, which is to say to ground it, to select it, to exclude from it everything that threatens to confuse its boundaries. But the deployment of representation as well-founded and limited, as finite representation, is more surely the project of Aristotle: representation crosses and covers the whole field that extends from the highest genera to the minutest species, and the method of division at this point takes on a traditional aspect of specification that it had not possessed under Plato. We can fix a third moment when, under the influence of Christianity, there is no longer the attempt only to found representation, rendering it possible, nor to specify or determine it as finite, but rather to render it infinite, to assert its claim to the limitless, to have it conquer the infinitely great as well as the infinitely small, opening onto a Being that exists beyond the highest genera and onto a particularity that resides within the minutest species.

Upon this endeavor, Leibniz and Hegel left the stamp of their genius. But if we have not done with the issue of representation, it is because the double requirement of the Same and the Like persists. Quite simply, the Same discovered an unconditioned principle capable of setting up its rule within infinity: namely, sufficient reason; and the Like found a condition by means of which it could be applied to the unlimited: namely, convergence or continuity. In effect, a notion as rich as the Leibnizian compossibility means that, monads being assimilated to unique points, each series that converges around one of these points is extended in other series, converging around other points. Another world begins in the vicinity of the points, causing the series thus obtained to branch off. We thus see how Leibniz excludes divergence by means of distributing it in the domains of the "noncompossible," preserving the maximum convergence or continuity as a criterion of the best possible world, which is to say, of the real world. (Leibniz presents other possible worlds as "claimants" that are less well-founded.) The same is true for Hegel in that it has

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recently been shown to what extent the circles of the dialectic turn around a single center, depend on a single center.[6] Whether it's the mono-centering of circles or the convergence of series, philosophy does not leave the matter of representation behind when it goes off in quest of the infinite. Its intoxication is only feigned. Philosophy continues to pursue the same goal, Iconology, adapting it to the speculative demands of Christianity (the infinitely small and the infinitely large). And always there is the selection from among claimants, the exclusion of the eccentric and divergent, and this in the name of a superior finality, an essential reality, or even a meaning to history.

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Aesthetics suffers from an agonizing dualism. On the one hand it designates a theory of feeling as the form of possible experience; on the other, it marks out a theory of art as the reflection of real experience. In order for these two meanings to join, the conditions of experience in general must become the conditions of real experience. The work of art would, for its part, really then appear as experimentation. We know, for example, that certain literary procedures (other arts have equivalents) allow one to tell several stories at the same time. This is certainly the essential character of the modern work of art. It is in no way a question of different points of view on a single story understood as the same, for these points remain subject to a rule of convergence. It is, on the contrary, a matter of different and divergent narratives, as though to each point of view there corresponded an absolutely distinct landscape. There is of course a unity of the divergent series, as divergent, but it is a continually decentered chaos, itself at one with the Great Work. This unformed chaos, the great letter of *Finnegan's Wake,* is not just any chaos, it is the power of affirmation, the power of affirming all heterogeneous series, it "complicates" within itself all series. (Whence Joyce's interest in Bruno as the theoretician of complication.) Within these basic series a sort of *internal reverberation* is produced, a resonance that induces a *forced movement* that overflows the series themselves. The characteristics are all those of the simulacrum when it breaks its chains and rises to the surface. It then asserts its phantasmatic power, its repressed power. As we recall, Freud already showed how fantasy results from at least two series, the infantile and the postpubescent. The affective charge connected with fantasy is explained by the internal resonance of which the simulacra are the carriers, and the impression of death, of ruptured or dismembered life, is ex-

6. Louis Althusser writes of Hegel: "*A circle of circles, consciousness has only one centre,* which solely determines it; it would need circles *with another centre than itself—decentred circles*—for it to be affected at its centre by their effectivity, in short for its essence to be over-determined by them" (*For Marx,* trans. Ben Brewster, New York, Vintage Books, 1970, p. 102).

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plained by the amplitude of the compulsion that produces them. This, then, is the way the conditions of real experience and the structure of the work of art reunite: the divergence of series, the decentering of circles, the constitution of a chaos that comprises them, the internal reverberation and amplified movement, the aggressiveness of the simulacra.[7]

Systems of this sort—formed by the placing in contact of disparate elements or heterogeneous series—are in one sense extremely common. They are signal-sign systems. The signal is a structure which is divided into differences of potential, assuring the communication of disparate elements. The sign is that which flashes between two bordering levels, between two communicating series. It seems that all phenomena, insofar as their ground is located in dissymmetry, in difference, in constitutive inequality, correspond to these conditions: all physical systems are signals, all qualities are signs. It is true nonetheless that the series that border them remain exterior; and by the same token the conditions of their reproduction also remain exterior to other phenomena. In order to speak of the simulacrum it is necessary that their difference be *enclosed.* There is undoubtedly always a resemblance between series that reverberate. But that is not the issue; the issue, rather, is the status or position of this resemblance. Let us take the two formulations: "only that which is alike differs," and "only differences are alike." Here are two readings of the world in that one bids us to think of difference in terms of similarity, or a previous identity, while on the contrary, the other invites us to think of similarity or even identity as the product of a basic disparity. The first one is an exact definition of the world as icon. The second, against the first, defines the world of simulacra. It posits the world itself as phantasm. Now, from the point of view of this second formulation, it makes little difference whether the original disparity, on which the simulacrum is constructed, is big or little; it could happen that the basic series have only slight differences. It is enough, however, that the constituting disparity be judged in and of itself, not prejudged on the basis of any previous identity, and that it have *dispars* as its unit of measure and communication. Then resemblance could only be thought of as the product of this internal difference. It matters little that the system be in a state of great external resemblance and small internal difference, or the reverse, from the moment that resemblance is produced on the curve and that difference, small or large, continually occupies the center of the system thus decentered.

Hence, to overthrow Platonism means: to raise up simulacra, to assert their rights over icons or copies. The problem no longer concerns the distinction Essence/Appearance or Model/Copy. This whole distinction operates in

7. On the modern work of art, and particularly on Joyce, see Umberto Eco, *L'Oeuvre ouverte,* Paris, Seuil. In the preface to his novel *Cosmos,* Gombrowicz offers profound comments on the constitution of divergent series and on their manner of reverberation and communication within the heart of chaos.

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the world of representation. The goal is the subversion of this world, "the twilight of the idols." The simulacrum is not degraded copy, rather it contains a positive power which negates *both original and copy, both model and reproduction.* Of the at least two divergent series interiorized in the simulacrum, neither can be assigned as original or as copy.[8] It doesn't even work to invoke the model of the Other, because no model resists the vertigo of the simulacrum. And the privileged point of view has no more existence than does the object held in common by all points of view. There is no possible hierarchy: neither second, nor third. . . . Resemblance continues, but it is produced as the external effect of the simulacrum insofar as this is constructed on the divergent series and makes them resonate. Identity persists, but it is produced as the law that complicates all series, causing them to return within each one as the course of compulsion. In the overthrow of Platonism it is resemblance that speaks of interiorized difference, and identity, of Difference as a primary power. Similarity and resemblance now have as their essence only the condition of being simulated, that is, of expressing the operation of the simulacrum. Selection is no longer possible. The nonhierarchical work is a condensation of coexistences, a simultaneity of events. It is the triumph of the false claimant. He simulates father, claimant, and fiancé, in a superimposition of masks. But the false claimant cannot be said to be false in relation to a supposedly true model, any more than simulation can be termed an appearance, an illusion. Simulation is the phantasm itself, that is, the effect of the operations of the simulacrum as machinery, Dionysiac machine. It is a matter of the false as power, *Pseudos,* in Nietzsche's sense when he speaks of the highest power of the false. The simulacrum, in rising to the surface, causes the Same and the Like, the model and the copy, to fall under the power of the false (phantasm). It renders the notion of hierarchy impossible in relation to the idea of the order of participation, the fixity of distribution, and the determination of value. It sets up the world of nomadic distributions and consecrated anarchy. Far from being a new foundation, it swallows up all foundations, it assures a universal collapse, but as a positive and joyous event, as de-founding (*effondement*):[9] "Behind every cave . . . there is, and must necessarily be, a still deeper cave: an ampler, stranger, richer world beyond the surface, an abyss behind every bottom, beneath every 'foundation.'"[10] How could Socrates recognize himself in these caves that are no longer his own? With what thread, since the thread is lost? How could he get out and how could he still tell himself apart from the Sophist?

8. See Blanchot, "Le Rire des dieux," *La Nouvelle revue française,* July 1965: "A universe where the image ceases to be second in relation to a model, where imposture pretends to the truth, or, finally, where there is no more original, but an eternal sparkle where, in the glitter of detour and return, the absence of the origin is dispersed" (p. 103).
9. Translator's note: *effondement* is a neologistic play on *effondrement* or collapse.
10. *Beyond Good and Evil,* §289.

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That the Same and the Like might be simulated does not mean that they would be appearances or illusions. Simulation designates the power to produce an *effect.* But this is not only in the causal sense, because causality, without the intervention of other meanings, would remain completely hypothetical and indeterminate. It is in the sense of "sign," resulting from the process of signals. And it is in the sense of "costume," or even better, of masks, expressing a process of disguise where, behind each mask there is still another. . . . Simulation constructed in this way is not separable from the Eternal Return, because it is in the Eternal Return that the overthrow of the icons or the subversion of the world of representation is decided. There, everything happens as if a latent content blocked a manifest content. The manifest content of the Eternal Return could be determined in accordance with Platonism in general. It then represents the manner in which chaos is organized through the action of the demiurge, and according to the model of the Idea that imposes on it similarity and resemblance. In this sense the Eternal Return is the process of going mad mastered, uni-centered, determined to copy the eternal. And this is how it appears in the foundation myth. It installs the copy within the image, it subordinates the image to resemblance. But this manifest content, far from representing the truth of the Eternal Return, acts as the mark of a mythical use and survival within an ideology that can no longer support that truth and to which its secret is lost. It is fitting that we recall how much the Greek spirit in general, and Platonism in particular, is repelled by the Eternal Return taken in its latent meaning.[11] We must grant Nietzsche's claim that the Eternal Return is his own vertiginous idea, fed only by esoteric Dionysiac sources unknown to or repressed by Platonism. Nietzsche's own rare explanations remain at the level of the manifest content: the Eternal Return as the Same which causes the Like to come back. But how are we to overlook the disproportion between this flat truism, that goes no further than a generalized order of the seasons, and Zarathustra's emotion? Or better, the manifest statement that exists only to be dryly refuted by Zarathustra? Once addressing the dwarf, another time his animals, Zarathustra reproaches them with the transformation into platitude of that which is particularly profound, with making a "tired refrain" of that which is quite another music, with changing into circular simplicity that which is especially tortuous. In the Eternal Return one must pass by way of the manifest content, but only to reach the latent content located a thousand feet below (cavern behind all caverns . . .). Then, what seemed to Plato nothing but a sterile effect, reveals in itself the inalterability of masks, the impassibility of signs.

11. On this reticence of the Greeks, and most notably Plato, with regard to the Eternal Return, see Charles Mugler, *Deux thèmes de la cosmologie grecque,* Paris, Klincksieck, 1953.

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The secret of the Eternal Return is that it in no way expresses an order that it opposes to chaos, and masters it. On the contrary, it is nothing but chaos, the power of affirming chaos. There is a point at which Joyce is Nietzschian — when he shows that the *vicus of recirculation* cannot affect or spin a "chaosmos." For the coherence of representation, the Eternal Return substitutes something entirely different, its own c[ha]o-errance. For between the Eternal Return and the simulacrum there is a connection so profound that one is only comprehended by the other. What returns are the divergent series, as divergent: that is, each one insofar as it displaces its difference from all the others; and all, insofar as they complicate their difference in the chaos without beginning or end. The circle of the Eternal Return is a continually eccentric circle with a constantly decentered center. Klossowski is right in saying that the Eternal Return is "a simulacrum of doctrine." It is indeed Being, but only when "being" is for its part simulacral.[12] The simulacrum functions in such a way that resemblance is necessarily retrojected onto the base series, and an identity is necessarily projected onto the forced movement. The Eternal Return is then indeed the Same and the Like, but only insofar as they are simulated, products of simulation, of the functioning of the simulacrum (will to power). It is in this sense that it overturns representation and destroys icons. It does not presuppose the Same and the Like, but rather, sets up that which differs as the only Same and makes of unlikeness the only resemblance. It is the single phantasm for all the simulacra (the being of all the beings). It is the power of affirming divergence and decentering. It makes of them the objects of a higher affirmation. It is under the power of the false claimant that everything is forced to pass and repass. Further, not *everything* is allowed to return. The Return is still selective, establishing differences, but not at all in Plato's way. What it chooses are all the processes that oppose choice. What is excluded, what *is not allowed* to return, are those things that presuppose the Same and the Like, those things that pretend to correct divergence, to recenter the circles or to make order of chaos, to provide a model and make a copy. As long as history lasts, Platonism will occur only once, and Socrates falls under the knife. Because the Same and the Like become simple illusions, precisely from the moment they cease to be feigned.

Modernity is defined by the power of the simulacrum. It behooves philosophy not to be modern at any price, nor yet to be timeless, but to extricate from modernity something that Nietzsche called the *untimely,* which belongs to modernity, but which must also be turned against it — "in favor, I hope, of a future time." It is not in the great forests nor on pathways that

12. Pierre Klossowski, *Un si funeste désir,* Paris, Gallimard, p. 226. And pp. 216–218, where Klossowski comments on the words of Joyful Wisdom, §361: "The pleasure in simulation, exploding as power, repressing the so-called character, submerging it often to the point of extinction. . . ."

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philosophy is elaborated, but in the cities and streets, including even their most *factitious* aspects. The untimely is established, in relation to the most distant past, in the overthrow of Platonism, and in relation to the present, in the simulacrum conceived as the matter of this critical modernity, and in relation to the future, in the fantasy of the Eternal Return as belief in the future. The artificial and the simulacrum are not the same thing. They are even opposed. The factitious is always a copy of a copy, which must be pushed *to the point where it changes its nature and turns into a simulacrum* (the moment of Pop Art). It is at the core of modernity, at the point where modernism settles its accounts, that the factitious and the simulacrum stand in opposition as two modes of destruction may: the two nihilisms. For between the destruction which conserves and perpetuates the established order of representations, models, and copies, and the destruction of models and copies which sets up a creative chaos, there is a great difference; that chaos, which sets in motion the simulacra and raises a phantasm, is the most innocent of all destructions, that of Platonism.

I would like to thank Annette Michelson for her assistance in the preparation of this translation. —trans.

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