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Living Mirrors of the Universe: Expression and Perspectivism in Benjamin and Deleuze after Leibniz

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Two parallels become one, a perspective, of which
Men are part both in the inch and in the mile.

—Wallace Stevens, ‘To an Old Philosopher in Rome’

‘In the windswept towers of the Eiffel Tower, or better still, in the steel supports of a Pont Transbordeur, one meets with the fundamental aesthetic experience of present-day architecture: through the thin net of iron that hangs suspended in the air, things stream–ships, ocean, houses, masts, landscape, harbour. They lose their distinctive shape, swirl into one another as we climb onward, merge simultaneously.’ Sigfrid Giedion, *Bauen in Frankreich* (Leipzig and Berlin) p.7. In the same way, the historian today has only to erect a slender but sturdy scaffolding – a philosophical structure – in order to draw the most vital aspects of the past into his net. But just as the magnificent vistas of the city provided by the new construction in iron (again, see Giedion, illustrations on pp. 61-63) for a long time were reserved exclusively for the workers and engineers, so too the philosopher who wishes here to garner fresh perspectives must be someone immune to vertigo – an independent, and if need be, solitary worker.

—Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

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Abstract

This thesis argues for the significance of G.W Leibniz's concepts of 'expression', 'force' and 'perspective' to the writings of Walter Benjamin and Gilles Deleuze. By triangulating the philosophical projects of Benjamin, Deleuze and Leibniz, as has not yet been done, the thesis opens up new perspectives and provides new readings of all three. Designating a structure of relations in which every simple substance or monad serves as a 'living mirror' of the universe, Leibniz's concept of 'expression' denotes virtual inclusion or immanence. His concept of 'force' denotes the self-incurred drive that motivates the monad to action, while his 'perspectivism' defines the monads individuality through their infinite points of view on the world. Deleuze and Benjamin, I suggest, appropriate Leibniz's concepts as part of their respective critiques of epistemology, which target Kant's conception of experience as a hierarchic relation of representation, allowing them to redefine experience as non-hierarchal, de-centred and embodied. At the same time, for both, Leibniz's philosophy serves to criticize historicist views of chronological time. Leibniz's perspectivism is reformulated by Deleuze and Benjamin as part of their respective critical theories of the image, culminating in their later formulations of the 'dialectical' and 'crystal' image, respectively. The conclusion however, highlights the diverging paths formed by their returns to Leibniz. Benjamin develops a politically effective 'historical perspectivism' in which the discontinuity of history enables 'true historical time' to replace chronological time. Deleuze, on the other hand, opts for an a-historical pure form of temporality, his 'mannerist perspectivism' describing a continuous, perpetually repeated 'becoming'.

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Introduction

1. The Problems of Expression in Leibniz, Benjamin and Deleuze

1.1 Refiguring Experience

This thesis interrogates the significations of Walter Benjamin and Gilles Deleuze's appropriations and reformulations of G.W. Leibniz's concept of 'expression', which designates a structure of relations wherein every simple substance, or monad, serves as a 'living mirror' of the universe. Benjamin and Deleuze devote their most sustained attention to Leibniz's philosophy in their books on the baroque, yet references to Leibniz's conceptions traverse their writings, forming part of their most cogent formulations.[1] I argue that their respective reformulations of Leibniz's concepts of expression, 'force' and 'perspective' form part of their attempts to challenge Kant's theory of experience. This reconceptualisation of experience is linked to key concerns in their respective philosophies, such as how they understand the relations between experience on the one hand, and knowledge or learning on the other.

For Benjamin, reformulating Kant's concept of experience is a lifelong task, as Caygill has argued.[2] Deleuze's critique of Kant's conception of experience is a similarly persistent theme in his writing; Deleuze's 'transcendental empiricism' is formulated through challenging

[1] Benjamin refers to Leibniz's conceptions starting in his dissertation on the Romantics and up until his last written text, the theses 'On the Concept of History' as well as fragments written during its composition. See Walter Benjamin, 'On the Concept of History', in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 4 1938–1940*, ed. Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006). He engages most extensively with Leibniz in his book *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* on the baroque German *Trauerspiel*, see Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 2003), hereafter *OGTD*. Deleuze's interest in Leibniz is manifest from *Expressionism in Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition* (published 1968) and *Logic of Sense* (1969); and continues twenty years later, when Leibniz's philosophy is explored extensively in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1988) and briefly in his last book (written with Félix Guattari) *What is Philosophy?* (1995). See Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (Cambridge, MA: Zone Books, distributed by MIT Press, 1990); Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 2004); Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (London: The Athlone Press, 1993). Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

[2] Caygill suggests that Benjamin 'attempts to extend the concept of experience bequeathed by Kant by transforming it into an anti-Hegelian but nevertheless speculative philosophy of history inspired by a Nietzschean active nihilism'. Howard Caygill, *Walter Benjamin the Colour of Experience* (London; New York: Routledge, 1998) xii-xiii. I agree with the first part of this sentence, which has been influential on my own reading of Benjamin, yet I view Leibniz's expressive monads as a more decisive inspiration for Benjamin's philosophy of historical experience and knowledge than Nietzsche.

Kant's concept of experience.[3] Yet he cannot be described as offering a 'philosophy of experience' since the concept 'experience' itself forms part of what he attempts to transcend. Rather, Deleuze's reformulation of experience results in a theory of sensation, informed by Leibniz's conceptions of 'expression' and 'intensity', as I will attempt to demonstrate.

Deleuze and Benjamin's receptions of Leibniz have served as the focal point of several recent studies.[4] However, hitherto research has not highlighted their appropriations of Leibniz's concept of expression. Moreover, few studies examine the convergences between Deleuze and Benjamin's philosophies, and only one thesis-level study interrogates Benjamin and Deleuze's work on Leibniz and the baroque side by side.[5] This project views their respective appropriations of Leibniz's conceptions as grounds for a critical comparison between their philosophical projects.

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[3] Deleuze famously described *Kant's Critical Philosophy* as a 'book on the enemy'. Gilles Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy: The Doctrine of the Faculties* (London: Athlone Press, 1984), xv. However his philosophy was also markedly informed by Kant's, so much so that Vincent Descombes declared Deleuze to be 'above all a post-Kantian'. *Modern French Philosophy*, trans. J. Harding and L. Scott-Fox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 152. For more on Deleuze's ambivalent relation to Kant, see Mellisa McMahon, 'Immanuel Kant' in Graham Jones, ed., *Deleuze's Philosophical Lineage* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2009).

[4] For studies on Deleuze's reception of Leibniz see: Sjoerd van Tuinen and Niamh McDonnell, eds., *Deleuze and The Fold: A Critical Reader* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Alain Badiou, 'Gilles Deleuze, The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque', in *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2019), 51–69; Guillaume Sibertin-blanc, 'Pli psychotique et maniérisme, sur le leibnizianisme clinique de gilles deleuze', A. Jdey (dir.), *Gilles Deleuze, la logique du sensible – Esthétique & clinique* (Paris: Editions de l'incidence, 2013), 357–74; Daniel W. Smith, 'Deleuze on Leibniz: Difference, Continuity, and the Calculus', in *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 43–58; Lang Baker, 'The Cry of the Identicals: The Problem of Inclusion in Deleuze's Reading of Leibniz', *Philosophy Today* 39, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 198–211. For studies on Benjamin's reception of Leibniz see: Peter D. Fenves, *Arresting Language: From Leibniz to Benjamin* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001); Peter D. Fenves, *The Messianic Reduction: Walter Benjamin and the Shape of Time* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011); Samuel Weber, *Benjamin's -abilities* (Cambridge, MA; Harvard University Press, 2010); Paula Schwebel, *Walter Benjamin's Monadology*, Doctoral Thesis, Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto, 2012; Paula Schwebel, 'Monad and Time, Reading Leibniz with Benjamin and Heidegger', in *Sparks Will Fly: Benjamin and Heidegger*, ed. Andrew Benjamin and Dimitris Vardoulakis (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), 123–44; Paula Schwebel, 'Constellation and Expression in Benjamin and Leibniz', in *Thinking in Constellations: Walter Benjamin and the Humanities*, ed. Caroline Sauter and Nassima Saraoui (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017) 51–82; Fabrizio Desideri, 'Intermittency: The Differential of Time and the Integral of Space, The Intensive Spatiality of the Monad, the *Apokatastasis* and the Messianic World in Benjamin's Latest Thinking', *Aisthesis rivista on-line del Seminario Permanente di Estetica* IX, no. 1 (2016): 177–87; Dennis Johannßen, 'Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Andacht zum Kleinen: zu Benjamins Leibniz-Lektüren', in *Entwendungen: Walter Benjamin und seine Quellen*, ed. Nadine Werner and Jessica Nietzsche (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2018), 281–302.

[5] Several studies that examine the philosophies of Benjamin and Deleuze together are the following: Timothy Flanagan, 'The Free and Indeterminate Accord of "The New Harmony": The Significance of Benjamin's Study of the Baroque for Deleuze', in *Deleuze and The Fold: A Critical Reader* (Basingstoke, UK, New York, NY: Palgrave McMillan, 2010): 46–64; Olaf Berg, 'Benjamin und Deleuze: Ansätze für eine kritische Geschichtswissenschaft in Filmbildern', *Zeitschrift für kritische Theorie* 12 (2006): 68–97; Peter Szendi, *Le supermarché du visible* (Paris: Minuit, 2017); Timothy Edward Flanagan, 'Presentation of Reciprocity: An Interpolative Study of the Baroque Works of Walter Benjamin and Gilles Deleuze', PhD diss., University of Dundee, 2007. However, none of the above interrogates the function of Leibniz's philosophical project as a crucial intermediary between Deleuze and Benjamin.

In recent years, perhaps because of a general renewed interest in Benjamin's sources, Benjamin's reading of Leibniz has received wider critical attention, yet most studies focus on the more explicit readings of Leibniz appearing in Benjamin's earlier work.[6] In the case of Deleuze, *The Fold* has received a fair amount of critical attention, serving as the object of multiple philosophical and architectural research projects. However, it is rare to find studies that consider how Deleuze's thought on Leibniz evolved and changed over time.[7] Contemporary readings of *Difference and Repetition* often ignore the fact that conceptions like 'intensity', 'virtual', and even 'expression' are informed by Leibniz's philosophy.[8] 'Intensity' in particular has been in vogue recently and yet it is not usually linked to Deleuze's reading of Leibniz.[9]

The conception of expression, I suggest, forms part of Benjamin and Deleuze's attempts to maintain a tense balance between continuity and discontinuity, singularity and totality, which is crucial for their understanding of the relations between experience and history (in Benjamin's case) or between experience, time, and space (in Deleuze's). Deleuze and Benjamin, I argue, turn to expression in their search for an alternative to the manner in which experience and perception have been previously conceived of; namely as a structure of hierarchic representation. These hierarchic conceptions of experience and perception can be found, for example, in Aristotle and Kant's philosophical systems.[10] Kant specifically is challenged by Deleuze and Benjamin for creating the chasm between the 'thing-in-itself' and its appearance.[11]

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[6] Paula Schwebel's dissertation, *Walter Benjamin's Monadology*, and her book chapters 'Monad and Time, Reading Leibniz with Benjamin and Heidegger' and 'Constellation and Expression in Benjamin and Leibniz' comprise an extensive and thorough reading of Benjamin's early reception of Leibniz. One of the only readings of Benjamin's later references to Leibniz is conducted by Desideri in his excellent 'Intermittency: The Differential of Time and the Integral of Space, The Intensive Spatiality of the Monad'.

[7] Lang Baker's 'The Cry of the Identicals', in which the author attempts to understand the shifts in Deleuze's reception of Leibniz, is an exception.

[8] Manuel DeLanda highlights, for example, the significance of isomorphism as that which underlies the structures of strata and meshwork in *A Thousand Plateaus* with no mention of Leibniz's expression as a key source for Deleuze's attention to isomorphic structures. See 'Immanence and Transcendence in the Genesis of Form', in *A Deleuzian Century?*, ed. Ian Buchman (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 281–317.

[9] See for example *Deleuze Studies* 11, no. 2 (May 2017), 'The Virtual, the Actual and the Intensive: Contentions, Reflections and Interpretations'. Despite the terms listed in the title, none of the articles in this issue discuss Deleuze's reception of Leibniz.

[10] Aristotle describes perception as a reception of form without matter: 'A general point to be grasped is that each sense (aisthêtikon) receives the perceptible forms without the matter. Wax, for instance, receives the design on a signet ring without the iron or gold; it acquires the design in the gold or bronze, but not insofar as (qua) the design is gold or bronze', Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation. 1* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 'On The Soul', Book 2, 424a17 42–43.

[11] As Kant writes, '…everything intuited in space or in time, hence all objects of an experience possible for us, are nothing but appearances, i.e., mere representations, which, as they are represented, as extended beings or series of alterations, have outside our thoughts no existence grounded in itself'. Immanuel Kant et al., *Critique of Pure Reason*, 15. print, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, general ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), A491/B519, 511.

Unlike models of representation in which represented and representor are separate, their significance scaled by their distance from the truth, in Leibniz's model of expression there is a continuity, a gradation of force or scale of intensity, between expressor, expressed, and expression itself. A dynamic structure of inclusion, or containment, Leibniz's conception of monadic expression designates a structure of relations in which the expressed is virtually included within the expressor. The expressor is singular and separate, yet at the same time continuous with the expressed, a 'virtual' constantly tending towards actualisation. Using Leibniz's terms, we may say that this structure solves the problem of the tension between the 'principle of continuity' and the 'principle of indiscernibles'. While the first principle determines that the world is composed of an infinity of continuous series, according to the second principle, every simple substance or monad must be different from every other.[12] That is, although all monads are continuous with each other, they are also intrinsically distinct from one another. Leibniz reconciles the apparent contradiction by designating the monad as capable of expression. Every monad, he writes, expresses all other monads, as well as God and the universe. It is thereby continuous with the universe as a totality, yet also separate, enabling a 'multiplicity in the unity [unité]'.[13]

For Deleuze, the conception of expression is meant to address the problem of the tension between the 'univocity of being' on the one hand, and its singularity on the other.[14] 'Univocity of being' is crucial for Deleuze, who does not accept the hierarchisation of being, while singularity is necessary in order to allow difference into being. Leibniz's conception of the individual, an 'expressive centre' defined by its 'singularities-events', enables Deleuze to define singularity in a manner that is based in intrinsic and qualitative differences rather than extrinsic ones, and does not eliminate univocity.[15]

Benjamin transfers Leibniz's problematic into a philosophy of historical experience. The monad is used in order to encapsulate the unsolvable tension between the distinctness and uniqueness of a singular historical experience on the one hand, and its continuity, or

[12] As he writes in the *Monadology*, 'indeed, each Monad must be different from every other. For in nature there are never two beings which are perfectly alike and in which it is not possible to find an internal difference, or at least a difference founded upon an intrinsic quality [*denomination*]', Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, trans. Robert Latta (London, 1971), 9, 222.
[13] Ibid, 13, 223, modified.
[14] The 'univocity of being' is a term Deleuze borrows from the Christian theologian Duns Scotus in order to define Spinoza's philosophical project as one in which being is equally present in all beings. As Deleuze describes it, 'being is predicated in the same sense of everything that is, whether infinite or finite, albeit not in the same "modality"'. Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (New York : Cambridge, Mass: Zone Books ; Distributed by MIT Press, 1990), 63.
[15] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 86. I agree with Badiou's suggestion that Leibniz is summoned '*as a spokesman for the singular*', Badiou, 'Gilles Deleuze, The Fold', 55.

embeddedness in a totality of history on the other. In the 'Epistemo-Critical Prologue' to *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (written 1924–25, published 1928), as well as earlier texts, the monad forms part of an idealist theory of art that investigates the singularity of the work of art, that is nevertheless included in the idea of art as a whole.[16]

Aside from their function within Benjamin and Deleuze's understandings of history and ontology respectively, the reconfigurations of perception and experience that draw from Leibniz's concept of expression form part of each thinker's engagement with what Benjamin defines as 'the problem of presentation [*Darstellungsproblem*]', and what Deleuze describes as the 'search for new means of philosophical expression'.[17] Their persistent engagement with this issue is also manifest in Benjamin's conception of *Denkbild*, or thought/thinking-image, and Deleuze's *image de la pensée* – 'image of thought'. Both continually examine the relation between thought and its representation; specifically its representation in and over time.

By the refiguration of the conception of the image as based on the relation between virtual and actual, instead of that between real and semblance, Benjamin and Deleuze put forward what we might call a 'politics of the image'. Benjamin's reconfiguration of the relations between experience and history results in a political theory of historical experience that reformulates the relations between individual and collective history. Deleuze also purports to offer, in his transcendental empiricism, a politics, by replacing the hegemonic 'image of thought' with a non-representational concept of the image. The culmination of this recasting of the image lies in Deleuze's 'crystal-image' and Benjamin's 'dialectical image', both of which contain a double movement: between virtuality and actuality, and between abbreviation and totalisation. These are conceptions of the image that are 'moving', or active, in the sense that they include a force field of irresolvable tensions. They are dialectical in a sense, yet they lack Hegel's *Aufhebung* or any kind of resolution.

It may seem odd that Benjamin, whose philosophy of history highlights discontinuity, would draw upon Leibniz, who is renowned for his 'principle of continuity' according to which 'nature never makes leaps', and who views history as similarly continuous.[18] The category of origin [*Ursprung*] outlined in the 'Epistemo-Critical Prologue' relies rather on an internal crack

[16] Walter Benjamin, 'Epistemo-Critical Prologue', in *OGTD*, 27–56.
[17] Benjamin, *OGTD*, 27/ Walter Benjamin et al., *Gesammelte Schriften. Bd. 1 Teil 1* Auflage, Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 931 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2015), 207. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, xxi.
[18] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, trans. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Preface, 57.

or leap [*Sprung*], as Weber notes.[19] In the *Arcades Project* Benjamin highlights the discontinuity of history against the Historicists, writing for example that 'continuity in the presentation of history is unattainable'.[20] And yet he also describes therein the founding concept of historical materialism as 'actualisation', which seems to imply that it relies on a continuous process of realisation.

Furthermore, Leibniz's concept of the monad persists until Benjamin's last written text, *On the Concept of History*,[21] where he applies the metaphor of a seed (as we will see, a central metaphor for the relation of expression, which will also appear in the *Arcades Project*) to describe time and truth. 'The nourishing fruit of what is historically understood', he writes, 'contains time in its *interior* as a precious but tasteless seed'.[22] Time is described as an internal kernel within historical understanding, a virtual presence that may or may not sprout, actualising its nourishing force.[23] Leibniz's concept of the monad, as well as the metaphor of the seed, is used specifically in the context of Benjamin's elaboration of historical experience. In Benjamin's view, I argue, the discontinuity of history presupposes a continuity of historical experience and understanding; in fact, the tension between the two is necessary. The monadic structure, implying a continuity between individual and total historical experience, preconditions the 'Messianic arrest of happening' which brings about a 'revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past'.[24]

At the same time, Leibniz's apparently continuous system includes 'fits and starts', as Benjamin observes by highlighting the monad as discontinuous in its isolation from the infinity of other monads.[25] As we will see, these 'fractures' relate in large part to Leibniz's theories of perspective and the unconscious. The discontinuity at the heart of Leibniz's metaphysics is only one of the fractures in his apparently perfect system. Deleuze and Benjamin's readings of his

[19] Samuel Weber, 'Genealogy of Modernity: History, Myth and Allegory in Benjamin's Origin of the German Mourning Play', *MLN* 106, no. 3, German Issue (April 1991): 472.
[20] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999), [N7a, 2], 470.
[21] Benjamin, 'On the Concept of History'.
[23] Ibid, Thesis XVII, 396 (Benjamin's emphasis).
[23] The description of time as contained in the interior of understanding recalls Kant's understanding of time as the interior form of our understanding, yet the seed metaphor implies internal genesis and actualisation that run counter to Kant's view of time.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Benjamin, 'Epistemo-Critical Prologue', *OGTD*, 47. Benjamin writes of Brecht's epic theatre that it 'proceeds by fits and starts, in a manner comparable to images on a film strip'. See Walter Benjamin, 'What is Epic Theatre' [second version] in *Understanding Brecht* trans. Anna Bostock (London and New York: Verso 1998), 23.

philosophy accentuate its hallucinatory, dizzying, and dark aspects, widening the gaps and unravelling the seams that hold its structure together.[26]

In terms of methodology, the dissertation triangulates the three thinkers in order to offer new interpretations of each. While the dissertation argues for some affinities between the three, each philosopher belongs to a different historical period and cultural context and provides a different philosophical approach. It is through confrontations with these radically other ways of thinking that seldom-studied aspects of Benjamin, Deleuze and Leibniz's thought comes to the fore. Beyond offering novel interpretations of these three philosophers I aim to contribute more generally to the field of philosophy of time and history; hence the focus of the dissertation is philosophical rather than cultural-historical.

The dissertation combines a hermeneutical approach with conceptual analysis. It interweaves close readings with reflection on the ways in which concepts develop and acquire different meanings over time, inspired by the approach of 'conceptual history' [*Begriffsgeschichte*] developed by Reinhart Koselleck among others. This approach views the meaning of socio-political concepts as constructed historically through their changing usage.[27] In my dissertation, I am interested in the ways in which Benjamin, Deleuze and Leibniz use a specific array of philosophical concepts, and in the function of these concepts in their philosophical projects more generally. I trace how the meaning of these concepts evolved and shifted through their usage and ask what these changing functions can tell us about each philosopher's philosophical project more generally.

The key concepts I focus upon are those around which the chapters are structured, namely 'expression', 'force' and 'perspective'. Several related concepts, such as monad, image, intensity, virtuality and montage receive attention as well. This conceptual network is that through which, I argue in the dissertation, Leibniz, Benjamin and Deleuze's philosophical projects coalesce. The three titular concepts are derived from Leibniz's philosophy and traced back from Benjamin and Deleuze's readings of his works. While Deleuze is especially attentive to 'expression' and 'force', which become important in his own philosophy and with which he credits Spinoza and Nietzsche as well as Leibniz, they are not 'Deleuzian' concepts per se, rather, as I show in the dissertation, originating in Leibniz's philosophy. As for 'perspective',

[26] As Deleuze writes, 'Leibniz discovers in the clear, finite, idea, the restlessness of the infinitely small, a restlessness also made up of intoxication, giddiness, evanescence and even death'. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 45.

[27] See the Dictionary of historico-political concepts; Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhart Koselleck (eds.) *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, 8 volumes, (Stuttgart: Klett, 1972–97).

this concept relates to Leibniz's 'perspectivism', or theory of individual points of view, appropriated by Deleuze and Benjamin in different ways. As I will demonstrate, Leibniz's understanding of vision, perspective and perception informed Benjamin and Deleuze's respective image-theories.

In my dissertation I aim to devote attention to the works of all three thinkers; reading Leibniz through Benjamin and Deleuze, Benjamin through Leibniz and Deleuze and Deleuze through Benjamin and Leibniz. This trilateral reading has the potential, I argue, to serve as a living mirror revealing blind spots in the philosophies of each thinker.

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Deleuze refers to Benjamin's work once, briefly, in *The Fold*, and once in *Cinema 2*.[28] He also mentions *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* in one of his lectures on Leibniz, pronouncing it as a difficult work.[29] My intention is not to uncover evidence for the influence of Benjamin on Deleuze's thought, nor to suggest that their appropriations of Leibniz are equivalent. Rather, my aim is to trace a history of the manners in which Leibniz's conceptions are reformulated and put to work by both Benjamin and Deleuze, and the functions they take on within their respective philosophies.

I attempt to treat these conceptions as ideas, in the manner in which these are defined by Benjamin in the 'Epistemo-Critical Prologue', or as concepts, as defined by Deleuze in *What is Philosophy?* Benjamin's *idea* and Deleuze's *concept* are, moreover, informed by Leibniz's metaphysics, as they acknowledge. In philosophy, Benjamin writes, 'it is a dubious [*bedenklich*] practice to introduce new terminologies […] Such terminologies – abortive denominative processes in which intention plays a greater part than language – lack that objectivity with which history has endowed the principal impressions [*Hauptprägungen*] of philosophical reflections'.[30] Benjamin alludes to the significance, for philosophical practice, of using terms that traverse the centuries, becoming 'ideas' through their use and reuse that impresses upon them a kind of objectivity. The German baroque *Trauerspiel*, Benjamin argues in the 'Prologue', is such an idea and, to that end, it is essentially distinct from other ideas like the *tragedy*.

[28] Deleuze, *The Fold,* 125; *Cinema 2*, 264.
[29] Deleuze, Cours Vincennes - St Denis, Cours du 20/01/1987.
[30] Benjamin, 37 modified/ *GS*1, 217.

Deleuze names the basic philosophical terms that transmute and evolve over time and space, 'concepts': these are 'fragmentary wholes' that 'refer to a problem', he writes. 'We are saying that every concept has a *history*, even if this history may zigzag, passing as necessary through other problems and diverse maps'.[31] Deleuze gives as an example the concept of 'others' [*autrui*], which, he suggests, rearticulates Leibniz's concept of the monad that expresses the world. For Deleuze, the philosopher is a creator of concepts, yet this may be done through reshaping and reactivating existing concepts.[32]

Similarly, Benjamin consistently uses Leibniz's term 'monad', yet its use transforms within Benjamin's writing – in the early work, he uses the conception to describe the idea, in the context of interpreting works of art, and in the later work, he uses it to describe the object [*Gegenstand*] of history. Deleuze, true to his word, does not stick to one of Leibniz's conceptions; rather, in the early work, he engages primarily with Leibniz's 'expression', 'differential' and 'individual', while in the later work, he creates the concept of the 'fold' that is in some respects a reconfiguration of the conception of 'expression'.

Unlike Benjamin or Deleuze, Leibniz self-described his philosophy as a system.[33]Moreover, as Mercer describes, his ambitions were further reaching: his 'First Truths', for example were intended to bring about a new world order.[34] Leibniz's himself viewed his own philosophical project's systematicity, order and 'fitness' as one of its defining qualities. Yet unlike such philosophical systems as Kant or Hegel's, that are presented in thick volumes, much of Leibniz's 'system' is scattered in an array of short essays and over correspondences with important European thinkers of his time. His thinking and writing, constructed through responding to his contemporaries and predecessors, is dialogical and polyphonic.

His working patterns where apparently similarly dispersed over different fields and projects. As his correspondent author Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle wrote in his eulogy of Leibniz, 'this almost perpetual jumble, which did not produce any confusion in his ideas, these abrupt and frequent transitions from one subject to another completely opposite subject, which did not trouble him, would trouble and confuse this history'.[35] The chaotic, interrupted nature of his writings, producing cross-fertilisation across multiple fields, must not be ignored, even if the

[31] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 18.
[32] Ibid, 17.
[33] For example in *Theodicy* 68, 69.
[34] See Christia Mercer. *Leibniz's Metaphysics: Its Origins and Development*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 2.
[35] Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle, 'Eloge de M. Leibnitz'. In *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences. Année 1716*. Paris: Impr. Royale, 1718, 94–128, quoted in Maria Rosa Antognazza, *Leibniz, an Intellectual Biography*, 2011, 1.

ideas they contain adhere to his principles of 'clarity and distinction'. In their readings of Leibniz's philosophy, Benjamin and Deleuze make manifest its inherent fragmentary, at times counter-systematic nature.

1.2 The Structure of Expression: Immanence, Perfection and Destruction

In *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, Deleuze writes that 'immanence is revealed as expressive, and expression as immanent'.[36] The structure of expression describes containment, or a remaining within, as opposed to structures of transcendence. Its immanent structure implies that divine perfection is sought internally rather than exteriorised, therefore expression inherently includes striving for perfection.

A key conception in Leibniz's metaphysics, expression is one of the essential characteristics of the simple substance that in his later writing Leibniz calls 'monad'. His simple substance is defined by its capacity to express. In other words, it consists of an expressive 'centre'.[37] The simple substance is 'like a small world that expresses the large world', as Leibniz writes in *Discourse on Metaphysics*. The relation between the monad, which comprises a 'world' in itself, and the universe, being that of expression (Leibniz plays on the similarity between *monde* and *monad*).

The structure of Leibniz's conception of expression entails ontological, epistemological, and historical inclusion. According to the first, in fact an onto-theological immanence, the entire universe and God are included within every individual substance. Each monad contains the world so that the latter is immanent within the former. Universe and monad are interdependent; the one cannot exist without the other. The relation of expression exists not only between substance and universe; substances can express one another, and express God too (although in this case God is not reducible to the substances). Similarly, speech can express thoughts or truths.[38]

Leibniz describes the relations of expression as a congruence or proportional similarity between expressor and expressed. Yet the extent of this similarity remains the subject of

[36] Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 175.
[37] See Leibniz, letter to Des Bosses, cited by Valérie Debuische, 'L'expression leibnizienne et ses modèles mathématiques', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 51, no. 3 (2013): 435. Debuishce discusses Leibniz's alternate use of the terms 'concentration' or 'centre' to describe the monad.
[38] See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 'What is an Idea? (1678)', in Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 2nd edn., 2. print, Synthese Historical Library, Vol. 2, ed. Leroy E. Loemker (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1976), 207.

contention.[39] Leibniz often demonstrates the relation of expression by way of mathematical examples, such as an algebraic equation expressing a circle, or that of an ellipse expressed by a circle.[40] His perhaps paradigmatic example for expression is the projection of a conic section onto a plane.[41] Following Debuische, I understand expression as a specific type of incomplete representation in which the part represents the whole that is contained by it, and there is a relation of isomorphism between expresser and expressed.

The continuity between expressor and expressed may create, at its most extreme, a kind of 'mobius effect' in which it is no longer possible to distinguish interior from exterior.[42] This may be the case for Spinoza but it is certainly not so for Leibniz, according to whom there is an isomorphic, hierarchical relation between expressor and expressed. Leibniz insists, as is well known, upon the monads' separateness from one another, their 'having no windows'.[43] He also distinguishes between two degrees of inclusion: a substance includes all its predicates either expressly or virtually. In Leibniz, then, the conception of expression enables a fragile balance between the continuity of the monads with the world they express and their discontinuity, or distinctness from the world.

Historical immanence is described by Leibniz, for example in his renowned formulation in the *Monadology*, as follows: 'every present state of a simple substance is naturally a consequence of the preceding state, in such a way that its present is big with its future'.[44] Not only does the universe, made up of an infinity of monads, lie immanent within every individual monad, but so too do its future, present and past, as Leibniz writes in 'First Truths'.[45] This type of inclusion is logical/ontological as well, since Leibniz defines every substance as including all its predicates.

Leibniz's immanent structure of expression is appropriated by Deleuze and Benjamin, alongside Leibniz's understanding of the virtual, as part of their critique of Kant's system. As

[39] Debuiche describes the scholarly debate over the precise meaning of Leibniz's concept of expression as revolving around two main points. First, the precise nature of the relation of expression, i.e. whether it is a functional relation, or a relation of correlation, as Swoyer defines it, a 'structure preserving mapping'; and second, which elements from the expressor are preserved in the expressed. In her own interpretation, the relation of expression consists of an isomorphism in the strong sense: two things that possess the same form, without being exactly the same. Debuiche, 'L'expression leibnizienne', 415, 437. Chris Swoyer, 'Leibnizian Expression', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 33 (1995): 82, quoted in Debuiche, ibid.
[40] See Leibniz, 'What is an idea?', 207, and *Sur le principe de raison*, C 11, *Recherches générales*, 476–77, quoted in Debuiche, 'L'expression leibnizienne', 414.
[41] See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 'Correspondence with Arnauld, 1686–87', letter from October 9, 1687, in *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 339.
[42] See Pierre Levy, *Becoming Virtual: Reality in the Digital Age* (New York: Plenum Trade, 1998), 33.
[43] Leibniz, *Monadology*, 7, 219.
[44] Leibniz, *Monadology*, 22, 231.
[45] Leibniz, 'First Truths', *Philosophical Essays*, 32.

Deleuze writes, what he sought to extract from Leibniz was 'a Leibnizian transcendental philosophy that bears on the event rather than the phenomenon, and replaces the Kantian conditioning'.[46] Benjamin does not explicitly state that his appropriations from Leibniz, made in the context of his critical epistemology in the 'Prologue' and earlier fragments, and in his theory of historical knowledge in the later work, serve as an attempt to rectify problems in Kant, yet in my view they comprise attempts to engage with problems raised by Kant's philosophy.

While freeing them from the impositions of Kant's transcendental idealism, Leibniz's structure of expression forced upon Benjamin and Deleuze a different problematic, which follows from Leibniz's principle of 'pre-established harmony' [*une harmonie préétablie/prästabilierte Harmonie*] according to which all infinite series of monads are harmonised upon creation according to a divine plan or script. Leibniz illustrates this conception by describing several bands of musicians playing in separate rooms so that they do not see or hear one another, yet because each follows their notes, their music harmonises perfectly.[47]The notes, determined by God, allow the musicians, or monads, to move in independent paths, not directly affecting one another yet remaining in tune. Elsewhere Leibniz describes harmony as created through the ideal influence one monad has on another.[48] As mentioned, monads are closed-off from one another yet they can effect one another on an ideal level.

What has been taken as Leibniz's 'optimism', is the idea that we live in the most perfect, most harmonious of possible worlds selected by God. Yet the concept of 'harmony' is in fact defined by Leibniz as 'unity within variety'. The main criteria for level of 'perfection' is a combination of simplicity and variety; as Leibniz describes in 'Principles of Nature and Grace':

> It follows from the supreme perfection of God that he chose the best possible plan in producing the universe, a plan in which there is the greatest variety together with the greatest order. The most carefully used plot of ground, place and time; the greatest effect produced by the simplest means.[49]

[46] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 120.
[47] Leibniz, Lettre à Arnauld (1687) (G. ii. 95), quoted in *Monadology and other Writings*, 47.
[48] Leibniz, *Monadology* 51, *Monadology and other Writings*, 246.
[49] Leibniz, 'Principles of Nature and Grace', 10, *Philosophical Essays*, 210.

Leibniz describes the perfection of the world in economic terms, as the result of the greatest variety produced from the simplest or most orderly means. As presented in the *Theodicy*, for example, Leibniz's system is hierarchal and directed towards what he describes as the 'perfect' and the 'morally good'. All monads constantly strive to perfection, motivated by their 'appetition', that drives them from less perfect to more perfect perceptions. Leibniz's 'appetition', or appetite, is a parallel concept of Spinoza's *conatus*, a directional force or drive that motivates the soul, weather consciously or unconsciously.

When describing the perfection of the soul, Leibniz writes that it 'has perfection to the extent that it has distinct perceptions', that is, the soul becomes more perfect when its perceptions are less confused and closer to God's infinite knowledge. Though always strived for, perfection is unattainable by all beings other than God, which contradicts the optimistic reading of Leibniz's metaphysics, since humans are portrayed as constantly perusing an unattainable goal.[50]

Moreover, despite the apparent unidirectionality of the monad's movement towards perfection, Leibniz's concept of pre-established harmony is at the same time inherently circular, since, as mentioned, the monad enfolds not only its future; rather Leibniz describes past, present and future as jointly embedded in every monad. This seems to suggest a non-linear understanding of time according to which the past is susceptible to changes as much as the present and future. In a similar vein, the notion of 'apokatastasis', or universal restitution, which Leibniz develops in several late texts contradicts a conception supporting the unilateral directionality of history.[51] As opposed to a vision of history progressing continually towards perfection, these texts describe its eternal return.

Pre-established harmony is not a mere given then, but a continual, repeated process of actualisation, following God's selection of the best possible world. In this way, Leibniz also justifies his theory of 'natural retribution' according to which sins and virtues carry their own rewards or punishments.[52] The natural result of sin is punishment, just as nature is ordered to achieve the greatest possible order and balance, yet in both cases the order is not given or determined in advance but repeatedly selected by God.

[50] As Leibniz write in 'Principles of Nature and Grace', 18, happiness consists in progression towards pleasures and perfections, rather than in the pleasures themselves. Ibid, 213.
[51] See the texts assmebled in Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz *De l'horizon de la doctrine humaine: 1693*, edited by Michel Fichant, Bibliothèque des textes philosophiques (Paris: Librairie philosophique), 1991.
[52] See Leibniz, 'Monadology' 88-9, *Monadology and other Philosophical Writings*, 269.

The notion of harmony also guided Leibniz's understanding of space, time, and motion.[53] In his later work, he developed conceptions of space and time as ideal, abstract orders of relations of phenomena. Space is viewed as the order of co-existence; time as the order of succession.[54] Time is therefore distinct from duration, as space is distinguished from co-location.[55] Leibniz's denial that time and space are absolute, rather describing them as relational orders, has been the subject of much critical debate, since this kind of relational understanding of time and space would seem to pose challenges for its serving as a foundation for physics.[56] The same logic that guides Leibniz's conception of expression determined the manner in which he understood time, as manifest in an example noted by Schepers:

> he discovered the far-reaching consequences of the little word 'now' [nunc]. He explained that each time we say 'now', we actually refer to the whole world and the whole of time. Moreover, when we utter a factual sentence containing the little word 'is', we include the entire world (by saying 'It is cold', we mean 'it is cold here and now').[57]

Leibniz defines the nature of being itself as temporal. As Schepers argues, Leibniz's theory of time is modern insofar as, rather than substances merely being actors within space and time, they constitute the orders of space and time though their self-action.

Benjamin's concept of destruction, epitomised in 'The Destructive Character' (1931), seems on the surface to be diametrically opposed to Leibniz's concept of perfection.[58] In this text, often believed to have been inspired by the 'destructive character' of his friend Bertolt Brecht, Benjamin describes destruction of what exists as necessary for the production of the new. The destructive character, 'young and cheerful', is opposed to the solitary 'creator'. Destruction itself is not opposed to order or balance, rather, Benjamin writes, the 'destruction-

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[53] 'Every notion of time and space we have is grounded in this accord', as Leibniz writes, quoted in Heinrich Schepers, 'Space and Time', in *The Oxford Handbook of Leibniz*, ed. Maria R. Antognazza (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 412.

[54] 'I hold space to be something merely relative, as time is: I hold it to be an order of co-existences, as time is an order of succession. For space denotes, in terms of possibility, an order of things which exist at the same time, considered as existing together; without inquiring into their particular manner of existing. And when many things are seen together one perceives that order of things among themselves. Letter to Clark (Clarke's tr.) (E. 752 a ; G. vii. 363): quoted in Latta, *The Monadology and Other Writings*, 102.

[55] See Schepers, 'Space and Time', 413.

[56] See John T. Roberts, 'Leibniz on Force and Absolute Motion', *Philosophy of Science* 70, no. 3 (July 2003), 553.

[57] Schepers argues that the crucial point of Leibniz's theory of time starts in 1676; however, the definition of 'order' does not appear until 1685–86. See Schepers, 'Space and Time', 416.

[58] Benjamin, 'The Destructive Character', *SW*2, 541-542/ 'Der destruktive Charakter', *GS*4, 396-398.

worthiness' [*Zerstörungwürdigkeit*] of the world 'affords the destructive character a spectacle [*Schauspiel*] of deepest harmony'.[59] This reads almost like a parody of Leibniz's perfect world. The possibilities of destruction included in the world, not its perfection, bring about a nihilistic happiness for the 'destructive character'. Benjamin's concept of destruction is not opposed to harmony, then, clearing away the old and making way for the new rather affording a harmonised vision. Yet as opposed to Leibniz's gradual progression towards perfection, in Benjamin's writing we find concepts of interruption, violence and destruction as necessary components of artistic production and political action. Thus for example in the *Arcades Project* the 'critical moment' in the writing of history is described as a destructive.[60]

In Benjamin's writing from the late thirties, his critique of historical progress becomes intertwined with a more violent, all-encompassing concept of destruction. A catastrophic concept of history is no longer sufficient, since catastrophe is followed by a new order. The very system that produces new orders must be destroyed:

> The course of history as represented in the concept of catastrophe has no more claim on the thinking man's attention than the kaleidoscope in the hands of a child. With each new twist, everything collapses into a new order. The image is thoroughly well-grounded [*hat sein gutes, gründliches Recht*]. The concepts of the rulers have always been the mirrors by which the image of an 'order' was established. – The kaleidoscope must be smashed.[61]

In this case the mirror image represents the ruler's order which can be annihilated only by complete destruction.

Deleuze does not often use the terms 'perfection' nor 'destruction', although his conception of 'force' implies destructive power. While many readers of Deleuze have highlighted the 'affirmative', joyous aspect of his philosophy, I follow Culp's revealing 'darker' aspects of his thought.[62] As he suggests, though highlighting the affirmative in his reading of Nietzsche, Deleuze did not ignore Nietzsche's negativity, interpreting Nietzsche as promoting destruction that serves for creation.[63] Deleuze's similarly deems destruction of the dogmatic 'Image of

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[59] *SW*2 541/*GS*4, 397.
[60] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N10a, 1], 475/*Passagen*, *GS*5, 594.
[61] Benjamin, 'Central Park', trans. Lloyd Spencer
with Mark Harrington, *New German Critique* 34, Winter 1985, p. 34/ *GS* I, 2, 660.
[62] Andrew Culp, *Dark Deleuze* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).
[63] Ibid, 26; *Desert Islands* Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953-1974*, Semiotext(e) Foreign Agents Series (Los Angeles, CA : Cambridge, Mass: Semiotext(e) ; Distributed by MIT Press, 2004), 130.

thought' necessary, in *Difference and Repetition*, for the sake of creation.[64] At the same time, in what seems to go against these destructive tendencies, Deleuze supports strong concepts of life and desire. These, however, lack Leibniz's tendency towards perfection.

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As we will see, Benjamin and Deleuze's appropriations of the conception of expression target specifically the ascendancy of visual representation and its sources in the philosophical tradition that began with the distinction, established by Plato, between the true and false, 'eikastic' and 'phantastic' images.[65] Both are renowned for their so-called 'image theories' yet these 'theories' or philosophies of the image are coupled, in both cases, with forceful critiques of visual representation. The challenging of the visually dominated conception of experience through Leibniz's conception of expression enables Benjamin and Deleuze to defy existing distinctions between the corporeal realm and that of the 'aesthetic', as well as the necessity of choosing between a philosophical concept and 'aesthetic' form. The strict disciplinary division between these domains masks the relevance of the question of presentation to philosophy, as both Benjamin and Deleuze viewed it. In order to inquire into their engagement with this question, a return to their respective reformulations of the conception of expression is paramount.

In *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze names critique as one of philosophy's ills. The critic simply notes the vanishing or transformation of concepts, while the philosopher must actualise concepts, in effect creating them.[66] Expression does not form part of critique, but rather contributes to this creative conceptual process. The monad, accordingly, does not represent; it expresses, or, more precisely, it encodes and transcodes. Rather than a 'window on the world', the monad, like a painting by Rauschenberg, is an 'opaque table of information', or the darkened chamber of a *camera obscura*.[67] Deleuze uses these metaphors to illustrate that the monad's expression does not comprise a representation as in a landscape painting in which the

[64] As he writes, 'the conditions of a philosophy which would be without any kind of presuppositions appear all the more clearly: instead of being supported by the moral Image of thought, it would take as its point of departure a radical critique of this Image and the 'postulates' it implies (...) As a result, it would find its authentic repetition in a thought without Image, even at the cost of the greatest destructions and the greatest demoralisations...' Difference and Repetition, 132/ Différence et répétition, 173.
[65] Plato, 'The Sophist', 235–237A, 11.25–11.27, in *The Being of the Beautiful: Plato's Theaetetus, Sophist, and Statesman*, trans. Seth Benardete (Chicago, Ill.; Bristol: University of Chicago Press ; University Presses Marketing 2006).
[66] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 33–34.
[67] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 38–39 / *Le Pli*, 27.

painter attempts to 'copy' the landscape; rather, information or images are produced within the monad through a process of coding.

To Benjamin, on the contrary, expression consists of a kind of representation. In the 'Prologue', he appropriates the conception of the monad into his theory of interpretation and critique of works of art. As he writes, 'The idea is a monad– the pre-established representation [*Representätion*] of phenomena rests within it, as in their 'objective interpretation'.[68] That is, the predetermined relation of expression between idea and the phenomena it represents is equivalent to the latter's 'objective interpretation'. The 'objectivity' of interpretation depends, in other words, on the possibility of its totalisation. Benjamin emphasises the distinctness of each idea-monad, its 'isolation' in relation to the totality. These characteristics are also used in Benjamin's later formulations of the monad in the *Arcades Project*, where the monad is described as interruptive of the continuum of history, and historian-philosophers are cast as monadically solitary.[69]

1.3 Cartographies of the Baroque

In some respects, the philosophical projects of Benjamin and Deleuze appear to be antithetical. In his early years Benjamin was interested in theological questions, which were not a central preoccupation for Deleuze. Dialectical thinking specifically, and historical materialism more generally, play a central role in Benjamin's later writing, while Deleuze is famous for his critique of Hegelian dialectics, and the status of Marxism in his work has been the subject of debate.[70] In his later work, Benjamin was critical of metaphysics, while Deleuze considered himself a 'pure metaphysician'.[71]

However, there are some shared elements that bring their thought, and the manner in which it was received, into closer proximity. Both wrote extensively on literature and art. Both are considered 'rebels' or 'heretical philosophers' who attack the tradition from within. Their shared preoccupation with the philosophy of art may be viewed in this context as forming part

[68] Benjamin, *OGTD*, 47 modified / *GS*1, 228.
[69] See Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N1a, 1], 459.
[70] As Eugene Holland argues, Deleuze and Guattari shared with Marx the view that it is important to analyse capitalism, a task they take on in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, yet his formulation of the problem of capital was significantly different from theirs. 'Karl Marx', in *Deleuze's Philosophical Lineage*, 148.
[71] See Arnaud Villani, who quotes from an interview he conducted with Deleuze in 1981. 'The Problem of an Immanent Metaphysics', in *Gilles Deleuze and Metaphysics*, ed. Alain Beaulieu (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), vii.

of their testing of the disciplinary boundaries between philosophy, literature, and art, since art is traditionally viewed as one of the 'others' of philosophy, lying outside of its domain.[72]

Finally, both thinkers wrote a book about the baroque in which Leibniz's philosophy plays a central role: Deleuze's *The Fold, Leibniz and the Baroque* (1988), and Benjamin's *Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Here too, there is much that separates the two works and the readings of Leibniz contained therein. Deleuze's is one amongst several philosophical monographs dedicated to figures in the history of philosophy. Deleuze offers an interpretation of Leibniz's work that is all his own, in line with the manner in which he engages with other philosophers. Yet *The Fold* was written almost twenty years after the other monographs, and in terms of the themes it deals with, it is closer to the his final work, *What is Philosophy?*

The main theme of Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* is the German baroque *Trauerspiels*, a much ridiculed seventeenth-century dramatic form. It is in the famously cryptic 'Epistemo-Critical Prologue' – often viewed as distinct from the book in its themes, style, and approach – that Benjamin makes his only references to specific works by Leibniz (although he does not refer to specific passages, and mis-references one of them).[73] Benjamin does not offer an interpretation of Leibniz therein, or indeed anywhere else. Yet he persistently appropriates and reformulates specific elements from Leibniz's metaphysics.

In both Deleuze and Benjamin's 'baroque books', there is an attempt to define the baroque as a specific moment in the history of philosophy and science; a pre-Enlightenment, post-scientific-revolution era. Moreover, both writers focus on baroque art forms. Benjamin emphasises theatre, Deleuze architecture and visual art. For both, Leibniz is viewed as the archetypal baroque polymath philosopher. As an era that, preceding Kant and the Enlightenment, differs so markedly from modern times, the baroque plays a similar illuminating role in relation to modernity, and, in Deleuze's case, to post-modernity, in their work.

There is also an array of authors and philosophers with which both Deleuze and Benjamin repeatedly engage. Kafka, Proust, Bergson, Nietzsche, Marx, Mallarmé, Freud – to name a few. Not only their choice of authors, but also the manner in which they read them is analogous in that they 'pick and choose' the elements on which to focus, incorporating these into their own philosophies. By interweaving their readings of philosophers from the French and German philosophical traditions with those of novelists and poets, they retell a history of

[72] The paradigmatic example is Plato's argument against the possession of knowledge by 'the imitator' in poetry. See Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Allan Bloom (NY: Basic Books, 1986) Book X, 602a, 285.
[73] Benjamin, *OGTD*, 47–48/*GS*1, 228; Benjamin refers to Leibniz's *Discourse on Metaphysics*, yet discusses monads, a term Leibniz did not use in the Discourse. Benjamin refers to Leibniz's *Monadology* in earlier drafts of the 'Prologue' as well, see Ibid, 930, 948.

philosophy that 'goes against philosophy', continually challenging the distinction between the disciplines and examining the key assumptions of the canonical philosophical tradition.

Their reading and appropriation of Leibniz's philosophy is unique, however, for a number of reasons. First, it spans the entirety of their writing career; both Benjamin and Deleuze address Leibniz's work in the so-called 'early' and 'late' stages of their work. Second, in both cases, their appropriations of Leibniz's conceptions are linked to their interrogation of 'meta' questions related to philosophical method, as well as to the relation between philosophy and other disciplines such as mathematics (and science more generally), art, and history. The 'great philosopher of continuity' allows both authors to test out the relation between continuity and discontinuity or fragmentation (both ontological and historical), as well as those between immanence and transcendence, which constitute key issues for Deleuze and Benjamin. Third, as stated, Leibniz's conception of expression, and the perspectivism that results from this conception, play a central role in Benjamin and Deleuze's respective philosophical thought.

Neither Benjamin nor Deleuze mention Leibniz as a central philosophical influence, yet both may have underestimated his impact on their thought. Neither thinker purported to offer an 'objective interpretation' of Leibniz's work; instead, each of them put Leibniz's conception into the service of their own writing. Benjamin, especially, sometimes uses the term 'monad' almost as a trope, and seems to have internalised Leibniz's conceptions without having a profound knowledge of Leibniz's wider philosophy. Deleuze, on the other hand, had apparently read a significant part of Leibniz's canon available in French when he wrote *The Fold*. Still, in both cases, we are dealing with a seventeenth-century philosopher viewed from the perspective of the twentieth century, hence theirs are unavoidably anachronistic readings.[74]

2. Deleuze and Benjamin read Leibniz: A Preliminary Outline

2.1 Deleuze reads Leibniz

Deleuze's engagement with Leibniz's philosophy spanned most of his career. His first readings of Leibniz's works were undertaken in *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* [*Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*]; *Difference and Repetition* (1968), which was submitted as his

[74] Even if we follow Rancière's definition of anachronism, see Jacques Rancière, 'The Concept of Anachronism and the Historian's Truth', *InPrint* 3, no. 1, Article 3 (2015): 21–52.

doctoral theses; and *Logic of Sense* (1969). Yet he expressed a particular interest in Leibniz already as a student at the *classes preparatoires litteraires*, in 1955–56, and this interest persisted until his last years.[75]

Deleuze's readings of Leibniz can be divided into two periods: an 'early period' in the works above, and a 'late period', twenty years later, in *The Fold* (1988) and briefly in *What is Philosophy?* (1995). Following the prevalent distinction between Deleuze's earlier period in which he wrote philosophical monographs and his later period in which he collaborated with Félix Guattari, the concerns that guide Deleuze's reading of Leibniz during the earlier and later phases are usually taken to be different. However, during the interim period, Deleuze made use of the conception of expression (without attributing it to Leibniz) in his collaborations with Guattari, *Mille Plateaux* (1980) and *Kafka, Towards a Minor Literature* (1975). He taught three popular lecture-seminars on Leibniz in the University of Vincennes – St. Denis: 'On Leibniz' in April–May 1980; 'On Leibniz: Leibniz and the baroque' in October 1986–January 1987; and 'On Leibniz: Principles and liberty' between January–June 1987.

Deleuze's earlier readings of Leibniz are viewed as more critical. Indeed, although Deleuze credits Leibniz, in *Difference and Repetition*, with making a decisive contribution to 'difference in itself', ultimately he views Leibniz as a philosopher of identity. In *The Fold*, Deleuze's reading of Leibniz is viewed as admiring and uncritical. Alain Badiou describes an amalgamation of Leibniz and Deleuze in this work, which results in a narration guided by what he refers to as 'Leibniz-Deleuze'.[76] I will try to show that in both cases, Deleuze's response to Leibniz's philosophy is more complex. The key themes that preoccupy Deleuze within Leibniz's philosophy – the 'expressive individual', 'minute perceptions', the 'virtual', and the 'compossible' – persist throughout his readings of Leibniz's works.

The conjunction of Nietzsche and Leibniz persists in Deleuze's philosophy as well. This is manifest, for example, in Leibniz's conception of the individual substance, transformed by Deleuze into a Dionysian, fractured conception of individuation. Deleuze's notions of force and singularity, informed by both Leibniz and Nietzsche, are key to Deleuze's 'reversal of the Kantian critique'. On the other hand, Deleuze struggles with a problematic that arises from this theoretical amalgamation. Namely, the problem of determinism, or the limitation of power or

[75] Dosse describes a course Deleuze taught during his studies in 1955–56 on the question of foundations in philosophy, focusing on Leibniz and Heidegger. See François Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari: biographie croisée* (Paris: La Découverte, 2009) 132.
[76] See Badiou, 'Gilles Deleuze: The Fold'.

freedom that comes with both Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason and Nietzsche's 'eternal return'.[77]

The tendency to contrast the two 'periods' of Deleuze's Leibniz reception may be partly accounted for by the dissimilar formats of the works in which the discussion occurs. In the earlier works, Leibniz is discussed as part of Deleuze's project of a philosophy of difference. In *Difference and Repetition*, Leibniz's philosophy is compared to that of Hegel, and in *Expressionism in Spinoza*, it is compared to Spinoza's philosophical projects. Deleuze admires Leibniz for the 'restlessness of the infinitely small […] made up of intoxication, giddiness, evanescence and even death', referring to Leibniz's 'minute perceptions' that fissure the perfection of organic representation.[78] Yet, alongside Hegel, Leibniz is described as 'confusing the concept of difference in itself with the inscription of difference in the identity of the concept in general'.[79] In *Expressionism in Spinoza*, Deleuze's main charge against Leibniz is his understanding of being as equivocal and hierarchical, as opposed to Spinoza's univocity of being.[80] Yet, as we will see, Deleuze's conception of expression, which he attributes to Spinoza, is filtered through his reading of Leibniz.

The Fold, Leibniz and the Baroque seems like something else entirely. Overdetermined by the concept of the fold, the baroque is the second protagonist of this double portrait. Furthermore, Leibniz's philosophy and the baroque are inseparable, folded together in Deleuze's reading to create a 'philosophical polyphony'.[81] Leibniz's philosophy is read through a multiplicity of baroque artistic and scientific forms. The 'monad' is comprehended *inter alia* through the 'scission' between baroque architectural interiors and exteriors, the principle of 'pre-established harmony' through an amalgamation of mathematics and musicology.[82] Deleuze understands the term 'harmony' in relation to Leibniz's development, in his calculus, of an 'harmonic triangle'; yet he also argues that the 'accords' produced by monads are informed by the use of musical accords in baroque music.[83]

Baroque is depicted as a 'long moment of crisis' following the crumbling of the dominant theological structure during the Counter-Reformation.[84] The 'thought of the infinite', expressed by the invention of the 'fold that goes to infinity' – a response to this crisis. Deleuze

[77] See Baker, 'The Cry of the Identicals', 199.
[78] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 45.
[79] Ibid, 50
[80] Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 329–330.
[81] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 135.
[82] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 28 modified/*Le Pli*, 39.
[83] See Deleuze, *The Fold*, 128–31.
[84] Ibid, 68.

is interested in uncovering the roots of modernity in the baroque inasmuch as he proposes a perspective on modernity as a 'nouveau-baroque, a neo-Leibnizianism'.[85] His analysis seamlessly flows back and forth between Tintoretto and Paul Klee; Caravaggio and Pollock.

Deleuze's references demonstrate that he is versed in the literature on Leibniz, although it seems he did not make much effort to stay up-to-date.[86] His reading of Leibniz was, however, notably mediated by several critics and writers who were either his contemporaries or belonged to preceding generations of the reception of Leibniz's work. Michel Serres's *Le Système de Leibniz et ses modèles mathématiques* (1968) probably had the most decisive influence on *The Fold*. Deleuze quotes from Serres's work extensively; key aspects of Deleuze's interpretation of Leibniz, such as the analysis of Leibniz's perspectivism, are drawn from Serres. Alongside Serres, the works of Yvon Belaval, Martial Gueroult, and Bertrand Russell were important for Deleuze's reading. An earlier reading of Leibniz that was significant for Deleuze's understanding of Leibniz's conception of 'minute perceptions' was Salomon Maimon's *Versuch über Transzendentalphilosophie* (1790).[87]

2.2 Did Benjamin read Leibniz?

The only texts of Leibniz that Benjamin explicitly mentions, in the 'Prologue' to *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, are the *Monadology* and *Discourse on Metaphysics*.[88] There is also a reference to what Benjamin calls Leibniz's 'concept-language' in a bibliographical list composed as part of his studies on language.[89] When considering the extent of Leibniz's oeuvre, this is very little indeed. Nevertheless, Benjamin repeatedly mentions Leibniz's *Monadology*, in texts ranging from his dissertation, 'The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism' (written in 1919), to his final essay on the philosophy of history (1940).[90] Although based on partial knowledge, Benjamin's idiosyncratic and persistent engagement with Leibniz's conceptions, primarily the monad, is not negligible. What's more, it is typical of the way in

[85] Ibid, 136.
[86] As Sjoerd van Tuinen suggests, Deleuze did not use the latest available editions of Leibniz's work nor did he enter into interpretative debates, with several exceptions. Sjoerd van Tuinen, *Mannerism in Philosophy*, Doctoral Thesis, Faculty of Arts and Philosophy, University of Ghent (2009), introduction, 7.
[87] Salomon. Maimon, *Versuch über die Transzendentalphilosophie*, ed. and Florian Ehrensperger Philosophische Bibliothek 552 (Hamburg: Meiner, 2004).
[88] Benjamin, *OGTD*, 47–48/*GS*1, 228.
[89] The list was compiled between 1917–20; See Benjamin-Archiv MS 506 varia.
[90] Benjamin, 'The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism', *SW*1,116–200.

which Benjamin often read other authors and philosophers: appropriating specific elements from their philosophy and making them his own.[91]I follow Schwebel who convincingly makes a case for the significance of Leibniz's doctrine of monads to Benjamin's philosophical project, despite the sparsity of Benjamin's references to Leibniz.[92]

Benjamin's reading of Leibniz was mediated to a certain extent by several neo-Kantian thinkers. As Schwebel notes, two sources appear to have informed Benjamin's early reading of Leibniz. Namely, the essay '*Leibniz' Weltanschauung als Ursprung seiner Gedankenwelt*' by Heinz Heimsoeth, mentioned in the list Benjamin composed of books he had read, and Hermann Cohen's writing, specifically *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung*.[93] While Cohen's reading was guided by an agenda of introducing Jewish sources into German philosophy, Heimsoeth was a student of Cohen's, whose reading linked Leibniz with Christian mystical traditions. Despite the antithetical motivations behind these interpretations, as Schwebel points out, they similarly highlight the finitude of the monad as the limitation of the infinite. While for Cohen the infinite is constituted by infinitesimal method, Heimsoeth describes the infinity of the creator.[94]

Two further sources for Benjamin's understanding of Leibniz in the early years were his neo-Kantian professors Ernst Cassirer, whose course he attended between 1914-1915, and his professor Richard Herbertz.[95] Tagliacozzo and Ferrari suggest that Benjamin's preoccupation with the 'multiplicity and continuity of living forms', which links his work on Goethe with his understanding of Leibniz, was derived from Cassirer.[96]As McLaughlin mentions, Herbertz, who supervised Benjamin's doctoral dissertation, had written a study on Leibniz's theory of the unconscious.[97]Benjamin's late references to Leibniz's monad may have been mediated by Hermann Lotze, as will be discussed in the final chapter.

In Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 'expression' is not defined as a problem or a concept. Benjamin's references to Leibniz are brief and often implicit.

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[91] Two recently published volumes focus on Benjamin's practices of reading and appropriation: *Entwendungen: Walter Benjamin und seine Quellen* Jessica Nietzsche and Nadine Werner, eds., (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2018) and *Material und Begriff: Arbeitsverfahren und theoretische Beziehungen Walter Benjamins*, Deutsche Originalausgabe, Argument Sonderband, neue Folge, AS 322 (Hamburg: Argument, 2019).
[92] See Schwebel, *Benjamin's Monadology*, 3.
[93] Benjamin, 'Verzeichnis der gelesenen Schriften', *GS*7, 443. Heinz Heimsoeth, 'Leibniz' Weltanschauung als Ursprung seiner Gedankenwelt: Zum 200.Todestage des Denkers am 14.November 1916', *Kantstudien* (1917), 365–95. Hermann Cohen, *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* (Saarbrücken: VDM, Müller, 2006).
[94] See Schwebel, 25.
[95] Cassirer's *Die Begriffsform im mythischen Denken* appears in Benjamin's Verzeichnis, *GS 7*, 452.
[96] Massimo Ferarri, *Dalla scuola di Marburgo alla flosofia della cultura*, 45-110, and ch.IV, *Fonti leibniziane dela filosofia dela form simboliche*, 171-190, quoted in Tagliacozzo, *Experience and Inifnite Task*,101.
[97] See Kevin Mclaughlin, 'Virtual Paris: Benjamin's Arcades Project', Gerhard Richter, ed., *Benjamin's Ghosts: Interventions in Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2002), fn23, 342. See Richard Herbertz, *Die Lehre vom Unbewußten im System von Leibniz*. (Niemeyer Halle 1905; Olms, Hildesheim 1980).

Nevertheless, he views Leibniz as the archetypal philosopher of the baroque, and as such his philosophy guides Benjamin's understanding of the age, in a work dedicated to a seemingly obsolete baroque dramatic form. Leibniz's conception of expression is one of the main elements that Benjamin adopts and reformulates to fit his own ends. Expression, I argue, plays a role in the relation between Benjamin's theory of historical knowledge and that of language not only in this particular work but also in Benjamin's writing in general. In the 'Epistemo-Critical Prologue', one of Benjamin's texts that deals with metaphysics and epistemology most directly, Leibniz's metaphysics receive Benjamin's most sustained attention (albeit its including an incorrect reference). It is in Benjamin's return to Leibniz and baroque aesthetics via post-Kantian thinkers, such as Cohen, that we can identify a similar move to that of Deleuze, in search of a strong conception of immanence. Here too 'expression' is used to transcend a dualistic model of experience, and more specifically, in order to challenge the subject-object divide within Kant's transcendental model of experience.

Benjamin's later writing contain several mentions of the monad, most manifestly in the *Arcades Project* and *On the Concept of History*. Most of Benjamin's late references to the monad are made in the context of his philosophy of history; it is mentioned three times in the *Arcades Project*, two of which in 'convolute N', 'On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress'.[98]Hence my decision to focus my reading on this 'convolute' of the *Arcades Project*, alongside the theses *On the Concept of History* where the monad reappears.

'Convolute N' stands out among the 'convolutes' of the Arcades as a methodological texts in which Benjamin reflects upon his own work as well as on epistemology and history more generally. Other 'convolutes' seem less coherent as wholes, more fragmentary, links between their sections illusive. While I suggest 'convolute N' functions monadically as a mirror of the *Passagen* as a whole, I do not view it as more significant than other 'convolutes' in the architecture of the Arcades Project.

In the *Arcades Project* the concept of the monad is inseparable from that of montage, the latter used both as philosophical principle and methodological procedure for the construction of the *Arcades Project* itself.[99]My interpretation of both monad and montage seeks to emphasise the constructive as well as destructive aspects of these concepts. Benjamin takes discontinuity and destruction as methodological procedures through which he constructs the *Passagen*, which in this respect defies traditional systematic philosophical presentation.

[98] Benjamin, 'Convolute N', 'On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress', *The Arcades Project*, 456-488.
[99] As Benjamin writes, 'Method of this project: literary montage', Ibid, [N1a, 8].

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The argument herein will be unfolded in three chapters. **Chapter One: Expression** focuses on the manner in which Leibniz's conceptions of monad and expression inform the relation between experience and knowledge within Benjamin and Deleuze's critical epistemology [*Erkenntniskritik*]. I argue that by using Leibniz's conception of expression, Benjamin and Deleuze offer, in their earlier works – namely Benjamin's *OGTD* and Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* – critiques of traditional epistemological theories of experience and learning, specifically those of Descartes and Kant. Benjamin and Deleuze thereby reconfigure the relations between knowledge and experience, arguing for a continuity between the two, and put forward theories of learning and experience that are not subject-based. As part of these critiques, learning is viewed as a dynamic and infinite process, rather than as the acquisition or possession of knowledge, informed by Leibniz's conception of 'infinite analysis', and the post-Kantian conception of 'infinite task'.

Deleuze and Benjamin follow the attempts made by philosophers such as Cohen and Maimon, who return to Leibniz in order to rectify Kant's transcendental system. Both Benjamin's category of origin, informed by Cohen's principle of origin, and Deleuze's understanding of learning through Maimon's interpretation of Leibniz's 'minute perceptions' as 'differentials of consciousness', seek to reconfigure knowledge as based on internal genesis rather than external conditioning. Yet while Benjamin's concept of expression is based on an interpretation of Leibniz's monad as a limitation of the infinite, resulting in a 'symbolic' concept of expression, Deleuze calls for an unlimited expression, putting forward a 'logical' concept of expression.

Chapter Two: Force considers the way in which Leibniz's conception of force, specifically 'living force', and the internal dynamic within the monad between virtuality and actualisation, figure within Benjamin's theory of historical experience. The chapter argues that the vitalist and dynamic aspects of Leibniz's understanding of substance play a role in Benjamin's philosophy of historical experience. The 'actualisation' of history that Benjamin describes in the *Arcades Project* relies on an understanding of history past and future as virtually contained within the idea (in *OGTD*) or in the dialectical image (in the *Arcades Project*). Leibniz's conception of virtuality is thus appropriated against Kant, the historicists, and Leibniz's own teleological and causal understanding of history. Yet the direction of Leibniz's force is reversed. By describing a force that, rather than striving for perfection or completion as in Leibniz and

Hegel, is directed towards destruction, Benjamin makes manifest the violence that is necessary for a continuous and teleological history.

Expressed in degrees of intensity or actualisation, force forms part of the reconfiguration of the relations between experience and knowledge, discussed in Chapter One, which extends into Benjamin's later theory of historical knowledge and experience. In Benjamin's conceptions of allegory and the dialectical image, through which this theory is expressed, the image functions as a monad or expressive centre, yet unlike Leibniz's monad, Benjamin's image-monad contains a destructive inner force. Moreover, it is precisely when the movement is arrested that the image is delineated, as Benjamin writes, 'image is dialectics at a standstill'; the becoming of the image necessitates the interruption or arrest of force. In Leibniz, the unique point of view of each monad 'breaks the continuity' in a sense; it delineates the limits of every monad's zone of clear expression that defines it. Benjamin accentuates this idea in his conception of the dialectical image, in which the point of view serves as medium; the past is mediated by the point of view of the present, and the total event is accessible only through analysis of the individual moment. Benjamin's conception of montage, used to describe the construction of history in the *Arcades Project*, further highlights the destructive nature of the force or dialectical struggle within the images of history, with montage being described as necessitating an explosion or shattering of linear narrative.

The actualisation of history is described as a counter-narrative movement, an actualisation that is at the same time virtualisation. Even so, understanding history as an actualising force bears the risk of predetermination, and Benjamin's struggle with the tension between predetermination and chance is manifest in his discussion of Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* on the one hand, and in Leibniz's conception of apokatastasis and Nietzsche's eternal return, both conceptions implying a strong notion of predeterminism, on the other. Benjamin's interpretation of apokatastasis or eternal return is one in which the repetition of the same is accompanied by a slight shift in vision or point of view. Deleuze's version of eternal return, by contrast, accentuates temporal and spatial multiplicity.

Chapter Three: Perspective interrogates how Leibniz's understanding of vision and his conceptions of perspective and image informed Benjamin and Deleuze's writing.. According to Leibniz's perspectivism, the individual is constituted through its points of view, through which it is differentiated from all other individuals. Moreover, the individual point of view is linked to the monad's body: the distinct zone of expression of the monad, the extent to which its perceptions are clear, established by its point of view, consists of its body. I argue that

Benjamin and Deleuze draw on Leibniz's metaphysics, within which vision, perception, and body are linked through a theory of 'point of view' or perspective. Leibniz's metaphysics were informed by transformations of spatial representation in art and architecture during the baroque period, following major developments in science, specifically geometry. His research in optics, physics, and mathematics embodies these revolutions. Following Leibniz, Deleuze and Benjamin understand perspective and image as embodied, and vice versa: the body is constituted by its own perspective, which differentiates it from all other bodies.

Both Deleuze and Benjamin pay special attention to Leibniz's emphasis on the 'in between', hallucinatory or intoxicated states of perception, within his theory of 'minute perceptions'; understanding perception as constitutive of the body through differentiation. Moreover, they appropriate Leibniz's perspectivism against hierarchical visual representation, as part of their respective critical image theories. These culminate in their key later formulations of the image, the 'dialectical image' and 'crystal image'; conceptions of the image that rely on the virtual-actual dynamic and are liberated from their representational functions. However, in their conceptions of the image, specifically these later ones, the divergences between Deleuze and Benjamin's thought also become most evident. For Deleuze, the image is pre-philosophical; the conception of the simulacrum, the distorted image of modernity, is perhaps an attempt to salvage a concept of the image, yet by designating the image of thought as non-philosophical, Deleuze adopts some of the traditional preconceptions of philosophy assigning the image and visual field more generally to the realm of the pre- or non-conceptual. For Benjamin, the dialectical presentation enabled by the image can disclose 'true historical time'. These divergent paths are evident in Deleuze and Benjamin's conceptions of image-montage, both drawing to some extent on Leibniz's perspectivism. While in Benjamin it is montage that enables the perceptibility of history, perhaps counteracting the 'crisis in historical perception', for Deleuze, montage within the crystalline regime extracts a falsifying movement out of pure time.

Chapter One: Expression

The Infinite Tasks of Learning in Deleuze, Benjamin and Leibniz

> We never know in advance how someone will learn: by means of what love someone will become good at Latin, what encounters make them a philosopher, or in what dictionaries they learn to think. The limits of the faculties are encased one in the other in the broken shape of that which bears and transmits difference.
>
> —Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*

> I do not portray being, I portray passing.
>
> —Montaigne, *Of Repentance*

Introduction

This chapter suggests that Benjamin and Deleuze's 'critical epistemologies' [*Erkenntniskritiken*] are informed, in comparable ways, by Leibniz's philosophy. The main texts discussed, belonging to Benjamin and Deleuze's earlier readings of Leibniz, are Benjamin's 'Epistemo-Critical Prologue' to *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, and the third chapter of Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* entitled 'The Image of Thought'. Introducing Leibniz's concept of 'expression' and its role within his metaphysics and theory of knowledge, I will then outline how it was appropriated by Benjamin and Deleuze, informing the relation between experience and knowledge within their critical epistemologies.

Benjamin and Deleuze, as we will see, throw into question our most fundamental conceptions about the nature of knowledge and learning. Based on these critiques, they put forward theories of learning that are informed by Leibniz's conceptions of 'expression' and 'infinite analysis'. The concept of 'expression' enables Benjamin and Deleuze to offer critiques of traditional epistemology and propose theories of learning and experience that are not subject-based. Both Leibniz's concept of expression and that of 'infinite analysis' are grounded in his principle of continuity, which in turn is derived from his infinitesimal calculus. The latter had

inspired the neo-Kantian notion of 'infinite task'. Deleuze and Benjamin were both informed by this conceptual trajectory that emphasises learning as a continual, open-ended process.

However, there remains a wide gap between the function of these common themes within the larger context of Benjamin and Deleuze's works. For Benjamin, Leibniz's 'expression' serves to designate continuity between knowledge and experience, history and nature. Yet one cannot speak of continuity between experience and knowledge in Deleuze, since he dispenses with both terms in an attempt to outline an affective concept of learning. Benjamin's 'now of knowability' [*Jetzt der Erkennbarkeit*], which understands knowledge as a continual possibility or virtuality, comes closer to Deleuze's non-knowledge-based conception of learning, although it includes an element of recognition – a notion that Deleuze seeks to challenge. Deleuze highlights Leibniz's 'minute perceptions' as a theory that concerns the body, developing from Leibniz's notion of the 'complete individual' an embodied theory of the event.

The chapter begins by examining Leibniz's concept of 'expression', that both determines and is determined by his novel understanding of substance. Sometimes described as a proportional relation between substances, 'expression' is grounded in mathematical models and often illustrated by way of mathematical examples. The metaphysical dimension of the concept of expression, however, is not reducible to these models, just as Leibniz's metaphysics in general are based on his calculus and yet cannot be fully explained by his mathematics.[1] By examining the concept of expression and its role in Leibniz's understanding of knowledge, I attempt to shed some light on the relations between Leibniz's mathematical and metaphysical systems, as well as his understanding of knowledge as a system, and the manner in which this understanding differs from that of Kant. This is significant since we understand Deleuze and Benjamin's 'returns' to Leibniz's theorisation of knowledge from a post-Kantian perspective: both seek to rectify Kant's understanding of the relation between knowledge and experience.

I will then interrogate the manner in which Deleuze and Benjamin each interpret this concept in the context of their critiques of epistemology. Deleuze's first engagement with this concept appears in *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, in which Spinoza and Leibniz's conceptions of expression are pitted against one another. In this work, Deleuze describes expression as an anti-Cartesian, immanent conception, identifying its rebellious nature within the history of philosophy. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze utilises Leibniz's conceptions of expression and differential calculus, harnessing their subversive nature, within his theory of

[1]As argued by Debuiche following Serres, see 'L'expression leibnizienne', 411.

learning, which is constructed by way of a critique of Kant, Descartes, and Plato's theories of ideas and knowledge.

Benjamin's detailed engagement with Leibniz's conception of 'expression' commences in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, yet I will suggest that some of his earlier written texts and fragments, in which he argues for a continuity between experience and knowledge in opposition to Kant's theory of experience, also make clear the stakes of Benjamin's early reading of Leibniz. These concerns underlie what we understand as a theory of learning, specifically learning to philosophise, offered in the 'Prologue'. Therein Benjamin makes use of the post-Kantian conception of 'infinite task', a term rooted in Leibniz's 'infinite analysis'.

Since the chapter presupposes that Deleuze and Benjamin's 'returns' to Leibniz replicate, to some extent, those of Hermann Cohen and Salomon Maimon, we will at this stage briefly examine these thinkers' turn to Leibniz in order to redefine Kant's experience, and establish how Benjamin and Deleuze were informed by these interpretations and yet diverged from them too. Following Maimon, Deleuze finds in Leibniz a possibility of conceptualising real rather than possible experience, based on eternal genesis and not external conditioning. This emphasis on the internal generation of knowledge is shared in part by Cohen. Benjamin is critical of this reading, which, he believes, highlights 'logical experience' over transient experience, that is, experience that is embedded in history.

This conceptual network, in my view, lies in the background of Benjamin and Deleuze's critical epistemologies. At the heart of their theories of learning is an abolition of the subject-object divide, as well as a challenge to disciplinary boundaries, specifically those between philosophy, art, and science.[2] Both thinkers, moreover, draw a direct link between philosophising and learning more generally. For Deleuze, philosophy consists of a 'pedagogy of the concept',[3] while Benjamin describes philosophical history as an apprenticeship of the mind.[4] At the same time, for both of them, philosophy involves digression or deviation from a

[2]As Benjamin wrote in a curriculum vitae from 1928, his goal was to 'bring about a process of integration in scholarship – one that will increasingly dismantle the rigid partitions between disciplines that typified the concept of the sciences in the nineteenth century – and promote this through an analysis of the work of art', cited in Tagliacozzo, *Experience and Infinite Task*, 100. Deleuze challenges disciplinary boundaries in the *Cinema* books for example, where he compares film-directors to philosophers. On the other hand, in *What is Philosophy?* He separates between art, philosophy and science through the distinction between percept, affect and concept. See Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 'Percept, Affect and Concept'163–200.
[3] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 17.
[4] Benjamin, *OGTD*, 56 modified / *GS*, 237.

linear path.[5] Thus according to Deleuze, 'it would not be false to consider that philosophy is in a perpetual state of digression or digressiveness'.[6]

Let us begin by introducing several of Leibniz's key concepts.

1. Leibniz's Two Labyrinths

1.1 The Free and the Necessary

Leibniz famously opens the *Theodicy* by suggesting there are two labyrinths in which

> our reason very often goes astray: one concerns the great question of the Free and the Necessary, above all in the production and the origin of Evil; the other consists in the discussion of continuity and of the indivisibles which appear to be the elements thereof, and where the consideration of the infinite must enter in. The first perplexes almost all of the human race, the other exercises philosophers only.[7]

The *Theodicy* is concerned with the first of these 'labyrinths'. As befitting a work written by a jurist, Leibniz's *Theodicy* defends the existence of a perfect, omnipotent and just God in a world in which evil and human suffering exist. The problem Leibniz struggles with is the compatibility of our God created world as the best of all possible on one hand, and the freedom of humans to sin on the other. Another way to formulate it would be asking how a perfect God could create what would seem to be a non-perfect world, in which evil exists. As Rateau mentions, Leibniz solution to this problem includes viewing evil as that which limits being and perfection.[8]

Leibniz's *Theodicy* has long been considered an inferior text of Leibniz's oeuvre. In the twentieth century especially, following the influential interpretations of Couturat and Russel, which prioritised Leibniz's logics above all other domains of his thought, Leibniz's theology has been relegated a secondary place in his thought, despite its being Leibniz's main

[5] See Benjamin, *OGTD*, 28.
[6] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 23 modified / Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (Paris: Éd. de Minuit, 1991), 29.
[7] Leibniz, *Theodicy*, 54.
[8] See Paul Rateau, *La question du mal chez Leibniz: fondements et élaboration de la Théodicée*. Travaux de philosophie 15. Paris: Champion, 2008.

philosophical work published during his lifetime.[9] However, as Rutherford argues, Leibniz's theological thinking and his metaphysics cannot be understood independently of each other.

Specifically, Leibniz's 'principle of sufficient reason' is formulated in a theological context. It may seem that if God chose our world as the best of all possible worlds, he did not chose it freely. Yet Leibniz's insists throughout the *Theodicy* that God chose freely, resolving the difficulty be redefining the concepts of freedom and necessity. Leibniz distinguishes between 'absolute necessity' and 'moral necessity', the latter which guides God's actions while not impeding his freedom. Furthermore, he argues, God's free choice is determined by knowledge of reason: 'The decrees of God are always free, even though God is always inclined to them by reasons which lie in the intention towards the good; to be necessitated morally by wisdom, to be bound by the consideration of the good, is to be free'.[10]This formulation enables Leibniz to insist on God's spontaneity as well as his possibility of selecting the best world among possible ones, which is the most harmonious and fitting of worlds.

As to the freedom of humans, Leibniz argues that it is assured by the distinction between necessary or primary truths on one hand, and contingent truths on the other. While 'primary truths' are 'identities', the contrary of which implies a contradiction, 'contingent truths' cannot be reduced to first truth, they are 'endowed with an infinite series of reasons, fully known to God alone', as Leibniz writes in 'On Freedom'.[11]That is, 'contingent truths' are not demonstrable in a finite series of steps. Therefore Leibniz can describe, in his concise early exposition of his principles, known as 'First Truths', for example, the 'complete individual' as containing all of his predicates its past present and future, yet doing so contingently, with the result that its actions are free.[12]

1.2 Continuity

The second labyrinth, that of continuity, is pronounced as the most significant and most perplexing of philosophical problems. As Leibniz concedes, the consideration of the infinite is part of this problem, and hence his conception of substance both determines and is determined by his principle of continuity and mathematical understanding of the infinite. In other words,

[9] Donald Rutherford, *Leibniz and the Rational Order of Nature*, 2003, 1. See Bertrand Russell, *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz: With an Appendix of Leading Passages* (Nottingham: Spokesman, 2008); Louis Couturat, *La logique de Leibniz d'après des documents inédits*, (Paris:Ancienne Librairie Germer Baillière, 1901.
[10] Leibniz, *Theodicy*, 237.
[11] Leibniz, 'On Freedom'*, Philosophical Essays*, 98.
[12] Leibniz, 'Primary Truths', Ibid, 32.

the problem of continuity is that of substance and vice versa. The problem of continuity, according to Leibniz, thus concerns not only continuity of space, time, and motion, but also the questions of whether matter is divisible into first elements, and their motion.[13]

As Serres notes, Leibniz exchanged Descartes' 'method', which was based on rules, for a set of effective principles through which he constructs his system.[14] These are the 'principle of sufficient reason', a form of which is also appropriated by Deleuze; the 'principle of identity' and its reverse form, 'the principle of indiscernibles', according to which no two elements of nature may share all their predicates; and the 'principle of continuity', upon which I focus due to its significance for Deleuze and Benjamin.

The principle of continuity pertains, first, to spatiotemporal continuity, determining that any change in time or space is always continuous, that is, passes through an infinity of intermediate degrees. It also argues for the continuity of existents, describing the succession of all creatures forming an uninterrupted chain. Finally, it is a law of continuity of reason, serving Leibniz as a *methodology* for reasoning, through which it is possible, when examining concepts that are continuous with one another, to determine that the laws applying to one must apply to the other. According to an account of the principle of continuity to which Leibniz returned throughout his writing,

> when the differences between two instances in a given series […] can be diminished until it becomes smaller than any given quantity whatever, the corresponding differences in what is sought or in their results must of necessity also be diminished or become less than any given quantity whatever.[15]

In a series in which the difference between two instances 'approach each other continuously', i.e. between variables in a continuous function, the corresponding difference in the result retains the same properties. The principle of continuity forms part of Leibniz's theory of knowledge as

[13] See Richard T. W. Arthur, 'The Labyrinth of the Continuum', in *The Oxford Handbook of Leibniz*, ed. Maria Rosa Antognazza (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 275.
[14] Serres, *Le Système de Leibniz*, 216.
[15] From *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* (1687), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 'extrait d'une Lettre de M. L. sur un Principe général, utile à l'explication des loix de la nature, par la consideration de la sagesse Divine; pour servir de réplique à la réponse du R. P. M, p.351', quoted in Larry M. Jorgensen, 'The Principle of Continuity and Leibniz's Theory of Consciousness', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 47, no. 2 (2009): 224–25.

well as what he refers to as a 'psychology', the study of the mind.[16] These domains are construed through his conceptions of individual substance or monad.

1.3 Monad

The term 'monad' is a name given by Leibniz in his later work for what he earlier refers to as an 'individual' or 'singular' substance. His emphasis on the individual increased in the later stages of his thought. *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1686) is perceived as the first work in which Leibniz presents his mature conception of individual substance.[17] Yet it is only in the *Monadology* (1714) that he unfurls a complete metaphysics of the substance.

Leibniz's conception of substance is constructed through the problematic of continuity. On the one hand, Leibniz believed that all elements of nature form one continuum in which it is not possible to discern one element from the next.[18] On the other hand, he describes this continuum as composed of indivisible elements. While the continuum is ideal in a sense, not actually existing, individual substances are real and contain an actualising force. The individual substance is hence defined by its forming part of a continuum in which everything is in constant flux, and at the same time by its indivisibility and its own relentless striving to actualise. In other words, individual substances are qualitative, intensive, and expressive.

They are qualitative since they are non-divisible, which means they change internal and qualitatively. Leibniz's understanding of substance is shaped against that of Descartes and his followers, who viewed matter as nothing other than extension, arguing that all changes in matter

[16] As Loemker notes, Leibniz used the term 'psychology' [*Psychologia antropologia*] as early as 1594, *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 61.
[17] Leroy E. Loemeker, 'Introduction: Leibniz as Philosopher', in *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 17. The conceptions of 'monad' and 'individual' play an important role in Deleuze and Benjamin's readings, and as such my reading will also focus on Leibniz's later work.
[18] As Leibniz describes the natural series, 'all the orders of natural beings must necessarily form only one chain, in which the different classes, like so many links, are so closely connected with one another that it is impossible for sense or imagination to determine exactly the point where any one of them begins or ends; all the species which border or occupy so to speak disputable territory [region d'inflexion et de rebroussement] being necessarily ambiguous and endowed with characteristics which may equally well be ascribed to neighbouring species'. From a letter quoted by Leibniz's biographer Guhrauer in G.W.F Von Leibniz, *Eine Biographie*, vol. 1, 'Anmerkungen', 32, requoted in Latta, ed., *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 38.

are reducible to motion.[19] By contrast, Leibniz viewed matter as involving action.[20] Against Descartes' mechanistic view of substance, Leibniz suggests substance as being endowed with an internal, living force.

The source of these oppositional views of matter and substance lie in Leibniz and Descartes' dynamics. Indeed, Leibniz himself justifies the nature of substance, specifically its self-action, through recourse to his principle of conservation of force.[21] Leibniz's understanding of substance must therefore be understood in light of his dynamics. Against the Cartesian view of motion as external to bodies, Leibniz developed his principle of conservation of force, expressed by the formula *mv2*, according to which motion is in fact change of position and rest is an infinitely small quantity of motion.[22] Accordingly, force that brings about motion is an intrinsic quality of the substance, always present in the monad in virtual form and tending to actualisation. The qualitative state of the substance is thus defined intensively by the ever-changing degree of its internal force. Thus the individual substance is defined as intensive, since it is endowed with an active force of varying degree, motivated by a *conatus* or desire to actualise. Aside from its qualitative and intensive nature, a third key characterisation of the monad defines it as expressive.[23]

1.4 Expression

Leibniz never explains precisely what he means by expression and the term, as discussed, has elicited no shortage of controversy. That said, the significance of the term within his metaphysics and theory of knowledge is well established.[24] Expression is the linchpin of Leibniz's solution to the philosophical problems of continuity discussed earlier. It is through its capacity to express that the individual substance is continuous with the infinite continuum

[19] 'In my opinion corporeal substance consists in something quite other than being extended and occupying a place: we must, in fact, ask ourselves what it is that occupies the place', Leibniz, Epistolaad Schulenburgium (1698) (G. Math. vii. 242, quoted in *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 28. See Descartes, 'all the variety of matter, or the diversity of its forms depends on motion', René Descartes, Valentine Rodger Miller, and Reese P. Miller, *Principles of Philosophy*, Synthese Historical Library : Texts and Studies in the History of Logic and Philosophy, v. 24 (Dordrecht, Holland ; Boston, U.S.A. : Hingham, Mass: Reidel ; Distributed by Kluwer Boston, 1983) part 2, 23.

[20] Anne Lise Rey discusses the link between Leibniz's developing conception of the individual and developments in his dynamics, see Anne Lise Rey, 'L'ambivalence de la notion d'action dans la Dynamique de Leibniz. La correspondance entre Leibniz et De Volder', *Studia Leibnitiana* 41, no. 1 (2009): 47–66.

[21] Ibid, 48.

[22] 'The importance of the Leibnizian formula *mv*2 is due to its introducing a potential into the state of affairs', write Deleuze and Guattari in *What is Philosophy?*, 153.

[23] Esp. *Monadology*, 12–14, *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 223–24.

[24]'L'unité dans la multitude, voilà la principe architectonique du monde et de la philosophie, soit l'harmonie même, voilà, en termes inversés, le schéma élémentaire de la perception', Serres, *Le Système de Leibniz*, 96.

of elements that forms the universe, while also remaining distinct from this continuum in its indivisibility. As Leibniz describes in his *Monadology*, every monad, or simple substance, expresses the infinite totality of monads, representing this infinity from a different point of view. Within every single monad, there is constant expression of the totality of monads, which makes all monads 'living mirrors of the universe' – expression is thus temporal and perpetual.[25]

Expression is also a meeting point of Leibniz's psychology, metaphysics, and mathematics. He often illustrates expression by way of geometrical examples:

> one thing expresses another (in my sense) when there is a constant and regular [*réglé*] relation between what can be said of the one and what can be said of the other. It is thus that a projection in perspective expresses the original figure.[26]

This means that, in expression, the constant element in both expresser and expressed is a law guiding the make-up of its inner relations, or proportions. Another similar example Leibniz uses is the manner in which a circle is represented by an ellipse.

'Perception', which is the term Leibniz uses when describing the psychological aspects of the relation of 'expression', plays a key role in his understanding of knowledge and of mind-body relations. It is described in the *Monadology* as 'the passing condition which involves and represents multiplicity in the unity [*unité*]'.[27] Monads are defined, then, by their capacity to perceive or express the multiplicity. Perception is recurrently described by Leibniz through two key visual metaphors: as a 'point of view' on the universe or its 'living mirror'. The 'point of view' of the monad or simple substance is what makes it different from all other monads, just as no two leaves are exactly alike.[28] That is, its singularity or individuality is constituted through its point of view.

In Leibniz's metaphysics, the whole (universe) is defined by the part (monad) as much as the parts are determined by the whole. To say that every monad expresses the totality of monads is equivalent to saying that each monad contains the entire universe. This is possible if we understand expression as a kind of representation. The entire universe is represented in every monad, just as a map represents a territory, or a painting of a landscape represents the landscape.

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[25] See Leibniz, *Monadology*, 56, 248.
[26] Leibniz, Letter to Arnald (1687) (G. ii. 112), quoted in *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 136.
[27] Leibniz, *Monadology*, 14, 224 modified.
[28] See Leibniz, *New Essays*, Book of Ideas, 231.

Since, according to Leibniz, individuals are rational monads, every individual mind expresses the universe, in a more or less distinct manner. The idea is defined as well as that which expresses, within the human soul, a set of relations that correspond to the thing expressed.[29] n this way Leibniz creates a continuity and interdependence not only between all creatures and the universe, but also between human perception and nature, and finally, since expression happens over time, between history and nature. This inclusion or immanence of the world within human consciousness is part of what attracts Deleuze and Benjamin to the conception of expression.

Expression and continuity are linked in Leibniz's metaphysics through the active component of monads, which makes them 'living mirrors of the universe' – thus through the temporal aspect of expression.[30] This temporal aspect, alongside the characterisation of monads as both self-contained and self-moving, gives rise to the problem of the production of change without interrupting the continuum of the series. Leibniz solves this issue by introducing 'pre-established harmony'; upon creation, the development of each monad was pre-arranged to correspond to that of the changes in all other monads. Thus, the series of changes taking place in every monad harmonises with those of the rest. There is a sense, therefore, in which Leibniz's principle of continuity may be considered as historical, insofar as it concerns not only the temporal changes of every single monad, but also how these affect the continuum of the totality of monads. It determines the manner in which single elements of time correspond to its totality. Benjamin will refer to this as 'virtual history' in the 'Epistemo-Critical Prologue'.[31]

While continuity serves Leibniz in his theory of knowledge, it poses a problem for his theory of consciousness. Given the principle of continuity, the passage between conscious and unconscious states must occupy all intermediate states in the transition, since there must be no gaps in the natural order. Yet these requirements are problematic in the case of consciousness, which abounds with sudden shifts in intensity, as in the example of fainting that Leibniz uses repeatedly.[32] One solution to the problem is to claim that all creatures are conscious to some extent at any time, unconsciousness thus being a state of minute consciousness. Yet Leibniz states that while we are sometimes without apperception or conscious awareness of our perceptions, we are never without perceptions, so this cannot solve the problem.[33]

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[29] Leibniz, 'What is an Idea?', 207.
[30] See Leibniz, *Monadology*, 56, in *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 248.
[31] See Benjamin, *OGTD*, 47.
[32] See for example *Monadology*, 20; *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 230.
[33] See Jorgensen, who quotes Leibniz: 'We are never without perceptions, but necessarily we are often without *awareness* [*apperception*], namely when none of our perceptions stand out', from Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, 162. Quoted in Jorgensen, 'Continuity and Leibniz's Theory of Consciousness', 235.

Allison Simmons argues that consciousness is not graduated; rather, the principle of continuity may be satisfied as long as discontinuous change is grounded in change. As Simmons puts it, 'the point of the principle of continuity is not that all change is continuous, but that all change […] *occurs through* some continuous change'.[34] While this interpretative approach may be contested, the debate itself makes clear the difficulties that consciousness poses for Leibniz's principle of continuity.

2. Deleuze on Expression

2.1 A Forbidden Tradition

It seems odd that Spinoza's philosophy, and not Leibniz's, is the focus of Deleuze's study on expression.[35] Expression as a problematic belongs more to Leibniz's philosophy, in its constant wrestling with the question of continuity, than it does to Spinoza's. Indeed, Spinoza seldom uses the term, and does not supply a definition for it, as Deleuze concedes.[36]

Deleuze uses a problematic found in Leibniz in order to define Spinoza's philosophy as a philosophy of continuity and immanence, which lacks the hierarchical aspect of Leibniz's philosophy that arises out of his positioning of God outside his system. Through their conceptions of expression, Deleuze suggests, both Spinoza and Leibniz restore a philosophy of nature and inaugurate a continuity between the intelligible and the sensible, as well as a continuity between nature and history, that in Leibniz's case is manifest in what Deleuze describes as a theory of the event.[37] Leibniz and Spinoza use expression in order to construct a graduated, continuous conception of knowledge against Descartes' strict opposition between the 'clear and distinct' ideas on the one hand and those that are 'obscure and confused' on the other. 'To the extent that we may speak of the Anticartesianism of Leibniz and Spinoza, such Anticartesianism is grounded in the idea of expression', writes Deleuze.[38]

Emerging as a privileged opponent throughout *Expressionism in Philosophy*, Leibniz's philosophy is described by Deleuze as exemplary of an alternative version of 'the problem of expression' and its solutions. In contrast to Spinoza's designation of diverse attributes and

[34] Allison Simmons, 'Changing the Cartesian Mind: Leibniz on Sensation, Representation and Consciousness', *The Philosophical Review* 110, no. 1 (January 2001): 45.
[35] Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*.
[36] Ibid, 19.
[37] Ibid, 17.
[38] Ibid.

modes as expressing a unity of being, in Leibniz each monad, as a unity, expresses the totality of monads. The problem is thus reversed, the main issue being the capacity of unity to express a multiplicity. As Joughin notes in his preface to the English edition, Spinoza and Leibniz offer

> two systems of folding: Spinoza's unfolded from the bare 'simplicity' of the infinity into which all things are ultimately folded up, as into a universal map that folds back into a single point; while Leibniz starts with the infinite points in that map, each of which enfolds within its infinitely 'complex' identity all its relations with all other such points.[39]

Both use the term in order to define the interdependence between God, the universe, and the creatures and phenomena that inhabit it, as well as the interdependence between soul and body.

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The conception of expression, described in *Expressionism in Philosophy*, denotes a triadic relation between the expresser, the expressed, and expression itself. The 'logic of expression', developed through a long tradition that runs from the Stoics to the Middle Ages, distinguishes between the sense of a proposition, that has no existence outside of itself, on the one hand, and what is designated by the proposition, the object or thing as such [*extra animam*], on the other.[40] Here we encounter a significant characterisation of expression: the existence of the expressed is contingent upon its expression by the expresser. Deleuze describes the philosophical history of the conception of expression as 'rather hidden', and 'rather cursed [*maudite*]', as its proponents faced charges of pantheism.[41] Its immanent model poses a threat to emanative and creationist theological theories championing a transcendent God. In other words, since what is expressed has no existence outside its expression, the concept of expression is a 'specifically philosophical concept of immanence'.[42] The 'danger' is that what is expressed would be 'swallowed' by its expresser, or in its expression; and that nothing would remain outside of it.

The term 'expression' has two 'correlates', suggests Deleuze, namely *explicare* and *involvare*. Thus, the expresser both explicates and involves that which it expresses; the

[39] Ibid, 5.
[40] Ibid, 62, 358.
[41] Ibid, 322, modified.
[42] Ibid.

expressed is clarified and unfolded, yet at the same time remains folded, or implicated within the expresser: 'Expression in general involves and implicates what it expresses while explicating and evolving it'.[43] Within the tradition of expression, in which both Leibniz and Spinoza partake, the 'one' or 'unity' expressed is that of God-nature. The notion of expression as manifestation of God's divine nature is also linked to the tradition of divine naming, to which the conceptions of expression of Leibniz, Spinoza, and Benjamin refer.

Expression indicates a relation of constant correspondence, either between two things or between two series of things, which is different from that of causality.[44] Deleuze names two metaphors that have been traditionally used to illustrate the conception of expression: that of the mirror and that of the seed [*le germe*]. In the first metaphor, the mirror stands for the expresser and the expressed is 'mirrored' or reflected, while in the second, the relation between the seed and the tree is likened to that between the expressed (tree) and that within which it is expressed, or the expression (seed). The first metaphor is spatial, and indicates a mimetic resemblance between expresser and expressed, a reproduction of the second in the first that takes place in space. The second metaphor is temporal, implying a correspondence between expressed and expresser that Deleuze calls 'genetic'; the seed includes the genetic data of the tree, and indicates development or constitution over time.[45]

Within infinitesimal calculus, difference is understood through a common ground, or system, rather than by converting differences into one another. Leibniz's differential calculus formed the basis of his relational metaphysics, in which things are comprehended not by their stable essence, but rather through their function in a system and their relations to other components. This relational approach, and the differential relations that constitute it, are key to Deleuze's reading of Leibniz both in *Difference and Repetition* and in *The Fold*, where Deleuze describes this anti-essential, *eventual* metaphysics and ontology as 'mannerist'.

2.2 Difference in Itself

Leibniz's conception of expression plays an important, underestimated role in the project Deleuze sets out for himself in *Difference and Repetition*, namely, putting forth a philosophy of difference that would serve as an alternative to the dominant philosophy of representation.[46]

[43] Ibid, 16.
[44] Ibid, 109.
[45] Ibid, 80–81.
[46] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 29 / *Différence et répétition*, 4.

'Representation is the site of transcendental illusion', writes Deleuze.[47] He attempts to liberate 'thought from those images which imprison it', or to introduce a manner of thinking and philosophising that is not curbed by the dogmatic assumptions that have been considered fundamental for philosophers to date. As he demonstrates, all previous attempts at a philosophy of difference, starting with that of Aristotle, subordinate difference to identity and representation.[48] As we will see, it is in Leibniz's metaphysics that Deleuze finds a concept of 'difference in itself' that lies at the heart of the theory of sensibility he puts forward in *Difference and Repetition*.

Differential calculus in general, and specifically its assimilation and reformulation within Leibniz's metaphysics, are significant for Deleuze's outline for a model of learning that challenges other philosophical models, specifically those of Kant, Hegel, and Descartes. The differential relation, symbolised as *dx*, which Deleuze opposes to the relation of contradiction – *non-A* – is foundational for Deleuze's philosophy of difference. As he writes, '*dx* is the idea – the Platonic, Kantian or Leibnizian idea – the "problem" and its being'.[49] In a sense, in order to challenge the philosophy of representation, Deleuze must reach beyond the conception of language as a primary form of representation, and he does so by describing the idea as a mathematical relation.

In Leibniz's infinitesimal system differences tend towards their disappearance or cancellation. Differential relations between terms constitute the terms themselves, as proved by Leibniz by showing that even when the terms 'vanish', the relation between them remains constant.[50] Deleuze's appropriation of Leibniz's differential calculus is coupled with a strong critique of Leibniz (softened in *The Fold*). Since Leibniz's series converge towards infinity, Deleuze writes, they tend towards the negative of a limit.[51] This means, for Deleuze, that Leibniz's differential is contingent upon identity. The only way difference could be freed from limitation would be if it affirms itself through repetition, thereby submitting to the law of eternal return.[52]

As Smith describes, infinitesimal calculus was derided, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for the 'dynamic notions' it supported, such as 'infinitesimals, fluxions and fluents, thresholds, passages to the limit, continuous variations – all of which presumed a

[47] Ibid, 261/341.
[48] Ibid, 133/174.
[49] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 171/ *Différence et répétition* 222.
[50] Leibniz, 'Justification of the Infinitesimal Calculus by that of Ordinary Algebra' (1701), in *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 545–46.
[51] Ibid,73.
[52] Ibid.

geometrical conception of the continuum: in other words, the notion of progress'.[53] These dynamic notions are precisely what attracted Deleuze to Leibniz's differential calculus, yet, of course, he reads Leibniz through the lens of his own times. Deleuze was well aware of developments in the history of mathematics that contradict the geometrical principle, central to Leibniz's calculus, of 'approaching a limit', replacing it with an arithmetic understanding of continuity.[54] Despite these developments, differential calculus remained crucial for Deleuze's philosophy of difference in general, and, as Smith suggests, for his conception of multiplicities, in opposition to that of Badiou, that is founded upon set theory.[55]

3. Benjamin on Continuity of Experience and Knowledge

3.1 Presentation in Language

For Benjamin, the question of philosophical presentation [*Darstellung*] is a central philosophical concern.[56] The manner in which philosophy is presented in language is essential for philosophising, writes Benjamin in the 'Prologue'. As Ng notes, Benjamin had studied Bernard Bolzano's *Paradoxien de Unendlischen* (1851), which provided a basis for Cantor's definition of the infinite set, and engaged with the conception of the infinite.[57] Yet, as opposed to Deleuze's recourse to differential calculus in an effort to counteract representation, Benjamin, I suggest, appropriates the mathematical infinite into a theory of presentation in language.

Benjamin does not refer explicitly to Leibniz's conception of expression in *The Origin of German Trauerspiel*, yet it nevertheless plays a significant role in its 'Epistemo-Critical Prologue' [*Erkenntniskritische Vorrede*], and more generally in Benjamin's understanding of the relation between philosophy, history, and knowledge throughout his writing. According to Hanssen, the term *'erkenntniskritisch*' in the title should be understood literally, as a 'radical repudiation of epistemology and transcendental philosophy' rather than a critique of the condition of possibility for cognition.[58] Benjamin's 'Prologue' consists of a critique of the

[53] Daniel W. Smith, 'Mathematics and the Theory of Multiplicities: Deleuze and Badiou Revisited', in *Essays on Deleuze*, ed. Daniel W. Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 293.
[54] Ibid, 294.
[55] Ibid.
[56] *Darstellung* may be translated as either 'presentation' or 'representation', as opposed to the German *Repräsentation*.
[57] Julia Ng, 'Acts of Time: Cohen and Benjamin on Mathematics and History', *Paradigmi. Rivista di critica filosofica* 1 (2017): 41–60.
[58] Beatrice Hanssen, 'Philosophy at Its Origin: Walter Benjamin's Prologue to the *Ursprung des deutschen*

philosophical tradition of *Erkenntnistheorie*, and the reasonable [*vernünftig*] subject it presupposes.

Benjamin continues in the 'Prologue' a path he inaugurated in several fragments written between 1916 and 1919, culminating in the essay 'On the Program of the Coming Philosophy' (1918), in which a scathing critique is directed towards Kant and neo-Kantian philosophers.[59] In an attempt to transcend Kant's subject-object distinction, Benjamin develops, in these fragments and his essay on Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, the conception of *Verwandtschaft*, affinity, as a non-casual relation between elements. This relation of affinity, which Benjamin describes as expressionless [*ausdruckslos*], and which forms part of what he describes as symbolic presentation in language, is in fact closer to Leibniz's conception of expression than what Benjamin intends when he uses the term expression itself [*Ausdruck*].

As we will see, as an alternative to *Erkenntnistheorie* Benjamin presents in the 'Prologue' a theory of philosophical teaching [*Lehre*] as that which must be presented [*darstellt*] in language. Language is understood by Benjamin as expressive in form, drawing on a mixture of Leibniz's metaphysics and Kabbalistic ideas (as noted Leibniz's own thinking was informed by Lurianic Kabbalah).[60] The term *Lehre* refers both generally to teaching as verb and noun, and more specifically to theological doctrine or teachings, appearing in texts and letters to Gershom Scholem written at the time.[61]

In the 'Prologue', Benjamin critiques subject-based conceptions of knowledge [*Erkenntnis*], as well as conceptions of history and historiography that are founded upon these. He seeks to inaugurate a new 'philosophical history' [*philosophische Geschichte*] rooted in natural history [*natürliche Geschichte*]. This philosophical history, as knowledge and practice, would concern the presentation of truth [*Darstellung der Wahrheit*], rather than serving as a simple guide to knowledge acquisition [*Anleitung zum Erkennen*]. Benjamin distinguishes between the domains of knowledge and truth, the latter alone being the concern of philosophical history.

The conception of expression will enable the continuity between the domains of philosophy and history. It is present in Benjamin's 'Prologue' already in its epigraph drawn from Goethe's essay on colour-theory:

Trauerspiels', *MLN* 110, no. 4 (September 1995): 820.

[59] See Walter Benjamin, 'Zur Sprachphilosophie und Erkenntniskritik', in *GS* 6, 9–53; Benjamin, 'On the Program for the Coming Philosophy', in *SW*1, 100–10.

[60] Allison Coudert, *Leibniz and the Kabbalah* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1995).

[61] See Walter Benjamin, Gershom Scholem, and Theodor W. Adorno, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910–1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

> Neither in knowledge [*Wissen*] nor in reflection can anything whole be put together, since in the former the internal is missing and in the latter the external; and so we must necessarily think of science as art if we expect to derive any kind of wholeness [*Ganzheit*] from it. Nor should we look for this in the general, the excessive, but, since art is always wholly represented [*darstellt*] in every individual work of art, so science [*Wissenschaft*] ought to reveal itself completely in every manifest detail [*einzelnen*].[62]

Famously a disciple of Spinoza, Goethe describes the process of reflection and the gaining of scientific knowledge through a relation of expression between detail and wholeness. Years later, Benjamin returned to this theory by Goethe in the *Arcades Project*, referring once again to Goethe's notion of the *Urphänomen*, which denotes the appearance of ideal essences within sensual forms.[63]

The above corresponds with either Spinoza or Leibniz's conceptions of expression, in which a totality is condensed into singular modes or monads. It is telling that Benjamin chooses this citation as an epigraph to the 'Prologue'. He puts forward a philosophy of history of art, specifically the philosophical history of the *Trauerspiel*. Yet before doing so, the 'Prologue' calls into question the basic assumptions of these domains by critically discussing the production and acquisition of knowledge. Goethe's citation suggests that science [the German *Wissenschaft*, literally created-knowledge] should be thought of as art – just as art as a whole is present in every single artwork, so scientific knowledge as a whole is represented in every tiny detail of nature. Benjamin's 'Prologue' deals primarily with the presentation [*Darstellung*] of knowledge and history. These, he argues, are manifest as totalities in ideas of art. From the epigraph and on, Benjamin designates their presentation in language as expressive in nature.

The 'detail' in which science reveals itself as complete has a privileged place in the epigraph. The 'Prologue' will put forward a philosophic-historical theory of interpretation of art, that, on the one hand, considers specific artworks, in this case plays, in relation to the *Trauerspiel* as an 'idea'. On the other hand, the plays will be considered as wholes in relation to the internal details of their composition. One of Benjamin's overall arguments in the book

[62] Benjamin, *OGTD*, 27, trans. modified/ *GS*1, 207.
[63] See Benjamin, *Arcades Project* [N2a,3], 462.

relates to the originality of *Trauerspiel* plays, which lies in fine details rather than in the plays as whole artworks.[64]

Schwebel has argued that what Benjamin means by representation in the 'Prologue' may be understood through Leibniz's concept of expression.[65] This is the case when Benjamin discusses the presentation of ideas. Yet Benjamin's uses both *Darstellung* and *Ausdruck* in the 'Prologue', and the two terms are not interchangeable. Rather, *Darstellung* denotes, for Benjamin, specifically presentation in language, and consists of a type of *Ausdruck* or expression. *Ausdruck*, never elaborated as a term, is present in the tension between 'expression' and the 'expressionless' [*Das Ausdruckslose*].

A third term Benjamin uses in texts written during the same years in which he worked on the *Trauerspiel* book, that may be understood through Leibniz's conception of expression, is *Verwandtschaft*, which is used to describe a non-casual, non-visual correspondence or affinity.[66] Benjamin develops a theory of such correspondences in the texts 'Doctrine of the Similar' and 'On the Mimetic Faculty', written in 1933, in which he discusses the human capacity to perceive similarities and 'natural correspondences' that may serve for the illumination of occult knowledge.[67]

As opposed to mathematical formulations, language discloses philosophical truths by encompassing the tension between expression and the expressionless. 'Philosophical teaching' [*Lehre*] is 'based on historical codification'. Benjamin writes in the 'Prologue', it 'cannot therefore be evoked *more geometrico*'.[68] Spinoza's *Ethics*, the archetypal philosophical system presented in 'geometrical-'like deduction, is implied by the term *more geometrico*. Philosophical teaching must not be abstracted into mathematical propositions as attempted by Spinoza, Benjamin suggests, rather, it must be formulated in language that is embedded in history.

3.2 A Pure and Systematic Continuum of Experience

In 'On the Program of the Coming Philosophy', Benjamin had made similar claims:

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[64] Benjamin, *OGTD*, 59.
[65] Schwebel, *Walter Benjamin's Monadology*, 92.
[66] For example in the essay on Goethe: 'Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften', in *GS*1, 123–202/'Goethe's Elective Affinities', in *SW*1, 297–360.
[67] See Benjamin, 'Doctrine of the Similar', in *SW*2, 696–97.
[68] Ibid, trans. modified: *Lehre* may be translated as either 'doctrine' or 'teaching'. I find the latter to be more fitting in this context.

> For Kant, the consciousness that philosophical knowledge [*philosophische Erkenntnis*] was absolutely certain and a-priori, the consciousness of that aspect of philosophy in which it is absolutely the peer of mathematics, ensured that he devoted almost no attention to the fact that all philosophical knowledge has its unique expression [*Ausdruck*] in language and not in formulas or numbers […] [I]t is ultimately because of this fact that the systematic superiority of philosophy over all sciences as well as mathematics will be asserted.[69]

Benjamin charges Kant with viewing philosophical knowledge as entirely a priori and certain, and therefore disregarding its essentially linguistic nature. The fact that philosophy may only be expressed in language is precisely what differentiates it from mathematics, Benjamin argues, and furthermore, the reason why it is superior over all other sciences.

Written in 1917, and completed in 1918 with an addendum, 'On the Program of the Coming Philosophy' defines the 'central task of the coming philosophy' in relation to Kant's triadic system. The 'coming philosophy' would necessitate a 'revision' of Kant's philosophy, Benjamin writes, in which some of its elements would be retained and others rejected. During the years preceding the writing of this text, as a student in Freiburg, and later in Berlin and Munich, Benjamin read works by Kant and neo-Kantian thinkers, and had studied with several Marburg School professors.[70] He also attended lectures by Hermann Cohen, as well as studying Cohen's *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung*, as testified by Scholem.[71] These were years during which Benjamin and Scholem engaged in a continuous intellectual dialogue, which informed Benjamin's thought in two main directions: first, Scholem introduced Benjamin to Judaic philosophical and Kabbalistic texts, and second, as has been the focus of research in recent years, Scholem had sparked Benjamin's interest in logic and mathematics.[72] Traces of these themes may be found in 'On the Program of the Coming Philosophy', which launches a double critique against Kant and neo-Kantianism.

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[69] Benjamin, 'On the Program of the Coming Philosophy', in *SW* 1, 108/*GS*2, 168.
[70] Between 1913 and 1915 he studied at the University of Berlin under Ernst Cassirer, Benno Erdmann, and Georg Simmel, and at the University of Munich, where he took lessons on Kant's *Critique of Judgment* with the phenomenologist Moritz Geiger. He also read and discussed with Scholem Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. See Tagliacozzo, *Experience and Infinite Task*, 12.
[71] See Gershom Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship* (New York: New York Review Books, 2012), 59.
[72] See Tagliacozzo, *Experience and Infinite Task*, esp. 14; Ng, 'Acts of Time'.

Philosophy, as perceived in this text, is the philosophy of knowledge, or *Erkenntnistheorie*.[73] The task of a future philosophy is therefore an epistemological one. Benjamin defines the double problem of *Erkenntnistheorie* as follows: 'First of all, there was the question of the certainty of knowledge that is lasting, and, second, there was the question of the integrity [*Dignität*] of experience [*Erfahrung*] that is ephemeral'.[74] Knowledge is not composed uniquely of eternal truths, according to Benjamin; it also comprises the temporal, fleeting experiences that serve as its immediate objects.[75] Benjamin criticises Kant for a conception of knowledge that prioritises the certainty of a priori, timeless knowledge, reducing the concept of experience to that of 'primitive, self-evident experience' and ignoring experiences that occur in time and are therefore passing. He argues that in the *Prolegomena*, Kant sought the principles of experience in sciences, and that the post-Kantians pushed this tendency even further, completely identifying experience with the 'object-world' [*Gegenstandwelt*] of science.[76] According to Benjamin, this scientifically grounded conception of experience is reductive, and hence the philosophy of the future must adopt a 'higher' conception of experience that would include realms other than science, most importantly, that of religion.

Kant's narrow conception of experience, according to Benjamin, results from the binaries that dominate the internal structure of his system. First, Kant conceives of knowledge as a subject-object relation. Second, Benjamin regards the distinction between appearance and thing-in-itself, *noumenon* and *phenomenon* – and more generally the view according to which individuals receive sensations from external objects and form ideas based upon these – as an empirical residue within Kant's epistemology. And finally, there is the binary delineated by Kant between the intelligible and the sensible, which the neo-Kantians sought, more successfully, to transcend.

Although Kant did not mean to shatter experience into its singular domains, these binary structures ruptured the continuity of the concept of experience across various fields, resulting in its fragmentation. Benjamin proposes the formation of a 'pure and systematic continuum of experience' that would be 'multiply gradated' stretching across domains such as art, law, and history as well as the natural sciences.[77] That is, although forms of experience belonging to

[73] As Benjamin writes, 'philosophy always inquires about knowledge, in relation to which the question of knowledge of its existence [*Dasein*] is only a modification … of the question of knowledge in general', 'On the Program of the Coming Philosophy', *SW*1, 109.
[74] Benjamin, *SW*1, 100.
[75] Ibid, 100–01.
[76] Ibid, 101.
[77] Ibid, 107.

different domains, such as historical and artistic experience, are distinct from one another, it is a difference of degree, while the essential nature of experience remains the same. This unified nature, Benjamin writes, would manifest itself in ideas that converge towards a higher knowledge.[78]

The conception of experience as gradated, and as manifest in ideas that express a totality of knowledge is close to the theologically oriented system of Leibniz, in which the imperfect ideas in human consciousness express God's perfect knowledge. Yet, Benjamin denies that any pre-Kantian philosopher had conceived of this theory-of-knowledge task [*erkenntnistheoretisch Aufgabe*]. Kant's contribution to defining experience as a key conception within his theory of knowledge was unprecedented, and hence the problem may only be defined as such from a post-Kantian perspective. Yet at least an aspect of the problem, the question of how human consciousness is related to pure knowledge, may be outlined by a return to pre-Kantianism.[79]

The alternative structure of relations between experience and knowledge that Benjamin proposes is one in which experience and knowledge are interdependent. Not just experience, but knowledge too must be transformed. The new conception of knowledge Benjamin proposes would be continuous with experience, serving as its teachings [*Lehre*].[80] In other words, knowledge as teaching, presented systematically in language, is described as the actualisation of experience, its continuation and fulfilment. 'Experience is the uniform and continuous multiplicity of knowledge', Benjamin surmises.[81] Benjamin reverses the traditionally empirical conception of the relations between experience and knowledge, according to which every experience is singular and therefore experience consists of a multiplicity, while knowledge is the unified generalisation of experience. He argues, on the contrary, that experience is essentially unified, and that this unity reflects the multiplicity of knowledge.

4. Infinite Analysis and Infinite Task in Leibniz, Benjamin, Deleuze

4.1 Conceptual Difference

'We may well say that learning is, after all, an infinite task: it is none the less cast with the circumstances and the acquisition of knowledge, outside the supposedly simple essence of

[78] Ibid.
[79] See Benjamin, 'Duns Scotus' *GS*6, 22–23.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Benjamin, *SW*1,108.

knowledge in the form of an innate or a priori element, or even a regulative Idea'.[82] Deleuze views knowledge as an 'infinite task' rather than as founded in innate, a priori ideas for two connected reasons: first, because he conceives of knowledge in terms of existence rather than essence; and second, because he argues for introducing time into the process of learning.

The neo-Kantian concept of an 'infinite task', developed by philosophers such as Hermann Cohen and Ernst Cassirer, originates in Kant's discussions of the infinite, as well as Leibniz's conception of 'infinite analysis'.[83] Deleuze suggested, in one of his lectures given in Vincennes, that Leibniz's conception of 'infinite analysis' was a novel one in the history of philosophy.[84] Leibniz himself viewed this conception as one of his most significant contributions, since he believed it had solved the problem of enabling contingency in a world in which 'every predication has a foundation in the nature of things' in his philosophy.[85]

Leibniz's 'infinite analysis' describes the idea that there are true propositions in which the connection between subject and predicate may not be demonstrable in a finite number of steps, according to which, a proposition can be true yet not demonstrable.[86] The conception of infinite analysis applies the mathematical notion of asymptotes to conceptual analysis:

> Just as the smaller number is contained in the larger in every proportion […] so in every truth the predicate is contained in the subject […] But in proportions the analysis may sometimes be completed, so that we arrive at a common measure which is contained in both terms of the proportion an integral number of times, while sometimes the analysis can be continued to infinity, as when comparing a square with the diagonal. Just so, truths are sometimes demonstrable or necessary, and sometimes free and contingent, so that they cannot be reduced to identities as if to a common measure by analysis. This is the essential distinction between truths as well as proportions.[87]

[82] Deleuze,Ibid,166/215.
[83] For example, in Kant's first antinomy, where Kant himself refers to philosophers of the 'Leibnizian school' and their conception of the infinite. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 473.
[84] Deleuze, *Cours Vincennes*, cours du 06/05/1980.
[85] See David Blumenfeld, 'Leibniz on Contingency and Infinite Analysis', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* XLV, no. 4 (June 1985): 484.
[86] See Blumenfeld, 488–489.
[87] Leibniz, 'On Freedom', in *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 265–66.

From the conception of infinite analysis follows that there are two kinds of truths: contingent truths, which are not demonstrable, and necessary truths, which one can demonstrate in a finite number of procedures. Only God has access to contingent truths, since he sees the series in its entirety, while human knowledge is always partial.

Leibniz's application of the mathematical infinite to conceptual analysis was significant to Hermann Cohen's development of his own conception of 'infinite task', in turn important for both Benjamin and Deleuze. In his reading of Leibniz, Cohen highlights Leibniz's designation of thought as continuous, acknowledging the manner in which Leibniz applied his principle of continuity and reflections on infinity more generally to domains other than mathematics. Cohen wrote:

> *Continuity became the higher concept, from which infinity derives* […] For the *being* of infinity is now grounded in the *thought* of continuity. Continuity, in as much as it is *idea*, and in as much as it is *law*, is now a principle both of *reason* and of *nature*.[88]

To Cohen's mind, the significance of Leibniz's principle of continuity lies in its framing of relations between elements in nature and in thought through the infinitesimal method.

Cohen uses the conception of 'infinite task' primarily in ethical and theological contexts, where he defines the possibility of participating in God's holiness as an 'infinite task'.[89]In Cohen's system, this participation, or the 'correlation' between man and God, as he defines it, is executed through ethical action, and is also the object of philosophical reason.[90] As in the case of Leibniz's infinite analysis, Cohen's infinite task relates to free will, yet in the case of Cohen the infinite task consists of an ethical-religious choice made by the individual, constituting the never-ending movement of the individual towards God.[91]

Deleuze compares Kant's synthesis of finitude with Leibniz's infinite analysis in a lecture from the Vincennes series.[92] While in Leibniz every analysis is conceptual, and therefore quantitative differences can be reduced to qualitative ones, writes Deleuze, for Kant knowing

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[88] Hermann Cohen, *Das Prinzip der Infinitesimal-Methode und seine Geschichte, ein Kapitel zur Grundlegung der Erkenntniskritik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968), 57f., quoted in Alberto Poma, *The Critical Philosophy of Hermann Cohen*, trans. John Denton (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 39.
[89] Cohen, quoted in Poma, *Critical Philosophy of Hermann Cohen*, 195.
[90] Ibid, 197.
[91] As Cohen writes, 'God's love of man is the arche-type *(Urbild)* for man's moral task to love his fellowman, and, inasmuch as it is a task, love of fellowman is an infinite movement toward God as the supreme end', *RV*, 170; Eng. trans. Poma, *Critical Philosophy of Hermann Cohen*, 147.
[92] Deleuze, Cours Vincennes, 20/05/1980.

consists precisely in going beyond the concept. Kant's revolution in understanding space and time involved their irreducibility to the order of concepts.

By using the conception of 'infinite analysis' Deleuze reintroduces time into concept, and therefore also into the process of learning. He thereby reinstates conceptual difference, significant for his understanding of philosophy as the creation of concepts. Furthermore, Deleuze reintroduces the infinite into the conceptual process. As he writes, Kant and the tradition that followed him discarded the infinite by its subordination to the finite (a charge Benjamin is equally guilty of). The goal of reintroducing infinite analysis, for Deleuze as for the neo-Kantians, is that of 'substituting the point of view of genesis for that of conditioning', in order to show that the conditions of appearance form the genetic elements of that which appears.[93] Unlike Leibniz and Cohen's conceptions of the infinite, Deleuze's own concept of infinity does not subordinate itself to finitude. Inifnity is rather constituted by exceeding finitude, engendering appearances through this act of surpassing the finite.[94]

4.2 The Task that Cannot be Given

Although Benjamin does not explicitly define, in 'On the Program of the Coming Philosophy', the 'task of the coming philosophy' as an 'infinite' one, the conception of 'infinite task' is present therein. During the period when this essay was written, Benjamin had decided to write his dissertation on the 'concept of the infinite task in Kant', which would have consisted of a reading of Kant in a neo-Kantian vein, informed by Cohen's *Logic der Reinen Erkenntnis*.[95] Despite Benjamin's criticism of neo-Kantianism in 'On the Program', Cohen's understanding of knowledge as a process, in a state of constant becoming, manifestly informed Benjamin's understanding of the relation between knowledge and experience as infinitely continuous.[96]

In two fragments probably written in 1917 and 1918 as part of research for his dissertation, Benjamin contemplates the concept of the 'infinite task'. 'Science is in its form, (*not* its matter), an infinite task […] [T]his does not mean a task with an infinite solution (temporally or otherwise). Infinite is the task [*Aufgabe*] that cannot be given [*gegeben*]'.[97] Benjamin plays on the verb *geben* that is part of the word *Aufgabe*, literally, that which is given. The infinite task, he suggests, is, on the contrary, that which cannot be given. Science itself is

[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] See Tagliacozzo, *Experience and Infinite Task*, 29.
[96] Leibniz's infinite analysis as the basis for Kant and Cohen's conceptions
[97] *GS*6, 51/ translated in Tagliacozzo, *Experience and Infinite Task*, 32, modified.

the infinite task. Had it been 'given', or had it consisted of an answer to finite questions, it would have been contingent upon limitation and could not have consisted of an infinite task.

Science or knowledge conceived of as an infinite task are always open; 'every solution poses a new task'.[98] Benjamin uses Cohen's own conception of infinite task to criticise his understanding of science. While in 'On the Program' he redefined experience to include non-scientific experiences, here he redefines science against what he perceives as Cohen's empiricist approach. In the second fragment, Benjamin criticises Cohen's concept of infinite task for its being 'not a-priori' and 'empty'.[99] He describes the 'neo-Kantian' version of the conception of infinite task as a process whose goals are determined over and over again in an infinite regression that empties the concept of meaning.[100] Benjamin's critique hinges upon the idea that an accumulation of a posteriori experience may not lead to a priori, absolute knowledge. The infinite task necessitates 'never-ending, absolute synthesis'.[101]

In the 'Addendum' to 'On the Program', Benjamin uses a similar argument against the 'neo-Kantians':

> But there is a unity of experience that can by no means be understood as a sum of experiences, to which the concept of knowledge [*Erkenntnisbegriff*] as teaching is *immediately* [*unmittelbar*] related, in its continuous development [*Entfaltung*]. The object and content of this teaching, this concrete totality of experience, is religion, which, however, is presented to philosophy in the first instance only as teaching. Yet the source of existence [*Dasein*] lies in the totality of experience, and only in teaching does philosophy encounter something absolute, as existence, and in so doing encounter that continuity in the nature of experience. The failing of the neo-Kantians can be suspected in its neglect of this continuity.[102]

Written several months subsequently to the main text, there is a shift of focus in the 'Addendum' towards a specific kind of experience, namely that of religion, which Benjamin describes as a totalised experience that serves as the source of existence [*Dasein*] – a term he had not previously used in the text. Benjamin's critique of the 'neo-Kantians' is not for lacking

[98] Ibid, 52.
[99] Ibid, 53.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Benjamin, *SW*1, 109–10.

a conception of continuity – continuity is an important conception within Cohen's work – but for neglecting a certain type of continuity, that between knowledge and experience.[103] According to Benjamin's reading, the neo-Kantians presented knowledge as continuous within itself, delegating an inferior place to experience, which they viewed narrowly as scientific experience alone.

The italicising of the word *immediately* indicates that by 'the continuity between knowledge and experience' Benjamin means their relation must be unmediated. Knowledge, in other words, consists of the natural development or unfolding as doctrine of this higher kind of experience. Benjamin views this continuity not only as epistemological but also as an ontological principle. Only experience that is continuous with knowledge may be totalised and become the source of existence. Since knowledge is ever changing, continually becoming, it necessitates experience. Existence – totalised experience – is described as the philosophical equivalent of religious teachings [*Lehre*], totalised knowledge.[104]

The concept of *Lehre* is present in essays as well as letters Benjamin wrote to Scholem during this period. Thus, for example, in 1917 Benjamin writes:

> [I]t is in the philosophy of history that the specific affinity [*Verwandtschaft*] of a given philosophy with the true teaching should be able to come forth with maximum clarity, for this is where the subject of the historical evolution of knowledge for which doctrine is the catalyst will have to appear.[105]

Scholem describes Benjamin's use of *Lehre* during these years as related to the Hebrew 'torah' as instruction; 'instruction not only about the true condition and way of man in the world but also about the transcausal connection of things and their rootedness in God'.[106]

Benjamin contemplates these 'transcausual connections' or the 'affinity' between elements that are not linked in a casual relation in a fragment written in 1919 titled '*Analogie*

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[103] 'Continuity became the higher concept, from which infinity derives […] For the being of infinity is now grounded in the thought of continuity. Continuity, in as much as it is idea, and in as much as it is law, is now a principle both of reason and of nature', as Cohen wrote in *Das Prinzip der Infinitesimal-Methode und seine Geschichte*, 57f., quoted in Poma, *The Critical Philosophy of Hermann Cohen*, 39.

[104] The totalisation of experience resulting in teachings or their equivalent, philosophy, is formulated in another fragment, 'On Perception', as the following: 'Philosophy is absolute experience, deduced in the systematic-symbolic context as language'. See Benjamin, *SW*1, 96.

[105] Walter Benjamin, Gershom Scholem, and Theodor W. Adorno, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 98.

[106] Scholem, A Story of a Friendship, 139.

und Verwandtschaft'.[107] In the text, Benjamin distinguishes between analogy, similarity, and affinity. As an example for *Verwandtschaft* (which may also be translated as 'relationship' or 'kinship') he uses the affinity between parents and their offspring that is distinct from the similarities between them, nor is it based on the causal relation that connects them. Rather, 'affinity belongs, undivided, to the entire being [*Wesen*] without seeking for a specific expression [*Ausdruck*] (expressionlessness [*Ausdrucksloses*] of affinity)'. It is, in other words, an 'enigmatic' connection that links the internal being of elements.[108]

Benjamin differentiates *Verwandtschaft* from analogy, arguing that the latter is simply metaphoric similarity.

> The conflation of analogy and affinity is an utter perversion. It occurs either when analogy is regarded as the principle determining an affinity, or when an affinity is taken for the principle governing an analogy. We find the first type of confusion in people who imagine something while listening to music – a landscape, event, a poem. They seek something (rationally) analogous to the music […] [I]t is impossible to move from music to an analogue; music recognises only affinity. Pure feeling [*reine Gefühl*] is related to music; this is knowable [*erkennbar*], and in it music is, too. The Pythagoreans tried to understand music by means of numbers.[109]

Confusion between affinity and analogy occurs for example when people attempt to express music in visual or verbal terms. Benjamin uses music to explain the difference between analogy and affinity; what may be expressed and the expressionless. It is not possible to move seamlessly between the visual and musical registers, just as it is impossible to move between analogy and affinity. Music, in its generation of affinities, is irreducible to numbers; it belongs to that type of non-scientific experience that Kant and the neo-Kantians did not recognise.

This does not mean that music cannot be known, writes Benjamin. He distinguishes between two types of acquiring knowledge: through feeling and through ratio. While analogy is explainable by rational principles, affinity is 'knowable' through 'pure feeling'. Through the concept of *Verwandtschaft* Benjamin challenges Kant's conception of knowledge as a product

[107] *GS*6, 43–45/ 'Analogy and Relationship', in *SW*1, 207–09.
[108] Benjamin describes the nature of this connection as *rätselhaft*, Ibid.
[109] Benjamin, *GS*6, 44/ *SW*1, 208.

of rational reasoning, suggesting sensation as a possible path to attaining knowledge [*erkennen*].

The affinity between two elements created by their shared connection to a third element seems close to Leibniz and Spinoza's conceptions of expression, in which modes and monads are linked through their participation in the being of God. During this period, according to Scholem, Benjamin had attempted to formulate a 'symbols-doctrine' [*Symbollehre*] in which 'God is the unattainable centre of a system of symbols intended to remove him from everything concrete and everything symbolic as well'.[110] In fragments and notes from this period, the symbol is not defined as a triadic structure with direct relation or participation in the absolute, yet the 'symbols-doctrine' consists of a hierarchic 'theory of orders'. Thus the 'highest order' includes a category of objects that 'fulfil themselves in objective intention' and 'point to God'.[111] Benjamin certainly does not call for a return to pre-Kantian speculation, and indeed, in another text from the same period, he critiques pre-Kantian philosophers for confusing experience and 'knowledge of experience'.[112]Although it is unclear to what extent the new conceptions of knowledge and experience Benjamin proposes in 'On the Program' and later works are speculative, there is a shift between the earlier fragments and the 'Prologue' in his position vis-à-vis speculative experience.

Another fragment from the period explicitly defines the infinite task as an epistemological one par excellence. 'The true-being [*das* Wahr*sein*] (which as such is naturally unknowable) is linked with the infinite task [Auf*gabe*]'.[113] The infinity of the task is here related to the unknowability of the true being it seeks. Its infinity lies in the impossibility of its completion. The tasks of epistemology are defined in the same fragment as the following: '1) The constitution of things in the now of knowability [*Jetzt der Erkennbarkeit*] and 2) the limitation [*Einschränkung*] of knowledge in the symbol'.[114] The 'now of knowability', a key term in the *Arcades Project* here used for the first time, highlights the significant of the 'now', the passing, for experience and knowledge.

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[110] Scholem, quoted in *GS* 6, 658.
[111] In notes for his *Habilitationsschrift*, under the title 'Theorems about symbolism', Benjamin lists the following:
1) Nothing objective as such corresponds with God
2) Nothing objective and nothing symbolic reaches God
3) Certain objects fulfil themselves only in an associated objective intention [*objektiven Intention*] and then point to God. These are objects of the highest order. Fr. 10, *GS* 6, 21–22.
[112] Benjamin, 'On Perception',*SW*1, 96. Benjamin explicitly appeals to a speculative conception of experience therein.
[113] Benjamin, 'Theory of Knowledge', *SW*1, 276 modified, Benjamin's italics/*GS*6, 45.
[114] Ibid.

The symbol in which knowledge is limited is identified by Benjamin with Goethe's *Urphänomen*, according to which the essence of a phenomenon is perceptible in every one of its details.[115] This conception has a similar role to that of Leibniz's monad in later work: both highlight the manner in which a totality of knowledge is condensed into symbols used in language. Symbol, *Urphänomen*, and monad are all conceptions that make manifest Benjamin's attempt to redefine knowledge as a process in which a totality is limited and abbreviated into details.

5. Refiguring the Idea: Deleuze and Benjamin

As discussed, Deleuze draws on the fact that in Leibniz's thought, metaphysics and ontology are grounded in mathematics.[116]Deleuze targets Plato's conception of 'idea' and Kant's 'transcendental idea', criticising the conception of 'innate ideas' and specifically innateness as an *a priori* regulatory idea, and challenging the conception of knowledge as essential. Deleuze's own conception of the 'problematic idea', according to which the idea is redefined as problem, is indebted to Leibniz's understanding of knowledge and the manner in which it was informed by infinitesimal calculus.

Redefining the idea as 'problem', Deleuze evokes the distinction, developed within the history of mathematics, between problems on the one hand and axioms or propositions on the other. While 'axioms' define objects through their stable essence and derived properties, 'problems' designate objects by their capacity to be affected.[117]Criticising Aristotle and Descartes, Deleuze argues that these thinkers reduced 'problems' into 'axioms' judging a problem to be 'true' according to the possibility of its solution. Leibniz, by contrast, was aware of the profound gap between propositions and problems or questions, writes Deleuze, especially those questions that investigate the circumstances of things.[118]Deleuze refers to Leibniz's *New Essays on Human Understanding*, in which Leibniz defines questions that 'ask how and ask for

[115] 'It is not in poetic analogies that Goethe discovered the symbols in which nature is recognizable, but in his prophetic insights. The *Urphänomen* is a systematic-symbolic concept', wrote Benjamin in a fragment from 1918. Benjamin, *GS*6, 38.
[116] This makes manifest the extent to which Deleuze's reading of Leibniz is informed by Belaval and Serres, both of whom focused on Leibniz's mathematical models and the manner in which they ground his metaphysics. See Serres, *Le Système de Leibniz*; Yvon Belaval, *Leibniz critique de Descartes*, Reproduit, Collection Tel 28 (Paris: Gallimard, 1978).
[117] Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, 208.
[118] Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, 205 fn./Différence et répétition322 fn. 20.

details' as a midway category between propositions and ideas.[119]In addition, Deleuze's theory of problematic ideas is indebted to Leibniz's theory of knowledge in its understanding the process of learning as an actualisation. Deleuze describes problem-solving as the engendering of 'real discontinuity' from 'ideal continuity', through a process of actualisation. Problems/ideas harbour virtual relations that are incarnated in the actual relations defined by the 'field of solutions'.[120]

'Problematic ideas are not simple essences, but complexes, multiplicities of relations and corresponding singularities', writes Deleuze.[121] His description of the idea as a complex of relations is close to Leibniz's definition of the idea as that which expresses, within the human soul, a set of relations that correspond to the thing expressed.[122]

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In the 'Prologue', Benjamin describes philosophical teaching as an 'order of ideas', informed by Plato's doctrine of ideas and Leibniz's metaphysics. He thereby extends the *erkenntniskritisch* project he had commenced in the earlier texts discussed, yet with some differences. Truth is contrasted with knowledge in the 'Prologue', and is accessed by means of philosophical history rather than religion. Philosophical history, rather than religion, is also the place where ideas are formed.

'The idea is something linguistic, it is that element of the symbolic in the essence of every word […] [I]t is the task of the philosopher to restore, by representation [*Darstellung*], the primacy of the symbolic character of the word'.[123] In 'On the Program', Benjamin had argued that philosophical knowledge must be expressed in language rather than mathematical formulas. Here he similarly designates the idea as that through which, by its representation in language, true knowledge may be restored, as opposed to the kind of knowledge sought by epistemological theories that view knowledge as possession.

It is philosophy, rather than the hitherto practiced literary-historical analysis, that is necessary for the insight into the 'origin' of German *Trauerspiel*. Benjamin criticises the proponents of literary-historical analysis for attempting to apply scientific procedures to art by

[119] See Leibniz, *New Essays*, book iv, 1, 2. Serres refers to this element of Leibniz's thought as his 'method of in-determination'. See Serres, *Le Système de Leibniz*, 221.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Leibniz, 'What is an Idea', *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 207.
[123]Benjamin, *OGTD*, 36.

using inductive or deductive methods. Unlike genre, the idea, for example the idea of *Trauerspiel*, does not deduce the essence of artworks through external methods such as deduction or induction. Rather, this common essence is determined internally. This is possible because the idea is an expressive centre, or, in other words, a monad. The significance of the category of the idea in opposition to those of 'concept' or 'genre' lies in its possibility of expressing a totality within the individual. Benjamin targets Benedetto Croce, for example, for favouring the multiplicity of singular artworks over the definition of an essence that would unify them.[124] In Leibniz's theory of expression, Benjamin identifies a possibility of designating ideas as a unity holding a multiplicity.

'The idea is a monad – the pre-established representation of phenomena resides within it, as in their objective interpretation [*objective Interpretation*]', writes Benjamin in the section of the 'Prologue' titled '*Monadology*'.[125] As an expressive centre, the idea mirrors the pre-established relations between the phenomena of the world, and this mirroring, constantly in flux to reflect the changing world, consists of their 'objective interpretation'. This capability of expressing the totality of the relations between phenomena that make up the world affords the idea access to 'true scientific content'.[126] The task Benjamin sets for himself in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* is to offer such an 'objective interpretation' of baroque plays. To this end, he follows Leibniz, whom he describes as a philosopher who penetrated so deeply into the real as to reveal an 'objective interpretation' of the world.[127]

The notion of 'objective interpretation' is not synonymous with the conception of 'immanent critique' Benjamin appropriates elsewhere from the early Romantics. Rather, here Benjamin strives to go beyond the Romantics' understanding of critique.[128] To be sure, 'objective interpretation' is immanent in the sense that unlike the deductive or inductive methods of interpretation, it is internal to the artwork, dependent on neither recipient nor critic. Yet more important for the 'objectivity' in question is the 'idea' as an intermediary category between the singular artwork and art as a whole, and its totalising effect. The interpretation of each artwork is immanent to the idea because the idea expresses the world as a totality. Through its totalisation the idea is 'redeemed', writes Benjamin.

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[124] Benjamin, *OGTD*, 43–45. As Benjamin writes of Croce's *The Essence of Aesthetic*: 'But the psychologising tendency, thanks to which his definition of art as "expression" is undermined and replaced by that of "intuition", prevents him from perceiving this'. See Croce Benedetto 1866-1952, *Essence of Aesthetic.* (Hardpress Ltd, 2013).
[125] Ibid, 47 modified.
[126] Ibid, 42.
[127] Ibid, 48/*GS*1, 228.
[128] Ibid, 37.

As expressive centres, ideas cannot be apprehended through vision. This is because ideas, like monads, consist of a structure of relations, in which the whole is mirrored in the part from a certain point of view. Benjamin describes the idea as a linguistic component: every word has a profane meaning on the one hand, and a non-communicable 'symbolic essence', the idea, on the other. This is the 'historical codification' to which Benjamin referred earlier, described in this case as the act of naming. Benjamin defines the idea through its temporality; the idea becomes such in the moment within which the word becomes symbolic.[129] The characterisation of the idea as symbolic pre-empts the reference to Leibniz's monad, designating the idea through the relation between symbol and symbolised. Through representation in language, philosophical contemplation can restore these symbolic essences or ideas, by bringing ideas to 'self-understanding' [*Selbstverständigung*], an independent understanding of their internal nexus of relations, that is the opposite of mediation/communication [*Mitteilung*]. The harmonious relation between ideas, each an isolated essence, constitutes truth.

Designating the idea as expressive centre/symbolic essence affords Benjamin the following. First, it allows an internal, objective, interpretation of ideas, through 'self-understanding'. Objectivity may be reached by deep immersion in reality, as Benjamin learns from the baroque, which he views as the age of profundity.[130] Second, it enables Benjamin to precisely define the connection between language and history that lies at the basis of his philosophical history. From Benjamin's critique of the Romantics' 'speculations' in which 'truth assumed the character of a reflective consciousness', we gather the importance for him of the 'linguistic character' of truth; its inclusion of an image of total history, and its consisting of a structure of relations between independent essences, that Benjamin likens to 'suns' or planets, each revolving in its own orbit. What is symbolised or expressed by the idea, then, is the world including its history, not the absolute. For this reason Benjamin models his theory of ideas on Leibniz's expression rather than Spinoza's.

We have seen that Deleuze suggested that Leibniz's metaphysics, specifically the conception of the differential, allowed him to replace the truth-false binary with that of the singular-ordinary. Benjamin attempts to retain both. On the one hand, the philosophy of art Benjamin puts forward examines how singular works are different rather than what they have in common. On the other, he argues for a conception of truth that may be attained by the philosopher. He criticises literary-historical analysis for assuming unity between various works,

[129] Ibid, 36/*GS*1,216.
[130] As Benjamin writes, 'Even the danger of allowing oneself to plunge from the heights of knowledge into the profoundest depth of the baroque state of mind, is not a negligible one', *OGTD*, 56.

classifying works according to the category of the average. Benjamin argues that in order to investigate an idea of art, such as the *Trauerspiel*, the most extreme cases should be examined.[131] The singular thus holds the key, or functions as a point of entry, into the general. Although he argues against the Romantics that the number of ideas is finite, and therefore the same ideas must be repeated, Benjamin describes every idea as including infinite variety.[132]

6. Cohen and Benjamin on Origin, Logical and Historical

Through his conception of origin, Benjamin attempts to introduce a historical conception of singularity that is not related to genesis. He does so by describing origin as imperfect and incomplete, a continual, open-ended process. Benjamin does not refer directly to Leibniz's differential, yet his understanding of the singular is informed by Leibniz, mediated by Cohen's principle of origin, a methodological and ontological principle.[133] Benjamin retains the notion of origin as a key epistemological category, and as the productive force both of being and of itself, while rejecting Cohen's assumption that 'the productive force of thought can only manifest itself through the mediation of logic'.[134]

Leibniz's infinity as grounds for the finite serves as the nucleus of Cohen's origin. Cohen viewed infinitesimal calculus as the crux of scientific method, upon which the certainty of science depends. As he writes, '[t]he precise question and decisive answer for an indispensable, irreplaceable meaning of the thought as production must be obtained from the analysis of infinity'.[135] By positing infinitesimal calculus as origin, Cohen sought to overcome the foundation of Kant's epistemological doctrine in reality, leading to his subject-object, sensibility-understanding distinctions. This was achieved through designing the principle of origin as inherent to the system of knowledge, which also serves as its ground. By recourse to infinitesimal calculus as the principle of becoming, Cohen overcame the strict separations

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[131] Ibid, 38–39.
[132] 'Philosophy is – and rightly so – a struggle for the representation of a limited number of words which always remain the same […] a struggle for the representation of ideas', Ibid, 37.
[133] See Helmut Holzhey, *Natorp und Cohen* (Basel: Schwabe, 1986), 184f, and Poma, *The Critical Philosophy of Hermann Cohen*, 293n.
[134] Hermann Cohen, *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis* 4. Auflage, 3. Nachdruckauflage; Nachdruck der 2. verbesserten Auflage Berlin von 1914. Werke, Hermann Cohen. Im Auftr. des Hermann-Cohen-Archivs am Philosophischen Seminar der Universität Zürich und des Moses-Mendelssohn-Zentrums für Europäisch-Jüdische Studien, Universität Potsdam, von Helmut Holzhey ... ; Bd. 6, ed. Helmut Holzhey, (Hildesheim: Olms, 2005). 23, my translation.
[135] Cohen, *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis*, 35, quoted in Andrea Poma, *The Critical Philosophy of Hermann Cohen* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997,92.

present in Kant's 'Transcendental Idealism' between being and non-being, and between subject and object.

Cohen substitutes Kant's synthesis with origin, by replacing 'the question concerning the *connection* of A and B as given elements with the problem of the *origin* of B from that which is not'.[136] Nothingness thus becomes, in Cohen's thought, the very condition of being, just as rest, within the infinite system, contains an infinitesimally small movement or change; 'Pure thought produces the determinable itself, before its determination'.[137] Furthermore, Cohen viewed his principle of origin as distinct from the Romantics' logic of being, and from Kant's grounding of his doctrine, as Cohen understands it, on reality [*Realität*].[138] Thus instead of cognition being grounded in being, according to Cohen being is grounded in thought, and 'thought is thought of origin'.[139]

Therefore, as Poma writes, on the one hand, the principle of origin is 'the supreme principle of pure knowledge'. All pure cognition must be a modification of the principle of origin, writes Cohen, since the logic of origin is the logic of pure cognition.[140] Yet, on the other, it is also a ground, or origin, not only of being but also of itself. Thought is thus productive of itself. Unlike Kant, Cohen argues that nothing is given to thought; thought constitutes and grounds its own objects. The central instrument for this productive, constitutive thought, or logic of origin, is infinitesimal calculus.

Benjamin criticises Cohen, in 'On the Program for a Coming Philosophy', for subordinating experience to thought and mathematics, and therefore favouring objective logical experience over subjective ephemeral experience. Yet like Cohen, Benjamin charges Kant with disrupting the continuity between experience and knowledge; between a priori reason and a posteriori experience. Benjamin's conception of origin consists of a return to Leibniz's infinitesimal, via Cohen's principle of origin, as the grounds for a conception of singularity based on a continuity between experience and knowledge.

Cohen highlights Leibniz's designation of thought as continuous, acknowledging the manner in which Leibniz applied his principle of continuity and reflections on infinity more generally to domains other than mathematics. To his mind, the significance of Leibniz's principle of continuity lies in its framing of relations between elements in nature and in thought

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[136] See Marco Giovanelli, *Reality and Negation - Kant's Principle of Anticipations of Perception: An Investigation of Its Impact on the Post-Kantian Debate*, Studies in German Idealism, volume 11 (Dordrecht Heidelberg London New York: Springer, 2011), 204.
[137] Poma, *The Critical Philosophy of Hermann Cohen*, 95.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Cohen, *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis*, 36.
[140] Ibid, 33.

through the infinitesimal method. The infinitesimal, in Cohen's view, is the fundamental concept of any truly modern logic of science, as he criticises Kant for failing to perceive.[141]

Cohen credits Kant for having transformed metaphysics into 'critique' by applying the Newtonian system of principles to metaphysical thought.[142] And yet, he also challenges Kant's distinction between intuition and concepts, denying that intuition plays a role in knowledge acquisition and thereby rejecting Kant's category of 'givens'. Further, Cohen's conception of knowledge as dynamic and continually evolving was not compatible with Kant's schema of fixed a priori categories. This is one feature of Cohen's theory of knowledge which Benjamin takes up. Cohen's principle of origin embodies his conception of the evolving character (*Werdecharakter*) of science.[143] The principle of origin is a principle of thought, through which Cohen identifies thought with a process of becoming, grounding finite being in infinite thought. Thought does not consist, therefore, of representations or sensations; rather, it is a principle of the mathematical science of nature.

Origin functions, first, as an epistemological principle par excellence, since 'all pure knowledge cannot be but inflections of the principle of origin […] [T]hus the logic of origin becomes that of pure knowledge'.[144] Second, origin serves as ground both of knowledge and of itself: thought is 'the productive activity itself […], the goal and the object of its activity'.[145] Thus there can be no givens or 'things in themselves', since what produces being is thought itself. Benjamin too defines origin as becoming, in a reformulation of Cohen's principle of origin: 'The term origin is not intended to describe a process by which the existent came into being, but rather to describe what emerges from the process of becoming and disappearance'.[146]

Benjamin describes the original phenomena as being defined by their incompleteness, as every singular monad is an incomplete representation of the world from a different perspective. The dialectic inherent in origin 'shows singularity and repetition to be conditioned by one another in all essentials', writes Benjamin. Yet he denies that this conditioning of singularity upon repetition consists of a model of eternal return, as manifest in an early draft of the 'Prologue', where he defines a philosophical history that would concentrate on historical time:

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[141] Cohen, *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis*, quoted in Thomas Mormann and Mikhail Katz, 'Infinitesimals as an Issue of Neo-Kantian Philosophy of Science', *HOPOS: The Journal of the International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science* 3, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 244. See Hermann Cohen, *Das Prinzip der Infinitesimal-Methode und seine Geschichte, ein Kapitel zur Grundlegung der Erkenntniskritik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968), 59, *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis*, 35.
[142] See Cohen, *Das Prinzip der Infinitesimal-Methode*, 55.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Cohen, *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis*, 36, my translation.
[145] Ibid, 41.
[146] See Benjamin, *OGTD*, 45.

> Such a conception of history, for which the border between natural and world history should become severely problematic, would regard repetition as an essential moment in every form of periodisation that occurs in natural and world history, and would turn the question in what sense repetition can appear in history – unrepeatable in itself – into the *experimentum crucis* of its philosophy of history.[147]

While the question of the form of repetition is a crucial one for such a philosophical history, history in itself, as a whole, is unrepeatable.

'The category of origin is not therefore, as Cohen holds, a purely logical one, but a historical one', writes Benjamin.[148] He locates the origin not in thought, as does Cohen, but rather in the 'fore and after history' of the phenomenon. Benjamin's concept of origin, therefore, returns, in a sense, via Cohen to Leibniz. Origin becomes a category not of thought itself, but of the history of thought and science, and thus of history more generally, corresponding with Leibniz's emphasis on the historical nature of phenomena, which contain both marks of their past and a 'script' of their future.

7. Leibniz and Deleuze on Minute Perceptions

7.1 Differentials of Consciousness

Deleuze turns, as well, to Leibniz's differential calculus in an attempt to reformulate a category of singularity grounded in a continuity between experience and learning. Challenging the traditional conception of knowledge as something that may be possessed, Deleuze replaces the conception of knowledge acquisition with a continual process of learning. He interprets Leibniz's theory of minute perceptions as describing the relations between the remarkable and the ordinary: the differential relation between minute perceptions and conscious perceptions is one between the remarkable and the regular, rather than part-whole relations. 'We must understand literally – that is mathematically – that a conscious perception is produced when at least two heterogenous parts enter into a differential relation that determines a singularity'.[149]

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[147] Benjamin, *GS*1, 935, translation quoted in Hanssen, 'Philosophy at Its Origin', 824, modified.
[148] See Benjamin, *OGTD*, 46.
[149] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 88/ Différence et répétition, 239.

Singularity is produced, then, by the understanding of differential relations as active internally, determining the process of moving from unconscious to conscious experience.

In his analysis of Leibniz in *The Fold*, Deleuze highlights, as Benjamin does implicitly, the permanent state of incomplete perception of every monad.[150] Leibniz's theory of 'minute perceptions' serves as a focal point in Deleuze's reading of Leibniz therein as well as in *Difference and Repetition*. By focusing on Leibniz's minute perceptions, Deleuze suggests 'in between' states of consciousness like sleep, fainting or hallucination as models for learning. Deleuze highlights differential calculus as a process by which thought is generated internally. For Deleuze, singularity is a category of thought of learning as well as an ontological category, not one of history as in Benjamin. In this sense he comes closer to Cohen's 'logical interpretation' of Leibniz.

Grounded in the logic of infinitesimals guiding his calculus and dynamics, Leibniz put forward a revolutionary theory of unconscious, known as the theory of 'minute perceptions'. Just as bodies, according to Leibniz, are never completely still, rather, when seemingly still they are in fact minutely dynamic, so perception never ceases from its activity. 'Minute perceptions' consist of a constant flow of impressions made on us by exterior bodies that in some cases enter our conscious realm. As Leibniz writes,

> These minute perceptions, then, are more effective in their results than has been recognized. They constitute that *je ne sais quoi,* those flavours, those images of sensible qualities, vivid in the aggregate but confused as to the parts; those impressions which are made on us by the bodies around us and which involve the infinite; that connection that each being has with all the rest of the universe.[151]

Minute perceptions consist of the scattering of seemingly negligible impressions through which other bodies affect our own, expressing the continuity between our consciousness and the universe. They vary in degrees of intensity, becoming more vivid when coming together and entering our consciousness. Leibniz often uses the image of the sound of roaring waves to illustrate these ideas. When standing on the beach we hear the sound of many waves merged together unconsciously; it enters our consciousness only when a single wave

[150] Ibid, 86/235.
[151] Leibniz, 'Preface', *New Essays*, 55.

touches us, or affects us in a specific way. The fact that we are not conscious of our initial perception of the subdued sound of multiple waves does not mean this sound is not perceived, minutely, or in a manner lacking in intensity.

'Every consciousness consists of a threshold', writes Deleuze in *The Fold*. The threshold is crossed when 'two heterogenous elements at least enter into a differential relation that determines a singularity'.[152] In order to discern singular elements within the flow or confused perceptions, two or more perceptions must interact in a way that would produce a third, conscious perception. The relation between them is differential, i.e. the elements are determined only by their relation to one another; this determination is internal to their reciprocal relation.[153] Instead of a conscious perception being related to an object in space, as per Kant, it is related to a multiplicity of minute unconscious perceptions as a singular relates to the ordinary or unremarkable. The conscious perception is thus determined by the differential relation between minute unconscious perceptions.

As Deleuze writes, Maimon was the first to overcome Kant's concept-intuition dualism by returning to Leibniz's 'differentials of consciousness' as such, his theory satisfies Deleuze's requirement for enabling an immanent model of learning.[154] Kant is famously criticised for the circularity of his argument, which assumes a priori facts of knowledge such as mathematical truths, and then seeks their condition of possibility. In assuming a priori knowledge that serves as the foundation of knowledge of the transcendental subject, Kant posits a condition of knowledge that is external to reason itself. Maimon, and with him Deleuze, argue that for Kant, difference is external to determinable intuition and determining concept. According to Maimon, a priori knowledge must be itself engendered by reason. He appropriates from Leibniz the determination of differential relations as the source of genesis of real objects. Through Leibniz's understanding of differential relations, Maimon, and Deleuze in his footsteps, conceives of difference as determined in a manner that is internal to reason or thought.[155]

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[152] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 88 modified/*Le Pli*, 117.
[153] See Leibniz, 'Justification of Infinitesimal Calculus by that of Ordinary Algebra' (1701) *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 542–543.
[154] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 173.
[155] See Daniel W. Smith, 'Genesis and Difference: Deleuze, Maïmon, and the Post-Kantian Reading of Leibniz', in *Deleuze and The Fold: A Critical Reader*, ed. Sjoerd van Tuinen and Niamh McDonnell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 132–54.

7.2 Degrees of Intensity

Deleuze describes the internal concept of difference, determined by differential relations, as 'intensity'. As he writes, 'intensity is the form of difference in so far as this is the reason of the sensible. Every intensity is differential, by itself a difference'.[156] Deleuze's concept of intensity is shaped, once again, by 'correcting' a Kantian conception, namely that of 'intensive qualities', by recourse to Leibniz.

In the section on 'Anticipation of Perception' in the first critique, Kant defines 'intensive qualities' in the following: 'In all appearances, the real, which is an object of the sensation, has intensive magnitude'.[157] That is, objects of experience have degrees of reality that are determined independently from their extension in space. This 'dynamic' understanding of matter, like Leibniz's, views matter as irreducible to size and shape alone. Deleuze's concept of intensity is based on this dynamic understanding of degrees of reality, yet he criticises Kant for designating 'intensive quantity' as only applying to matter that fills a given extensity.

Leibniz's understanding of intensity, as the varying degrees of sensible qualities that compose perception, fulfils the demands of the concept of intensity sought by Deleuze, one that is independent from extension. According to Leibniz, perceptions are actualised, becoming conscious and therefore more intense, through differential relations. Their degrees of intensity are therefore determined by difference, which corresponds with Deleuze's model of intensity as 'difference in itself'.

In a famous critique of Leibniz's theory of absolute space, Kant described the difference between two enantiomorphs, such as that between the left and right glove of the same person, as internal.[158] Yet, as Deleuze notes, since this difference is non-intrinsic and non-conceptual, it cannot truly be internal, that is, intensive. As it relates to extension in space, it can only be represented in the opposition between each hand and extensity as a whole.[159]

Deleuze argues rather that such difference between two enantiomorphs, the 'paradox of symmetrical objects', must have an intensive source, citing Cohen as correctly seeking to reformulate 'intensive quantities' in his interpretation of Kant.[160] In Leibniz, on the contrary,

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[156] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 222.
[157] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B207.
[158] Immanuel Kant, 'On the Basis of the Difference of Regions in Space' (1768), in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Reimer, de Gruyter, 1900), Vol. 2, 378.
[159] He refers to the distinction between *innere Verschiedenheit* and *innerlich* in Kant's 'Prolegomena' 13, in Immanuel Kant, Gary C. Hatfield, and Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science: With Selections from the Critique of Pure Reason*, Rev. ed, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
[160] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 231.

as Deleuze notes, there is an affinity of extrinsic differences and intrinsic, conceptual ones, since all predicates are contained in the concept, which in effect renders all differences conceptual. This affinity is grounded on an internal, intensive, differential process.[161]

7.3 Learning to Swim

Using Leibniz's conception of 'minute perceptions', Deleuze describes the idea as a system of relations between differentials, and learning as an interaction between our minds and bodies on the one hand, and singular points within the problematic idea on the other:

> The idea of the sea, for example, as Leibniz showed, is a system of liaisons or differential relations between particulars and singularities […] [T]o learn to swim is to conjugate the distinctive points of our bodies with the singular points of the objective Idea in order to form a problematic field. This conjugation determines for us a threshold of consciousness at which our real acts are adjusted to our perceptions of the real relations of the object, thereby providing a solution to the problem.[162]

Deleuze designates the point of shifting from unconscious into conscious perceptions, in which the singular is engendered by differential relations (named in *The Fold* 'the point of inflection'), as the point at which the problem is solved, and something is learned. He describes relations of expression between our conscious and unconscious perceptions, our actions, and the 'real relations of the object'. Problematic ideas consist of elements of nature and at the same time comprise particles of our unconscious perceptions, marking a 'profound complicity' between nature and soul. While Benjamin describes the inner continuity between experience and knowledge as mirrored by an external continuity between history and nature, for Deleuze there is no strict separation between internal and external, consciousness being connected in a non-mediated manner to nature. The manner in which Deleuze draws on Leibniz's understanding of

[161] Ibid, 26.
[162] Ibid, 165/214.

the unconscious in his theory of learning is significant for Deleuze's own conception of the unconscious further developed in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*.[163]

8. Deleuze on Individuation, Expression, Crystallisation

Deleuze hesitates between two interpretations of Leibniz, which we may call the 'Cartesian Leibniz' vs. the 'Nietzschean Leibniz'. Deleuze asks: How might we understand Leibniz's statement that a clear idea is clear inasmuch as it is confused? The Cartesian Leibniz would understand this as meaning that the clear idea is confused because it is not clear enough. Leibniz in this case follows Descartes' understanding of human ideas as extending across a range between the clear and the confused. The Nietzschean Leibniz would rather suggest that there is a difference of nature, not of degree, between clear and distinct, hence the clear is in itself confused, and the distinct in itself obscure. An idea that is clear inasmuch as it is confused, or, as Deleuze describes it, 'the properly philosophical stupor of the Dionysian idea', is another way of describing Deleuze's virtual idea/problem.[164]

In 'Asymmetrical Synthesis of the Sensible', the closing chapter of *Difference and Repetition*, it seems that Deleuze finally opts for the second, 'Nietzschean' interpretation of Leibniz. This interpretation then plays an important role in Deleuze's forming of his own theory of individuation.

> Only Leibniz approached the conditions of a logic of thought, precisely inspired by his theory of individuation and expression. Despite the complexity and ambiguity of his texts, it does indeed seem at times that the expressed (the continuum of differential relations or the unconscious virtual Idea) should be in itself distinct and obscure: for example all the drops of water in the sea, as genetic elements and their differential relations, the variations of these relations and the distinctive points they comprise. And that the expressor (the perceiving, imagining or thinking individual) is by nature clear and confused: for example our perception of the noise of the sea, which confusedly includes the whole, yet clearly expresses only certain

[163] See also Cours Vincennes, cours du 29/4/1980: 'For Leibniz there is a differential rapport between conscious and unconscious perceptions (in contrast to Freud's oppositional relation)'.
[164] Ibid, 214.

> relations and points by virtue of our bodies and the threshold of consciousness they determine.[165]

Instead of the idea being clear and distinct, the expressed is both distinct and obscure, and the expresser is clear and confused. The relation between the genetic elements, or the noise of drops of water, and the sound of the sea as a whole is not one of part-whole, but rather of virtual-actual. Once the tiny perceptions of the sounds of drops cross the threshold of consciousness, they become actual. Thus human experience in general, as well as the process of the posing and solving of problematic ideas, is best described, according to Deleuze, as one of actualisation rather than of unification or synthesis.

Although Deleuze harshly criticises Leibniz, it is clear that it is precisely in Leibniz's metaphysics and epistemology that he finds an alternative to Kant's transcendental subject. Deleuze's conception of individuation, alongside its source in Gilbert Simondon's theory of individuation, is informed by Leibniz's conception of the individual substance, which is constituted by its differential relations to other individuals that make the system of the world.[166] Individuation and differentiation are two discernible yet interlinked processes, according to Deleuze:

> Individuation does not presuppose differentiation, it gives rise to it. Qualities and extensities, forms and matters, species and parts are not primary, they are imprisoned in individuals as in crystals. And it is the world itself, that may be read as in a crystal ball in the moving depth of individuating differences or differences of intensity.[167]

The constitution of the individual and that of the world are interdependent, as in Leibniz's expressive model. The individual includes its qualities and parts 'as in a crystal' while the world and its events may be read within the fluctuations of intensity that constitute the individual. Dosse and Buci-Glucksmann trace the omnipresence of the crystal in Deleuze's work, the crystalline plane serving as a model of his concept of the 'event', as Dosse writes, to his reading of Leibniz.[168] Indeed, in the above passage, the crystal embodies Deleuze's version

[165] Ibid, 326/253, modified.
[166] Ibid, 246/317.
[167] Ibid, 247/318.
[168] *Biographie croisée*, 534. Dosse cites Christine Buci-Glucksmann, 'Les cristaux de l'art : une esthétique du virtuel', *Rue Descartes* 20 (May 1998): 95–111.

of Leibniz's 'living mirror' metaphor, emphasising the capacity of a crystal ball to reflect events future and past.

Deleuze draws on Leibniz, yet, in the same breath, distances himself from him by defining difference via the terms 'expression', 'implication', and 'envelopment', used when discussing Leibniz's theory of expression in *Expressionism in Philosophy* and later in *The Fold*. Thus, in *The Fold*, implication is described as a key characteristic of the individual monad: the monad implicates the world that does not exist outside of the monads that express it. In the final chapter of *Difference*, intensities function both as 'enveloped' and as 'enveloping'; they are folded into one another, so to speak. As enveloping, intensity expresses the world clearly, while when functioning as enveloped, it expresses the world confusedly.[169] The intensities that are enveloping belong to the individual, or thinker, and are *both* clear and confused; those that are enveloped belong to the idea, and are *both* distinct and obscure. Thus Deleuze uses Leibniz's conception of expression, in its Nietzschean interpretation, to transcend the binary thinking that, he claims, has plagued the philosophy of representation since Descartes. While in Descartes, clear-and-distinct describes the mind, and confused-and-obscure describes the body, in Leibniz, according to Deleuze's reading, clear-and-confused relates to mind; distinct-and-obscure to body. The location of the monad on the range between clear and confused perception is defined as its perspective, that which marks it as a unique individual. Deleuze uses these aspects of Leibniz's metaphysics in order to offer a model that forms a continuity between mind and body.

Deleuze concludes the chapter, and *Difference and Repetition* as a whole, with a brief statement in which the interaction between the individual and his or her other are defined through the conceptions of expression and implication. Instead of designating the other [*L'autrui*] as either object or subject, Deleuze argues, the other is 'defined in each system by its expressive value – in other words, by its implicit and enveloping value'. The 'other' is defined by the way in which it expresses a possible world, i.e. by how it is implicated in this world and this world is implicated in it. The multiplicity of possible worlds are in themselves our 'others', and hence, in order not to either objectify or subjectify others, we must consider them as the expression of possible worlds. Language is described by the means by which the other makes such possible worlds real, and as such, it is the source of lies. On the other hand,

[169] Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, 247/*Différence et repetition*, 318.

language itself functions as an expressive other, or an enveloping centre. The more expressive it is, the higher its tendency to internalise difference.[170]

Epilogue:
Learning as Recollection; Plato, Benjamin Deleuze

Besides critiques of epistemology/*Erkenntnistheorie*, Benjamin in the 'Prologue' to the *Trauerspiel* book and Deleuze in the third chapter of *Difference and Repetition* offer conceptions of learning and philosophising based on reformulations of the conceptions of expression, infinite task, and idea, which stem from their respective readings of Leibniz. Both texts are profoundly informed by the idealist tradition, specifically Leibniz and Plato, yet at the same time, they strongly reject this tradition in order to inaugurate an alternative philosophy. For Benjamin, this is a philosophy of history tasked with the analysis of works of art, while for Deleuze, this is a philosophy of difference.

These distinct aspects of their theories of learning are manifest in their respective references to the archetypal theory of learning presented in Plato's *Meno*, and discussed by Leibniz in his *Discourse on Metaphysics*.[171] The dialogue is renowned for describing learning as a process of recollection. Socrates suggests to his opponent, Meno, that learning consists of the recollection of knowledge that the soul innately possesses from its previous life. The knowledge in question is mathematical: Socrates illustrates his argument by drawing a square with a stick in the sand and asking a slave boy a series of questions in geometry in relation to its dimensions. Thereby, he shows that the process of learning is 'nothing but recollection' activated through questioning, rather than teaching.[172] He also justifies his own method of asking his opponents questions until they reach an *aporia*, or state of puzzlement or doubt.

Benjamin compares the concern of philosophy, described as the restoration of 'the symbolic character of the word' through the recollection of 'primordial perception' [*Urvernehmen*], to Platonic *anamnesis*. 'Except that here it is not a question of actualisation in

[170] Ibid, 335.
[171] Leibniz refers to *Meno* in *Discourse on Metaphysics*, one of the few texts by Leibniz that Benjamin cites. In Leibniz's interpretation, the soul recollects data not from previous lives, but from periods in which it is inactive, or does not think: 'our soul always has in it the quality of representing to itself any nature or form whatsoever, when the occasion to think of it presents itself. And I believe that this quality of our soul, in so far as it expresses some nature, or essence, is properly the idea of the thing, which is in us and which is always in us, whether we think of it or not'. Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, 26, Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, 58.
[172] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*,114–24, quote on 114.

visual terms [*anschauliche Vergegenwärtigung*]; but rather in philosophical contemplation the idea is released from the heart of reality as the word, reclaiming its name-giving rights'.[173] For Benjamin, philosophy is tasked with restoring a specific kind of knowledge: that of the symbolic, non-communicable aspect of words. He refers to Plato's dialogue in order to highlight that philosophy is a kind of learning that takes place in time, through a process of recollection aided not by visual aids as in *Meno* but through words. Through the representation [*Darstellung*] of words in philosophy they regain their symbolic, primary character in which 'the idea reaches self-understanding'.[174] This process of recollection is also compared to the act of naming, in which knowledge is recovered through an affinity between the name and what is named.

By evoking *Meno* Benjamin critiques the narrow conception of knowledge as mathematical knowledge that can be represented visually. Instead, he alludes to an idealistic aspect of linguistic knowledge that lies in opposition to external communication [*Mitteilung*]. Philosophical truths, he argues, are revealed in this non-communicable aspect of language rather than through mathematical deduction. Benjamin reformulates, in the 'Prologue', the conception of the 'idea', which, following Plato, he views as foundational for philosophical work, through a critique of Plato's *eidos* or visual form, suggesting that ideas function on a non-visual, non-communicable level.

In *Logic of Sense* and *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze defines the very task of modern philosophy as the reversing of Platonism.[175] Yet, while he views Plato as one of the founders of the philosophy of representation, Deleuze does not dismiss every aspect of his philosophy. In the chapter *l'image de la pensée* he alludes to *Meno* as part of his critique of the traditional conception of knowledge. He distinguishes between knowledge [*le savoir*], attained by apprenticeship [*l'apprentissage*] on the one hand, and learning [*l'apprendre*] on the other. While knowledge is gained through rudimentary empirical experience, using the principle of identity, learning is a transcendental process produced by and producing differences. In *Meno*, Deleuze writes, there is a true learning process of the soul, and yet,

> […] a new Meno would say: it is knowledge [*le savoir*] that is nothing more than an empirical figure, a simple result which continuously falls back into experience; whereas learning [*l'apprendre*] is the true transcendental

[173] Benjamin, *OGTD,* 37/*GS*1, 217.
[174] Ibid, 36 modified/217.
[175] See for example Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 253.

> structure which unites difference to difference, dissimilarity to dissimilarity, without mediating between them; and introduces time into thought – not in the form of a mythical past or former present, but in the pure form of an empty time in general.[176]

Deleuze describes learning as a structure of relations in which differences are brought to bear upon one another. He follows Plato in depicting learning as a movement of the soul in time (in its pure form); hence learning cannot be reduced to knowledge. Like Benjamin, Deleuze describes learning as immediate, and as a passage through the unconscious. At the same time, Deleuze criticises Plato's understanding of knowledge as innate and absolute, while in his symbolic theory of naming, Benjamin puts forward a notion of absolute knowledge.

[176] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*,167/ *Différence et repetition*, 216.

Chapter Two: Force

Benjamin's Intensive Image of Historical Experience

> Perhaps my life is nothing but an image of this kind; perhaps I am doomed to retrace my steps under the illusion that I am exploring, doomed to try and learn what I should simply recognise, learning a mere fraction of what I have forgotten.
>
> —Breton, *Nadja*

Introduction

'Whenever a dialectical process takes place we are dealing with a monad', writes Benjamin in 'Convolute N', entitled 'On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress' [*Erkenntnistheoretisches, Theorie des Fortschritts*], of the *Arcades Project*.[1] The fragment lists five rules for the 'elementary doctrine of historical materialism'. That is, historiographical rules that the historical materialist should aim to follow. As Benjamin writes in another fragment, since the objects of history are structured as monads, the dialectical process of historiography is that which engages with monadic structures.[2]

Benjamin's use of Leibniz's term 'monad', here and in the *Theses on the Concept of History*, is surprising for two reasons. First because of the way it is conjoined with the term 'dialectics': if there were a clear-cut division between Benjamin's earlier writing, often defined as 'metaphysical' or 'idealistic', and his later historical-materialist concerns, such formulations would not exist. Moreover, in his late philosophy of history, written in the 1930s, Benjamin insists on the 'discontinuity' of history, which the term 'dialectics' implies as well. The monad,

[1] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N11,4], 476 modified / *GS*5, 596.
[2] Ibid, [N,10a,3], 475. Benjamin's use of the terms 'historical materialism' and 'dialectics' is specific and idiosyncratic. I follow Löwy's understanding of Benjamin's conception of history: 'taking its inspiration from Marxist and messianic sources, it uses nostalgia for the past as a revolutionary method for the critique of the present', in Michael Löwy, *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History'* (London: Verso, 2016). When Benjamin refers to the 'historical materialist', he sets a standard for the kind of historiography the historian should strive for, and at the same time refers to his own historical-cultural project of the *Arcades Project*. As in the 'Prologue', many of Benjamin's later references to 'history' concern the history of art. See, for example: 'for the dialectical historian concerned with works of art, these works integrate their fore-history as well as their after-history; and it is by virtue of their after history that their fore-history is recognizable as involved in a continuous process of change'. Walter Benjamin, 'Eduard Fuchs, Collector and Historian', in *SW* 3, 261.

as we have seen, primarily denotes continuity between expressor and expressed. Second because we can assume several years have passed since Benjamin's engagement with Leibniz's philosophy. As noted earlier, there is some evidence that Benjamin read Leibniz, and commentaries on Leibniz, as a student, while there is no verification of his having read Leibniz after completing *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* in 1925.

This perhaps unexpected use of Leibniz's conceptions in Benjamin's later writing, I argue, makes manifest the manner in which Leibniz's understanding of the monad, as an expressive, intensive substance endowed with force, links Benjamin's earlier and later philosophy of historical knowledge and experience. In this vein, the present chapter argues that Leibniz's conception of force, specifically what he calls 'living force', and the internal dynamic within the monad between 'virtuality' and 'actualisation', underlie Benjamin's theory of historical experience, wherein two of Benjamin's concerns converge.

The first concern is a crisis of experience that in a sense results from the crisis of the possibility of its narration, its telling [*Erzählen*] or oral communication, as Benjamin relates in his essay on Leskov (written in 1936).[3] The second is a critique of history and historiography that Benjamin delineates in both early and later texts, the main targets of which are Kant and the Historicists, whom Benjamin criticises for their teleological and progressive narration of history. These two concerns are interlinked, in that in both cases Benjamin addresses experience and the possibility of its narration, whether as a fictional or a historical account. Moreover, as we have seen in the first chapter, Benjamin suggests a continuity between experience and history, and understands experience as historical by nature. This is already apparent in the 'Prologue' and becomes more manifest in the *Arcades Project*, for example in his pronouncement of a 'Copernican revolution in historical perception [*Anschauung*]' that challenges both the conception of the past as a fixed point and Kant's understanding of perception as founded upon transcendental forms.[4]

Since the crisis in experience is intertwined with the crisis of its narration, I argue, Benjamin's attempt of offering, in Jay's phrasing, a 'redemptive notion of experience', calls for the shattering of traditional forms of narrativity, and replacing them with image-montage as a new form of narrativity or storytelling.[5] This form hinges upon a conceptualisation of the image as a kind of monad or expressive centre that contains self-activating force. The vitalist and

[3] Benjamin, 'The Storyteller, Observations on the Works of Nikolai Leskov' *SW*3,143–166.
[4] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [K1,2], 388/*GS*, 490. Consequently, while Kant views history as moving in time, according to Benjamin history constructs time. See Werner Hamacher, 'Now: Walter Benjamin and Historical Time', *Walter Benjamin and History* ed. Andrew E Benjamin (London; New York: Continuum, 2005), 46.
[5] Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience*, 317.

dynamic aspects of Leibniz's understanding of substance thus play a crucial role in Benjamin's philosophy of historical experience, despite Benjamin's earlier critique of the way the concept of *Erlebnis* was used within *Lebensphilosophie*.[6]

I will delineate here how the concept of the 'dialectical image', outlined in the *Arcades Project* and the 'theses' *On the Philosophy of History*, draws on two conceptions Benjamin developed in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, namely the 'idea' and 'allegory', which are described as expressive monads. However, unlike Leibniz's conception of active force, the monadic force in Benjamin's image-conceptions is violent, and its direction is reversed; rather than towards perfection, it tends towards destruction.

Based on his principle of conservation of force, the conception of force plays an important role in Leibniz's understanding of substance, and therefore in his metaphysics as well as his theories of knowledge and consciousness.[7] Every monad contains a self-generated force that drives it to action. Motivated by the monad's 'appetition' or conatus, this force carries it from one perception to the next. Force determines, then, both the manner in which the monad acts, and the manner in which it perceives or knows the world (which coalesce to some extent in Leibniz's philosophy). Tending towards perfection, active force drives the monad towards ever more clear and distinct perceptions.[8] In itself, force is never completely actualised; rather, it continuously tends towards actualisation. Driven by this force, the substance 'unfolds' moving from virtual to actual knowledge, and from virtual or unconscious perceptions to actual, conscious ones.

I suggest that this movement of actualisation motivated by force informs both Benjamin's concepts of the image, and Benjamin's conception of history as an image-montage. Force functions, then, both on an inter-monadic level – within the image-monad – and on an intra-monadic level – determining the relations between multiple image-monads, as it does in Leibniz's philosophy. In this manner, the 'actualisation' of history Benjamin describes in the *Arcades Project* may be understood as relying on an understanding of history past and future as virtually contained within the idea (in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* or in the dialectical image (in the *Arcades Project*).

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[6] Jay cites Benjamin's early critique, narrated by Scholem, of Buber's *Erlebnismystik* for its glorification of World War One military efforts. See Scholem, 'Story of a Friendship', 29, quoted in Jay, 'Songs of Experience', 126. According to Jay, this led to Benjamin's being more generally suspicious of *Lebensphilosophie*. See, Ibid, 317.

[7] As discussed, Leibniz's understanding of substance changed over time. In later work, he viewed action as derivative of substance, as Schepers discusses: 'matter and motion are not so much substances or things in themselves as the phenomena of the perceivers'. Heinrich Schepers, 'Monadic Perception', in *The Oxford Handbook of Leibniz*, ed. Maria Rosa Antognazza (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 381.

[8] Leibniz also describes a passive force that moves in the reverse direction, as we will discuss later.

Benjamin's dialectical image requires an arrest of movement, a 'standstill' or break that seems at odds with Leibniz's continual understanding of motion, which views rest not as the lack of motion, but rather as a minimal amount of motion. Yet although movement is unremitting, perception may be understood as interrupted in a sense through the delimitation of the monad's zone of expression or point of view. The monad's perspective, or, in other words, the degree to which it is actualised, thus serves to delimit breaks in the continuum. These 'breaks' are in a sense spatial rather than temporal, since they pertain to the monads' relations to one another at a given time. This facet of Leibniz's metaphysics is assimilated in the manner in which – within Benjamin's concept of the 'dialectical image' – the point of view of the present, or 'now', interrupts in a sense the continuity of history, mediating between its past and future perceptions. The 'actualisation' of history Benjamin describes, replacing the conception of 'progress', requires a shattering of traditional historical narratives and their replacement with a montage of 'dialectical images' that retain a clarity [*Anschaulichkeit*] of history.[9]

Force and action are interlinked within Leibniz's metaphysics with the principle of pre-established harmony, which determines that the actions of all monads are harmonised. As I have briefly outlined in the introduction, the deterministic tendency of his metaphysics comes to the fore in Leibniz's conception of 'Apokatastasis', a theory of eternal return. These tendencies are also apparent in Leibniz's own conception of history, which, grounded in his principle of continuity, viewed historical events as a casually driven chain. His vision of history as a unified system informed the conceptions of history and historiography of the historicists and Kant, later critiqued by Benjamin.

The final sections of the chapter will interrogate how, as part of his theory of historical experience, Benjamin engages with the threat of determinism that accompanies the appropriation of Leibniz's conceptions of force and 'intensivity'. These concerns are manifest in Benjamin's interpretation of Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*, and his recurrent references to the notions of 'Apokatastasis' and 'eternal return'. In the *Arcades Project* and his essay on Leskov, 'Apokatastasis' is presented as a form of redemption through a shift in vision; a restoration rather than repetition of the same.[10] On the other hand, Benjamin criticises, in the *Arcades Project*, Louis Auguste Blanqui's versions of eternal return. While, like Benjamin, Deleuze viewed eternal return as a figure of modernity, Benjamin's critique of the concept of 'eternal return' sets him apart from Deleuze, who also alludes to Mallarmé and

[9] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N2, 6], 461.
[10] 'In keeping with Russian folk belief, he interpreted the resurrection less as a transfiguration than a disenchantment', as Benjamin writes of Leskov, *SW*3, 158. See also *Arcades Project*, [N1a,3], 459.

Nietzsche in relation to Leibniz. For Deleuze, Nietzsche's eternal return, in which chance and necessity are inseparable, presents a way beyond Leibniz's notions of necessity and contingency.

1. Benjamin on Storytelling and Montage

1.1 The Crisis of Experience

In his essay on Nicolai Leskov, 'The Storyteller', Benjamin describes a process of decline in storytelling as an art-form which began following the First World War.[11] From the outset of the essay, storytelling is contrasted with vision through an image Benjamin uses of a human head or an animal's body carved in a rock that become visible only from a specific distance and point of view [*Blickwinkel*].[12] Vision from a distance, rather than from close-up, increases visibility, in a manner reminiscent of Benjamin's renowned conception of the 'aura' in the 'Artwork' essay, described as a 'unique appearance of a distance' [*einmalige Erscheinung einer Ferne*].[13]

Benjamin connects this decline in storytelling with a plummet in the value of experience [*Erfahrung*]. As mentioned, Benjamin was critical towards certain usage of the term *Erlebnis* in the context of *Lebensphilosophie*. This critique may have led him to privilege the term *Erfahrung* in this essay, in order to define a non-subjectivist concept of experience. The term life [*Leben*], which belongs to a set of concepts relating to Benjamin's reading and appropriations from Leibniz, is not similarly banished. Benjamin describes, for example, the 'living efficacy' [*lebendigen Wirksamkeit*] of the storyteller in the opening sentence of the essay.[14] I take Benjamin's persistent use of the terms 'life' and 'energy', here and in other texts, to be manifestations of his engagement with Leibniz's concept of 'living force'.

The First World War had changed the world to such an extent that experiences could no longer be orally communicated. Since storytellers source their material in experience transported from mouth to ear, the crisis in experience resulted in a crisis of its narration. Moreover, this double crisis affected the status of truth: 'Council woven into the fabric of lived life [*gelebten leben*] is wisdom. The art of storytelling [*des Erzählens*] is nearing its end because

[11] Benjamin, 'The Storyteller', in *SW* 3, 146/'Der Erzähler', in *GS* 2, 442.
[12] Ibid, 143/439.
[13] Benjamin, 'The Work of Art'(second version)104–105.
[14] Benjamin, 'The Storyteller', *SW* 3,143/ *GS*, 438.

the epic side of truth – wisdom – is dying out'.[15] The dying out of storytelling also marks a weakening of the possibility of communicating truths in the form of wisdom [*Weisheit*], and all that remains possible is, at best, to 'find a new beauty in what is vanishing'.[16]

The form of storytelling permitted continuity both between experience and its communication, and between the storyteller her listeners: 'The storyteller takes what he tells from experience – his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale'.[17]The rise of the novel, in its dependence on the written form of the book, broke the link between experience and its communication. It dispersed the 'community of listeners' constructed around the ever-repeated, told and retold stories, focusing instead on individualised experience.[18] The novel is described against the epic form, to which storytelling belongs. The epic form, grounded in historiography, holds out the prospect for new, non-narrative forms of telling [*Erzählen*], namely montage.

In her analysis of the role of montage in 'The Storyteller', McBride notes that 'for Benjamin, the aesthetics of montage was both the signature of modern alienation and a blueprint for inquiring into the possibility of a new storytelling lodged at the intersection of new technologies and perceptual patterns'.[19] McBride argues that Benjamin's montage inaugurates a mode of narrative that responds to the alienation of modern urban life. Her analysis of montage is grounded in the 'Artwork' essay, and she describes Benjamin's conception of montage as primarily inspired by cinematic technology.[20]

McBride is correct to point out that for Benjamin the movement beyond the crisis in perception takes place though new forms of perceptibility, some of which were brought about by developments in technology. Cinematic montage, however, is only one form of montage out of many that Benjamin discusses. Alongside it are literary montage, photomontage, the montage of objects within Dada artworks, and historical montage, which serves as my focus here. Understanding Benjamin's principle of montage primarily through the lens of cinematic montage risks ignoring its destructive aspect. Benjamin's principle of montage is at the same time constructive and destructive, since, as becomes clear in the *Arcades Project*, for Benjamin construction necessitates destruction.

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[15] Ibid, trans. altered.
[16] Ibid, 146.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid, 149.
[19] Patrizia C. McBride, *The Chatter of the Visible: Montage and Narrative in Weimar Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 41.
[20] Ibid, 42.

In ‘Crisis of the Novel’, Benjamin describes montage as an epic form; the key stylistic principle [*Stylprinzip*] of Alexander Döblin’s novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.[21] Montage ‘explodes the framework of the novel […] and clears the way for new, epic possibilities’, writes Benjamin. Yet despite the use of this explosive stylistic principle, Döblin’s novel remains an ‘old bourgeois *Bildungsroman*’, although it pushes this genre to its extreme. Montage, in this case, is still used at the service of narrative. In Benjamin’s writings from the late 1930s on, the destructive force of montage intensifies, destroying not only the framework of the novel but the epic as well; or, put differently, montage becomes a counter-narrative principle. As Benjamin writes in a note while composing ‘On the Concept of History’: ‘The second fortified position of historicism is the idea that history is something that lets itself be narrated [*das Sich-erzählen-lassen*]. In a materialist investigation, the epic moment will always be blown apart in the process of construction’.[22] In historical-materialist investigations, the destruction of epic narrative constitutes part of the construction, or montage, of images.

The possibility of a new storytelling and history-making opened up by the procedure of montage, I suggest, is one that relies on the image rather than oral narrative. ‘Montage’ forms part of an image-theory, or a ‘politics of the image’, which Benjamin developed throughout his writing; it may be viewed as a reincarnation of the concept of ‘image-space’ [*Bildraum*] from the essay on Surrealism.[23]

It is not by chance that ‘The Storyteller’, like many other essays by Benjamin, opens with a literary image, and, moreover, one that relates to vision. Here and elsewhere, the ‘image’, and specifically the montaged image, is construed as an alternative method for reaching truths to that of narrative. Benjamin’s image-theory forms part of the critical epistemology or theory of historical knowledge discussed in the previous chapter. One of the key ways in which Benjamin’s ‘image’ performs its epistemological function, revealing historical knowledge and truth, is by its internal force or energy, informed by Leibniz’s conception of force, which intensifies and becomes destructive in Benjamin’s later writing.

1.2 Monadic Montage

Like the ‘historical object’, the ‘dialectical image’ is described in ‘Convolut N’ of the *Arcades Project* as a monad. In fact, the two conceptions are equivalent. As Benjamin writes, ‘the object

[21] *SW* 2, 1, 301.
[22] *SW* 4, 406, modified.
[23] Walter Benjamin, ‘Surrealism’, in *SW* 2, 207–21/‘Der Surrealismus’, in *GS* 2, 295–310.

constructed in the materialist presentation of history is itself the dialectical image'.[24] This is somewhat confusing since the dialectical image is also described as a kind of internal, mental image that flashes up when thought stands still, while the 'historical object' denotes an external object of analysis.[25]

It is precisely the monadological structure which allows this tension between exterior and interior, creating continuity between 'the knower and the known'.[26] The conception of the dialectical image therefore hinges on a conception of perception that does not distinguish between the analysing subject and the object of analysis, such as Leibniz's. Benjamin does not mention a subject, yet he does mention 'thought' and 'consciousness'. At the same time, Benjamin writes that

> if the object of history is to be blasted out [*herausgesprengt*] of the continuum of historical succession, it is because its monadological structure demands it. This structure first comes to light in the extracted object itself. And it does so in the form of the historical confrontation that makes up the interior (and, as it were, the bowels) of the historical object, and into which all the forces [*Kräfte*] and interests of history enter on a reduced scale [*verjüngtem Maßstab*].[27]

The structure of the object of history as monad demands, on the one hand, that the object be separated, extracted out of the continuum of history, thereby enabling the construction of a non-continuous historiography. Benjamin contests the notion of the historical continuum that describes history as teleological and progressive. On the other hand, this same monadological structure enables the object of history or dialectical image to enclose within its form the conflicting forces and interests of history through the tapering of their scale. Thus while he contests the notion of history as continuous and progress-driven, Benjamin describes the notion of history as motivated by forceful, conflictual powers. The image is created by a break in movement, yet it contains dynamic forces, necessary as well for the construction of history. The concept of the 'dialectical image' encapsulates, once more, the tensions between continuity and discontinuity, construction and destruction. By highlighting destruction alongside

[24] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N10a,3], 475.
[25] See Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N9,7], 473 and [N10a,3], 475.
[26] 'Truth […] is bound to a nucleus of time hidden in the knower and the known alike', Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N3,2], 463.
[27] Ibid, [N10,3], 475/*GS*5, 594.

construction, Benjamin's distances himself in his late use of the term 'monad', from Leibniz's description of the monad as striving towards perfection. Yet he retains Leibniz's conception of the monad as independent and self-active, motivated by inner force.

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As Buck-Morss argues, the 'dialectical image' in itself enacts a kind of montage, through its dialectical construction.[28]While Benjamin describes montage, in the 'Artwork' essay, as a film-making procedure mediated by the apparatus, some of his other references to montage denote it as a procedure that merely exhibits or shows [*zeigen*] distinct elements of material or images, allowing meaning to emerge from their juxtaposition. Thus in 'Convolut N' of the *Arcades Project*, Benjamin describes montage as a procedure or method that produces a clarity or perceptibility of history, the possibility of watching history as one watches moving-images, as well as a principle of construction serving historical materialism:

> Must the Marxist understanding of history necessarily be acquired at the expense of the perceptibility [*Anschaulichkeit*] of history? Or: in what way is it possible to conjoin a heightened graphicness [*Anschaulichkeit*] to the realization of the Marxist method? The first stage in this undertaking will be to carry over the principle of montage into history. That is to assemble large scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut components. Indeed, to discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event.[29]

Montage is described as a principle [*Prinzip*] which can bring together 'graphicability' [*Anschaulichkeit*] on one hand, and the historical materialist approach to history, on the other. Its method is described as that of construction; using parts that are constructions, or assemblies of even smaller parts [*konfektionierten Baugliedern*] , themselves. The principle of montage allows the (Marxist) historian/philosopher to follow the conviction that truth is contingent upon historical context rather than timeless; ephemeral objects no less worthy of philosophising than

[28] As she writes: 'The principle of construction is that of montage, whereby the image's ideational elements remain unreconciled', Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 67.
[29] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N2,6], 461/ *GS* 5, 575.

eternal ones. In montage the small, 'precisely cut' components are paramount for the construction of the whole. Moreover, by exercising this principle, totalities emerge through analysis of minute details. Here montage is described not only as a principle for the conjoining of disparate material, or sections, but also for analysis of 'moments' or time segments, enabling the discovery of a 'total event', that is, a whole or totality contained by each segment, just as the monad contains the universe. In other words, montage is defined as a monadological principle.

Benjamin does not describe the process of montage as involving mediation of the assembled material. As he writes, the historical materialist must 'discover' rather than construct the 'total event'. Adorno criticised Benjamin's 'montage' precisely for its lack of mediation in the form of commentary:

> Benjamin's intention was to eliminate all overt commentary and to have the meanings emerge solely through a shocking montage of the material. His aim was not merely for philosophy to catch up to surrealism, but for it to become surrealistic (…) The culmination of his anti-subjectivism, his major work was to consist solely of citations. Only seldom are there interpretations noted which could not be integrated into the Baudelaire study or the theses 'On the Concept of History', and there is no canon to indicate how the audacious venture of a philosophy purified of argument might be carried out, or even how the citations might be meaningfully ordered. His philosophy of fragmentation remained itself fragmentary, the victim, perhaps, of a method, the feasibility of which in the medium of thought must remain an open question.[30]

In an essay published in his 1955 book 'Prisms', Adorno accused Benjamin of using montage in the composition of the *Arcades Project* as an arbitrary process, in which material is assembled and ordered randomly. Benjamin's philosophy, he writes, becomes 'surrealistic'. Surrealist practices invited chance to intervene in the process of creation, as Breton writes: 'It is even permissible to entitle POEM what we get from the most random assemblage possible (observe, if you will, the syntax) of headlines and scraps of headlines cut out of the

[30] Adorno, 'A portrait of Walter Benjamin', *Prisms*, 238.

newspapers'.[31] Adorno's criticism implies Benjamin's 'shocking montage' of material in the *Arcades Project* is comparable to such poems. He views Benjamin's excessive use of quotations therein as dangerously pushing to the extreme his statement, from *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, according to which 'truth is the death of intention'.[32]

In his grand-scale project, Adorno suggest, Benjamin was 'carried away' so to speak, by his use of citations, until the citations outnumbered the commentary. While in earlier works, such as *One-Way Street* and *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin integrated the extensive citations within a main text, in the *Arcades Project*, citations seemed to have taken priority, some of the convolutes almost lacking mediating commentary. Adorno casts doubt upon whether this 'philosophy of fragmentation' may function as philosophy, implying that philosophical argumentation necessitates a subjective intention and point of view.

Yet, as suggested, Benjamin defines montage as a monadological principle, and as such, it is not arbitrary as the random assembly of newspaper cut-outs on a page. It involves the creation of meaning through the juxtaposition between parts, as time and space are created relationally in Leibniz's philosophy, or as in the renowned 'Kuleshov effect' meaning emerges from the juxtaposition between successive shots.[33] Thus in the case of the *Arcades Project*, meaning is created relationally, by the constellation of fragments collected in every 'convolute'. The reader, entrusted with the decision of the order in which to read the fragments, becomes an active participator in the construction and destruction of meaning.

Although it is impossible to know whether Benjamin viewed the *Passagen* as a blueprint to a future project or as a finished work, I believe, with Eiland and McLaughlin, that 'the research project had become an end to itself'.[34]That is, Benjamin had not intended to add commentary to the fragments at a later stage, viewing montage as a methodological principle for the construction of this work.

His preoccupation by the question of the extent to which it is necessary to mediate historical materials is manifest in 'The Storyteller', wherein Benjamin's compares between the historian and the chronicler. While the historian is tasked with explaining events, the chronicler interprets events by the way they are 'embedded in the great inscrutable course of the world'.[35]

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[31] André Breton, 'Manifesto of Surrealism' 1924, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*. 1. ed. as an Ann Arbor paperback. Ann Arbor Paperbacks 182. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Univ. of Mich. Pr, 1972, 41.
[32]Benjamin, *OGTD*, 36.
[33] See Lev Kuleshov's 'Kuleshov Effect' from 1921, in which he demonstrated the way in which viewers interpret the juxtaposition between shots to bear different emotional meanings: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_gGl3LJ7vHc
[34] *Translator's Forward* in Benjamin, Walter, Eiland, Howard, McLaughlin, Kevin and Rolf Tiedemann. *The Arcades Project*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1999, xi.
[35] Benjamin, 'The Storyteller', 153.

In chronicles, events are displayed 'as models' in relation to the totality of events, while the relation between different events within this totality is unexplored. In the model of historical construction Benjamin proposes, connection between events are determined, yet not by relations of cause and effect.[36]

By developing the principle of montage, Adorno seems to suggest that Benjamin incorporates, with questionable success, a tradition associated with the essay and shorter-form writing into his longer works. In 'The Essay as Form' (1958), Adorno describes Benjamin's writing as archetypal for the form of the essay. Adorno evokes Leibniz therein, drawing a link between Leibniz's monad, the Romantic fragment and the modern essay, yet at the same breath also denying the debt the modern essay owes to Leibniz, implying Leibniz had not taken intellectual freedom far enough.[37]Adorno describes the essay as constructing 'immanent criticism of cultural artefacts', while 'the artefact is a monad, yet it is not.'[38] The artefact cannot quite be a monad because of the totality included within the monad. The Romantic fragment, Adorno seems to suggest, is a more fitting image of the artefact, in its incompletion; resisting totality thorough infinite self-reflection.

My reading suggests, however, that in Leibniz's writing there is already a resistance of totality and perfection, alongside the movement towards perfection, a resistance to which Benjamin was perhaps more attuned than Adorno, and which Deleuze explicitly highlights in his reading of Leibniz in *The Fold*. This movement away from perfection and towards destruction manifests itself in the aspects of discontinuity of Benjamin's principle of montage.

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[36] In an early fragment Benjamin replaces cause and effect with the category of debt [*Schuld*], as a determining relation in history: 'the ultimate category world-history uses in order to guarantee the insightibility of events is debt/guilt [*Schuld*]. Every world-historical moment is indebted to other moments and other moments are indebted to it. Cause and effect can never be decisive categories for the structure of world-history, for they cannot determine a totality.' 'Zur Geschichtesphilosophie, Historik und Politik' *GS*6, 92. The word *Schuld* refers both to capitalism as the driving political framework of history, and to Freud's theory of guilt and repression.

[37] Thus Adorno writes that 'In Germany the essay provokes resistance because it is reminiscent of the intellectual tradition that from the time of an unsuccessful and lukewarm Enlightenment, since Leibniz's day, all the way to the present has never really emerged, not even under the conditions of formal freedom; the German enlightenment was always ready to proclaim, as its essential concern, subordination under whatever high courts', 'The Essay as Form', 152.

[38] Ibid; 166, 162.

2. Leibniz on the Perfection of History

Leibniz composed a large and varied output of historical writing during his lifetime, yet many consider these less innovative than his scientific and philosophical ones. Arguably, while Leibniz's historical writings per se had limited influence on historiography, his philosophical writings were imperative for the theorisation of history as a unified system expressed in epic form by eighteenth-century German Enlightenment thinkers.[39] Leibniz's direct references to historical method are not elaborated comprehensively. As in many cases with Leibniz, since there are contradictory statements in his writing, different standpoints have been emphasised by critics, which has led to highly different interpretations of his thinking on history. Davillé, for example, extracts a philosophy of history based on Leibniz's principle of continuity from his work, arguing that Leibniz sought to unearth a continuity between past and present events through which the prediction of future events would be possible.[40]

A view of history as structured according to the principle of continuity would imply that humankind as a whole continually progresses towards perfection. Yet this is an issue over which Leibniz had apparently changed his mind, which renders questionable Davillé's and other interpretations of Leibniz's view as necessarily based on continuity and progress towards perfection. Between 1693 and 1715, Leibniz composed a series of texts in which these questions were investigated.[41] While in 'Concerning the Horizon of Human Knowledge' (1693) he argues for eternal return in a manner contradicting the idea of humankind's constant progression, in a text from 1715 he seems once again committed to the idea of human progress.[42]

In *Theodicy* (1710), his best-known work both during his lifetime and in the years to come, Leibniz viewed nature and history as originating in God, and therefore history as fulfilling the divine plan.[43] Regardless of whether Leibniz changed his mind about the progress of humankind, his conception of substance as constantly developing towards perfection in an

[39] See Lewis W. Spitz, 'The Significance of Leibniz for Historiography', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 13, no. 3 (June 1952): 333. Leibniz's historical writing includes for example *gentium diplomaticus* (1693) followed by *Der origin Germanorum* (1696) and *Origines Guelficae* (1748). For a complete account see Louis Davillé, *Leibniz Historien*, *Essai sur l'activite et la methode Historiques de Leibniz* (Paris: Librairie Felix Alcan, 1909).
[40] Davillé quotes Leibniz's contemporary Fontenelle, who makes a similar argument, see 687 (Eloge, Dutens, t.1, xxvi). His interpretation is evidently influenced by Historicist readings of Leibniz. See Davillé, *Leibniz Historien*, 666–74. Davillé describes three main consequences of the embracing of the law of continuity by Leibniz for his philosophy of history: determinism, optimism, and progress (ibid, 694).
[41] See Coudert, *Leibniz and the Kabbalah*, 109–10; Leibniz, *De l'horizon de la doctrine humaine: 1693*.
[42] Coudert argues that Leibniz's last texts on apokatastasis embrace Origen's optimistic version of the term as the inevitable restitution of the fallen world to its prelapsarian perfection. Ibid, 114–15.
[43] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy: essays on the goodness of God, the freedom of man, and the origin of evil* trans. E.M Huggard (Peru, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1985).

infinite progress, in a manner that is in a sense predetermined *a priori*, informed Kant's well-known essay 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose', and consequently had a significant (albeit second-hand) influence on the Historicists.[44]

As Koselleck argues, Leibniz was the first to temporalise the process of becoming complete or perfect, and render it into a worldly series of occurrences brought about by humans, with objectives that are transferred from one generation to the next.[45] Before Leibniz, perfection was viewed as attainable only in the next world. Leibniz's understanding of the individual as endowed with active force, its freedom consisting in a degree of spontaneity, underpin his view of the moral perfection of humankind as constantly developing. These informed, *inter alia*, the concepts of individualism and progress developed by Kant, Herder, and the Historicists in their philosophies of history.[46]

Leibniz described the goal of both history and poetry, in the *Theodicy*, as moral: more precisely, it was to 'teach wisdom and virtue by example'; the history of humanity as God's novel. Koselleck views this as an example of the coalescence of the demands of history and poetry, following a process which saw historical narrative as providing the unity of the epic made manifest in the way the plural form *die Geschichte* was condensed into a collective singular denoting history as a system.[47] Leibniz's metaphor of the novel was taken up by Kant, who uses the term *Roman* to express the desired systematic unity in the seemingly random aggregate of human actions.[48]

The *Monadology* was in all probability Leibniz's work with which Benjamin most thoroughly engaged.[49] Coudert argues convincingly that the Lurianic Kabbalah influenced Leibniz during his later years, an influence that affected most of the ideas presented in the *Monadology*.[50] It seems probable that Benjamin, who himself had an interest in Kabbalah and

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[44] Immanuel Kant, 'Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective', *Towards Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace and History*, ed. Pauline Kleingeld, trans. David L. Colclasure (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 14–15.

[45] See Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004) 266–267.

[46] See Spitz, 'The Significance of Leibniz', 235–36, Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 266–68.

[47] See Koselleck, Ibid, 33–42.

[48] 'At first sight it is certainly a strange, and apparently an extravagant, project, to propose a History of Man founded on any idea of the course which human affairs would take if adjusted to certain reasonable ends. On such a plan it may be thought that nothing better than a romance could be the result'. Kant, 'Idea for a Universal History', 9. See Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 34–35.

[49] Coudert follows Loemeker, Garber, and Wilson who claim that Leibniz's philosophy changed significantly in his later years, from the 1690s on, and that in the *Monadology* specifically it is evident that Leibniz's thought had undergone a revolution manifest in his concept of the dynamic monad in contrast to the static substance of the *Discourse* and earlier writings. See Coudert, *Leibniz and the Kabbalah*

[50] Coudert suggests that this influence was mainly mediated by the Christian theologian Francis Mercury van Helmont, with whom Leibniz had a close relation during the late years of his career. See Coudert, Ibid.

other gnostic sources, was drawn to these elements in Leibniz's *Monadology*.[51] The coalescence of poetry and history, both described as 'epic forms', are recurrent themes in Benjamin, despite his opposition to Kant and the Historicists' teleological account of history as system. As we will see, in its particular ability to make use of images, or its imageability [*Bildlichkeit*], poetry is viewed by Benjamin as a predecessor of cinematic montage, which poses a challenge to the narrative form of the novel. Thus although Leibniz's conceptions of progress and individuality, and the manner in which they were developed by Kant and the Historicists, were rejected by Benjamin, aspects of Leibniz's late metaphysics and dynamics were significant for Benjamin's critical thinking on history, and the way in which it was articulated through concepts of the 'image'.

3. Leibniz's Conceptions of Force and Virtuality

3.1 'Living Force'

As noted, force is of paramount importance in Leibniz's understanding of the simple substance, or monad. As Leibniz writes: 'the concept of forces or powers, which the Germans call *Kraft* and the French *la force*, and for whose explanation I have set up a distinct science of *dynamics*, brings the strongest light to bear upon understanding of the true concept of *substance*'.[52] In the *Monadology*, Leibniz describes monads as 'entelechies' or 'perfection-havers', an Aristotelian term Leibniz appropriates and reformulates: while for Aristotle it denotes a realised *state* of perfection, Leibniz uses the term to describe a substance containing within it the principle of its own change; a germ of perfection which it tends to develop.[53] In other words, one of the principle characterisations of Leibniz's simple substance or monad is its force or tendency towards perfection.

[51] Benjamin's interest in the Kabbalah was mediated by his friend the Kabbalah scholar Gerschom Scholem, since he did not read Hebrew and had not read the Kabbalah. Scholem describes their discussions of Molitor's presentation of the Kabbala: Molitor, Franz Joseph, *Philosophie der Geschichte oder Über die Tradition* (Münster: Theissing, 1857). See Scholem, A Story of a Friendship, 105. According to McBride, what made the strongest impression on Benjamin about the Kabbalah was the theory presented therein of divine language. See James McBride, 'Marooned in the Realm of the Profane: Walter Benjamin's Synthesis of Kabbalah and Communism', Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Vol. 57, No. 2 (Summer, 1989): 241–266.
[52] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 'On the Correction of Metaphysics and the Concept of Substance', in *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 433.
[53] See Leibniz, *Monadology*, 18, *Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 229.

Leibniz refers to force from his early texts and on, and it receives full elaboration in his late essay 'Specimen Dynamicum' from 1695.[54] Contra Descartes' contention that extension is the only essential attribute of bodies, Leibniz argues that prior to extension substances encompass force. Leibniz believed that explanations of natural phenomena must include, beyond the empirical laws of motion, dynamics that explain these laws and are founded on metaphysical truths.

He distinguishes between two kinds of force; the first, primitive force, is that of suffering or resisting. The second, active force, is described by Leibniz in the following way:

> Active force […] contains a certain act or entelechy and is thus midway between the faculty of acting and the act itself and involves a conatus. It is thus carried into action by itself and needs no help but the removal of an impediment. This can be illustrated by an example of […] a bent bow. For though gravity and elasticity can and ought to be described mechanically by the motion of ether, the ultimate reason for motion in matter is nevertheless the force impressed upon it in creation, which inheres in every body but is variously limited and restrained in nature through the impact of bodies upon each other.[55]

'Active force' may be described, then, as a kind of potentiation of action that constantly tends towards realisation. It originates in God, who imprints substances with force upon their creation, yet it also includes an element of self-action of the body in question and can act upon other bodies when unimpeded. Inherent in all substances, active force brings about a minute level of action at all times, so that bodies are never in complete rest. Leibniz further distinguishes between 'dead' and 'live' active force; while the former is purely mechanical force, such as centrifugal force or gravity, the latter, *vis viva* or living force, is grounded in Leibniz's infinitesimal system and described as an amassment of an infinite number of impressions of dead force. Live force is therefore infinitely graded or toned; it is a potential that is continuously actualised or *unfolded* to infinity.[56]

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[54] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 'Specimen Dynamicum', in *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 435–52.
[55] Ibid, 435.
[56] Benjamin describes life as unfolding in several early texts, such as the essay on Translation: 'Diese Enfaltung ist als die eines eigentümlichen und hohen Lebens durch eine eigentümliche und hohen Zweckmäßigkeit bestimmt'. See *GS*4, 11.

Leibniz's theory includes an unresolved tension by his designation of force, on the one hand, as self-movement, and, on the other, as 'imprinted' in substances by God and controlled by a pre-established harmony. As he writes in 'Principles of Nature and Grace' (1714):

> For all is regulated in things, once and for all, with as much order and mutual connection as possible, since supreme goodness and wisdom can act only with the perfect harmony. The present is big with the future, the future might be read in the past, the distant is expressed in the near. We might get to know the beauty of the universe in each soul if we could unfold all that is enfolded in it and that is perceptibly developed only through time.[57]

Leibniz describes the world as ordered in the best possible way thanks to God's endowing it with a 'perfect harmony'. The present contains the future enfolded within it, yet we can only perceive its unfolding through time. The self-movement of bodies consists uniquely, then, of their moving from one perception to the next towards a more perfect representation of the world, or, in other words, of their executing the plan [*détail*] imprinted upon them by God.

3.2 The Virtual

An important aspect of Leibniz's theory of force is the category of the 'virtual', which Leibniz opposes to the 'active' or 'actual', yet rather than an Aristotelian potency or a capacity, signifies something like a tendency towards action.[58] In the introduction to the *New Essays on Human Understanding*, for example, the speaker who stands for Leibniz, Theophilus, suggests a notion of innate truths, which he compares to veins in a block of marble outlining the figure of Hercules which will later be carved out of it, as opposed to a uniform surface or *tabula rasa*. Similarly, 'ideas and truths are innate in us, as natural dispositions, habits or virtualities [*virtualités*] and not as activities [*actions*], although these virtualities are always accompanied by some activities, often imperceptible, which correspond to them'.[59] The virtual is then a kind of innate

[57] Ibid, 13, 419.
[58] An 'intermediate between bare potency and the fully developed activity [*acte*] of the scholastics', as Latta describes it in *Monadolodgy and Other writings*, 229. The word 'virtual' originates from Medieval Latin *virtualis* and Latin *virtus*, both of which mean potency, efficacy, and literally manliness or manhood, and from which originates the English 'virtue'. 'The meaning "being something in essence or effect, though not actually or in fact" is from mid-15th century, probably via the sense "capable of producing a certain effect" (early 15th century)'.
[59] Leibniz, 'Introduction', in *New Essays*, *Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 367.

tendency-towards-force composed of unconscious or low-conscious-level psychological content, on which Leibniz elaborates in his theory of 'petites perceptions'.[60] Leibniz specifies that these virtualities are not necessarily conscious, yet, he writes, they may be swiftly brought to consciousness like the opening line of a song that calls to mind the entire tune.[61]

The term 'virtual' also appears in Leibniz's *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1686), one of the first presentations in consistent form of his metaphysical system.[62] Opposing Descartes and his followers' view of the essence of substance as extension, Leibniz proposes therein instead that the essence of the substance, as noted earlier, consists in its containing all of its predicates. As such, Leibniz redefines the individual substance as a complete individual concept:

> When a number of predicates is attributed to a single subject while this subject is not attributed to any other, it is called an individual substance (...) Now it is certain that every true predication has some basis in the nature of things, and when a proposition is not an identity, that is to say, when the predicate is not expressly contained in the subject, it must be included in it virtually. This is what the philosophers call *in-esse*, when they say that the predicate *is in* the subject. So the subject term must be included in the subject in such a way that anyone who understands perfectly the concept will also know the predicate that pertains to it.[63]

A substance is defined as that which includes all its predicates, either expressly or virtually. When a predicate is included virtually in the subject, it belongs to its essence, that is, it is included in it *in esse*. Leibniz next moves seamlessly from subject to concept, describing the 'knowable' subject, or the aspect of the subject that may be understood as 'concept', and arguing that perfect understanding of a concept is equivalent to knowledge of all of its predicates. According to the controversial consequences of this definition, the entire sequence of events that will befall the substance form part of its predicates. Every concept includes 'traces' of its past and 'marks' of its future, which are fully revealed to God alone. In order to avoid complete determinism, Leibniz distinguishes between 'necessary' and 'contingent' truths, both contained in the concept; the former are 'eternal truths', the contrary of which is a contradiction, while the latter's contrary does not imply contradiction. Contingent truths, which

[60] Latta highlights that the notion of virtual and unconscious perceptions was developed against the positions of Locke and Descartes, see *Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 367.
[61] Leibniz, 'Introduction', 367–68.
[62] G.W Leibniz, Discourse on Metaphysics *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 303–330.
[63] Ibid, 8, 307.

are contained virtually in the concept of the substance, are not necessary but rather based on God's choice of the best amongst several possible options. Leibniz gives the ratios of irrational numbers, which may be solved only through an infinite series, as an example for contingent truths.

When defending his thesis in a letter to Arnauld, Leibniz refrains from using the term 'virtual', which in other texts enables him to reach this middle ground between necessity and contingency. In his short essay 'On Freedom', for example, Leibniz describes how, at one stage, he had believed that everything in the world was necessary, yet he had changed his mind because of fictitious novels, the possibility of which, as he writes, one cannot deny, although they do not exist in actuality.[64] Deleuze quotes Leibniz's description, in this essay, of virtual inclusion as such that must be extracted from the subject, and as included in the subject 'only with a certain force'.[65] That is, the virtual is included in the subject in a subdued manner, with reduced force, which implies that force is necessary for its actualisation.

Within his logic, as we have seen, a 'concept' or 'notion' is that which includes all predicates of the subject. Within the sections dedicated to knowledge in the *Dissertation*, Leibniz defines the concept in a slightly different manner, differentiating it from the idea. As Leibniz writes therein, every substance constantly expresses the entirety of the universe as well as God. In the case of humans with minds, the property of unceasing expression of a thing consists of its idea.

In his short exposition 'What is an Idea?' (1678), Leibniz describes the idea as 'something in me *which not merely leads me to a thing but also expresses it*'.[66] The set of relations in the idea which expresses a thing correspond to that within the thing expressed, he writes. Ideas originate in God, who has impressed upon us a faculty enabling us to derive these sets of relations that correspond to those that are in things. Thus our idea of a circle expresses the circle itself by corresponding to it in a manner which enables us to derive from it truths about the circle.[67]

Knowledge is an aspect of what Leibniz calls 'perception', that is, the manner in which a monad expresses other monads (or the manner in which mind-monads express thing-monads), by which the pre-established harmony is maintained. It is 'obscure' when it does not well represent external things, and distinct when its representation suffices for their correct

[64] See Leibniz, 'On Freedom', 263.
[65] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 52 modified/*Le Pli*, 70.
[66] Leibniz, 'What is an Idea?', Philosophical Papers and Letters, 207–208.
[67] Ibid, 208.

recognition.[68] Only God's knowledge is fully distinct; humans' knowledge thus differs in its levels of obscurity. Phenomenal things are constituted as an infinite and continuous series of events, and therefore full knowledge of them would require an infinity of steps. Just as being is temporal, or even historical, according to Leibniz, so too is knowledge.

Against those who argued that ideas are temporary, existing only while we think of something, Leibniz argued for their innate nature. He drew inspiration from Plato's theory of ideas, referring to his doctrine of reminiscence described in *Meno*.[69] 'This demonstrates that our soul knows all these things virtually and requires only *attention* to recognise truths, and that consequently, it has, at the very least, the ideas upon which these truths depend', writes Leibniz.[70] Knowledge exists in the soul, its actualisation requires merely the dedication of attention. The virtual is not opposed to the actual or existing, nor is it equivalent to potential in the Aristotelian sense. The conception of the virtual pertains, as we have seen, both to historical events and to knowledge, a link that is retained in Benjamin's conception of historical knowledge.

4. Virtual Histories and Infinite Totalities

4.1 Virtual History

I have noted, in Chapter One, how Benjamin modelled his theory of ideas upon Leibniz's concept of expression, and the way in which the historical aspect of this concept was especially important for Benjamin, leading him to define essence as historical. This becomes even more apparent through Benjamin's usage of Leibniz's term 'virtual' in order to describe a type of history that he distinguishes, in the 'Prologue' to the *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, from what he calls 'pure history'.[71] This distinction is significant not only for the philosophy of history presented in the 'Prologue', but also for Benjamin's later theory of historical experience in the *Arcades Project* and 'Theses' *On the Philosophy of History*. As he writes,

[68] See Leibniz, 'Meditations on Knowledge, Truth and Ideas', in *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 291.
[69] Plato, 'Meno', *Meno and Other Dialogues*, Oxford World's Classics, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 82b–86a, 115–123.
[70] Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, 26, 320.
[71] The link between Benjamin's and Leibniz's conceptions of the virtual has been noted, for example by Kevin McLaughlin in 'Virtual Paris: Benjamin's Arcades Project', who suggests that the significance of the term 'virtual' to Benjamin is influenced by Leibniz's use of the term.

> The past and subsequent history of such essences is – as a token of their salvation [*Rettung*] or being gathered into the world of ideas – not pure, but natural history. The life of the works and forms, which only under such protection may unfold clearly, unclouded by human life, is a natural life. Once this redeemed state of being in the idea is established, then the presence of the unactual [*uneigentliche*] history, that is to say natural historical, fore and subsequent history [*Vor- sowie Nachgeschichte*] is virtual. It is no longer pragmatically real [*wirklich*], but, as natural history, is to be read [*abzulesen*] from the state of completion and rest of the essence.[72]

'Natural history' forms part of the essence of the work of art. It consists of the past and future history of the work in virtual, unactualised form. That is, as in the case of Leibniz's complete individual concept, that includes its history, or the monad, in which past and present are 'detailed' – the history of the work of art forms part of its essential make-up. The 'life of works and forms' can only 'unfold' when not disturbed by 'human life', Benjamin writes, suggesting that works have a kind of 'life of their own', which may only come about if not hindered by subjective assumptions. Benjamin establishes links between 'natural history' and 'natural life', a concept he developed in his essay 'The Task of the Translator', to which he refers the reader.[73] Therein Benjamin describes translation as the 'after life' [*Nachleben*] of the work, which is in a sense *virtually* contained within the original work, putting forward an objective idea of life virtually detailed in the work.[74]

'The range of life must be determined by the standpoint of history rather than that of nature […] [T]he philosopher's task consists of comprehending all of natural life through the more encompassing life of history', he writes.[75] The philosopher is tasked with comprehending the 'life' of works, which can be done only from a historical standpoint. In place of Leibniz's conception of 'living force', Benjamin suggests a concept of forceful life, a 'life' belonging to works of art that unfolds or actualises under the gaze of the philosopher. Benjamin appropriates Leibniz's conception of the virtual in order to suggest a notion of history – in this case, the history of works of art – that is essential and objective yet not fully predetermined. It can be 'read' but that does not mean that it has been entirely 'written' in advance.

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[72] *OGTD*, 47 modified/*GS*, 227–28.
[73] Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', *SW*1, 253–263.
[74] Ibid, 224.
[75] Ibid, 225.

In the 'Prologue' too, Benjamin describes philosophical history as the exploration of all the virtual extremes contained in an idea. 'Pure history', on the other hand, is described as 'pragmatically real' and consisting of an accumulation of past occurrences. The transition from pure to virtual history, Benjamin writes, results from 'salvation', or becoming 'gathered into the world of ideas'. Salvation is described as bringing about the virtualisation of history, rather than its actualisation. Benjamin's concept of 'salvation' [*Rettung*] denotes in this context what he calls 'Platonic salvation', which refers to Plato's theory of recollection. Benjamin describes the salvation of phenomena through the recollection of a 'primordial form of perception', and as the recovery of the symbolic aspect of the word through naming.[76] The virtualisation of history is brought about by the recovery of 'primordial' knowledge via a process of recollection or naming, enabling its 'reading' by the philosopher. 'Salvation' is distinct from, and yet is related to, Benjamin's concept of 'redemption' [*Erlösung*] used in the 'Theses' and elsewhere, which amalgamates Jewish conceptions of messianic redemption with Christian notions such as Apokatastasis.[77]

The 'virtual history' in this case is opposed not to the 'actual', but to the 'real'. Benjamin writes that the virtual history may be read from the state of completion or rest of the 'essence'; its past and future history may be read, or understood, once it has reached a state of completion, making manifest that the 'virtual' is not oppositional to this state of completion, on the contrary, it is brought about by it. By describing the virtual as becoming 'readable' once the essence reaches a state of rest, Benjamin diverges from Leibniz's account of the virtual force within the substance, which, as we have seen, never reaches such a state of completion or rest, but rather always remains active to a degree. This 'state of rest' will, in Benjamin's later writings, be described as a 'standstill' necessary for the emergence of the dialectical image.

4.2 Intensive Interpretation

Benjamin's defines truth as a harmonious relationship between a finite multiplicity of ideas as monads, or self-contained essences.[78] Benjamin's understanding of truth as unintentional and, in a sense, predestined grounds his tasking of philosophers with the 'objective interpretation'

[76] Ibid, 46, 36.
[77] This 'salvation' of ideas, through which their virtual history is constituted, takes place immanently, in a manner that corresponds with the immanent salvation, the only kind possible within *Trauerspiel* plays, since, as Benjamin discusses, these no longer contain an eschatological dimension. Ibid, 81.
[78] Benjamin, *GS*1, 217–18.

of the world, which can be achieved by penetrating deeply into 'all its real' [*alles Wirkliche*].[79] His appropriations from Leibniz's *Monadology* allow him to criticise the intentional and subjectively structured epistemology of Kant and Husserl while retaining the individual, fleeting experience as the core of his alternative theory of historical knowledge.

In a letter to his friend and correspondent, the Protestant theologian Florens Christian Rang, Benjamin differentiates between the monadic manner in which the idea is historical on the one hand, and the manner in which art historians designate a work of art as historical on the other.[80] The latter type of historical is external and synonymous with the set of occurrences that have befallen the work of art, while the historical nature of the idea is inward-inclined and essential. Benjamin defines these two types of history as extensive 'art history' and intensive interpretation.[81] Extensive history does not relate to the works of art themselves, but only takes them as examples, while intensive history, which is perhaps equivalent to what Benjamin refers to as 'natural history' in the 'Prologue', marks the essential links between works of art.

> For the process of interpretation brings to light connections between works of art that are timeless, yet not without historical dimension. The same forces [*Gewalten*] that become explosively and extensively temporal in the revealed world (that is, history), emerge intensively in the taciturn world (that is, the world of nature and art).[82]

Interpretation illuminates connections between works that relate to their internal history, rather than the history of the relations between them. These connections are 'timeless' in the sense that they are not successively 'placed' in time. The distinction drawn by Benjamin echoes what some critics describe as Leibniz's differentiation between inner-monadic and inter-monadic time.[83] The first of these corresponds to his concept of force, or the self-movement of the monad, while the second relates to Leibniz's theory of relational time and space, and his designation of time as a relation of succession between phenomena.[84] Although Benjamin uses

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[79] Ibid, 228.
[80] Benjamin, 'Letter to Florens Christian Rang' *SW* 1, 387–90/ Walter Benjamin, Christoph Gödde, and Henri Lonitz, *Gesammelte Briefe. 1. Aufl.* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), 390–94.
[81] Benjamin, Ibid, *SW* 1,389/*GB*, 393. When writing the letter, Benjamin was in the process of having his dissertation examined for his *Habilitation*, later published as the *Trauerspiel* book.
[82] Ibid.
[83] See for example Nicholas Rescher, *The Philosophy of Leibniz* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 58–65.
[84] As Leibniz writes in a letter to Clarke: 'I hold space to be something merely relative, as time is: I hold it to be an order of co-existences, as time is an order of succession', 'Lettre a Clarke' (Clarke's trans.) (E. 752 a ; G. vii. 363), quoted in Leibniz, *Monadology and Other Philosophical Writing*, 102.

the term *Gewalten* rather than Leibniz's *Kraft/la force* he may have had in mind the self-moving force of monads, the consequences of which become present in the phenomenal world. Benjamin transforms Leibniz's distinction between the metaphysical world of monads and the physical phenomenal world into a distinction between the world of revelation [*Offenbarung*] and that which is 'taciturn' or sealed [*verschlossen*].[85] Works of art and the ideas that correspond to them are, then, driven by their own self-produced forces, which determine their inner history, becoming explosive when emerging into external history. Benjamin's use of *Gewalten* suggests that the forces internal to the idea, or, in the case of the letter, the work of art, are violent and destructive, even before their emergence into the 'revealed' world. In this respect his conception of force differs from Leibniz's notion of force that contains an entelechy or striving towards perfection.[86]

Benjamin characterises, in the same letter, ideas by their 'intensive infinity' [*intensive Unendlichkeit*]. Ideas are independent essences linked to one another intensively; they are not placed in time in a successive causal relation to one another, and therefore in a sense they are 'timeless', yet each idea has its own history that characterises its internal development. The infinity of degrees or stages of distinctness in which the idea represents the totality of knowledge, comprising the idea's *Vor-* and *Nachgeschichte*, is included within it as an intensive quality; it is essential and not subordinate to external temporal relations.

5. Force and Violence in Benjamin's *Origin of the German Trauerspiel*

5.1 Catastrophic Extremes

The most significant mark of the *Trauerspiel*, Benjamin suggests in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, is its engagement with history both thematically and formally. As opposed to classical plays that centred on myths, the *Trauerspiel*'s subject matter consisted of historical events, often depicting political schemes and intrigues, and taking place in royal courts. Formally, the *Trauerspiel*, like the allegory, is characterised by its immanence. 'Baroque knows no eschatology', Benjamin writes.[87] Allegory, according to Benjamin, depicts history as nature

[85] Benjamin, *SW*1, 389/*GS*, 393.
[86] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 'On the Conception of Metaphysics and the Concept of Substance', in *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 433.
[87] Ibid, 66.

that is 'subject to the power of death', or, in other words, nature in its mortality.[88] That is, the historical narratives contained within allegories are finite. The baroque plays were characterised by a similar lack of transcendence, since salvation was no longer possible in the next world, as was the case in classical plays. The situations depicted in the *Trauerspiel*, therefore, had to reach their catastrophic extremes within the play's limits. Benjamin viewed the resulting bloodiness of these plays – comparable to modern-day horror films, and castigated by the critical hegemony of his day – as part of their unique reflection of the baroque worldview.

'If history is secularised in the setting, this is an expression of the same metaphysical tendency which led, in the exact sciences, to the infinitesimal method. In both cases chronological movement is grasped and analysed in spatial images', writes Benjamin, seeing the marks of the seventeenth-century scientific revolution, including the shift from synthetic to analytic geometry and the introduction of the infinitesimal method, as manifest in the *Trauerspiel* form.[89]

The introduction of the infinitesimal method into Leibniz's metaphysics resulted in a kind of philosophical immanence, which corresponded with the theological immanence of the counter-Reformation era, as both Benjamin and Deleuze observe. Although Leibniz's system includes an eternal God, his conception of this eternal God is timeless, that is, he separated infinitely divisible time from a timeless eternity.[90] In the above quote from Benjamin, he argues for a similar immanence in *Trauerspiels*; since their plots were not structured teleologically, leading towards a redemptive eternity, infinite time and space were condensed into their finite setting. The chronological movement of history was thus abbreviated into the images of nature in the stage settings.

Leibniz as the paradigmatic philosopher of the baroque, and specifically his conceptions of force and intensity, underlie Benjamin's interpretation of *Trauerspiels*. The plots of the plays, for example, are described as actualising or developing in an infinity of degrees towards their catastrophic ends. The transcendence of classical plays is opposed to the lively actuality [*lebhaftesten Aktualität*] of baroque dramas.[91]

The continuous force that dynamises Leibniz's monad becomes, in Benjamin's reading, a violent force [*Gewalt*]. This results from Benjamin's integration of Carl Schmitt's theory of the state of exception, an 'extreme doctrine of princely power', into his reading of the concept

[88] Ibid, 166.
[89] Ibid, 92.
[90] See Michael Futch, *Leibniz's Metaphysics of Time and Space* (New York: Springer, 2014), 194.
[91] Wilhelm Hausenstein, *Vom Geist des Barock*, 42, quoted in Benjamin, *OGTD*, 66 / *GS*, 247.

of sovereignty in baroque plays.[92] The ruler holds, according to this doctrine, unlimited power in the case of catastrophe leading to a state of emergency [*Ausnahmezustand*]. The prince's violence is used to guarantee the continuity of the community.[93] Benjamin transforms Leibniz's immanent concept of infinite force, via Schmitt, into the unlimited political force of the sovereign that characterised the depiction of politics in baroque plays. Benjamin's reading of Leibniz exposes the violence needed to maintain Leibniz's metaphysical law of continuity, expressed in the political terrain by the ideal of 'complete stabilisation' [*völligen Stabilisierung*].[94]

5.2 The Death of Intention

As mentioned, the term 'idea' does not appear in the *Arcades Project*, and in some ways, the concept of 'image' can be seen to take its place.[95] Both 'idea' and 'image' are described as essences, and both linked to truth:[96]

> What distinguishes images from the 'essences' [*Wesenheiten*] of phenomenology is their historical index. (Heidegger seeks in vain to rescue history for phenomenology abstractly through 'historicity') […] For the historical index of the images not only says that they belong to a particular time; it says above all that they attain to legibility only at a particular time. And indeed, this acceding 'to legibility' constitutes a specific critical point in the movement at their interior [*ein bestimmter kritischer Punkt der Bewegung in ihrem Innern*]. Every present day is determined by the images that are synchronic with it: each 'now' is the now of a particular recognisability. In it, truth is charged to bursting [*bis zum Zerspringen*] with time. (This shattering [*dies Zerspringen*], and nothing else, is the death of *intentio*, which thus coincides with the birth of real [*echten*] historical time, the time of truth).[97]

[92] Benjamin, *OGTD*, 65/s*GS* 1, 246. Benjamin references Schmitt's *Political Theology*, see Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, University of Chicago Press ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Wohlfarth has suggested the replacement of the 'idea' of the 'Prologue' by the 'dialectical image' in the *Arcades Project*. See Irving Wohlfarth, 'Et Cetera? The Historian as Chiffonnier', New German Critique, No. 39, Second Special Issue on Walter Benjamin (Autumn, 1986), 163.
[96] Benjamin uses different terms and refers to different philosophical traditions in each of these works; the idea is described as '*Sein*' while images are compared to phenomenological *Wesenheiten*. See *GS*1, 210 / *OGTD*, 30.
[97] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N3, 1], 463, altered.

Images differ from phenomenological essences on one account, writes Benjamin, implying that they nevertheless consist of essences of a sort. It appears that Benjamin has in mind, alongside Heidegger's 'essence' [*Wesenheit*], Husserl's concept of essence [*eidos*] as ideal form.[98] Benjamin briefly refers to Heidegger only to dismiss his concept of historicity, yet this reference also points to the project he shares with Heidegger, namely the attempt to construct an alternative to the traditional ('vulgar', in Heidegger's words) understanding of history. Moreover, as does Heidegger, Benjamin describes his understanding of temporality in this passage through a critique of Husserl's intentionality.[99] Benjamin shares with Heidegger the attempt to redeem a phenomenological understanding of time, as manifest in the differentiation Benjamin makes between 'past' and 'what has been': a phenomenologically experienced past. For Benjamin, the image, an 'essence', is temporal, yet images are not 'in time', just as, for Heidegger, *Dasein* is temporal not because it is 'in history' but rather because it is temporal in the grounds of its being.[100] The two thinkers share, then, the conception of essence as inherently temporal, a conception that was perhaps informed in both cases by their respective readings of Leibniz.[101] Yet the 'image' is used by Benjamin precisely in order go beyond Heidegger's 'abstract concept of historicity' by suggesting a conception of historical time.

While in Heidegger the temporality of *Dasein* hinges upon its finality, the image is described by Benjamin as 'dialectics at a standstill'; its movement merely paused in a hiatus, not destined to come to a final end. The 'critical point' in which the image attains legibility is brought about by a movement in its interior, indicating that the image contains its own force of movement or unfolding. This point enables the meeting of two experienced moments in time: the 'now' and its 'moment of recognisability'. The image is then a structure that allows two 'nows', or experienced instances, to come into relation. The conception of the image as

[98] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology, trans. F. Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983), 6–8. In *The Messianic Reduction*, Fenves highlights Benjamin's critical engagement with Husserl, citing Benjamin's letter to Fritz Radt from 1915 in which he writes: 'I am also reading Husserl's difficult, principal groundwork, so as to gain entrance into his school' (*GB*, 1, 301–02). This 'principle groundwork', Fenves writes, could be either *Ideas* or *Philosophical Investigations*.

[99] As suggested Schwebel, *Benjamin's Monadology*, 133. Fenves Suggests Benjamin appropriated the term 'essentiality' from on a pupil of Husserl, Jean Héring. See Fenves, *Messianic Reduction*, 49.

[100] Martin Heidegger, Joan Stambaugh, and Dennis J. Schmidt, *Being and Time* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 359.

[101] As Schwebel writes of Benjamin and Heidegger: 'At stake for both – albeit in markedly different ways – is the temporalisation of Leibniz's substantial unities'. Schwebel, 'Monad and Time', 123.

containing its critical point implies the possibility of an 'objective interpretation' of the world.[102]

In both the 'Prologue' and the passage above, Benjamin conjoins essence, time, and truth. If, in the 'Prologue', truth was constituted 'inter-monadically', as a relation between monad-ideas that consisted of separate essences, here truth is described as 'intra-monadic'. Truth lies within the image-essence that consists of the 'now of recognisability'. Benjamin describes a structure in which both truth and time, like the image, are doubled. 'Real historical time, the time of truth' is contingent upon the shattering of a prior truth. The first truth is charged with time, while its bursting brings about the birth of 'real historical time'.

The 'time of truth' is related to the death of intention, as in the 'Prologue', suggesting that the former, shattered truth was an intentional truth. The 'real' truth, which in the 'Prologue' was found by penetrating the outer layers of 'unreal' time, in this case necessitates their shattering. Leibniz's force, which in Benjamin's letter to Rang had been transformed into *Gewalten*, or violent forces, is here depicted as a destructive, murderous force that 'shatters' truth. Actualisation is contingent upon destruction. Truth is 'charged to bursting' with time; there is an excess of time within truth; 'real historical time' necessitates this excess and yet lies beyond it.

6. Leibniz and Benjamin on Fulgurations of Divinity

Benjamin criticises the concept of 'timeless truth', proposing in its stead a continuous actualisation of historical truth, or, in Leibniz's terms, 'continual fulgurations' that appear in momentary flashes.[103] As Leibniz writes:

> Thus God alone is the primary unity or original simple substance, of which all created or derivative monads are products and have their birth, so to speak through continual fulgurations of the divinity from moment to moment, limited by the receptivity of the eternal being, whose essence it is to have limits.[104]

Benjamin critiques the 'contingent time' of Marxism on the one hand, and the eternal or 'timeless truth' of Leibniz on the other. Despite this critique, he appropriates Leibniz's

[102] Benjamin, *OGTD*, 48.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Leibniz, *Monadology*, 47, *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 243–44, 113.

understanding of degrees of truth, and his 'metaphysics of fulguration': Leibniz viewed the monad as a possibility continually tending to realise itself, yet requiring God's assistance to do so. This assistance comes in fulgurations, or flashes, that set things free to exist, rather than as in continual creation or emanation.[105]

Benjamin's 'dialectical image' describes a process wherein 'what has been' joins the 'now' in a 'flash':

> It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation [*Bild ist dasjenige, worin das Gewesene mit dem Jetzt blitzhaft zu einer Konstellation zusammentritt*] […] For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what has been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent.[106]

The 'image' is described as both 'flashing' [*blitzhaft*] and 'suddenly emergent' [*sprunghaft*]: while it joins two points in time, it does not extend over a period of time. Benjamin describes the image as 'flashing up' in the 'Theses' as well, where he writes that 'the past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the moment of its knowability, and is never seen again'.[107] The 'flashing' or 'springing forth' of the image therefore describes the fleeting, singular nature of the experience of the appearance of past 'images' in the present, within memories or consciousness. The characterisation of the image as 'flashing' is distinguished by Benjamin from the 'purely temporal, continuous' relation between past and present. In its sudden appearance Benjamin's image captures the sense of Leibniz's 'fulgurations' as the creation anew of phenomena in every instant. While Leibniz's 'fulgurations' describe divine presence in the created world, Benjamin describes the image as flashing into consciousness or into a state of 'knowability'. Yet, as Hamacher notes, the flashing of the image is linked in the 'Theses' with messianic expectation, since the momentary image can only be 'seized' if it were expected.[108]

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[105] See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 'On the Ultimate Origination of Things', in *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 344.
[106] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N2a,3], 462.
[107] *SW*4, 390 / *GS*1, 695.
[108] See Hamacher, 'Now', 52.

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The functions and significations of Benjamin's conception of the image within his writing shift over time, and yet particularly in the *Trauerspiel* book and the *Arcades Project*, its epistemological functions, relating to its affinities with the 'idea' in his earlier work, persist. The coalescence, within the conception of the dialectical image, of the idea – key to Benjamin's theory of knowledge [*Erkenntnistheorie*] – and the allegory – central to his conceptualisation of history – result in Benjamin's mature theory of historical knowledge. Highlighting the intensive aspect of the image, however, risks overlooking the fact that Benjamin also describes the image as emerging in stillness:

> Image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal, the relation of what has been to the now is dialectical: not temporal in nature but figural [*bildlich*]. Only dialectical images are genuinely historical – that is, not archaic – images.[109]

The arrest of movement that brings about the image appears to be at odds with Leibniz's understanding of motion. As discussed, for Leibniz, all phenomena are constantly in a state of change and what seems to be immobile is in fact moving to a minute degree. Yet although there are no breaks in the ideal continuum of natural elements, the continuity of the monad's perception is interrupted in a sense through the delimitation of the monad's zone of expression or point of view. Since this zone of expression corresponds to the degree to which the monad is actualised, or, in other words, the degree of clarity and distinctness of its perceptions, the monad's zone of expression delimits its boundaries. These 'breaks' that separate monads from one another may be understood as constitutive of space and time since they pertain both to the order of co-existence and to that of succession.

The notion of the 'point of view' as constitutive of time and space may be seen in how in Benjamin's dialectical image the point of view of the present, or 'now', interrupts the continuity of history, mediating between its past and future perceptions. Moreover, Benjamin often describes the dialectical image as emerging from the break 'in thought': 'Where thinking

[109] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N3,1], 463.

comes to a standstill in a constellation saturated with tensions – there the dialectical image appears. It is the cesura in the movement of thought'.[110]

As demonstrated in Chapter One, Leibniz's theory of consciousness posed challenges to his law of continuity, since consciousness includes sudden shifts in intensities. Leibniz mitigates the tension between the principle of continuity and the breaks created either by shifts in states of consciousness or by the monads' points of view, by defining continuity as ideal while perception is in a state of actualisation.

In Benjamin, these tensions are not resolved but rather exist together within the historical object 'on a reduced scale' and in the conception of the dialectical image.[111] The points of view constellated in the image construct historical time. Benjamin describes, in the above, the image as dialectical in that it is figural [*bildlich*], rather than temporal: it is an 'image' that retains the tensions between motion and immobility, continuity and discontinuity, without their resolution.

Time and space are nearly interchangeable within Benjamin's description of the construction of historical time by 'points of view'. The spatial nature of time is manifest as well in Benjamin's description, in the 'Theses' *On the Concept of History*, of the 'site' or place [*Ort*] of history as one that is not 'empty and homogenous'.[112] As noted, for Leibniz, both time and space are systems of relations, different only in that time describes relations of succession while space describes relations of co-existence. While the 'point of view' of the monad is not spatial per se, designating the degree of clarity of the monad's perceptions, it is significant that Leibniz uses a spatial metaphor, as he does frequently. The notion of geometrical space developed in his 'analysis situs' plays an important role in his metaphysics and theory of knowledge.[113]

Benjamin describes the image as that which is read, or that which 'bears the imprint' of a critical moment foundational for reading.[114] Leibniz describes history as 'marked' or engraved within the 'complete individual'. Serres notes that, for Leibniz, both knowledge and existence develop in a manner analogous to reading. Both the unconscious and the world are like 'a book to be read'. Moreover, the fundamental state of being according to Leibniz, Serres writes, is the

[110] Ibid, [N10a, 3], 475.
[111] Ibid, [N10, 3].
[112] For example in Thesis XIV: 'history is the subject of construction whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled full by now-time [*Jetztzeit*]', Benjamin, *SW*4, 395.
[113] See Vincenzo De Risi, who argues that Leibniz's geometry was groundbreaking in that it was the first in the history of mathematics to include geometrical definitions of space, 'Analysis Situs, the Foundation of Mathematics, and a Geometry of Space', in *The Oxford Handbook*, 253.
[114] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N3,1], 463.

'impression of expression' [*l'impression de l'expression*].[115] That which is impressed upon the monad is not its history itself, but the possibility of expressing past and future.

According to Benjamin, not just the image, but the world itself may be read: 'The expression "the book of nature" indicates that one can read the real like a text', writes Benjamin.[116] The historical details God 'marks' in the monad are continually actualised. Likewise, Benjamin's description of the grounding concept of historical materialism as 'actualisation', rather than progress, refers to an actualisation of history that is imprinted or impressed within the dialectical image.[117] Yet this actualisation is at the same time a virtualisation: the image retains the oppositional forces to create a 'force field' of conflicting tensions.

7. Benjamin on Time Differentials

An early sketch for the *Arcades Project* is illuminating in respect of how Benjamin uses the terms 'actualisation' and 'sublation' [*Aufhebung*] in relation to the image:

> Historical knowledge of the truth [*Geschichtliche Wahrheitserkenntnis*] is possible only as the overcoming of semblance [*Aufhebung des Scheins*]. Yet this overcoming should not signify sublimation, actualisation of the object but rather assume, for its part, the configuration of a rapid image. The small quick image in contrast to scientific complacency. This configuration of the rapid image goes together with the acknowledgment [*Agnoszierung*] of the 'now' in things. But not the future.[118]

The 'rapid image' is defined as the alternative to sublation, in a manner that foreshadows Benjamin's later description of the dialectal image as containing conflicting tensions. The overcoming of semblance in order to reach knowledge of the truth is performed through a quick, small, sketch-like image of the historical object rather than traditional scientific methods. The

[115] Serres, Le Système de Leibniz, 543.
[116] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N4,1], 464.
[117] Ibid, [N2,2], 460.
[118] Ibid, [O, 81], 865 modified / *GS*5, 1034–35.

description of the image as 'small' is reminiscent of the monad's abbreviation or reduction of the world into its minute dimensions.

In another early note, Benjamin describes a 'time-differential' in which the image is real:

> On the dialectical image. In it lies time. Already with Hegel, time enters into dialectic. But the Hegelian dialectic knows time solely as the properly historical, if not psychological, time of thinking [*Denkzeit*]. The time-differential [*Zeitdifferential*] in which alone the dialectical image is real [*wirklich*] is still unknown to him. […] Real [*reale*] time enters the dialectical image not in natural magnitude – let alone psychologically – but in the smallest gestalt. The temporal momentum [*Zeitmoment*] in the dialectical image can be determined only through confrontation with another concept. This concept is the now of recognisability [*Jetzt der Erkennbarkeit*].[119]

Within Leibniz's differential mathematics, the differential is the rate of change in the varying quality of matter and motion within the infinite series of degrees of a constant force. The rate or degree of change of the variable is derived from the law of its series, determining in turn the inflections of the curves that represent the series. Benjamin's designation of the 'dialectical image' as 'figural' denotes, then, the manner in which the inflections in a curving line are determined by the differential, or more generally the manner in which time shapes space.

The dialectical image is real, Benjamin writes, only within a framework in which time consists of minute, persistent changes rather than a uniform, stable whole. Hegel's progressive dialectics of negation are contrasted with Leibniz's development as differentiation, a contrast that is also implied in Benjamin's definition of the dialectical process as monadic.[120] Benjamin carefully distinguishes his own articulation of concepts such as 'actualisation' and 'dialectic' from that of Hegel. Since, as Benjamin writes, time may only enter the dialectical image through its condensation into the tiniest possible forms, images are particles of history, the totality of which does not consist of an absolute or world history.

As Deleuze writes in *The Fold*, as a preformist, Leibniz understands unfolding, or the development of organic forms brought about by their inner force, as a process in which every fold originates from a prior fold.[121] The debate between epigenesists and preformists during

[119] Ibid, [Q, 21], 867/*GS*5, 1038.
[120] Ibid, 476.
[121] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 10.

Leibniz's time revolved around the extent to which something is considered as being formed or organized from the 'beginning' or whether organisation and form arise over time. From the preformist perspective of Leibniz, genesis is viewed not as a fixed beginning but as the process of becoming over time. The unfolding of a series, just like the development of an organic form, is, according to Leibniz, a kind of organisation of existing form, or actualisation through differentiation.

In the 'now of recognisability' in which two times are brought together, such actualisation through differentiation is performed. The image does not form part of dialectical time; rather, time enters the image and is compressed into its 'smallest gestalt'. The image is dialectical in that it includes an unresolvable tension between enfolding and unfolding, actualisation and its inverse process, a tension motivated by a momentum or force. Time is condensed into the spatial form of the image only to be actualised once the image is read and recognised.[122]

8. Leibniz on Apokatastasis

Hegel's dialectic on the one hand and Leibniz's infinite differentiation or variation on the other are once again pitted against each other in Benjamin's 'Convolute N':

> Modest methodological proposal for the cultural-historical dialectic. It is very easy to establish oppositions, according to determinate points of view, within the various fields of any epoch […] The very contours of the positive element will appear distinctly in so far as this element is set off against the negative. On the other hand, every negation has its value solely as background for the delineation of the lively, the positive. It is therefore of decisive importance that a new partition be applied to this initially excluded negative component so that, by shifting the angle of vision [*Verschiebung des Geschichtwinkels*] (but not its scale [maßstäbe]!) a positive element emerges in it too – something different from that previously signified. And so on, ad infinitum, until the entire past is brought into the present in a historical apocatastasis.[123]

[122] See Leibniz, *Monadology*, 12: 'besides the principle of change, there must be *a particular series of changes* [*un detail de ce qui change*] which constitutes, so to speak, the specific nature and variety of the simple substances', *Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 223.
[123] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N1a,3], 459 / *GS*, 573, modified.

Benjamin suggests a 'cultural-historical dialectic' in which a process of infinite differentiation will take place, instead of negation and *Aufhebung*. Breaking the negative into components and shifting one's point of view opens up a view of the positive within the negative, suggests Benjamin, and this repeated procedure results in a 'historical apocatastasis'. The changing of one's angle of vision and its attendant revelation of hidden truths is a recurrent idea in Benjamin's writing, as we discussed, for example, in the opening of 'The Storyteller'.[124] Leibniz's perspectivism, according to which the totality of truth, accessible only to God, is composed of the infinity of points of view of the infinity of monads, underlies Benjamin's recurrent designation of a multiplicity of points of view as constituent of truth.

A Greek term designating restoration or return, and used to describe the Stoic cycle of cosmology, 'apokatastasis' was adopted by Christian theologians, most notably Origen of Alexandria, who used it to describe the restoration and salvation of all souls. The term therefore has both a Stoic and Christian lineage, the latter being based upon an apostolic reference to Jewish eschatology, namely St. Peter's speech in Acts 3.21, describing Christ 'whom heaven must hold until the times of that restoration of all things (achri chronōn apokatastaseōs pantōn)'.[125]

When mentioning 'apokatastasis' in 'The Storyteller', Benjamin refers to Origen's doctrine of universal salvation from *De principiis*, describing it as the 'entry of all souls into paradise'.[126] Benjamin's conception of redemption [*Erlösung*], famously utilised in the third 'Thesis' 'On the Concept of History', is understood by Löwy as referring to both the concept of 'apokatastasis' and Jewish messianism.[127] Both concepts, he writes, share a double meaning: in apokatastasis, the restitution of the past is at the same time a renewal.[128] The same dual meaning, restoration of the past on the one hand, and a utopian inclination on the other, resides in the Jewish messianic tradition, as described by Scholem.[129]

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[124] Benjamin, *SW* 3, 143.
[125] As Bentley Hart explains, 'In later Christian thought restoration would come to refer not only to the final reconstitution of the cosmos, but also (for some) to the final salvation and glorification of all of creation and of everyone therein'. David Bentley Hart, ed., *The New Testament: A Translation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017)*, 498, 608.
[126] Benjamin, Ibid., 158.
[127] As Benjamin writes, 'Only a redeemed mankind […] is granted the fullness of its past – which is to say, only for a redeemed mankind the past has become citable in all its moments'. Thesis III, *SW*4, 390.
[128] Löwy, *Fire Alarm*, 83–4. As Löwy writes, 'The Jewish, messianic and cabbalistic equivalent of the Christian apokatastasis is, as Scholem argues in his article 'Kabbala' in the Encyclopaedia Judaica (1932), tikkun.'
[129] Ibid.

Benjamin expressed a similar idea in a Hasidic tale he recounted in a conversation with Ernst Bloch, recorded by the latter and quoted by Giorgio Agamben:

> The Hassidim tell a story about the world to come that says everything there will be just as it is here. Just as our room is now, so it will be in the world to come; where our baby sleeps now, there too it will sleep in the other world. And the clothes we wear in this world, those too we will wear there. Everything will be as it is now, just a little different.[130]

What is specific about Benjamin's version of the story, writes Agamben, is the 'tiny displacement that the story introduces into the messianic world'. Benjamin's version of historical apokatastasis or redemption in the 'Theses' describes a possibility of infinite repetition and differentiation rather than a utopic final completion.

There is no reason to assume that Benjamin had read Leibniz's unpublished drafts on 'apokatastasis', described therein as the eternal return of history. However, Leibniz expresses similar ideas in brief in the *Monadology*, to which Benjamin refers, and, moreover, Origen is a shared source for Benjamin and Leibniz's use of the term.[131]

In 'Apokatastasis Panton' from 1715, Leibniz argues that since the number of books on earth is finite, and public annual history on earth can be related in a book of a certain length, if humanity were to last long enough in its current state, public histories would necessarily be exhausted and hence return. Leibniz suggests the narrated accounts of events will return, or in other words the repeated events will warrant the same accounts, although there may be slight differences between the repeated sets of events themselves.[132] The slight variations within repeated accounts allow for the progression of history. Leibniz refers, in his essay, to 'the great Platonic year' – the idea presented by Plato of a 'complete' or 'perfect' year, achieved when all eight celestial revolutions or periods return to their starting points.[133] Benjamin appropriates the conception of apokatastasis to describe imperfect repetition, yet forgoes the progressive or

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[130] Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. M. Hardt (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 54.
[131] See Leibniz, *Monadology*, 88: 'A result of this harmony is that things lead to grace by the very ways of nature, and that this globe, for instance, must be destroyed and renewed by natural means at the very time when the government of spirits requires it, for the punishment of some and the reward of others'. 'Apokatastasis Panton' (1715). 'Hence it follows that if we imagine that humanity lasts long enough in the state it is in now, past public histories must return'. Leibniz, trans. David Forman, [64] 2.
[132] As noted by David Forman, 1–2: 'certainly there will always be differences of some sort between the old and the new, but they will be imperceptible, and precisely of the sort that could not be expressed in books'.
[133] Plato, Timaeus (39c–d).

perfection-inclined aspect of the traditional use of the term, as demonstrated by the Hasidic story in which the world to come is described as a slightly unhinged version of the earthly one.

Actualisation as differentiation to infinity, transformed by Benjamin into what may be defined as non-Hegelian dialectics, is at work in the conception of 'apokatastasis' as within the 'dialectical image'. In these two structures, a similar condensation of time past into the present is performed. The infinite differentiation within the image goes against the traditional identification of image with likeness, drawn from Genesis 1:26, where it is written that man is created 'in the image and likeness' of God, and Plato's notion of the *eikon* as 'faithful resemblance'.[134] In Benjamin's 'image', the relationship between genesis and essence, which he had challenged in the *Trauerspiel* book, is questioned once again: essence is not determined through genesis, as in the case of the creation of man. Rather, it is determined by a process of differentiation; not one of likeness on the one hand, or negation on the other. Creation results from a repetition of the same while shifting one's angle of vision, or minutely differing one's moment in time.

9. Mallarmé and Benjamin on Chance

9.1 Attested Auditor

The term 'now of the knowability', which, as discussed in Chapter One, first appeared in a fragment dated to 1920–21, carries with it a danger of historical predestination that Benjamin sought to avoid. Despite challenging progressive, teleological views of history, Benjamin also had his own struggle between contingency and necessity, as evidenced by his short text 'Attested Auditor of Books' [*Vereidigter Bücherrevisor*], published in *One-Way Street* (1928).[135] In the fragment, which focuses on Mallarmé's poem *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*, Benjamin draws a connection between the 'intensive' nature of the image and foresight into history. Mallarmé is praised for having read the true image of the future: 'Mallarmé, who in the crystalline construction of his manifest traditionalist writing saw the truth-image of what was to come, was in his *Un coup de dés* the first to incorporate the graphic

[134] Paul Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 11. For Benjamin, it is the name rather than the image that forms part of the 'realm of the similar', see Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [Q, 24], 868.
[135] Walter Benjamin, 'Attested Auditor of Books', in 'One-Way Street', *SW*1, 456–457/ '*Vereidigter Bücherrevisor*', in *Einbahnstraße*, *GS*4, 102–04.

tensions of the advertisement in the printed page'.[136]

Benjamin suggests that in Mallarmé's poem, the relation between *Wahrheit* [truth] on the one hand and *Bild* on the other is articulated through the *Bildlichkeit* (imageability or image-potential) of the text, which may only be achieved in poetic form. By writing a poem in which the text itself is *bildlich* – adopting certain qualities of an image – Mallarmé had pre-empted the modern reconfiguration of script-image relations. If in fact, as Scholem recalls, Benjamin felt that he did not understand *Un coup de dés*, this did not impede him from highlighting in his text a key aspect of the poem, as Mallarmé viewed it; namely its foreshortening technique that condenses an infinite undecidability into succinct formulations and imagery.[137] 'Everything takes place in foreshortened, hypothetical form', as Mallarmé writes in the preface to the poem.[138] Benjamin was drawn to the abbreviating function of the image, which arrests that which is abbreviated in an ambiguous status, as a non-actualised representation. By creating a unique *Schriftbild*, Benjamin argues, Mallarmé anticipated the new technical and literary forms that will come to replace the book (ironically, since Mallarmé's unfinished work, simply titled 'The Book [*le Livre*]', was meant to be an all-encompassing 'book of books').

9.2 Rhythmic Suspension of Disaster

As Mallarmé explains in the preface, he avoided introducing narrative into the poem, yet a specific event may nevertheless be gleaned from its fragmented lines. It describes a shipwreck in the middle of the ocean, from which emerges a 'master' [*Le Maître*], who hesitates as to whether to throw the dice clenched in his fist, only to disappear beneath the waves (we never discover if the dice had been tossed). Countless interpretations attempted to decipher the poem through an overarching allegory or key. One of the most recent attempts is that of Quentin Meillassoux who, in *The Number and the Siren*, argues that the poem is coded, and that its true comprehension is contingent upon cracking the code and revealing the mysterious 'number' that is referred to in the poem (a mission which he undertakes).[139] Others have resisted such

[136] Benjamin, 'Attested Auditor', *SW*1, 456.
[137] 'On his desk there was also Mallarmé's *Un Coup de dés* in a special quarto edition whose graphic form was clearly in keeping with the title. The words in various type sizes rolled back and forth over the lines like dice […] The whole thing was a most astonishing sight, and Benjamin told me that he did not understand the text either. In my uncomprehending soul there remained engraved only the visual image of a pre-Dadaistic product'. Scholem, A Story of a Friendship, 202.
[138] Stéphane Mallarmé, 'Préface' (Faksimile-Edition de l'édition, 1914; Paris: Gallimard, 2014), 3.
[139] Quentin Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren* (Falmouth, UK and New York: Urbanomic and Sequence Press, 2012).

attempts to decipher the poem, as did Jacques Rancière, who famously pronounced that 'Mallarmé is not a hermetic author, he is a difficult author'.[140]

The struggle between contingency and chance on the one hand and human action on the other lies at the heart of the poem's thematic. Specifically, the poem engages with the manner in which chance and necessity affect literary creation, as is evident in lines like 'Choit/ la plume/ rythmique suspense du sinistre' ['Down falls/ the plume/ rhythmic suspension of disaster'].[141] The struggle remains unresolved, the non-narrative of the poem, like the master himself, hovering in the hypothetical or inaction, as we can see for example in the repetition of the words 'come si' and 'si', and the likening of the master to a prince; a reference to the famously indecisive Hamlet.

The dice-throwing motif harkens back to Pascal's wager, yet whereas in Pascal the aim of the wager is to close off the abyss of meaninglessness through a leap of faith, in Mallarmé's poem the abyss of nullity remains agape.[142] It is, moreover, rendered visible in the poem through the empty spaces between isolated words, the 'blanks' that are required by the verses as surrounding silence, as Mallarmé writes in his preface. In Meillassoux's reading, Mallarmé

> seeks to make scintillate words forged and disseminated by the chance of language, through the usage of a disconcerting syntax in which each vocable seems isolated by a 'lacuna' from all the others, as if decontextualized: which allows it to shine with a light one has never before perceived in it.[143]

The gaps between the words frustrate the reader, interrupting the continuity of reading, yet the isolation of the words, at the same time, empowers and heightens their singular force.

9.3 International Moving Script

The image of pre-established harmony that Benjamin uses in 'Attested Auditor' is borrowed from Paul Valéry (1920), echoing Leibniz.[144] When describing pre-established harmony, as mentioned, Leibniz invokes the metaphor of musicians playing in separate rooms, yet reading

[140] Jacques Rancière, *Mallarmé: La politique de la sirène* (Paris: Hachette, 1996), 10.
[141] Mallarmé, reproduced in Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, 'Appendix 1', IX.
[142] See Henry Weinfield ed., *Stéphane Mallarmé, Collected Poems: A Bilingual Edition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 266.
[143] Meillassoux, 46.
[144] Paul Valéry, '*Le Coup de dés*'. *Variété* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998).

from the same sheet of notes, which ensures that the multiple instruments produce harmonious music.[145] Valéry may have derived the image of harmony from Mallarmé himself, who compared the agony of poetic creation with pure harmony in his lecture *La musique et les lettres*.[146] Benjamin describes a pre-established harmony between the poet and historical events as follows:

> The typographic experiments later undertaken by the Dadaists […] show the contemporary relevance of what Mallarmé, monadically, in his sealed room, had discovered through a pre-established harmony with all the decisive events of our times in economics, technology and public life.[147]

On the one hand, broken off from the external world, Mallarmé followed his internal stylistic inclinations, and, on the other, he formed a continuity with the world outside, through the reflection of the world's constantly transforming totality within the poem's images. The poem is *bildlich*, then, in the manner in which it consists of an image of its present and contains its future in virtual form. The *Schriftbild* created by Mallarmé, suggests Benjamin, condenses future events into the words scattered in isolation upon the double pages of *Un coup de dés.* By outlining a relation of expression between the poem and the exterior world, Benjamin highlights the foresight of poetic creation in its distinctive use of images, through which it provides singular representations that condense a totalising image of world history. As described by Meillassoux, in Mallarmé's poem there is 'a dialectical infinite […] that includes its other […] a non-Hegelian dialectic, one without progress'.[148]

Benjamin suggests, furthermore, that through its radical use of *Schriftbild* to reflect its historical moment, Mallarmé's poem becomes politically effective. It precipitates the next revolution, writes Benjamin, by internalising the colourful, chaotic lettering of advertisements.[149] The liberation of script is described as a process in which it becomes increasingly closer to the image: the shift from the vertical plain of the book to the perpendicular of films and billboards leads up to the three-dimensionality of the card index. Benjamin defines the card index as a modern-day rune, in which, like a monad that mirrors the world, an isolated

[145] Leibniz, 'Lettre à Arnauld' (1687), (G. ii. 95), quoted in *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 47.
[146] Stéphane Mallarmé and Bertrand Marchal, 'La music et les lettres', in *Œuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), 68.
[147] Benjamin, *SW*1, 456, translation modified.
[148] Ibid, 140.
[149] Ibid.

word stands for the full text. His fascination with the index-form continued in later years as manifest, for example, in the thematic lists composed as part of the drafting of the Baudelaire essays, in which entire passages are abbreviated into themes such as 'allegory' or 'boredom', each marked by a symbol or image.

In the concluding paragraph of 'Attested Auditor', movement, or time, is implied as a future fourth dimension of script:

> In this picture writing, poets, who will now as in earliest times be the first and foremost experts in writing, will be able to participate by mastering the fields in which (quite unobtrusively) it is being constructed: statistical and technical diagrams. With the founding of an international moving script, poets will renew their authority in the life of peoples.[150]

Poets, masters of exercising the *exzentrischen Bildlichkeit* of script, will lead the way in the construction of a universal, ever-fluctuating script that will capture in diagrams and statistics the 'life of peoples'; their behaviour and moral judgements. Benjamin alludes to the *characteristica universalis*; the universal language Leibniz imagined would reduce all natural language to pictographic characters that would depict reality as mathematical notations reflecting numbers and magnitudes. Judgements of reason, Leibniz conjectured, could be easily made in such a language via the calculations of probabilities, eliminating the chance occurrences that Mallarmé's throwing of the dice could not overcome.[151]

As noted, Benjamin rejected the attempt to reduce all that is expressed in language into logical notation. His reading of Mallarmé's poem goes against efforts at deciphering its 'code'. Benjamin seemed to believe, like Deleuze, that the mysterious number at the heart of *Un coup des dés* is contingent upon chance.[152] Benjamin's 'international moving script' rather enfolds a vision for a merging of script and image that would go beyond Mallarmé's *bildlich* poem in its abbreviation of human history, perhaps taking the form of musical notes or cinematic moving-images. Hovering in the hypothetical, the poetic expression of Mallarmé leads the way. The words of his poem, separated by the blank spaces between them, each condense a totality of human experience reflected from a different point of view, strewn upon the pages like stars in

[150] Ibid, 457.
[151] See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 'Preface to a Universal Characteristic', in Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Roger Ariew, and Daniel Garber, *Philosophical Essays* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1989), 9.
[152] Gilles Deleuze, *Philosophy and Nietzsche*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 33.

a constellation. In Mallarmé's words, 'Rien/ n'aura eu lieu/ que le lieu/ exepté peut-etre/ une constellation' ['Nothing/ will have taken place/ but the place/ except perhaps/ a constellation'].[153]

9.4 Thought-Worlds

In the third chapter of *The Fold*, 'What is the Baroque', Deleuze suggests that the fold was Mallarmé's most important operational act, which made him a 'great baroque poet'.[154] Mallarmé's poems enact a process of 'folding' in which exterior and interior are distinct yet connected, holding a tension in which each fold contains the next.[155] However, later, in the chapter on 'Incompossibility, Individuality, Liberty', Deleuze returns to his own comparison of Mallarmé and Nietzsche from *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, painting a more complicated picture.

Mallarmé and Nietzsche are described here as being, on the one hand, followers of Leibniz in their creation of 'thought-worlds', and yet at the same time and in opposition to Leibniz, they are fellow nihilists. 'For them the world lacks principle, has lost its principles. That is why the roll of the dice is the power of affirming chance'.[156] Mallarmé and Nietzsche choose a world in which principles are absent, as opposed to Leibniz's proliferation of principles, designed to bridge the gaps created during the lengthy crisis of the baroque.[157] As such, Mallarmé and Nietzsche were visionaries of modernity, creators of a multiplicity of 'thought-worlds' rather than the multiple principles of the baroque. Chance is here opposed by Deleuze to the logic of principles and the overdetermination of meaning of Leibniz's world, in which everything has a reason.

In *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze emphasises rather the differences between Mallarmé and Nietzsche's 'throwing of the dice'. For Mallarmé, Deleuze writes, chance and necessity were on opposite sides, each of which denying the existence of the other.[158] The success of the throwing of the dice is measured by its ability to eliminate chance. For Nietzsche, by contrast, the 'throwing of the dice' affirms both chance and necessity: when thrown in the air, the dice affirm chance, while when landing and revealing a certain number combination, necessity is affirmed.[159] This understanding of the inseparability of chance and necessity guides

[153] Mallarmé reproduced in Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren* 'Appendix 1', X,XI.
[154] Deleuze, *The Fold*,30.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid, 67.
[157] Ibid, 68.
[158] Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 33.
[159] Ibid, 26.

Nietzsche's conception of 'eternal return'; 'the necessary result of all chance', in Deleuze's reading,.[160]

Epilogue:
Blanqui and Nietzsche, Spectres of Eternal Returns

As discussed, in his elaboration of the concept of 'Apokatastasis', Leibniz alludes to Plato's theory of return. As Deleuze writes in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Nietzsche viewed his own figure of eternal return as distinct from notions of cyclical return in antiquity. Benjamin, however, viewed Nietzsche's return as continuing a mythical approach: 'Thinking the idea of eternal recurrence once more in the nineteenth century, Nietzsche becomes the figure on whom mythic doom is now carried out'.[161]

Deleuze follows Nietzsche in describing ancient and modern figures of return as opposed; in the first, he writes, time is subordinated to a cyclical, eternal movement of the world.[162] The eternal cycle is predestined, resulting from godly decision. In the second, modern version, time is no longer subordinated to movement and the cycle results from blind chance or necessity. Despite his noting the continuity between these different forms, Benjamin discusses the 'modern' figures of return put forward by Louis Auguste Blanqui and Nietzsche, separately from such notions as 'apokatastasis' and redemption. Benjamin is critical of these visions of return, describing them as nightmarish, yet also as intensely powerful.

In the second Exposé he wrote for the *Arcades Project* in 1939, Benjamin delves into Blanqui's vision of eternal return, presented in *Eternity by the Stars* (1872), and not that of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* to which he refers only briefly. Benjamin describes Blanqui's doppelgänger world of 'present eternalised', in which every component of the universe is repeated to infinity, as the 'phantasmagoria of history itself'.[163] By using the term 'phantasmagoria' Benjamin evokes the nineteenth-century horror theatre, which used magic lanterns to project images of ghosts, skeletons, and other haunting images. 'Phantasmagoria' is mentioned explicitly in another *Arcades* fragment as part of a list of nineteenth-century pre-cinematic spectacles produced by emerging visual technology.[164] He casts Blanqui's 'return' as

[160] Ibid, 29.
[161] Benjamin, 'Paralipomena to "On a Concept of History"', *SW* 4, 403–04.
[162] Deleuze, *Essays Critical And Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A.Greco (London and NY:Verso, 1998), 27.
[163] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 25–26.
[164] Ibid, 'Q, Panoramas', [Q1,1], 527.

transforming history into an alarming spectacle through the use of visual effects, and comments on its 'extreme hallucinatory power'.[165]

Benjamin also refers to Marx's pronouncement of the phantasmagorical powers of the commodity, which Benjamin links, in the *Arcades*, to a manifold of visual technology, amongst which 'phantasmagoria' has a privileged place, with tropes of ideological illusion.[166] Benjamin describes the return of history as its commodification: 'the idea of historical recurrence transforms the historical event itself into a mass produced article'.[167] As a process of commodification of history, eternal return brings about the decline of its 'aura', historical events losing their unique status in time.

This phantasmagorical figure of eternal return is also described as a figure of Baudelairean modernity.[168] As such, it is to be distinguished from the baroque and its allegory, the latter described by Benjamin as 'eternal transience'.[169] Benjamin does not hide his disappointment that 'this resignation without hope is the last word of the great revolutionary'.[170] As Benjamin acknowledges, although Blanqui's vision included a critique of historical progress, he ultimately chose return over progress.[171] For Benjamin, neither progress nor eternal repetition of the present are acceptable models of history. As he writes, 'it is the inherent tendency of dialectical presentation to dissipate the semblance of sameness, and even repetition, in history. Authentic political experience is absolutely free of this semblance'.[172] Benjamin's dialectical model of history as montage consists of his 'third way' in which historical time is neither linear nor circular – but constructed.

If, for Benjamin, the eternal return of history consists of a 'vision of hell', for Deleuze, Nietzsche's 'eternal return' consists of a 'Copernican revolution'. By furnishing difference with its own concept, Nietzsche's eternal return was the precursor of Deleuze's own revolutionary philosophy of difference.[173] Deleuze describes Nietzsche's eternal return, in *Difference and Repetition*, as a return not of the 'identical', the 'same', or the 'One'. Rather, 'returning constitutes the only Same of that which becomes. Returning is the becoming identical of

[165] Ibid, 25.
[166] For a detailed discussion of how the concept of 'phantasmagoria' functions in the *Arcades Project* see Margaret Cohen, 'Walter Benjamin's Phantasmagoria', *New German Critique* 48 (Autumn 1989).
[167] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [J62a, 2], 341.
[168] Ibid, 26.
[169] Ibid, [J67,4], 348.
[170] Ibid, 26.
[171] Ibid, [J61a, 3], 339.
[172] Ibid, [N9,5], 473.
[173] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 40.

becoming itself'.[174] Eternal return offers a model in which becoming takes priority over being. Starkly distinct from both the Ancient Greek return as law of nature on the one hand, and Blanqui's dark vision on the other, Nietzsche's eternal return, in Deleuze's reading, does not produce infinite copies of the same. It produces repetitions and selects differences in an ever-turning wheel of becoming.[175]

I noted earlier that at times Deleuze reads Leibniz through Nietzsche. In Deleuze's discussion of Nietzsche's eternal return, as described in *Difference and Repetition*, we see that the inverse is true as well. Difference is not a term used by Nietzsche, and, as Deleuze concedes, Deleuze's own conception of 'difference in itself' was inspired by Leibniz's differential. What is more, Deleuze highlights the principle of selection, an important one for Leibniz that determines the selection of the best possible world, within Nietzsche's eternal return, in order to explain how the return is a principle of difference. Accordingly, he describes how only the 'extreme and excessive', within the 'theatrical' world of eternal revolution, returns.[176]

In the fifth chapter of *Difference and Repetition*, 'Asymmetrical Synthesis of the Sensible', the link between Nietzsche's eternal return and Leibniz's metaphysics and dynamics becomes clearer, when Deleuze writes that 'the eternal return is neither qualitative nor extensive but intensive, purely intensive'.[177] The differences produced by returns are variations in intensity, degrees of power. Through Nietzsche's eternal return, Deleuze proposes a new way of thinking time, in which difference of intensity replaces hierarchisation. This is the ethical underpinning of eternal return, which expresses, he writes, the common being of all things as that which returns.[178] By highlighting the intensive nature of eternal return, Deleuze picks up on Nietzsche's Leibnizianism. As Deleuze writes, Nietzsche's interest in contemporary energetics was not guided by mere nostalgia.[179] Leibniz's conception of force was important for Nietzsche, as is clear for example in Nietzsche and Leibniz's respective understandings of all events being governed by immanent internal forces.[180]

Leibniz's conception of force, both in itself and via Nietzsche's eternal return, was crucial for the formation of the category of 'intensity' in Deleuze's thought. In 'Asymmetrical Synthesis of the Sensible', the concept of 'intensity' is definitive for Deleuze's understanding

[174] Ibid, 41.
[175] Ibid, 42.
[176] Ibid, 41.
[177] Ibid, 243.
[178] Ibid, 41.
[179] Ibid, 243.
[180] For a reading of Nietzsche that elaborates his debt to Leibniz, see Günter Abel, *Nietzsche: Die Dynamik der Willen zur Macht und die Ewige Wiederkehr* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984).

of both being and experience. He defines 'disparity' – difference in intensity – as the sufficient reason of all being.[181] Intensity, he writes, forms part of the conditions of real experience, its variations determining the being 'of' the sensible.[182]

Having mainly explored the intensive nature of Benjamin's image of historical experience in this chapter, in the next I will demonstrate that, for Deleuze, the concept of 'intensity', rather than denoting history, actually serves to define the nature of time and of being. We will see that like Benjamin's, Deleuze's appropriations of Leibniz's concepts of intensity and force are manifest in his image concepts.

[181] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 222.
[182] Ibid, 232, 236.

Chapter Three: Perspective

Leibniz, Benjamin and Deleuze on Perception, Image and Perspective

> … a world *Solemque suum, sua sidera norat* [that has its own sun, its own stars]
>
> —Leibniz, *Theodicy*

Introduction

This chapter argues for the significance of Leibniz's understanding of vision and perspective for Benjamin and Deleuze's writing. It focuses on the role of perspective within Leibniz's theories of knowledge and perception, manifest in his so called 'perspectivism' and how these informed Deleuze and Benjamin's conceptualisations of the image and vision more generally.

Philosophical perspectivism generally argues for the contingency of truth in relation to the multiple perspectives of individuals. In some versions, such as Whitehead's, it argues that the world itself is reducible to the perspectives of subjects upon it.[1] Its proponents are therefore often accused of relativism, a charge Leibniz attempts to avoid. Perspectivism has enjoyed a recent revival in philosophy of science, yet it is seldom discussed outside of this domain.[2] Both Benjamin and Deleuze, I argue, assimilate versions of Leibniz's perspectivism, albeit in very different ways. Benjamin broaches what might be called a 'historical perspectivism', while Deleuze's interpretation of Leibniz in *The Fold* results in what can be referred to as a 'mannerist perspectivism' that converges with his thought on cinema.

According to Leibniz's perspectivism, the individual is constituted through its points of view, through which it is differentiated from all other individuals. Leibniz refers to these multiple 'points of view' as 'perspectives', hence we can describe his conception of individuality as determined through perspective. As highlighted by Deleuze, the individual point of view is linked to the monad's body: the distinct zone of expression of the monad, the extent to which its perceptions are clear, established by its point of view, is coterminous with the body. As discussed in the first chapter, perception is the term Leibniz uses when discussing

[1] See George Gentry, 'The Subject in Whitehead's Philosophy', *Philosophy of Science* 11, no. 4 (October 1944): 222–26.

[2] For a recent publication that examines perspectivism in the context of analytic philosophy and philosophy of science, see *Understanding Perspectivism*, eds. Michela Massimi and Casey D. McCoy (London: Routledge, 2019).

the psychological aspects of the projective-geometry-derived structure of 'expression'.[3] The monad's perception of the world depends on its point of view and therefore, in a sense, perspective is a constructive aspect of perception. Leibniz's understanding of expression, and hence of perception, draws on the work of contemporary mathematicians such as Girard Desargues and Blaise Pascal.[4] In due course I will also briefly outline how their research informed Leibniz's theorising of perspective.

These aspects of Leibniz's perspectivism are crucial for Benjamin and Deleuze. Specifically, they draw on the manner in which Leibniz's perspectivism is constitutive of individuality and on his theory of consciousness and 'minute perceptions'. As already observed, both Deleuze and Benjamin pay special attention to Leibniz's emphasis on 'in between', hallucinatory or intoxicated states of perception; understanding perception as constitutive of the body through differentiation. For both thinkers, such states of intoxication or hallucination bring about the dissolution of the self and the breaking up of the body. Benjamin and Deleuze utilise and develop key elements of Leibniz's metaphysics within which vision, perception, and body are linked through a theory of 'point of view'.

In the work of both thinkers, we find image theories that consist of critiques of the hegemony of visual and representational thinking. Benjamin and Deleuze reconfigure subject-object relations in a manner that promotes a non-hierarchical, de-centred, 'real rather than possible' (in Deleuze's terms) conception of experience. The conceptions of 'image' used by Deleuze and Benjamin are temporal, embodied, and rooted in sense perception. Both draw on a philosophical tradition in which the 'image' is linked with memory and imagination, yet their conceptions of image relate to not only the mental but also the bodily image. Their conceptions of 'image' call mimetic representation into question. By emphasising sense perception, they challenge the age-old philosophical link between truth and vision.

Deleuze discusses Leibniz's perspectivism in *The Fold*, reconceptualising subject and object through Leibniz's theory of point of view.[5] He names the object that is defined not essentially but through 'pure functionality' an *objectile*. This objectile, Deleuze writes, is 'a mannerist object, no longer an essentialist one: it becomes an event'.[6] Deleuze views mannerism, against essentialism, as the constitution of *objectiles* through their constant variation. He connects Leibniz's perspectivism with the mannerist style in art and architecture,

[3] See Yvon Belaval, *Études leibniziennes: de Leibniz à Hegel*, Collection Tel 229 (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), 144.
[4] See Debuiche, *L'expression leibnizienne*, 415.
[5] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 25–27.
[6] Ibid, 19.

known for its distortion of perspective and artificial effect. As discussed, Deleuze's reading of Leibniz pays special attention to the imbalance and imperfections of Leibniz's seemingly harmonious system. Leibniz's perspectivism, read through the prism of mannerism, forms part of Deleuze's ongoing critique of image and artifice, manifest in his attack on 'the image of thought' and his conception of the simulacrum. These concerns form part of Deleuze's image theories in the two cinema books, on which he worked while delivering his series of lectures on Leibniz.

In their conceptions of the image, the divergences between Deleuze and Benjamin's thought are also apparent. The etymological distinctions between *image* and *Bild* must be taken into account. *Image* originates from the Latin *imagio* that relates to *imitate*, hence the term 'image' inherently designates a mimetic relation. The Germanic *Bild* comes from the verb *bilden*, equivalent to *gestalten*, forming; and relates also to *Bildung*, education. *Bild* therefore echoes formation, yet unlike *image* it does not necessarily imply the act of imitating or producing a copy. The German *Abbild*, designating image as well as reflection, or likeness, is closer in meaning to *image*.[7]

Throughout his writing, Deleuze engaged with the relations between the image and thought, the visible and the thinkable. As a form of representation, which, according to Deleuze, consists of distortion, 'image' does not necessarily belong to the realm of thought. In *Difference and Repetition* the concept of 'Image of thought' is designated as pre-philosophical, consisting of common-sensical presumptions that are presupposed by philosophical thought. The concept of simulacrum, the distorted image of modernity, is perhaps an attempt to delineate an affirmative concept of the image, in this work, yet by designating the 'Image of thought' as non-philosophical Deleuze paradoxically adopts some of the traditional preconceptions of philosophy, assigning the image and visual field more generally to non-conceptual domains.

However, in *What is Philosophy?* there is a shift in the role of the 'image of thought' (externally marked by Deleuze's decision to no longer capitalise the word 'image'). The 'image of thought' is equated therein with the 'plane of immanence'.[8] Here too the image is associated with the 'non-philosophical' and yet, at the same time, the latter is redefined as standing for the 'foundation' of philosophy.[9]

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[7] Benjamin uses *Abbild* to designate a facsimile or reproduction in the 'Artwork' essay: 'the reproduction [Reproduktion], as offered by illustrated magazines and newsreels, differs unmistakably from the image' *SW* 3, 105.
[8] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 37.
[9] Ibid, 41.

The intricate relations between thought and the image are a persistent theme in Benjamin's writing as well. Thought and image are conjoined in the 'thought/thinking image' [*Denkbild*], a concept Benjamin uses to describe the aphoristic texts assembled in *One-Way Street* and *Berlin Childhood around 1900*.[10] While Benjamin describes images as appearing in the mind, memory, and dreams, he also describes the image as presented in language. Common to all image forms is the fact that the image may enable access to truths. Thus, for example, the dialectical presentation enabled by the image can disclose 'true historical time'.

Deleuze and Benjamin's discussions of cinema and conceptions of image-montage, in which they draw on Leibniz's perspectivism, make the similarities in their approaches as well as their divergent positions vis-à-vis the image manifest. 'Perspectivism or projection – these are neither truth nor appearance', Deleuze writes in *Cinema 2*.[11] While, for Benjamin, it is montage that enables the perceptibility of history, perhaps counteracting the 'crisis in experience' and revealing 'true historical time', for Deleuze, montage within the crystalline regime is essentially falsifying.[12]

1. Buck-Morss and Benjamin on Perception and Aesthetics

In her seminal text 'Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered', Buck-Morss understands Benjamin's demand that communism 'politicise art' – made at the end of the 'Artwork' essay – as a statement intimately linked to sense perception. As she writes, when Benjamin calls for communism to politicise art in response to the fascist aestheticization of politics, he cannot mean that culture should be made a vehicle of communist propaganda. Rather,

> he is demanding of art a far more difficult task – that is, to *undo* the alienation of the corporeal sensorium, to *restore the instinctual power of the human bodily senses for the sake of humanity's self-preservation*, and to do this not by avoiding

[10] Benjamin, *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, in *SW* 3, 344–413.
[11] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 144 / *Cinéma 2*, 188.
[12] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 131. As Deleuze, writes, his definition of the narration in the Crystalline regime follows Nietzsche 'who, under the name of "will to power", substitutes the power of the false for the form of the true, and resolves the crisis of truth, wanting to settle it once and for all, but, in opposition to Leibniz, in favour of the false and its artistic, creative power…'.

technologies but by *passing through* them.[13]

For Buck-Morss, what Benjamin means by the aestheticization of politics involves an alienation of the senses that 'makes it possible for humanity to view its own destruction with enjoyment'.[14] This self-alienation followed a 'crisis of perception' that formed part of the modern experience.[15] Its reversal, Benjamin suggests, would require the employment of cinematic technology for the restoration of a form of sense perception.

As Buck-Morss reminds her readers, 'aesthetics' is derived from the Greek *Aisthesis* meaning the sensory experience of perception. She follows Eagleton who traces the reversal in the meaning of the term that resulted in its being applied primarily to art during Benjamin's time.[16] Buck-Morss suggests that a key concern for Benjamin in the 'Artwork' essay – the way in which technology affects the human sensorium – harkens back to the original meaning of the term, and that art is thereby redefined, no longer distinguishing itself by its separation from 'reality'.[17]

Buck-Morss does not problematise the conception of 'image' in this essay.[18] Just as Benjamin understands art and aesthetics through sense perception, sense experience is also a key to Benjamin's shifting conception of the image. Following Buck-Morss, we can understand the transitions in Benjamin's conceptualisation of the image as resulting from his diagnosis of a 'crisis in perception' discussed in the previous chapter. In the 'Artwork' essay, as Buck Morss describes, technology is seen as both the central cause of 'perceptual splitting' during the modern era and its possible cure.

In earlier works, from the 1917 fragment 'Perception as Writing' through to the Surrealism essay (1929), extreme perceptual experiences such as intoxication, madness, and

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[13] Susan Buck-Morss, 'Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered' October, Vol. 62 (Autumn, 1992), 5.
[14] Ibid, 37.
[15] Buck-Morss suggests a 'perceptual splitting' undergone by both individuals and the imagined 'social body' during the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, following industrialisation and technological developments (ibid, 30). She views the 'crisis of perception' Benjamin identifies as caused by experiences of anaesthetics, drug addiction, and phantasmagoria as manipulations of the senses that caused a numbing of the organism and deadening of the senses.' (ibid, 18).
[16] As Terry Eagleton writes, 'it is as though philosophy suddenly wakes up to the fact that there is a dense, swarming territory beyond its own mental enclave which threatens to fall utterly outside its sway. That territory is nothing less than our whole sensate life together – the business of affections and aversions, of how the world strikes the body on its sensory surfaces […] [T]he aesthetic concerns this most gross and palpable dimension of the human, which post-Cartesian philosophy, in some curious lapse of attention, has somehow managed to overlook', Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 13.
[17] Buck-Morss, 'Aesthetics and Anaesthetics', 6.
[18] Buck-Morss does, however, discuss the significance of images to Benjamin in *The Dialectics of Seeing*, where she recounts how the *Arcades Project* was at a certain point planned to include images, as Benjamin wrote in a letter to Gretel Karplus. See Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 71.

experiences of the unconscious lead the way to a reversal of the crisis through the dissolution of the bourgeois self. Moreover, the understanding of individual perception as linked to collective perception, and the collective as body – highlighted by Buck-Morss in the 'Artwork' essay – are already present in Benjamin's earlier texts. His understanding therein of the relation between individual perception and collective bodies, as manifest in his conceptions of the image, echoes Leibniz's theory of perception, in which individual perception expresses the universe and God's 'perception'. Leibniz's theory of an unconscious composed of minute perceptions filtered into consciousness by differential relations was also influential for Deleuze's conceptions of the image. In Leibniz, as we will see, the image is linked not only to body but also to time – and to the body *in* time.

2. Leibniz's Conceptions of Image and Perspective

2.1 Image

Following the philosophical traditions of Plato and Descartes, Leibniz used perspectival vision as a central metaphor for his theories of knowledge and consciousness.[19] He was unique, however, in the manner in which he drew upon contemporary theories in projective geometry and perspective as well as his own work in infinitesimal calculus for his understanding of knowledge and theory of perception, and in the central role of perspective in his theory of knowledge as well as his metaphysics. His understanding of perspective was also shaped by a long-lasting engagement with optics and visual apparatuses.[20] In an essay from 1696, Leibniz discusses reflection involving concave mirrors, suggesting that his recurrent 'living mirrors' metaphor was inspired by his research on reflection.[21] Benjamin and Deleuze, as I have suggested, were informed by these concerns, as well as by other aspects of Leibniz's

[19] As formulated by Serres, 'La vision demeurant model de la connaissance, chose traditionnelle de Platon est Descartes, la théorie de la vision perspective, est un genre dont la théorie de la perception et celle de la connaissance sone des espèces', Serres, *Le système de Leibniz*, 158.

[20] For a detailed account of Leibniz's longstanding research in the field, see Jeffrey K. McDonough, 'Optics', in *The Oxford Handbook of Leibniz*, ed. Maria Rosa Antognazza (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 425–37. A thriving science in the seventeenth century, optics was the focus of several research projects undertaken by Leibniz. As McDonough shows, Leibniz made innovative attempts at deriving the laws of reflection and refraction throughout his career. McDonough traces Leibniz's optical research from the early *Leges Reflexionis et Refractionis Demonstratae* (1671) and on, showing how Leibniz's approach developed from a strictly mechanistic approach to one that, from the late 1670s and on, insisted that laws of optics could be derived from considerations of optimality.

[21] Leibniz, 'Essai anagogique dans la recherche des causes *Tentamen anagogicum*' (1695) *Die philosophischen Schriften* ed. Karl Immanuel Gerhardt (Berlin: Weidmann, 1890) bd.7, 270-279.

metaphysics.

In *New Essays on Human Understanding*, Leibniz uses the term 'image' repeatedly.[22] The work, which responds to John Locke*'s An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), is structured as a dialogue between Philalethes, spokesman for Locke, and Theophilus, Leibniz's spokesman.[23] Leibniz attempts to refute Locke's understanding of the human mind as a 'blank slate'.[24] In *New Essays*, the 'image' denotes a representation of a sensible quality that either willingly or unwillingly affects our senses.[25] In several passages, Leibniz describes images as 'impressions':

> But a single very strong impression may, by its very intensity, instantly have as much effect as could be had by a repetition of mild impressions over a long period of time; and so this intensity may etch into the imagination [*fantaisie*] as deep and vivid an image as prolonged experience produces.[26]

The image is described as being etched or marked into imagination. An intense image can mark the soul immediately, while less intense ones may have a comparable effect over time. In other passages Leibniz describes dream-images and images linked in memory.[27] Like colour, the image can be more or less intense; Leibniz describes the image as equivalent to sense experience such as 'colours, taste and so on'.[28] Images have a degraded status, since they come to us through confused perceptions, and may therefore be illusionary ['*Ne sont que de fantômes*'].[29] Furthermore, Leibniz describes how images may bring about error, by producing a false connection between two ideas within the imagination, so that one erroneously judges the connection between them as casual.[30] In an example given by the speaker Theophilus in the

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[22] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, ed. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[23] John Locke and R. S. Woolhouse, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: New York : Penguin Books, 1997).
[24] See Locke, *An Essay*, Book I, 55-91. As Remnant and Bennett describe, Leibniz's exposition of Locke's ideas does not 'fairly' present Locke's position; rather, 'instead of two people seriously arguing, we have a mechanical spokesman for Locke (Philalethes) who dutifully serves up portions of the *Essay* so that Leibniz's spokesman (Theophilus) can pass judgment on them', see 'Introduction', Leibniz, *New Essays*, x.
[25] 'Involuntary thoughts come to us partly from without, through objects' affecting our senses, and partly from within, as a result of the (often undetectable) traces left behind by earlier perceptions, which continue to operate and mingle with new ones. We are passive in this respect; and even when we are awake we are visited by images – which I take to include representations not only of shapes but also of sounds and other sensible qualities which come to us unbidden, as in dreams'. Leibniz, *New Essays*, 178.
[26] Leibniz, *New Essays*, 272.
[27] Ibid, 445, 51.
[28] Ibid, 488.
[29] Ibid, 404.
[30] Ibid, 272.

dialogue, and presenting Leibniz's own views, when we look at a rotating wheel in motion, our confused image [*fantôme*] of it makes its teeth disappear and an imaginary ring appears in their place.[31] The terms 'image' and 'imagination' (Leibniz uses both *imagination* and *fantaisie*) are often used in proximity; for example, Leibniz describes the imagination of beasts as the passage from one image to another.[32]

In the chapter 'of clear and obscure, distinct and confused ideas' in the second book of *New Essays*, Leibniz denounces Locke for conflating the distinction between *idea* and *image*. Theophilus gives the following example: human senses and imagination cannot distinguish an image [*image*] of a chiliagon from that of a polygon, that has one side less, a distinction that may be made by a mathematician with precise knowledge of these shapes.[33] The 'clear image' one may have of these shapes consists merely of a 'confused idea' of their nature and properties.[34] Thus both image and idea are representational, the difference between them consisting in what aspect of the thing they represent: the image represents the sensible qualities of the thing, while the idea stands for its essential qualities.

Leibniz's use of the term 'image' is consistent with how it was used within the idealist philosophical tradition. Plato's treatment of images, specifically the inferior position of certain types of images that are founded upon sense experience, often leading to illusion and error, is manifest in Leibniz's usage. Leibniz uses both '*image*' and '*fantôme*', the latter an 'erroneous' image, which echoes Plato's distinction between *eikon* and *phantasie*. The notion of an image as impressed upon the soul or in memory, and preserving the past in the present, is present in Plato and needless to say it was hugely influential on European philosophy.[35] Leibniz's distinction between image and idea, and his use of the broader conception of imagination, perhaps also drawing on Plato and Neo-Platonism, may have pre-empted the special place assigned to imagination by Kant.[36] The conception of image within the idealist tradition, as represented by Plato and Leibniz, is one that both Deleuze and Benjamin – as I have sought to demonstrate – repeatedly and critically challenge in their writings.

[31] Ibid, 404.
[32] Ibid, 51.
[33] Ibid, 262.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ricoeur discusses the association of *eidolon*, image, and *eikon* copy, with *tupos*, imprint through the metaphor of the slab of wax in Plato's *Theaetetus*. See Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 8–10.
[36] Deleuze comments on imagination in Kant in *Difference and Repetition*, 187.

2.2 Perspective

Aside from his notion of the image, I have spoken of Leibniz's own attention to theories of perspective, a recurring theme in a variety of his works.[37] Leibniz uses the terms 'perspective' and 'point of view'. During his time, 'perspective' was used, as it is today, to denote the field relating to the representation of three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional surface. The unique aspect of Leibniz's theory of perspective lies in that not only is the individual's perception constituted by its point of view, but the individual itself is thereby constituted, and therefore individuality may be said to be, in a sense, perspectively determined.

According to Leibniz's theory, the substance or individual is constituted by its point of view on the world, which is different from all other points of view of all other individuals. Each simple substance is thus rendered individually thanks to its singular point of view. Leibniz illustrates this using the recurrent metaphor of alternate perspectives of a city, for example in the *Monadology*:

> Just as the same city viewed from multiple directions appears entirely different and, as it were, multiplied perspectively (...) because of the infinite multitude of simple substances, there are, as it were, just as many different universes, which are, nevertheless, only perspectives on a single one, corresponding to the different points of view of every monad.[38]

Since there is an infinity of monads and each has a unique point of view, there is an infinity of perspectives that constitute the entirety of the universe, mirroring God's infinity. The conception of a perspectivism, which designates individual monads as constituted by their points of view, allows the single universe to comprehend a multiplicity of different perspectives, or 'universes'.

As Andersen describes, the seventeenth century in France was a 'very creative period in the history of perspective', during which developments in perspective went hand in hand with those in projective geometry.[39] Leibniz had access to at least some of these developments,

[37] The word 'perspective' comes from *perspicere*: to look through, into or at, as well as to perceive clearly. See Andersen, *The Geometry of an Art*, xx.
[38] Leibniz, *Monadology*, 57, in *Philosophical Essays*, 220.
[39] Andersen, *The Geometry of an Art*, 402.

for example through Pascal's *Traité sur les coniques* (1654) and Desargues' *Brouillon Project* (1636), whose work he mentions in *New Essays*.[40] The engineer Desargues (1591–1661) developed his manual for the construction of perspective *La Perspective* (1636) and, in the second part of the *Brouillon Project*, focused on conic sections, a beloved theme of Leibniz.[41]

Leibniz mentions Desargues' work in *New Essays* in the chapter 'Of Perception'. He uses perspective as an example for the deceptions of painting, which leads us to confuse image for reality and substitute cause for effect.[42] By applying Desargues' methods to painting, Leibniz writes, the creation of three-dimensional representations through the use of hue and shading was enabled. 'Flat' depictions of objects painted 'in the Chinese manner' were replaced by shapes rendered with shading, which made possible the distinction between a spherical surface and a circular one.[43] Leibniz uses the gradual shift from darkness to light in paintings that use perspectival rules as a model for his theory of knowledge in which there is a gradated transition between distinct and confused ideas, in opposition to the clear-cut distinction between distinct and confused ideas in Descartes.[44] Not only did Leibniz refer to Desargues' methods of shading, he also advanced his own 'doctrine of shading' which he viewed as a kind of reverse perspective, in which a source of light replaces the position of the eye.[45]

In addition to his methods of shading, Desargues' work was important for Leibniz's research into conic sections. Debuiche argues that one of the ways in which Desargue and Pascal's theories of perspective, and specifically their understanding of conic sections, influenced Leibniz was in their use of the term 'correspondence'. Projective perspective, she writes, functions as a transformation that preserves the relations between two elements and thereby constructs a relation of analogy between them.[46] This serves as a model for Leibniz's conception of expression, which served as the foundation for his novel theory of consciousness. In his *Theodicy* Leibniz makes a direct connection between conic sections and the relations of analogy they construct on the one hand, and the monad's representation of the universe from its unique point of view on the other, which, we might recall, is equivalent to how the soul

[40] See Leibniz, *New Essays*, 135; see also Debuiche, 'L'expression Leibnizienne', 415. Leibniz took some notes on Pascal's conic sections, see Costabel, Pierre. "Traduction française des notes de Leibniz sur les 'Coniques' de Pascal." In Taton, *L'œuvre scientifique de Pascal*, 90–101, quoted in Debuiche, 'L'expression Leibnizienne', 419.
[41] As Remnant and Bennett mention, by Leibniz's time Desargues' work was unattainable and Leibniz was probably familiar with Desargues' work through A. Bosse's *La maniere universelle de M. Desargues pour pratiquer la perspective* (1648). See Leibniz, 'Notes', *New Essays*, ix.
[42] Leibniz, *New Essays*, 135.
[43] Ibid.
[44] See Serres, *Le système de Leibniz*, 160.
[45] Ibid, 165.
[46] See Debuiche,'L'expression Leibnizienne', 421.

perceives the universe:

> It is true that the same thing may be represented in different ways; but there must always be an exact relation between the representation and the thing, and consequently between the different representations of one and the same thing. The projections in perspective of the conic sections of the circle show that one and the same circle may be represented by an ellipse, a parabola and a hyperbola, and even by another circle, a straight line and a point. Nothing appears so different nor so dissimilar as these figures; and yet there is an exact relation between each point and every other point. Thus one must allow that each soul represents the universe to itself according to its point of view, and through a relation which is peculiar to it; but a perfect harmony always subsists therein.[47]

Conic sections, obtained by projecting a circle upon a plane that 'slices' the cone, demonstrate how one and the same circle may be expressed by various shapes, each of which seems entirely different and yet retains the analogical relation between each of the points in the expressed circle and those in the expressing shapes.[48] Leibniz likens this analogical expression to how every soul represents the universe, even while an eternal harmony subsists between their representations.

Leibniz uses examples from perspective, then, to illustrate both expression and perception. As Serres writes, the relation, within conic sections, between the multiple curves that may be projected upon one point comprehends the relation of the one and the multiple, and can thereby serve as a model of expression in general and of perception in particular.[49] Another example may be found in a letter to des Bosses, in which Leibniz distinguishes between the perception of bodies by 'us' and by God: 'The difference that exists between the appearances of bodies for us and their appearance to God is *quodammodo* that which exists between scenography and ichnography'.[50] While in the first objects are represented using perspectival methods to create a three-dimensional depiction, the second depicts objects on a geometrical, horizontal level. Human perception is thereby described as inherently lacking in its representational capacities, missing the perspectival abilities of representing objects three-

[47] Leibniz, *Theodicy*, 357.
[48] See Serres, *Le système de Leibniz*, 159.
[49] Ibid, 161.
[50] Leibniz, Lettre à des Bosses du 5 fevrier 1712, quoted in Serres, *Le système de Leibniz*, 153.

dimensionally, in comparison to God's perfect perception. In this case perspective is viewed as enabling the perception of objects in a manner that results from knowledge of their true nature.

In another example from the *Theodicy*, Leibniz rather associates 'devices of perspective' with artifice and describes them as leading to error, in a way that is similar to his use of the term 'image' discussed before:

> Man finds himself the worse for this, in proportion to his fault; but God, by a wonderful art, turns all the errors of these little worlds to the greater adornment of his great world. It is as in those devices of perspective, where certain beautiful designs look like mere confusion until one restores them to the right angle of vision or one views them by means of a certain glass or mirror. It is by placing and using them properly that one makes them serve as adornment for a room.[51]

The twofaced 'devices of perspective' Leibniz describes seem like 'mere confusion' until viewed correctly, in the right angle or aided by a mirror or glass. When viewed appropriately, they fill their function of adornment. Perception is mediated by the artful device that plays upon reflections, creating a shift in the observer's point of view. The mediation or intervention in perception through devices or apparatuses is discussed by Benjamin and Deleuze, specifically in relation to photographic and cinematic devices that bring about a shift in the viewer's perspective; it is a theme in their work to which I shall return.

2.3 Living Mirrors

Although Leibniz does not describe the monad's perspective as located in space, but rather as a point in the scale between clear and distinct perceptions on the one hand, and obscure and indistinct ones on the other, the term 'point of view' relates to vision and projection, as manifest in his recurring descriptions of the individual as 'mirroring' the world.[52]

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[51] Leibniz, *Theodicy*, 147.

[52] As mentioned, Leibniz was actively engaged in optical research. His use of the 'living mirror' metaphor must be contextualised through scientific developments in lens and glass making and the usage of mirrors during his times. As Melchoir-Bonnet describes, while mirrors were in use from antiquity, early mirrors were made of metal and the early glass mirrors, developed during the Middle Ages, were often opaque. From the second half of the fifteenth century glass makers from Morano developed techniques for producing glass so pure and transparent that it was termed 'crystalline', which later spread to France and Germany. However glass mirrors remained rare and luxurious objects of small size, their surfaces usually concave or convex, until the eighteenth century. See Sabine Melchior-Bonnet, 'The Secret of Venice' in *The Mirror: a History*. London and NY: Routledge, 2014, 9-34. The pervasiveness of round mirrors, usually concave or convex, during his times,

The link between Baroque fascination with the concept of infinity and the metaphor of the mirror in philosophy and literature of the time has been previously noted.[53] The 'mirror' is described as a 'living' one, receiving a unique twist, rather later in Leibniz's career. Leibniz's late conception of 'life' or 'living beings' describes all substances as interconnected living beings, linked through the principle of pre-established harmony. The mirror, Leibniz writes, 'gives us a figurative expression, one suitable enough and already used by philosophers and theologians when they speak of an infinitely more perfect mirror, that is the *mirror of divinity*, which they made into the object of beatific vision'.[54] The 'living mirror' can therefore be understood as connecting these two elements: constant reflection of the deity by each substance and its interconnection with every other substance belonging to the infinite network that makes up the universe. The latter aspect is highlighted in Leibniz's better-known usages of the concept in *Principles of Nature and Grace*, for example, where he writes that 'each monad is a living mirror, or a mirror endowed with inner activity, representative of the universe, according to its point of view'.[55]

The 'living mirror' image first appeared, as Nachtomy suggests, in a commentary by Leibniz on fragment 22 from Pascal's *Pensées*, composed around 1696 and later titled 'Double infinité chez Pascal et Monade'.[56] Leibniz uses therein the image of the 'living mirror' to describe his concept of the complete substance and in contrast with Pascal's 'mite' [*ciron*]. Nachtomy argues that the 'living mirror' image draws on Pascal's notions of the infinitely small and infinitely large, yet with a significant alteration: every infinitely minute part of matter

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suggests that Leibniz had round mirrors in mind when describing the monad as a 'living mirror', which corresponds to his description of God as a 'centre that is everywhere, but that his circumference is nowhere' in 'Principles of Nature and Grace'13, in *Philosophical Essays*, 211. Leibniz took an active part in the study of lenses, as manifest in a letter addressed to him by Spinoza, which responds to Leibniz on the advantages of a specific type of lens. See Letter LII in *Correspondence*, by Benedict de Spinoza, [1883], 372-373 https://www.sacred-texts.com/phi/spinoza/corr/corr50.htm. For a general study of optical evolutions in the seventeenth century contributing to the development of devices that newly delineated the boundaries of vision, such as the telescope and the microscope, see A.I Sabra, *Theories of Light: From Descartes to Newton*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 1 edition, 1981.

[53]For example by Chen Moris who links between Kepler's optics and Shakespeare's use of the mirror metaphor, in 'The Quality of Nothing: Shakespearean Mirrors and Kepler's Visual Economy of Science', see Ofer Gal and Raz Chen-Morris, eds., *Science in the Age of Baroque*, Archives Internationales d'histoire Des Idées = International Archives of the History of Ideas 208 (Dordrecht ; New York: Springer, 2013).

[54] G.W Leibniz, Letter to Samuel Masson (1716), *Philosophical Essays*, 227. Leibniz may have been referring to Plato, who describes the soul as mirror of divinity, for example in *First Alcibiades*, 133c: 'Shall we not say, therefore, that as mirrors are clearer, purer, and more splendid than that which is analogous to a mirror in the eye, in like manner God is purer and more splendid than that which is best in our soul?'

[55] Leibniz, 'Principles of Nature and Grace', in *Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 409.

[56] Ohad Nachtomy, *Living Mirrors: Infinity, Unity, and Life in Leibniz's Philosophy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), 134. For a reconstruction of the fragment see Leibniz and Frédéric de Buzon, 'Double infinité chez Pascal et Monade: Essai de reconstitution de deux états du texte', Presses Universitaires de France, *Les Études philosophiques*, 2010 4, 95, 549– 546.

represents the infinitely large universe.[57] This might be the case, although as mentioned, the concept restates the structure of expression formulated by Leibniz at an earlier stage. In his own interpretation of Leibniz's commentary, Buzon emphasises that Leibniz's critique of Pascal hinges upon the latter's concept of the infinite extending in space alone. For Leibniz infinity is rather temporal, as the 'living mirror' image makes manifest.[58]

The 'living mirror'; an active, temporal, ever-changing representation of God and the universe, comprises then of a kind of moving image. In a sense Leibniz's understanding of perception may be described as cinematic *avant la lettre*, which is no coincidence in a thinker for whom self-movement or force are the defining characteristics of individual substance.[59]

As well as highlighting the interdependence of the universe and individual substances, the 'living mirror' metaphor highlights that of body and soul. Both relations are portrayed by Leibniz as instantiations of pre-established harmony.[60] The collective mirroring of all monads produces an image of God. There is thus a direct connection between individual and collective perception, and hence between what we may call individual and collective consciousness. This means that even the minutest perception has an important role as mirror of the entire universe and God. Leibniz illustrates this by describing minds as 'architectonic samples or models [*échantillons*] of the Deity, capable of knowing the system of the universe', and elsewhere as 'machines'.[61] The significance of the notion of the detail to Benjamin, following Leibniz, has been noted by Weber, who notes that what allows the monad to express the universe in a manner that harmonises with the expressions of all other monads is named 'detail' by Leibniz.[62]

3. Deleuze on Perspectivism and Mannerism

Deleuze describes Leibniz's thought as a 'profound mannerism'. This is due to Leibniz's understanding of substance: while in classicism substance was often defined according to its

[57] Ibid, 145.
[58] See Frédéric de Buzon, 'Que lire dans le deux infinis ? Remarques sur une lecture Leibnizienne' Presses Universitaires de France, *Les Études philosophiques*, 2010 4, 95, 547.
[59] See Anne Lise Ray, 'L'ambivalence de la notion d'action dans la Dynamique de Leibniz. La correspondance entre Leibniz et De Volder' (I ere Partie), *Studia Leibnitiana* 41, no. 1 (2009): 47–66.
[60] 'The union of soul with body, and indeed the operation of one substance upon another, consists only in the perfect mutual accord of substances, definitely established through the order of their first creation, in virtue of which each substance, following its own laws, agrees with the rest, meeting their demands; and the operations of the one thus follow or accompany the operations or change of the other'. Leibniz, Letter to Arnauld (1690), quoted in *Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 106.
[61] Leibniz, *Monadology*, 83, 266.
[62] As Samuel Weber writes, 'The detail is that aspect of the monad that makes perception possible and with it, differentiation […] [It] marks the aspect of the monad where consciousness converges with unconsciousness'. Weber, 'God and the Devil – in Detail', in *Benjamin's -abilities*, 246.

essential attributes, Leibniz's individual is fluidly constituted through spontaneous 'modulations'.[63] As discussed, according to Leibniz the individual and its perception are also continuously shaped by its point of view. In Deleuze's reading of Leibniz, we will see, perspectivism coincides with mannerism. Leibniz's mannerist conception of the individual – also described through the relation between 'superject' and 'objectile' – replaces Kant's understanding of experience through subject and object. In one of his lectures, Deleuze describes Leibniz's perspectivism in the following way:

> Leibniz cannot stop. He has to go all the way to a theory of point of view such that the subject is constituted by the point of view and not the point of view constituted by the subject […] The individual notion is the point of view under which the individual expresses the world. It's beautiful and it's even poetic […] For Leibniz, every individual substance is like an entire world and like a mirror of God or of the whole universe that each substance expresses in its own way: kind of like an entire city is diversely represented depending on the different situations of the one who looks at it.[64]

Deleuze recognises the originality of Leibniz's designation of the individual through its point of view, rather than vice versa. As he writes in the second chapter of *The Fold*, 'The Folds in the Soul', Leibniz was the inventor of a 'theory of point of view' that was the precursor of perspectivist theories put forward by a diverse array of authors, namely Nietzsche, William and Henry James, and Whitehead.[65] In all of the above, perspectivism entails a kind of relativism, Deleuze writes, yet not the kind of relativism we suspect, according to which truth changes according to the subject. Rather, what changes are 'the conditions under which the truth of a variation appears to the subject'.[66]In Serres' words, which Deleuze quotes, Leibniz's perspectivism is viewed as 'the truth of the relative rather than the relativity of truth'.[67]

Perspectivism – whether that of Leibniz, Whitehead or Nietzsche – views the world as reducible to the multiple points of view of individuals upon it. Thus, for Whitehead, 'apart from the experiences of subjects there is nothing'.[68] Similarly, for Leibniz as interpreted by Deleuze,

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[63] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 19.
[64] Deleuze, Cours Vincennes-St Denis, Cours du 15/04/1980.
[65] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 20 / *Le Pli*, 27.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid, 21 / 30. Deleuze reuses the same quote to describe perspectivism, this time without attributing it to Serres, in *What is Philosophy?*, 130.
[68] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, quoted in 'The Subject in Whitehead's Philosophy', 222.

the world itself consists of a virtuality included in every soul which expresses it.[69] The world is folded within the expressing souls, and as such exists in actuality only in its being enveloped by them. Deleuze follows Serres in understanding Leibniz's perspectivism as a symptom of his 'decentred' age: the multiple points of view of the monads replace the lost centre.[70] While perspectivism consists of a pluralism, in the sense that it implies plural, separate points of view, in Deleuze's reading this does not entail discontinuity between these points of view. Rather, Deleuze argues, they are distant from one another yet continuous.[71]

In 'The Folds in the Soul', Deleuze reconceptualises both subject and object through Leibniz's theory of point of view. He names the 'new object' that is defined through its function rather than essence, an *objectile*. Deleuze describes this type of object as a modern, technologically produced object, not one that harkens back to a model, but rather one informed by a continuum of variations.[72] There is no stable object or substance enduring through its changes; the 'objectile' exists only through its morphing nature. Its modulation is temporal rather than spatial, qualitative and constant. Just as the object changes, so too does the subject, becoming that which inhabits a point of view. The subject, so construed, is equivalent to Whitehead's 'superject', writes Deleuze. The point of view is in fact the condition for the subject's variation. It is the site on which the curve is inflected or the variation occurs. Deleuze understands inflection as the 'pure event' or 'the virtual', and the 'objectile' as the process of becoming an event.[73] Deleuze's understanding of the 'virtual' and the 'event' therefore hinges upon his interpretation of Leibniz's definition of the point of view of the individual as contingent upon inflections caused by changes in the degree of their active force.

Deleuze describes the 'objectile' as a 'mannerist' rather than an essentialist object, equating between the processual, variable nature of the 'objectile' and the mannerist style of art and architecture. The term 'mannerism' is used to define the anti-essentialist tendency of the baroque, following Stoic traditions and in opposition to the essentialism of Aristotle and Descartes.[74] The mannerist 'superject' and 'objectile' are both continuously constituted by the 'superject's' point of view, hence equivalent to the 'spontaneous manners' through which the individual becomes such.

As a late sixteenth-century style of art and architecture, mannerism is usually

[69] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 32.
[70] Ibid, 21.
[71] Ibid, 28. Here his reading of Leibniz differs from Benjamin's, which, as we have seen, highlights the distinct points of view of the monads as enacting breaks in the continuity.
[72] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 19.
[73] Ibid, 21.
[74] Ibid, 19.

distinguished from the baroque, which is dated from the beginning of the seventeenth century. The boundary between the two periods has been the subject of many art-historical debates. Deleuze arguably goes further than the common position that recognises difficulties in drawing a line between the two periods, by describing mannerism in *The Fold* as the operational trait of the baroque.[75] If the fold is the defining form of expression of the baroque, mannerism determines the manner in which the fold functions. The mannerist object is defined not as the sum of its parts but by these parts' inseparability, which results from the ways in which they are folded.[76] That is, mannerism constructs its objects through qualitative relations. When writing that Leibniz's thinking is mannerist, Deleuze means, then, first, that it follows a specific kind of relationism. Yet highlighting the 'operational' function of mannerism in relation to baroque has further consequences.[77] Mannerist artists took the rules of linear perspective, perfected in the Renaissance, to the extreme, often resulting in distortion. As a style, mannerism is renowned for its artificiality and excess. Deleuze does not explicitly discuss these aspects of mannerism in *The Fold*. He does, however, discuss the excessive decoration of baroque interiors in contrast to the serene building-facades. He also compares Leibniz to the painter Fontana Prospero (1512–97) whose work exemplifies mannerist painting, and he describes Leibniz's own excessive creation of principles.[78]

When discussing illumination techniques in painting, Deleuze highlights the role of the dark background against which the lighter forms emerge, both in mannerism and in baroque, for example in the works of Caravaggio and Tintoretto.[79] Following Wölffin, he describes the techniques of chiaroscuro as a progressivity of light that is augmented or reduced by degrees; what appears to be lit becomes so only in relation to areas of darkness. 'Clarity ceaselessly plunges into obscurity', as Deleuze writes.[80] He refers to Leibniz's 'theory of shading' discussed earlier, and the manner in which Leibniz's conception of gradated intensivity informed the use of light and colour by mannerist and baroque painters. This theory reappears in Deleuze's later discussion of Welles' cinema, making manifest the link between Deleuze's

[75] Following a description of the challenges of separating mannerism from baroque, Richard Sayce suggests the following periodisation: 'Renaissance se charchterise par l'espace statique, la composition équilibrée, la lumière harmonieusement répandue; le maniérisme par le *Raumflucht* […], la tension dans le composition, la lumière glissant ; le baroque par la profondeur dans l'espace, la composition qui s'épanouit, la lumière inondant'. Richard Sayce, 'Maniérisme et périodisation, quelque réflexions général', in *Renaissance, Maniérisme, Baroque* (Paris: Library Philosophique J.Vrin, 1972), 48.
[76] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 51 / *Le Pli*, 36–37.
[77] Ibid, 36 modified /51.
[78] Ibid, 67.
[79] Ibid, 56–57, 31.
[80] Ibid, 32 modified /45.

conceptions of mannerism and modernism.[81]

In describing baroque and mannerism as intertwined, and defining Leibniz as a mannerist, Deleuze highlights the imbalanced and distorted aspects of the baroque and of Leibniz's philosophy. Deleuze also notes these elements of the baroque in his description of mannerism as a trait of schizophrenia, both in *The Fold* and in *Cinema 2*.[82] In other words, Deleuze pushes Leibniz to the extreme, resulting in a kind of excessive Leibnizianism. Leibniz's best of all possible worlds becomes a mannerist, over-perfect and therefore distorted vision that converges with Deleuze's critique of the image of thought as expressed in the conception of the distorted image or simulacrum.

4. Perception and Body in Deleuze and Benjamin

4.1 Having a Body

As discussed, Leibniz describes the 'point of view' as belonging at once to the monad's soul and body. Latta goes so far as to say that 'the point of view of each monad *is* its body'.[83] Rather than relating to its position in space, the point of view depends solely on the extent to which its perceptions, or the manner in which it expresses the universe, is clear and distinct. Since the monads are finite beings that express the infinite universe, their expression is inevitably confused and indistinct to a certain extent. The vantage point of the monad is equivalent to its distinct zone of expression, as Deleuze writes in the section titled 'Having a Body', in the chapter 'Perception in the Folds' of *The Fold*. Since Leibniz writes that 'the soul expresses most clearly that which belongs to its body', this distinct zone of expression is equivalent to the monad's body.[84]

According to Leibniz's understanding of the individual, the distinct zone of expression of each monad consists of the events that it will undergo, in an ideal, incorporeal form. In Deleuze's interpretation, this means that the point of view of the monad, its distinct zone of expression, consists not only of its body *per se*, but also of what will happen to its body. The

[81] Ibid, 188.
[82] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 69n23. In *Cinema 2*, the 'mannerist' conversations of schizophrenics are depicted as creating distance, in a similar way to the distance between monads in Leibniz's perspectivism. As he writes: 'Psychiatrists have studied the conversation of schizophrenics, with its mannerisms, its interactional bringing closer and putting at a distance, but all conversation is schizophrenic, conservation is a model of schizophrenia, not the other way round.' *Cinema 2*, 230.
[83] 248n, my emphasis.
[84] Leibniz, Letter to Arnauld from April 1687, quoted in Deleuze, *The Fold*, 121.

'complete notion' of Caesar thus expressed clearly the historical event of the crossing of the Rubicon before it had taken place, pre-empting the contact of Caesar's body with its waters. As Deleuze writes, 'the monad expresses the world "according" to its body, according to the organs of its body, according to actions of other bodies upon itself'.[85] The point of view of the monad, its unique perspective, is embodied, and vice versa: its perspective, its zone of expression, constitutes its body. Moreover, since the perception of the monad includes that which will happen to its body, Leibniz's theory of perception is also a theory of the event.

Defined by its perceptions, it follows that the monad's self-movement corresponds to the flux in its perception, the becoming-distinct or becoming-obscure of its expression of the universe. In other words, the changes undergone by the monad are its movement from indistinct perceptions to distinct ones, motivated, as we have seen, by its appetition.

Deleuze highlights the significance of the obscure, dark part of the soul that necessitates the distinct, illuminated zone of expression that comprises the body. 'Contrary to Descartes, Leibniz begins in darkness. Clarity emerges from obscurity by way of a genetic process'.[86] As Deleuze explains in 'Perception in the Folds', each monad is singular thanks to the obscurity of its perceptions, which are never completely distinct since the monad is finite and the expressed world infinite. The world only exists within the monads, and only in the form of 'representatives' or 'infinitely small actual elements', which Leibniz also calls 'minute perceptions' and which Deleuze terms 'hallucinatory micro-perceptions'. These minute, confused perceptions are units composing our conscious, clear perceptions, as well as the passage from one perception to the next.[87] When we are in a state of sleep or unconsciousness, our minute perceptions are still active. Just as the body is never without movement, so the soul is never without perception, as Leibniz writes in *New Essays*.[88]

Deleuze underlines, in Leibniz's theory of minute perceptions, the constitution of perception mathematically, out of differential relations. The relation between conscious and unconscious perceptions is not one of part and whole, Deleuze claims, but rather one of ordinary and remarkable. Differential relations that constitute a singularity produce a conscious perception. By way of Salomon Maimon, Deleuze calls for a 'method of internal subjective genesis' that may replace Kant's method of conditioning, determining a concept of internal difference.[89] 'The physical object and mathematical space', writes Deleuze,

[85] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 99 / *Le Pli*, 132.
[86] Ibid, 120/90.
[87] Ibid, 115.
[88] Leibniz, *New Essays*, 111; book 2, chap 1, 10.
[89] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 118.

> both refer to a transcendental (differential and genetic) psychology of perception. Space-time ceases to be a pure given in order to become the totality or the nexus of differential relations in the subject, and the object itself ceases to be an empirical given in order to become the product of these relations in conscious perception.[90]

In Deleuze's understanding of perception, object and subject cease to be 'givens' and are produced through differential relations, and space-time becomes the nexus of these relations. Lacking an object, perception is always 'hallucinatory'. Deleuze adopts Whitehead's distinctions between 'macroperceptions' (conscious, clear, and distinct perceptions) and 'microperceptions' (unconscious minute perceptions, 'pricklings of anxiety [*aiguillons de l'inquiétude*] that render all perception unstable').[91] By underscoring the role of minute perceptions, which he calls the 'obscure dust of the world', Deleuze emphasises the dark part of the soul, the disharmony and imbalance at the heart of Leibniz's philosophy and the baroque era more generally.[92] Consciousness and distinct perception necessitate unconsciousness and indistinct, foggy ideas. Leibniz's emphasis on unconscious states, as well as those of dizziness or hallucination, are foregrounded against Descartes' cogito and 'clear and distinct ideas', challenging Leibniz's undisputed reputation as an optimist. Deleuze clearly finds in Leibniz a reply to the philosophy of representation in the form of a theory of perspective linking body and event, which brings us back to Benjamin's own thoughts on corporeal experience.

4.2 Perception and Body

The interrelation between the concept of 'perception' and the experience of the human body first appears in Benjamin's early texts, specifically in several fragments written at the end of the 1910s and early 1920s.[93] Several recent studies have called attention to how the theme of embodied experience elaborated in these fragments persists in his writing, taking form in his

[90] Ibid, 89.
[91] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 86/*Le Pli*, 116.
[92] As Deleuze writes, 'The finite infinite present in the finite self is exactly the position of the equilibrium, or disequilibrium, of the Baroque'. *The Fold*, 89 / *Le Pli*, 119 modified.
[93] See Benjamin, 'Zur Moral und Anthropologie', *GS* 6, 54–89.

later work as the 'collective physis', depicting the collective as body.[94]

In 'Outline of the Psychophysical Problem' (written in 1922–23, but unpublished in his lifetime), Benjamin distinguishes between the 'lived body' [*Leib*] and 'thing body' [*Körper*], a distinction made by phenomenologists at the time.[95] The two corporeal modes are distinguished by the manner in which the body appears in our self-perception: while the 'lived body' appears to our inner eye, the 'thing body' denotes our external perception of our body. Benjamin distinguishes between 'lived experience' [*Erlebnis*] and 'extended experience' [*Erfahrung*], understanding corporeal experience primarily through perception. In this respect, Benjamin's understanding of the body through the perspectival point of view of the individual resembles Leibniz's.

Critically, Benjamin writes in the fragment 'Perception and Lived Body' [*Wahrnehmung und Leib*] that 'through our corporeality [*Leiblichkeit*], ultimately most immediately through our own body, we are placed in the world of perception [*Wahrnehmungswelt*]'.[96] The manner in which we perceive our body shapes our external perceptions, forming our experienced world through a 'hierarchy of distances', which may even lead to a kind of estrangement from our body, deriving from the fact that there are many parts of the body that we do not usually see.

While, in 'Outline of the Psychophysical Problem', Benjamin speaks of mind and body [*Geist und Leib*] as unified, he can also in the same breath speak of a rupture between 'lived body' and 'thing body'. 'With the "lived body", man belongs to mankind, with the "thing body", to God', Benjamin writes. 'Both have fluctuating boundaries with nature, the manner in which they encompass the world affects the world's events', he continues.[97] 'Lived body' and 'thing body' are continuous with nature. Perception links these two oppositional aspects of the body and the world.

In the following, Benjamin defines perception as a 'differentiation':

> The representation of total vitality in life causes fate to end in madness. For all the living reactivity is bound to differentiation, whose permanent instrument is the body [*Körper*]. This is an essential function of the body. Only the body can be

[94] Benjamin, 'Surrealism', *SW* 2, 217. See Léa Barbisan, 'Eccentric Bodies, From Phenomenology to Marxism – Walter Benjamin's Reflections on Embodiment', *Anthropology and Materialism*, Special Issue 2017 'Discontinuous Infinities', http://journals.openedition.org/am/803; Weigel, *Body Image and Space Image.*
[95] See Barbisan, Ibid.
[96] Benjamin, 'Wahrnehmung und Leib', *GS*, 67 (my translation).
[97] Benjamin, 'Outline of the Psychophysical Problem', *SW* 1, 395 modified /*GS* 6, 80.

> viewed as an instrument with which to differentiate between the vital reactions and at the same time can be comprehended in terms of its psychic animation. All psychic energy can be differentially located in it, just as the old anthroposophy attempted this when it regarded the body as an analogue of the macrocosm. One of the body's most important organs of differentiation is perception. The zone of perception also shows clearly the variability to which it is subject as a function of nature. If nature changes, the body's perception changes, too.[98]

The body is defined through differentiation that is performed through perception, in a formulation that is very close to Leibniz's understanding of perception as constituted by differential relations and constitutional of the body. Benjamin uses terminology that relates to forces, describing the body as acting and reacted upon by 'vital animations' and containing 'psychic energy'. Perception is described as a uniquely corporeal function. The body's 'zone of perception' defines its relation to the 'macrocosm' or exterior world that it continually expresses, changes in nature thus leaving their mark on the body's perceptions, as in Leibniz's pre-established harmony.

As is also manifest in the above citation, in these early 'anthropological' sketches Benjamin pays special attention to extreme states of perception, such as those incurred by states of madness. In a fragment (dated to 1917 or earlier) titled 'Perception is Reading', Benjamin links perception and madness: 'In perception [*Wahrnehmung*] the useful (the good) is true [*Wahr*]. Pragmatism. Madness is a form of perception alien to the community. The accusations of madness levelled against great reformers. Inability of the masses to distinguish between knowledge and perception', reads the fragment.[99] Madness is described as a 'form of perception' which society does not comprehend, leading to the levelling of (false) accusations of madness at misunderstood visionaries.

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In the 'Artwork' essay, Benjamin argues that the possibility of splitting and splicing together an actor's performance when shooting a film indicates that art no longer belongs to the realm of beautiful semblance [*schöner Schein*].[100] The distinction between truth and semblance, and

[98] Ibid, 396/81.
[99] Benjamin, *SW* 1, 92.
[100] Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of its Reproducibility' (second version), *SW* 3, 113.

the artwork that was grounded upon this distinction, necessitated a wholeness of the body.[101] Benjamin compares the self-alienation produced by representation of the actor's body by the cinematic apparatus to that produced by one's mirror-image; a recurrent theme in the Romantics' writing (and indeed in Leibniz's too). The difference between mirror-image and film-image is that the latter is detachable, tearing the semblance [*Erscheinung*] of the body from its 'origin' and relocating it to 'a site in front of the masses'.[102] The possibility of splitting and reassembling the body defines, then, the 'age of the assembled [*montierbar*] artwork'.[103] For Benjamin, mimetic representation is primarily that of the body, and the prohibition against representation is a moral injunction that relates specifically to the implications of producing images of the body. Hence his argument that the shift in the collective mode of perception was brought about by self-alienation caused by the splitting of the body.[104]

As opposed to Benjamin's conceptions of the body, the 'Body without Organs', or BwO, described by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, is non-phenomenological. Rather than denoting a 'body' that used to be whole until it was dismembered, it describes a body that has never been whole. 'Above all, it is not a projection; it has nothing whatsoever to do with the body itself, or with an image of the body. It is the body without an image', as they write.[105] Bringing together rhizomatic multiplicities and continuums of intensity, the BwO challenges the notion of the organism that attributes a fixed function to the organs of the body: 'The BwO is not the opposite of organs; its enemies are not organs. The enemy is organism'.[106]

In a sense, Deleuze takes further the notion of the splitting of the body as potentially bringing about the liberation from tradition that had been insinuated by Benjamin. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, '[u]ndoing the organism was never killing it but opening the body to connections that suppose an arrangement, to circuits, conjunctions, levels and thresholds, passages and distributions of intensity'.[107]

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[101] As Benjamin writes, 'the oldest form of imitation had only one material to work with: the body of the mime himself'. Ibid, 127n22.
[102] Ibid, 113.
[103] Ibid, 109.
[104] '"Thou shall not make unto thee any graven image" – this is not a warning against idolatry. With incomparable emphasis the prohibition against *representation of the human body* obviates any suggestion that the sphere in which the moral essence of man is perceptible can be reproduced'. Benjamin, *OGTD*, 105, my emphasis.
[105] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 8.
[106] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 158.
[107] Ibid, 160.

5. Allegory and Symbol in Benjamin and Deleuze

In the history of the critical reception of the *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, the 'Prologue' has often been considered an odd metaphysical residue in an anti-idealistic work.[108] In my view, however, Benjamin's return to Plato's doctrine of ideas in the 'Prologue' is at the same time a 'reversal of Platonism' *à la* Nietzsche and Deleuze. Benjamin redefines Plato's conception of 'idea' as a historical conception, via Leibniz's theory of expression, unearthing a category of history within metaphysical thought. As such, the idea is continuous with the allegory, a conception to which the last part of the book, 'Allegory and Trauerspiel', is devoted.

'Ideas are to things [*Dingen*] as constellations [*Sternbilder*] are to stars', writes Benjamin in the 'Prologue'.[109] Like a star-sign, composed of points which vision supplements by connecting lines, producing an image, the idea is created by the interlinking of extremities. As noted previously, Benjamin explicitly describes the idea as a monad, in addition to designating the idea as an arrangement in which a form is generated by bringing together extreme points: 'The idea is best described as the composition of the contexts [*Gestaltung des Zusammenhanges*] in which the unique-extreme [*das Einmalig-Extreme*] stands alongside its counterpart', he writes.[110] Just as in Leibniz's newly discovered calculus the extrema, or points of minimum and maximum of a function, determine its curvature, so the idea 'comes to life' when surrounded by extremes.[111]The 'points' [*Punkte*] that make up Benjamin's constellational idea are reminiscent of the infinity of the monad's points of view that make up Leibniz's universe. The idea, just like Leibniz's world, does not exist outside of the things that it constellates. My suggestion in Chapter Two that the 'dialectical image' should be read as a metamorphosis of the 'idea' is further supported by Benjamin's description of the dialectical image in a letter to Scholem, in which Benjamin writes that it comes forth 'just like an astral image emerges, from luminous points'.[112]

Having noted the link between 'image' and 'idea' in Benjamin's work, I want to go further and argue that the 'idea' of the 'Prologue' functions, in a sense, as an image. As Deleuze does so explicitly, Benjamin implicitly challenges Plato's distinction between image and idea by exposing an underlying connection between the two conceptions. The 'idea' is an 'image'

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[108] As described by Hanssen, 'Philosophy at Its Origin', 810.
[109] Benjamin, *OGTD*, 34 modified / *GS*1, 214.
[110] Ibid, 34–35 modified / *GS* 215.
[111] Benjamin, *OGTD*, 35, see 'A New Method for Finding Maxima and Minima, and likewise for tangents, and with a single kind of calculation for these, which is hindered neither by fractions nor irrational quantities'. http://17centurymaths.com/contents/Leibniz/nova1.pdf. See also Deleuze, *The Fold*, 101.
[112] Benjamin, *Correspondences*, 508.

of sorts despite not being an object of vision [*Anschauung*] or even an 'intellectual vision', in Benjamin's words.[113] It is rather a mathematical image, like a function determined by the relationships created between its variables.

Benjamin defines 'allegory', in a sense, against the 'image': 'Allegory […] is not a playful image-technique [*spielerische Bildertechnik*], but expression [*Ausdruck*], just as speech is expression, and indeed, just as writing is'.[114]Against the belief, common in his time, that allegory was a sign, Benjamin defines the allegory as 'expression'.[115] As we have seen, according to Leibniz, the world does not exist outside its infinite expressions, or the infinity of points of view through which it is observed. The allegory, then, is not a sign that signifies a meaning outside of itself, or an image *of* something else; that which is expressed by the allegory has no external existence.

Benjamin likens the allegory to a ruin, a fragment marked by decay, broken off from something that was once whole, and reused by the allegorists of the present:

> For it is common practice in the literature of the baroque to pile up fragments ceaselessly, without any strict idea of a goal, in the unremitting expectation of a miracle, to take the repetition of stereotypes as a process of intensification.[116]

The allegory is extracted from its original context and haphazardly inserted into a new work alongside many other such textual remnants, in a failed attempt to create new meaning from the jumbling together of an excess of stereotypical characterisations. Here and elsewhere Benjamin refers to the futile attempts of baroque writers to produce novelties by way of repetition. Functioning as an element within a constructed work, whose artifice is visible, the allegory stands in stark contrast to the symbol, described by Benjamin as an 'image of organic totality.[117]

In Deleuze's reading of Benjamin undertaken in the last chapter of *The Fold*, 'The New Harmony', he emphasises the allegory as a 'power [*puissance*] of figuration' rather than a representational technique. The allegory forms part of the schizophrenic excess of folds, folds 'all over', pre-empting modern art in its movement beyond a specific medium. Deleuze writes:

> Walter Benjamin made a decisive step forward in our understanding of the

[113] Benjamin, *OGTD*, 35.
[114] Benjamin, *OGTD*, 162 modified/*GS* 1, 339.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Benjamin, *OGTD*, 178.
[117] Ibid, 176.

> baroque when he showed that allegory was not a failed symbol, or an abstract personification, but a power of figuration entirely different from that of the symbol: the latter combines the eternal and the momentary, nearly at the centre of the world, but the allegory uncovers nature and history according to the order of time.[118]

Deleuze focuses on Benjamin's distinction between allegory and symbol, highlighting the role of allegory in transforming history into nature in a de-centred world. Benjamin's allegory is interpreted as an objectile; a mannerist, excessive object that overflows its frame like the folds of material that spill outside the frame in baroque paintings.[119] Deleuze defines the roles of both allegory and symbol as transcending the relations between concept and object:

> [I]f we consider the logical relation of a concept to its object, we discover that the linkage can be surpassed in a symbolic and an allegorical way. Sometimes we isolate, purify or concentrate the object […] sometimes, on the contrary, the object is broadened according to a whole network of natural relations. The object itself overflows its frame in order to enter into a cycle or a series, and now the concept is what is found increasingly compressed, interiorised, enveloped in an instance that can, if need be, be called 'personal'. Such is the world as cone or copula.[120]

For Deleuze, the allegory is the object that envelops its concept as a virtuality. Its historical nature relates to its repeatability as part of a series. It functions as an event in that it recalls its previous and following events. The allegory forms part of Leibniz's perspectivist world that has lost its centre. Within this world, Deleuze suggests, unity no longer comes from a centre, but rather emerges from a summit that itself functions as a point of view.[121] The significance of the allegory, then, for Deleuze, is in its paving the way for a 'concept that is reconciled with the individual'.[122] It contains, then, the seeds of modernity that will transform the 'monadology' into a 'nomadology'.[123]

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[118] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 125 modified/*Le Pli*, 170.
[119] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 121.
[120] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 125 modified/*Le Pli*, 171.
[121] Deleuze refers to Serres, *Le système de Leibniz*, 2, 653–57.
[122] Benjamin, 'Surrealism', *SW* 2, 172.
[123] Ibid, 189.

6. Activity and Actuality in Benjamin's Surrealism Essay

It is in 'Surrealism, the Last Snapshot [*Momentaufnahme*] of the European intelligentsia', published in 1928, the same year as *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, that Benjamin's concept of the image shifts in two related ways: first, the image becomes interlinked with technology, specifically photographic technology; and second, the image becomes explicitly political. Yet, alongside the changes, there are also aspects of Benjamin's conception of image that remain contiguous with his earlier use of the term.

Here, too, the image is linked with the notion of perspective. Benjamin opens the essay with an image of observing the Surrealist movement from a specific point of view: 'The German observer is not standing at the source of the stream. This is his opportunity. He is in the valley. He can gauge [*abschätzen*] the energies of the movement'.[124] The link between image, on the one hand, and energy or movement on the other, discussed in the previous chapter, is established throughout the essay, signalling Benjamin's nascent interest in film, a medium that is not explicitly mentioned beforehand.

In this meditation on the Surrealists, Benjamin mentions two key forms of the image: the literary, specifically the poetic image, and the photographic image. In the essay, Benjamin observes the politicisation of the French Surrealist movement between 1919, when it issued its first manifestoes, and its present form in 1929; a process he describes as 'pushing the "poetic life" to the utmost limits of possibility'.[125] This transformation of the movement, accompanied by a shift from 'metaphysical materialism' to 'anthropological materialism', is exemplified, in Benjamin's account, by the role that images play in the Surrealists' work. Benjamin argues that a 'dialectical kernel' of revolutionary potential existed already in the early days of the movement. The radical conception of freedom developed and practiced by early Surrealists paved the way for the later politicisation of the movement. Thus, in its early stages,

> [l]ife seemed worth living only where the threshold between waking and sleeping was worn away in everyone as by the steps of multitudinous images flooding back and forth; language seemed itself only when sound and image, image and sound interpenetrated with automatic precision and such felicity that no chink was left for the penny in the slot called 'meaning'.[126]

[124] Ibid, 207.
[125] Ibid, 208.
[126] Ibid.

The description of mechanised interchanging of image and sound may refer to early surrealist cinematic experiments, inspired by experiences of intoxication through the use of drugs such as hashish, which eroded the boundaries between waking and sleeping, consciousness and unconsciousness. These experiences of liminal states of consciousness, in which boundaries are dissolved, precipitate an upsurge of images and the interpenetration of sound and image. Benjamin may have had in mind films such as Man Ray's *Le Retour à la raison* (1923), composed of photograms and the play of abstract shapes, light, and shadow, alongside strips of light on a female torso; or 'Ghosts before breakfast' [*Vormittagspuk*] (1927–28) by Hans Richter. In the latter, time is a protagonist, represented by the face of a ticking clock, its hands moving with uncanny speed, and by fast motion and reverse motion, which cause the leaves on a branch to sprout in seconds.

Such states also brought about a dissolving of the strictly determined 'individuality' of the artist. The loosening of the 'self' or individuality instigated by drug use, Benjamin argues, was precisely what allowed them to go beyond intoxication and reach what he names a 'profane illumination'. In other words, the seeds of the revolutionary ideology that will take hold of the movement at its later stages lie in replacing a well-defined concept of 'self' with a 'flood of images'. Rather than merely leading to states of drugged ecstasy, the Surrealists' engagement with dream-like states served to reach beyond religious illumination and attain a 'materialistic, anthropological inspiration'.[127]

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The image has a unique role in the interplay of relations that Benjamin delineates between literature, specifically poetry, on the one hand and political action or activity [*Aktivität*] on the other. Informed by a manifold of avant-garde movements, amongst them the French Surrealists, Benjamin had already explored the relation between action, writing, and image in *One-Way Street* (written 1923–26, published 1928), for example, in the *Denkbild* entitled 'Filling Station':[128]

> True literary activity [*wahre literarische Aktivität*] cannot aspire to take place

[127] Benjamin, 'Surrealism', *SW* 2, 209.
[128] Benjamin, 'One-Way Street', *SW* 1, 444/*GS*4, 'Tankstelle', 83.

> within literary frameworks; this is rather the habitual expression of its sterility. Significant literary effectiveness [*bedeutende literarische Wirksamkeit*] can come into being only by strict alteration between action and writing; it must nurture the forms that fit its influence in active communities [*tätigen Gemeinschaften*] better than does the pretentious, universal gesture of the book – in leaflets, brochures, articles, and placards.[129]

Literature gains its effectivity and force through its interconnection with action. Benjamin draws here on Russian constructivists such as Tretyakov, one of the leading figures in the Factography movement active in the late 1920s, and originator of the notion of the artist as 'operator', who transforms rather than reflects reality.[130] In order to conserve its powers in politically active communities, it must adopt forms that bring text closer to image, or render it graphically *bildlich*, image-like, such as leaflets and placards. The image-quality of text renders it political, as stated, more explicitly in the *Denkbild* 'Attested Auditor of Books'.[131] As in the essay on Surrealism, both literary and political activity are likened to sources of energy, and charged with the dynamics of machinery. In *One-Way Street*, writing becomes effectively active by the edging of script closer to the image. In the essay on Surrealism, Benjamin takes this notion a step further, by proposing that the image can achieve actuality, beyond activity.

It is the image, photographic or literary, that enables the shift from activity [*Aktivität*] to actuality [*Aktualität*], rendering Surrealistic art truly political. Benjamin describes this shift by referring to Louis Aragon's 'Treatise on Style' (1927).[132] Written during the year in which Aragon joined the French Communist Party, this work is considered an important point in his transition to 'Socialist Realism'.[133]The discussion of poetic style is exemplified in the distinction Aragon draws between metaphor and image.[134] Aragon describes the fleeting quality of the image by its encapsulation of humour, which belongs to a specific time only and is rendered obsolete once this period has passed. Once repeated too many times, the joke is

[129] Benjamin, *SW* 1, 444 / *GS* 5, 87.
[130] Sergei Tretyakov, 'The Writer and the Socialist Village', *October* 118 (Fall 2006): 63–70. Benjamin refers to his ideas in 'The Author as Producer', *SW* 2, 770.
[131] Benjamin, *SW* 1,456/'Vereidigter Bücherrevisor', in *Einbahnstraße*, *GS*4, 102–04.
[132] Louis Aragon, *Treatise on Style*, trans. Alyson Waters (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1991).
[133] See Alyson Waters, *Treatise on Style*, 'Translator's Introduction', xiii.
[134] Benjamin was probably inspired by the following passage: 'Literary images are in fact the vehicles of humour, and by proportional reciprocity, humour is what gives an image its force. Compare two images taken at random and you will be reduced to dust. Which also explains the way they age, because humour is assigned to an image only for a short time, and as soon as it has remounted its motorcycle, the wall begins to crumble. This is the basis of the idea of poetic novelty, about which there has recently been so much commotion […] poetry is by nature stormy, and every image should produce a cataclysm'. Aragon, *Treatise on Style*, 69.

destroyed. Aragon, and Benjamin following him, alludes to the oppositional, dialectical function of humour, its ability to cause a stir by enabling directness, saying things that are otherwise unacceptable. The image, charged with the dynamic force of time, must produce shock and upheaval, crumbling the old and ushering in the new. Poetic novelty lies in humour-filled images. The metaphor, by contrast, is associated by Aragon with the habitual, used and abused that has become a cliché.

Benjamin adopts this distinction in order to differentiate between Surrealist poets and 'poets of the social democratic associations'. The latter write poetry that is 'bursting with metaphors' [*mit Vergleischen bis zum Platzen gefullt*]. Benjamin uses '*Metapher*' and '*Vergleisch*' interchangeably, making manifest his critique of the metaphor, which functions as a simple comparison. Unlike banal, repeatable metaphors, the Surrealists produce unique images in their art by drawing on dream-images and mental images produced by altered states of being.[135]In 'Dream Kitsch' (1927), Benjamin makes a similar distinction between banal, repeated images, which he designates as 'outer images of things' [*Außenbild den Dinge*] and 'the most objective image of our feelings'. The first are rendered valueless by technological mass reproduction. Worn down by habitual representation, even the appearances of objects in dreams is rendered kitschy, like overused maxims that lose their meaning.

Deleuze, like Benjamin, critiques the metaphor, which he sees as a mode of 'designation' and opposes this to the procedure of 'expression'. But he also takes this idea a step further:

> Kafka deliberately kills all metaphor, all symbolism, all signification, no less than all designation. Metamorphosis is the contrary of metaphor. There is no longer any proper sense or figurative sense, but only a distribution of states that is part of the range of the word. The thing and other things are no longer anything but intensities overrun by deterritorialized sound or words that are following their line of escape.[136]

As does Benjamin, Deleuze views the use of metaphor as designating a comparative, symbolic relation. Yet while Benjamin compares the metaphor to the intensive image, charged

[135]Benjamin's distinction between image and metaphor is comparable to that between affinity and analogy noted in Chapter One.
[136] Deleuze, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, 22.

with the tensions of humour, Deleuze opposes metaphoric figuration to intensity itself.[137] It is the intensive use of language, through the construction of 'machines of expression', which enables metamorphosis and becoming in Kafka's writing. These replace the metaphor, which Kafka 'deliberately kills'.[138]For both Deleuze and Benjamin, then, these intensive modes of expression, which replace the metaphor, are politically effective. For Deleuze, this is a politics of the 'deterritorialisation' of language, words, and sounds, within what he terms 'minor literature'. For Benjamin, the political efficacy of the Surrealists lies in the actuality of the image in their works.

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As part of Benjamin's critiques of the failure of the intelligentsia to connect with the proletarian masses, he targets the moral metaphor that loses its meaning via over-repetition. Artists who truly want to connect with the masses should interrupt their careers and become directly involved in political action. Image space is the space of interruption, of shock or emotional reaction caused by impolite and direct words. It is the space in which mental image confronts exterior action:

> For in the joke too, in invective, in misunderstanding, in all cases where an action [*ein Handeln*] puts forth, and is, its own image, absorbing and consuming it, where nearness views itself with its own eyes, the long sought image space is opened, the world of general and integral actuality [*allseitiger und integraler Aktualität*], where the 'best room' is missing – the space, in a word, in which political materialism and physical creatureliness share the inner man, the psyche, the individual, or whatever else we wish to throw them, with dialectical justice, so that no limb [*Glied*] remains untorn. Nevertheless – indeed precisely after such dialectical annihilation – this will still be an image space and more precisely, a body space.[139]

[137] In his essay on Beckett's 'The Exhausted', Deleuze comes even closer to Benjamin, denoting the image as 'intensity': 'The image is what dies away, wastes away, a fall. It is a pure intensity, which defines itself as such through its height-its level above zero, which is only described in falling.[137]' Here 'intensity' equals ephemerality, the image comprises the process of its own dissolution.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Benjamin, 'Surrealism', *SW*2, 217 modified.

Action produces image, and itself becomes image, in problematic, affective zones, such as those of the joke, which can be funny and/or offensive, and those of insult or misunderstanding; places in which there is confusion or non-agreement regarding sense and meaning. In these instances, when action discovers its image and takes its form, while also destroying it, 'image space is opened'. 'Image space' demands, then, the uncomfortable in-between zones in which continuity between exterior and interior is created.

In image space, the individual is ripped apart and replaced by the collective. Benjamin describes the collective as a body whose members are torn apart. By harnessing the energies of intoxication to the revolution, the Surrealists contributed to the process of collectivisation and liquidation of the self, which constitutes a necessary prelude to revolutionary action. Yet, as he writes, the shift from metaphysical (anarchic, Surrealistic) materialism and anthropological materialism (full-fledged communism) was not uninterrupted. The break between the former and the latter may in the future be bridged through technology and the way in which it relates *materia*, things, and the human body; animate and inanimate.

> The collective is a body, too. And the *physis* that is being organised for it in technology can, through all its political and factual reality, be produced only in that image space to which profane illumination initiates us. Only when in technology body and image space so interpenetrate that all revolutionary tension becomes bodily collective innervation [*leibliche kollektive Innervation*], and all the bodily innervation of the collective become revolutionary discharge, has reality transcended itself to the extent demanded by the *Communist Manifesto*. For the moment, only the Surrealists have understood its present commands. They exchange, to a man, the play of human features for the face of an alarm clock that in each minute strikes for sixty seconds.[140]

In the opening of the essay, as discussed, Benjamin described the French movement as the current of a river, the energies of which the German critic can observe from his vantage point in the valley.[141] Here, this force becomes that of bodily collective innervation that results in 'revolutionary discharge'.[142] The 'psychic energy' Benjamin referred to earlier, in the fragment

[140] Ibid, 217–18, modified/*GS* 2, 310.
[141] Ibid, 207/297.
[142] In 'To the Planetarium', the last *Denkbild* in *One-Way Street*, Benjamin similarly describes technology as the new organising principle of *physis* – the relation between mankind and the world – that replaces nations and families. Benjamin, *SW*1, 486–87.

'Outline of the Psychophysical Problem', is here transformed into the 'collective innervation' of the society as body. The intermingling of the collective as body with its actual, intensive image through the intervention of technology creates a continuity between art and action that may bring about revolution. This has been achieved by the Surrealists' innovative use of technology in their art, reconceiving the body/collective in objects and vice versa. The interpenetration of image and body space, the violent becoming one of art and life, result in collective action in which 'reality transcends itself' – becoming actuality.

7. Deleuze on The Distorted Image

In the preface to the English edition of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze writes:

> A new image of thought – or rather a liberation of thought from those images that imprison it: this is what I had already sought to discover in Proust. Here, however, in *Difference and Repetition*, this search is autonomous and it becomes the condition for the discovery of these two concepts.[143]

The image is conceived of as an incarcerator of thought; the possibility of a 'new', alternative image of thought is raised only to be dismissed. Since Deleuze's project consists of challenging what he calls 'philosophy of representation', the image, in its representational function, is targeted as part of his attack. The only image Deleuze conceives of in this work that does not confine thought is the distorted image that is not based on semblance. However, despite being emptied of its representational functions, the simulacrum is still deemed a kind of image. If we may say that Deleuze puts forward an 'image theory' in this work at all, it is an anti-iconological one; a perversion of the image.

In opposition to 'world of representation' in which the relation of identity has primacy over all other relations, the 'world of simulacrum', which is 'the modern world', is structured around difference and repetition. In this world 'all identities are only simulated, produced like an optical "effect", by a more profound game which is that of difference and repetition'.[144] Although, as I have noted, the word 'image' is predominantly used in this work to designate the traditional 'Image of thought', which Deleuze goes against, this passage sketches out two

[143] Deleuze, 'Preface to the English Edition', *Difference and Repetition*, xvi–xvii.
[144] Ibid.

different types of imagistic representation. The first characterises past philosophical approaches, perpetuating identity or sameness, while the second belongs to the new, 'modern' approach that Deleuze is proposing. Deleuze names the latter 'simulacrum', describing it as producing 'simulations' or illusionary identities that conceal a more profound interplay between difference and repetition.

Deleuze's use of the conception of 'simulacrum' forms part of his project, carried out in Nietzsche's footsteps, of 'reversing Platonism'.[145] In *Logic of Sense* Deleuze explains that this project goes beyond the challenging of Plato's distinction between essence and appearance, a challenge already put forth by both Hegel and Kant, and past the distinction between the thing itself and its image; original and copy.[146] Deleuze argues that his reversal of Platonism consists in challenging Plato's oppositional thought, and specifically, in the case of the *Sophist*, the opposition Plato makes between two types of images [*eidolon*]: the copy [*eikon*] and the simulacrum [*phantasma*].[147]

In the *Sophist*, the stranger differentiates between the 'art of likeness-making', in which a likeness is produced by making a copy of something, on the one hand, and 'phantastic art', in which an appearance rather than a likeness is produced, on the other. In the former, the proportions and colours of the model are reproduced, while the latter 'appears to resemble the beautiful because the sighting of it is not from a beautiful position, but if one should get the power to see things of this sort of size adequately, and it does not resemble that which it declares it resembles, what do we call it?[148] The distortion is created by the incorrect point of view taken by the spectator. 'Phantastic art' is likened to the false rhetoric of the sophist, visual art compared with verbal instruction. Yet, as Ricoeur notes, the three terms – *eidolon*, *eikon*, and *phantasia* – are later 'reunited under the ignominious charge of deception'.[149] Plato is suspicious of any kind of image, not only that which produces false appearance.

In Deleuze's reading, both types of image are 'claimants' [*prétendants*] that pretend to be what they are not. While the first are 'well-grounded pretenders' that resemble what they intend to copy, the second are 'false claimants, constructed by dissimilitude, implicating perversion'.[150] In other words, the first may be described as true images, while the second as false ones. Deleuze argues that the manifest distinction between *image* and *idea* is only there

[145] Deleuze, Logic of sense, 253 / *Logique du sens*, 292.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid, 296.
[148] Plato, 'The Sophist', *The Being of the Beautiful*, 237A, 11.27.
[149] Ricoeur, *History, Memory, Forgetting*, 12.
[150] Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 256.

to ensure the latent distinction between the two types of images: *eikon* and *simulacra*. Like the image, Plato's idea comprises a relation of semblance: something is judged 'just' when it resembles the idea of justice. The copy resembles something when it resembles its 'idea', which comprises the relations constituting its essence. It is thus based on intrinsic relations to a model, rather than extrinsic relations to an object.[151] Moreover, the idea is only created in order to track down false images or simulacra, the only type of image that is independent of its referent.

Far from being a degraded copy, Deleuze's conception of the simulacrum differs from the copy in nature: it is an image lacking resemblance.[152] The simulacrum transcends the very distinction between original and copy. Simulacra still produce an illusionary effect of semblance, writes Deleuze; they are demonic, hallucinatory, constructed upon difference. As in the case of an optical illusion, the effect of semblance is produced by including the point of view of the observer, which comprises part of the simulacrum itself.[153] Deleuze argues that ever since the advent of Platonic thought, the task of philosophy has been an iconological one, whose goal has been the establishment of icons over simulacra.[154] This goal underlies what Deleuze terms the 'philosophy of representation'.

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Deleuze may have attempted to liberate 'thought from those images that imprison it', yet the 'image' is omnipresent in *Difference and Repetition*, as in Deleuze's later works. Deleuze refers to the image of thought in the singular, as he explains, because what he targets is not specific presuppositions belonging to certain philosophical traditions, but rather, a 'single image in general that constitutes the subjective presupposition of philosophy as a whole'.[155] Naming the presuppositions of philosophy as a single 'image of thought' enables Deleuze to argue that there are presuppositions that are common to all of philosophy and that are, in a sense, visible and apparent like an image. The conception of the 'image' is used by Deleuze in order to denote that which is not philosophy, whether it is 'pre-philosophical' or 'non-philosophical'

The simulacrum is a kind of image, albeit a distorted one. Deleuze's attack on the image is more precisely an attack on a specific type of image. His attempt to reverse Platonism thus

[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid, 262. Deleuze's conception of the simulacrum differs from the more renowned conception of Baudrillard's simulacra as copies that never had an original.
[153] Ibid, 258.
[154] Ibid, 259.
[155] Ibid, 132.

replicates the uneasy coupling – starting from Plato and dominating the European philosophical tradition – of the image's branding as non-philosophical on the one hand, and the subordination of conceptual thought to the visual field on the other.

Perhaps for this reason the function of the 'image of thought' is reversed in *What is Philosophy?* Here, Deleuze and Guattari identify the 'image of thought' with the 'plane of immanence':

> The plane of immanence is not a concept that is or can be thought but rather the image of thought, the image thought gives itself of what it means to think, to make use of thought, to find one's bearings in thought […] The image of thought retains only what thought can claim by right. Thought demands 'only' movement that can be carried to infinity. What thought claims by right, what it selects, is infinite movement or the movement of the infinite. It is this that constitutes the image of thought.[156]

The image of thought cannot be thought, writes Deleuze; once again pairing image with thought only to then distinguish between the two. Like the dogmatic 'Image of thought' outlined in *Difference and Repetition*, the 'image of thought' in *What is Philosophy?* is 'non-philosophical' in the sense that it is non-conceptual. Yet in this case it is not described as a 'dogmatic', 'pre-philosophical' image. Rather, the 'image of thought' has a crucial function in relation to thought and the construction of concepts. It constitutes a 'living mirror' of thought; a movement in which thought is folded, unfolded, and refolded to infinity. It is an 'open whole', a 'One-All' [*Un-Tout*] that comprehends all concepts on a 'plane' or 'horizon' from which they can be selected.

The 'plane of immanence' harbours a flux of concepts constantly developing, mutating through shifts in their degree of intensity. This understanding of philosophy as a conceptual 'life' originates, as Deleuze and Guattari concede, in Leibniz and Bergson:

> The grandiose Leibnizian or Bergsonian perspective that every philosophy depends upon an intuition that its concepts constantly develop through slight differences of intensity is justified if intuition is thought of as the envelopment of infinite movements of thought that constantly pass through a plane of

[156] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 37.

immanence.[157]

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As mentioned, Deleuze designates what is unique about the simulacrum by using the category of the 'modern'.[158] The term 'modern' – which Deleuze uses, in *Difference and Repetition,* in relation to art, literature, 'thought', and mathematics, and later in relation to cinema – is described as that which has the force to bring about the collapse or failure of representation. Moreover, it is modern art that leads the way in challenging representation, and philosophy must follow its lead. The challenge modern art poses to 'representation' is by way of what Deleuze describes, once again using visual terminology, as a kind of perspectivism:

> Infinite representation may well multiply points of view and organise these in series, these series are no less subject to the condition of converging around the same subject, upon the same world […] By contrast, when the modern work of art develops its permutating series and its circular structures, it indicates to philosophy a path leading to the abandonment of representation. It is not enough to multiply perspectives in order to establish perspectivism. To every perspective or point of view there must correspond a work with its own self-sufficient sense: what matters is the divergence of the series, the decentring of circles, the 'monster'.[159]

Deleuze draws on Leibniz's perspectivism, yet at the same time criticises Leibniz's conception of infinite representation by the fact that all points of view represent one and the same world. Deleuze suggests that in modern literature an extreme version of perspectivism occurs, in which the multiplicities of perspectives do not converge into one world or one work: 'it is as if a completely distinct landscape corresponded to every point of view'.[160] In this perspectivism, which becomes a monstrous 'chaos', series diverge and narrative circles are de-centred. The simulacra produced by modern literary works such as Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* and Mallarmé's *Livre* are described, then, as a kind of chaotic perspectivism, in a manner that anticipates

[157] Ibid, 40.
[158] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 1, modified/*Différence et répétition*, xix.
[159] Ibid, 68-69 modified/94.
[160] Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 260.

Deleuze and Guattari's description of art as 'a composition of chaos' in *What is Philosophy?*[161].

8. Between the Dialectical Image and the Crystal-Image

8.1 Crystal-Image and Doubled Time

The cinema books contain a 'taxonomy of images', as Deleuze writes in the preface to the French edition of *Cinema 1*.[162] Deleuze uses the plural form to describe a range of 'sign-images' that are entirely different from the two image conceptions discussed hitherto, the dogmatic 'Image of thought' and the 'simulacrum'. Moreover, unlike the 'Image of thought', described by Deleuze as pre-philosophical, the 'images' he discusses in the *Cinema* books function as philosophical concepts.

The key inspirations for Deleuze's conceptualisation of the image and its relation to time in these works, as he concedes, are the philosophy of Bergson and the semiotic theory of Charles Sanders Peirce. Yet Leibniz's philosophy, I maintain, plays a larger role in these works, especially in *Cinema 2*, than betrayed by the occasional direct references to his philosophy.[163] Already in *Cinema 1* there are intimations of the manner in which cinema enacts a kind of perspectivism, which become more explicit in *Cinema 2*. Deleuze describes, for example, in the opening pages of *Cinema 1*, the evolution of cinema as relying on the 'emancipation of the view point' [*prise de vue*, which is the term for 'shot' or 'shooting'] once the apparatus of shooting [*appareil de prise de vue*] was separated from that of projection.[164] This transformed the shot from a spatial into a temporal category, he writes. By using the term *prise de vue*, which is semantically close to *point de vue* (point of view), Deleuze refers to the emancipation of the shot from the apparatus that produced it and, at the same time, to the separation between the point of view of the cinematographer, and that of the viewer. The term 'projection', moreover, links his discussion of cinema to that of projective geometry.

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[161] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 204.
[162] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, xviii. In Deleuze's words, 'Images, in cinema, are signs. Signs are images seen from the viewpoint of their composition and generation (...)Cinema has given rise to its own particular signs, whose classification is specific to cinema, but once it produces them they turn up elsewhere, and the world starts "turning cinematic'. *Gilles Deleuze, Negotations: 1972-1990 (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1995)*, 65.
[163] See for example Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 24.
[164] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 3.

The two titular concepts of the cinema books, 'image-movement' and 'time-movement', are directly appropriated from Bergson's *Matter and Memory*.[165] Although Bergson wrote little on cinema and when he did, it was in rather unflattering terms, Deleuze found insights for his understanding of cinema in Bergson's philosophy of time and the particular manner in which he understood perception, which was informed by Leibniz, and which further explains the latent presence of the latter in the cinema books. Bergson conceived of the image as an elementary particle of the universe, which consists of an aggregate of images.[166] Unlike Leibniz's monads that are closed off from one another, Bergson's images constantly act and react upon one another. As in Leibniz, psychic and physical realities are intermingled. Bergson describes the relation of perception and reality as a continuous and analogous relation of part and whole, in a manner not unlike the relation of expression Leibniz designates between the perceiving soul and the universe. Moreover, Bergson and subsequently Deleuze rely on Leibniz's theory of the unconscious for their understanding of consciousness as a secondary process which follows a pre-conceptual moment of being affected in the world. The primary stage of sensation, Bergson maintained, is followed by a secondary one of consciousness, to which belong processes such as recognition and perception.

Deleuze defines, in *Cinema 1*, the 'movement-image' accordingly as the 'a-centred set [*ensemble*] of variable elements which act and react on each other'.[167] While the 'movement-image' represents time in an indirect manner, deriving time from movement, time-image, elaborated upon in *Cinema 2*, represents time directly, transcending the movement-image. It consists of a 'new image' of post-war cinematics, inaugurated by neo-realist cinema. It is a 'Readable' [*lisible*] and thinking image [*image pensant*], yet also one which 'commands *false movement*'.[168]

The 'crystal-image' [*L'image-cristal*] makes its first appearance in the fourth chapter of *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, titled 'The Crystals of Time'. Deleuze delineates it as 'the coalescence of the actual image and *its* virtual image, the indiscernibility of two distinct images'.[169] The 'crystal-image' constitutes a 'point of indiscernibility' in which actual and virtual are distinct and yet, paradoxically, cannot be distinguished one from another. It combines the 'movement-image', which Deleuze describes as actual, and the 'time-image',

[165] *Henri Bergson, Matter and Memory* (New York: Zone Books, 1988).
[166] Ibid, 17–18.
[167] Deleuze, 'Glossary', *Cinema 1*, 241.
[168] Deleuze, Cinema 1, xii.
[169] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 127 /*Cinéma* 2, 166–67.

which he describes as virtual.[170] It is informed, as Deleuze concedes, by Bergson's definition, in *Matter and Memory*, of 'circuits' created between the purely optic and sonorous situation, that is, the actual image; and a kind of 'memory image', that is, the virtual image.[171] While informed by Bergson, as well as Jean Ricardou's theory of the *Nouveau Roman*, the term 'crystal-image' itself, Deleuze concedes, is not Bergson's.

'The crystal is expression. The expression moves from the mirror to the seed',[172] writes Deleuze, defining the crystal as enacting a double movement of actualisation and mirroring. Recall that the two key metaphors of expression Deleuze describes in *Expressionism in Philosophy* were the mirror and the seed. In the first case the expressed is reflected as a mirror-image of the expressor, as in Leibniz's 'living mirror' metaphor. Deleuze in fact quotes Ricardou who describes the crystal as a 'mobile mirror that unceasingly reflects perception in memory'.[173] In the second case, the expressed is involved or implied in the seed. In cinema, the mobile mirroring is effected by instances of *Mise en abyme* such as a theatrical play, an image or a film within a film. Deleuze gives as an example the theatre scenes in Alain Renais' *Last Year in Marienbad* (1961). Expression by way of the seed is carried out by films that take as their object the process of film production, such as Fellini's *8½* (1963).

> The crystal-image has these two aspects: internal limit of all the relative circuits, but also outer-most, variable and reshapable envelope, at the edges of the world, beyond even moments of world. The little crystalline seed and the vast crystallizable universe: everything is included in the capacity for expansion of the collection constituted by the seed and the universe. Memories, dreams, even worlds are only apparent relative circuits which depend on the variations of this Whole.[174]

Crystallisation equals expression: the virtual image, composed of memories and dreams, expresses the whole, the universe, and its variations, the latter being contingent upon its expression within the 'seed'. The crystal-image amalgamates Bergson's understanding of time, according to which past and present, virtual and actual images co-exist, connected by 'circuits'

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[170] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 59. The 'point of indiscernibility' recalls Leibniz's 'method of indetermination' described by Serres, *Le système de Leibniz*, 221.
[171] Ibid, 44–47,68.
[172] Ibid, 74/ 100.
[173] Ibid, 81/109. Deleuze quotes Ricardou, *Le Nouveau Roman*, 73.
[174] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 80–81.

– with Leibniz's conception of expression. As noted, Bergson's understanding of the relation between mind and matter was informed by Leibniz. He directly refers, in *Mind and Memory*, to Leibniz's notion of monads as centres of force and living mirrors of the universe.[175] In a sense, Bergson's notion of circuits takes Leibniz's expression a step further; in lieu of continuity between expressor and expressed, they constitute a full circle, like a Mobius strip. As Deleuze writes,

> What constitutes the crystal-image is the most fundamental operation of time: since the past is constituted not after the present that it was but at the same time, time has to double itself [*se dédouble*] in two at each moment as present and past, which differ from each other in nature, or, what amounts to the same thing, it has to double the present in two heterogeneous directions, one of which is launched towards the future while the other falls into the past […] Time consists of this split [*scission*], and it is this, it is time, that we *see in the crystal*.[176]

The crystal-image appears not in space, but in time. It is, moreover, constituted through the 'fundamental operation of time', which Deleuze understands, following Bergson, as a doubling of the present that takes place during each and every instant, each of the 'doubles' oriented in a different direction: the first towards the future, and the second towards the past. The split between the two constitutes time, and it is this split that may be seen within the crystal. The co-existence of the double present – past-present and present-present – is appropriated, as Deleuze admits, from Bergson's *Mind-Energy*.[177] While Bergson describes the co-existences of past and present, in Leibniz, space consists of the order of co-existence while time is that of succession. For Deleuze, the division or doubling of the present at every instant into two 'presents' – one facing the past and one approaching the future – is a critical moment in Bergson's thought, embodied in the conception of the 'crystal-image'.[178]

[175] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 38/ Henri Bergson, *Matière et mémoire. Essai sur la relation du corps à l'esprit*, Une édition électronique réalisée à partir du livre de c Première édition : 1939. (Paris: Les Presses universitaires de France, 1965) 22.
[176] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 81 modified /*Cinéma 2*, 108–09.
[177] Ibid, 81/109.
[178] See Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 52.

8.2 Dialectical Image and Now Time

Benjamin's concept of the 'dialectical image' is formulated, like Deleuze's 'crystal-image', at a late stage of his work, although, as we have seen, Benjamin's other image-conceptions in a certain sense anticipate the dialectical image. The context of its appearance in the *Arcades Project* is quite different from that of Deleuze's crystal-image, which is discussed specifically in a cinematic context. However, the proximity of the concepts 'dialectical image' and 'montage' in 'Convolute N', and the fact that the conception of the dialectical image was forged at a time when Benjamin engaged with the photographic and cinematic images and apparatuses, point to an underlying connection between the concept of the 'didactical image', photography, and cinema.[179] Benjamin and Deleuze's image conceptions operate in a similar manner in relation to time, and similarly emerge at the conjunction of visible and verbal registers: dialectical images are to be encountered 'in language', writes Benjamin, while Deleuze's image-conceptions form part of a 'semiology of the cinema'.[180] While some have argued that Benjamin's dialectical image is primarily linguistic, I do not believe this to be the case; rather, the intermingling of the visual and linguistic dimensions within the image are unique to both the dialectical and the crystal-image, bringing them closer together.[181]

In Benjamin's dialectical image, as in the crystal-image, there is a doubling of time. Here the doubled times are not past and present, but rather 'what has been' and 'now'. To reprise Benjamin's memorable depiction of the dialectical image, first cited in Chapter Two:

> It's not that what has been casts its light on the present, or what is present its light on the past; rather image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what has been to the now is dialectical: it is not progression but image, suddenly emergent.[182]

Both crystal and dialectical images contain a critique of chronological, progressive time through its doubling. In the dialectical, as in the crystal-image, there is a coalescence of actual

[179] See Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).
[180] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N2a, 3]; Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 25.
[181] See for example Friedlander, *A Philosophical Portrait*, 37.
[182] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N2a, 3], 462.

and virtual; the actual 'now' constellates with the virtual memory of 'what has been'; these remain distinct and yet at the same time they are mutually 'indiscernible'.

There is a second doubling of time in Benjamin, in which historical time becomes distinct from progressive time. For Benjamin, in order for historical time to come into being, continuous time must stop. The image surges, then, outside of continuous time. Its position beyond time, moreover, enables the construction of historical time. Deleuze similarly differentiates between chronological and non-chronological time, the foundation of the latter which is visible within the crystal-image.[183] Yet, in Deleuze, movement is not arrested in order for the image to emerge; time 'splits' but does not stand still, nor does it offer an external vantage point vis-à-vis time, as does the dialectical image. The construction of history is thus contingent upon an a-temporal point of view from which history as a totality may be observed.

When the dialectical image is read, as noted in previous chapters, the image is in 'the now of its knowability [*Jetzt der Erkennbarkeit*]'.[184] The experience of the 'now' is linked through this concept with the possibility of knowing, a 'knowability', as Benjamin defines it. Benjamin's critique of subject-based conceptions of knowledge, discussed in the first chapter, is manifest in the concept of the 'now of knowability', which defines a kind of objective process of knowing, one that, forming part of the image, is not contingent upon a specific 'reader'. Rather, it is dependent on the arrival of a fleeting 'now' in which it can be recognised: every 'now' has another 'now of its recognisability', and when the two are constellated, an image is outlined.

Deleuze has something quite different in mind when he describes the 'time-image' as being 'read'. Reading an image means, for Deleuze, paying attention to its sonorous elements, not just the visible data it contains. He describes a process in which the image became readable with the shift from silent to sound films. The addition of speech to the cinematic image contributed to an equivocity of meaning that demands a process of reading in the sense of deciphering a text. The intricacies of relations and meanings within Antonioni's *Story of a Love Affair* (1950), for example, according to Deleuze, may only be deciphered through a process analogous to that of reading.[185] Deleuze's images-signs are readable in the sense that they can be decoded as a sign system, while for Benjamin the image may be 'known' or 'recognised'.

[183] See Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 81.
[184] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N3, 1], 463.
[185] See Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 24.

Benjamin departs further from Bergson, and hence from Deleuze, in his definition of the dialectical image as constructive of *historical* time, which he defines as the 'time of truth'.[186] The notions of 'time' and 'history' are opposed to one another in Benjamin's later writing; the first, which he also refers to as 'chronological' or 'progressive' time, denotes a causal chain of events in which all moments share the same significance. He describes this first time as homogenous and empty [*leere*]. 'Historical time', on the other hand, is described as constructed through a kind of montage of dialectical images, or, in other passages, as in itself 'imagistic' [*bildhaft*].[187] That is, while chronological, linear time lacks form, historical time is both formed and informed [*gebildet*].[188]

As elaborated in the previous chapter, Benjamin's concept of the dialectical image is defined as intensive, and as such contains fluctuating forces. Accordingly, in the construction of historical time, as opposed to the sheer amassing of data, 'the different epochs of the past are not all affected in the same degree by the present day of the historian'.[189] That is, different moments of the past carry varying degrees of significance that are contingent upon the historian's perspective. As opposed to 'empty', homogenous time, history or historical time is gradated intensively, 'full' of opposing energies that delineate its form.

In *On the Concept of History*, historical time is also termed 'messianic time'. I will not attempt a full interpretation of one of the most commented on of Benjamin's writings. I follow Löwy in viewing the text as informed by a kind of elective affinity between Marxism and theology, rather than privileging one of these approaches over the other, or pronouncing them as categorically contradictory, as some previous commentators have argued.[190] He argues rather that revolution and redemption are inseparable; moreover, they reinforce one another.

'History is the object [*Gegenstand*] of construction whose site is not homogenous time, but time filled by "now time" [*Jetztzeit*]'.[191] The concept of 'now time' denotes the manner in which past epochs are charged intensively with the forces of the present. Rather than merely the 'present', 'now time' designates the time of the dialectical image. Its structure is monadological, like that of the dialectical image and the object of history: 'Now time, as a model of messianic time, comprises the entire history of mankind in a tremendous

[186] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N3, 1], 463.
[187] Ibid, [N2, 6], 461.
[188] See Thesis XVII, 396, in which 'now time' is described as figural.
[189] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N7a1, 2], 470 modified, thesis XVII, 396. As Löwy describes, the debate between 'utopian (messianic or revolutionary) images' and 'formless progressive tendencies' is one which is posed as early as Benjamin's 'The Life of Students' (1914) as well as in his dissertation on 'The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism' (1919).
[190] Löwy, *The Fire Alarm*, 52.
[191] Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*, Thesis XIV, *SW*4, 395 modified.

abbreviation'.[192] The abbreviation enacted through 'now time' includes virtual history past and future. The ratio between 'now time' and the history of mankind corresponds to that between the history of mankind and the history of the universe.[193]

Historical time, in other words, is constructed from minute, seemingly insignificant particles of 'now times', each of which, however, virtually includes the entire history of mankind in abbreviated form. In a version of the 'Theses' known as the 'Hannah Arendt Manuscript', reproduced from a manuscript Benjamin gave Arendt before his death, the above quoted passage on the abbreviation of now time is followed by the crossed out sentence 'so that the truth may be accounted for'.[194] Alongside the discussed passage in the *Arcades Project* in which historical time is described as the 'time of truth', these references make manifest the metaphysical aspect of historical time, which at a later date Benjamin partially eliminated.

As both Löwy and Hamacher observe in their interpretations of the 'Theses', the opposition Benjamin creates therein between chronological time on the one hand, and historical or messianic time on the other, is prefigured in his dissertation on 'The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism' (1919). In his dissertation, where Benjamin designates the essence of Romanticism as messianic, he contrasts 'qualitative temporal infinity' [*qualitative zeitliche Unendlichkeit*] with the 'empty infinity of time' [*leeren Unendlichkeit der Zeit*]. The first is 'an infinite process of fulfilment, not a mere becoming', while the second comprises 'progress into the void'.[195] The task of Romantic poetry is viewed as a Leibnizian one, progressing towards fulfilment or perfection within a qualitative infinity, rather than a neo-Kantian progression into empty infinity. It is, according to Benjamin, an infinite yet determinate task.

In the 'Theological-political fragment', probably written in 1921–22, Benjamin similarly associates the messianic with a gradated force, in an enigmatic image of two oppositional arrows, one going in the 'direction of messianic intensity', running counter to a 'secular dynamic'.[196] These two forces, running in opposite directions, nevertheless strengthen one another. As Benjamin argues, 'just as a force, by virtue of the path it is moving along, can augment another force on the opposite path, so the secular order – because of its nature as

[192] Ibid, Thesis XVII, 396.
[193] Walter Benjamin and Gérard Raulet, *Über den Begriff der Geschichte*, 1. Aufl, Werke Und Nachlass / Walter Benjamin, Bd. 19 (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), 28.
[194] The passage reads:'Die Geschichte der zivilisierten Menschheit würde, in diesem Maßst [~~xx~~] ab~~zt damit der Wahrheit Rechnung~~ eingetragen, ein fünftel der letzten Sekunde der letzten Stunde [~~x~~] füllen'. Ibid. For an account of the different existing versions of the 'Theses' and the tangled history of their publication, see Ibid, 'Entstehungs- und Publikationgeschichte', 161–208.
[195] Benjamin, *SW*1, 168/*GS*1, 92, Hamacher, *Now Time*, 49.
[196] Benjamin, *SW*3, 305/*GS*6, 203. Some, however, date the text to 1937–38.

secular – promotes the coming of the messianic kingdom'.[197] The notion of promoting the coming of the messianic kingdom through the secular domain may have been informed by ideas in Franz Rosenzweig's *The Star of Redemption* (1921).[198]

This image of messianic and secular times as split and running in two directions, a double-powered intensivity, reminiscent of the doubling of time in Bergson and Deleuze, in a sense anticipates the doubling of time in Benjamin's dialectical image. Therein 'present' and 'past' receive a doubled version as 'what has been' and the 'now'; the dialectical relation between the latter pair echoes the two arrows that each augment the force of other. Moreover, the link between messianic and historical time, explicit in *On the Concept of History*, is already made in the fragment, in which Benjamin defines the relation between the messianic and the secular order as 'one of the essential teachings of the philosophy of history'.[199]

The contrast between qualitative-messianic time and progressive 'empty' time guides the 'Theses' as well. Yet rather than simply being directed towards fulfilment, in the 'Theses' there are multiple possibilities. History is heading towards catastrophe and at the same time contains the possibility of redemption or revolution. Like the 'historical index' contained by images, which determines how they will attain legibility at a particular time, the past 'carries with it a secret index with which it is referred to redemption'.[200] Since the index is secret, the past may or may not be redeemed. Messianic expectation is described as a force, albeit one that is 'weak' [*schwache messianische Kraft*].[201] Following Löwy, I understand this 'weakness' as resulting from the fact that 'redemption is anything but assured; it is merely a slim possibility, which one has to know how to grasp'.[202] In addition, it is the interruption of this force, the 'messianic arrest of events', which brings about a 'revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past'.[203] Just as messianism is in a sense fulfilled, or actualised, by the coming of the messiah whom, through the fact of his arrival, interrupts messianic anticipation, so the interception of messianic force actualises revolution bringing about redemption.

As evident in Benjamin's citation of German philosopher Hermann Lotze's *Mikrokosmus* (1856–64) in the second 'Thesis', the concept of redemption denotes, for Benjamin, Christian *Apokatastasis* as well as the Jewish redemption or *Tikkun*.[204] Lotze may

[197] Ibid.
[198] See Löwy, *The Fire Alarm*, 26.
[199] Ibid.
[200] Benjamin, *SW* 4, Thesis II, 390.
[201] Ibid, *schwache* italicised in original.
[202] Löwy, *The Fire Alarm,* 79.
[203] Benjamin, *SW*4, 390, 396 modified II, XVII, *GS*1, 694, 703.
[204] Hermann Lotze, *Mikrokosmus* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1896–1909).

have served as mediator of Leibniz's ideas and concepts that Benjamin uses in the 'Theses' and other late writing, years after he had referred directly to Leibniz's texts.[205] In 'Convolut N' of the *Arcades Project*, Benjamin remarks on the link between Lotze's critique of progress and his conception of redemption, defined as 'the thought of the preservation and the restoration of all things'.[206] Lotze combined a critique of historical progress with a notion of redemption, or *Apokatastasis*, which, like that of Origen and Leibniz, consisted of a vision of eternal return in which souls are both preserved and restored. That is, aside from the restitution of souls, it denoted an emergence of the new.[207] In 'Convolute N' Benjamin quotes Lotze's description of the form taken by the course of history as 'spirals – some prefer to say epicycloids'.[208] In Benjamin's recurring engagement with conceptions of eternal return, he tests out these ideas of the repetition of history against visions of progress, while insisting that repetition includes modification.

In the third 'Thesis', this spiralling form of history is described as its 'citability', the possibility of repetition of historical events through their citation. Redemption is here defined as the salvaging of the details of history from forgetfulness, by committing all historical events, large or small, to remembrance [*Eingedenken*]. In 'Convolut N' Benjamin also describes history as a 'form of remembrance' to which history owes its incompleteness: 'What science has determined, remembrance can modify'.[209] In this case Benjamin uses the notion of history as remembrance in order to argue, along with Horkheimer, for the incompleteness of history. This notion of remembrance as enabling the intervention of the past in the present may very well have been appropriated from Bergson, although he is not mentioned in this passage.[210]

Yet, Benjamin could also be critical of Bergson's theory of time as manifest in a brief passage in 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire' in which he targets Bergson's concept of duration. Benjamin criticises Bergson for arguing that the summoning of memory is a matter of choice, and as such remains subjective. Applying Proust's term '*mémoire involontaire*', Benjamin designates a temporal experience [*Erfahrung*] in which content from an individual's past combines with material from the collective past, thereby critiquing Bergson's '*mémoire pure*'. In other words, Benjamin faults Bergson's philosophy of time for its subjective and a-historical nature. In this regard, he echoes Horkheimer, who commended Bergson's differentiation

[205] See Löwy, *The Fire Alarm*, 72, However, Lotze's critique of progress in by no means Leibnizian.
[206] Benjamin, *Arcades Project* [N13a, 3], 479.
[207] See Löwy, *The Fire Alarm*, 83.
[208] Benjamin, *Arcades Project* [N13, 2], 478.
[209] Ibid, [N8, 1], 471.
[210] Horkheimer had sent Benjamin his essay on Bergson, titled 'On Bergson's Metaphysics of Time'.

between lived and abstract time, yet argued that he remained on 'the threshold' – which he could not cross – 'of dialectics'.[211]

8.3 Deleuze and Benjamin on Montage and Montrage

Both the 'dialectical' and the 'crystal'-image enact a montage of sorts: a perspectivised construction that is at once internal and intervallic to the image. We have discussed how within the dialectical image several points of view are constellated or 'montaged'. Deleuze describes a parallel operation of montage within the 'time-image'. In modern cinema, Deleuze writes, montage has, in a sense, entered the image itself: 'The elements of the image already implicate the montage'. This was only made possible under the conditions of the 'time-image'. Deleuze describes a process in which, in post-war cinema, the classical 'sensori-motor schema' he described in *Cinema 1* was shattered. This shattering was followed by a reversal in which instead of time depending upon movement, 'aberrant movement' now depended upon time, and its indirect representation by images was replaced by its direct representation. What had changed is cinema's self-perception as artifice. While it was always made up of 'aberrant movements and false continuity shots', it took modern cinema to proclaim itself as a virtual image, embodying the phantom that had haunted cinema ever since its inception.[212]

Montage played an important role in this shift. In classical cinema, montage was an operation performed upon movement-images. By contrast, in modern cinema,

> montage has changed its meaning, it takes on a new function: instead of being concerned with movement-images from which it releases [*dégage*] an indirect image of time, it is concerned with the time-image, and releases from it the relations of time on which aberrant movement must now depend. To adopt a word of Lapoujade's, montage has become 'montrage'.[213]

If classical montage extracted an indirect image of time from movement-images, 'mobile sections of duration', as Deleuze defined them, modern montage releases from the time-image – 'duration images, change images, relation images […] which are beyond movement itself' –

[211] Max Horkheimer, 'On Bergson's Metaphysics of Time', *Radical Philosophy* 131 (May-June 2005): 10.
[212] Deleuze*, Cinema 2*, 41 modified / *Cinéma 2*, 59.
[213] Ibid.

relations of time.[214] In one of Deleuze's lectures, he uses slightly different terminology: modern montage, or montrage, is an operation that '*determines* the relations of time within the time-image'.[215] Whether or not montage determines such relations, we are dealing with a process of constructing relations of time from and in 'images' that are temporal in themselves, rather than simply aggregating sections of duration together.

It is not that the procedure of montage itself had changed, or that it is used more or less abundantly, Deleuze specifies. Montage continues to be the most essential cinematic procedure, yet it is no longer the same. In classical cinema, montage had consisted of a 'vertical construction', linking images successively one to another, while in modern cinema, it functions within the image, for example, by variations in the depth of field.[216] The question guiding montage is no longer how the images connect, but rather, 'what does the image *show*?' [*qu'est ce que montre l'image?*].[217] Montage is no longer distinct from the image; therefore, the time-image could have been termed a 'montage-image'.

Deleuze describes, in *Cinema 2*, two 'regimes' that pertain to pre- and post-war cinema: the 'organic' and the 'crystalline', which he also calls the 'chronic' and 'cinetic' regimes respectively; implying that the crystalline regime is the truly cinematic of the two. The shift from classical to modern cinema echoes a shift in the history of philosophy that Deleuze detects in *Kant's Critical Philosophy*: in ancient philosophy, Deleuze writes, time was subordinate to movement, while today, time is 'out of joint', which signifies 'the reversal of the movement-time relationship. It is now movement which is subordinate to time'. Liberated, time presents itself as an 'empty and pure form'.[218] Pure time, writes Deleuze, drove the notion of truth to a head. This crisis is made manifest in the 'contingent futures' paradox: if it is *true* that a battle *can* take place tomorrow, how do we avoid one of the two following possibilities: either the impossible proceeds from the possible, since if the battle takes place it is no longer possible that it *can* take place, or the past is not necessarily true, since the battle might not take place. Deleuze refers to Leibniz's solution to the paradox in the *Theodicy*: the battle can take place in one world and not in another, the two worlds are possible, yet are not 'compossible' with each other. Thus, Leibniz rescues truth through the concept of *incompossibility*.

[214] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 13.
[215] Gilles Deleuze, vérité et temps cours 61 du 24/04/1984 - 1 transcription: lucie Picandet, http://www2.univ-paris8.fr/deleuze/article.php3?id_article=346
[216] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 42.
[217] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 42 / 60.
[218] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 88.

Montage within the 'crystalline regime' extracts a falsifying movement out of pure time. Within the direct image of time – an open relational whole – the power of the false is the determinant of relations. 'Narrative becomes temporal *and* falsifying at exactly the same time', writes Deleuze, that is, in order to become temporal it must become falsifying.[219] The 'time-image', and therefore the 'crystal-image', which consists, in a sense, of the ultimate 'time-image', are contingent upon this falsifying movement.

Deleuze refers here to Nietzsche's 'will to power' that substituted truth for the creative force of the false. We have seen that in *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze similarly argues that Leibniz's multiplicity of incompossible worlds should be transformed into eternal returns within this world, returns that are contemporaneous with that which they cause to return.[220] Deleuze opts time and again for a Nietzschean version of Leibniz's doctrine of infinite worlds. This does not mean, however, that Deleuze amalgamates Leibniz's 'mannerist' perspectivism with Nietzsche's perspectivism, the latter which Deleuze describes in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* as a 'total critique' according to which there are no moral facts or phenomena, but only their moral interpretation.[221] Nietzsche is invoked by Deleuze in order to disrupt an aspect in Leibniz's philosophy which he cannot accept, in a manner similar to that in which Deleuze reads Nietzsche against Kant. One of these unacceptable aspects is Leibniz's understanding of truth, which results from his theological worldview.

Finally, as we have seen, Benjamin puts forward his own concepts of truth, both in the 'Prologue' and in the *Arcades Project*. These are forged against classical conceptions of truth as timeless on the one hand, or as based on subjective intention on the other.[222] Benjamin's concept of truth, linked to that of origin, was informed by Goethe's *Urphänomen*, which describes the appearance of totality within an individual.[223] While in the 'Prologue' what is at stake is the truth of the work of art, in the *Arcades Project* the 'point of explosion' within the dialectical image discloses 'true historical time, the time of truth'. The structure of the 'time of truth', enacted by the principle of montage, is monadic, including a totality of history in every individual moment.

This aspect of Benjamin's notions of montage and the 'dialectical image' appear to be furthest from Deleuze's conceptions of montage enacted in the 'crystalline regime' and by the 'crystal-image'. The crystalline regime, we recall, is concerned with post-war cinema. The

[219] Ibid, 132.
[220] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 51 / *Cinéma 2*, 57.
[221] Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 90/Nietzsche et la philosophie, 211.
[222] Benjamin, *OGTD*, 36, Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N3,1], 463.
[223] See Rolf Tiedemann, 'Einleitung des Herausgebers', in *Passagen*, *GS* 5, 30.

films Benjamin viewed belong to what Deleuze terms the 'organic regime'. For Benjamin, film produced by image-montage was the opposite of an organic artwork: 'The finished film is the exact antithesis of a work created with a single stroke. It is assembled from a very large number of images and image sequences that offer an array of choice to the editor'.[224]In this case, the editor choses between the images, mediating the material for the viewer.

Yet for Benjamin, as mentioned, the term montage especially in earlier years, did not draw upon film-montage alone, and was informed by a variety of media, including Henry James' and Alexander Döblin's literary montage, John Heartfield's photomontage, and cinematic montage in Soviet cinema from the 1920s.[225] He defines his 'Arcades Project' as 'literary montage' in which 'I needn't *say* anything. Merely show'.[226] That is, for Benjamin, in literary montage meaning is not *said*, or stated, the author merely selecting and exhibiting material. The *Arcades Project* adheres to his definition of a chronicle in 'The Storyteller'; lacking the mediation of commentary, providing the reader with unprecedented freedom. This does not imply that the fragments bear no meaning at all, since as we stated, meaning is constructed relationally. Nor am I suggesting that all fragments share the same significance, but rather that they are not organised according to a specific hierarchy of meaning.[227] Any reading or interpretation of the *Arcades Project*, such as my own, will focus on some fragments, disregarding others, thus actualising some paths of meanings, destructing other.

In *The Artist as Producer* (1934) and the 'Artwork' essay, Benjamin's description of montage as a 'procedure' [*Verfahren*] seems to draw on cinematic montage. Benjamin's interest in Soviet cinema may have been sparked by his visit to Moscow in 1926–27, where he watched Vertov's *One Sixth of the World*, Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, Pudovkin's *Mother*, and *By the Law* directed by Kuleshov.[228] A *Mickey Mouse* cartoon may have been one of the few sound-films he had the opportunity to see.[229] These works, as well as constructivist theory, led him to proclaim his 'the age of montaged [*montierbar*] artwork'.[230] There is no evidence that Benjamin had read Eisenstein's theoretical works, discussed by Deleuze in *Cinema 1*. However,

[224] Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', *SW* 3, 109.
[225] See Benjamin, *The Crisis of the Novel*, *SW*2, 299-304; *The Author as Producer*, *SW*2, 674–675.
[226] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [N1a, 8], 460.
[227] As Josh Alvizu suggests, while Leibniz's system is famous for being hierarchised, the concept of isotropy, that forms the basis of Leibniz's concept of expression, according to which magnitudes remain stable through direction or measurement, is perhaps as significant a concept in his thought. See Josh Alvizu, 'Montage Monadology: Leibniz, Benjamin, Modernity' (presentation at *Benjamin and Leibniz: On Expression*, Goldsmith University of London, June 27-8, 2017).
[228] Walter Benjamin, *Moscow Diary*, ed. G. Smith (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 28, 106, 103; Benjamin, 'On the Present Situation of Russian Film', *SW*2, 12–15.
[229] See Benjamin, 'Mickey Mouse', *SW* 2, 545–46.
[230] Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', *SW* 3, 109.

Pudovkin's *Filmregie und Filmmanuskript* (1928) is referenced in a note to Benjamin's 'Artwork' essay, the first draft of which was written in 1935.[231] Benjamin quotes Pudovkin who writes that 'to connect the performance of an actor with an object […] is one of the most powerful methods of cinematic construction'.[232] Pudovkin's theory, which defines montage as a tool for guiding and constructing the viewer's 'psychological state', no doubt found its way into Benjamin's conception of montage in the 'Artwork' essay, alongside the perceptual psychologist and film theorist Rudolf Arnheim's Gestalt psychology ideas presented in *Film als Kunst* (1932).

Deleuze's theory of early cinematic montage, unfolded in the third chapter of *Cinema 1*, defines montage as the determination of an open, relational whole of time, or duration. This determination or 'releasing' of the image of time from the ensemble of active and reactive elements that constitute the 'movement-image', is performed 'by means of continuities, cutting, and false continuities [*faux raccords*]'.[233] While Deleuze admired Eisenstein's revolutionary cinematic reformulation of dialectics, whereby the latter redefined 'organic' composition as motivated by dialectical forces, he also criticises Eisenstein's theory of dialectical montage, in which montage is defined as the 'idea' of the film; the film as a whole constituting the 'object' of montage. The whole should rather be presupposed, writes Deleuze; it should be primary to its parts.

Benjamin's understanding of the task of the film editor is comparable to that of the chronicler: the selection of and display of materials, out of which meaning emerges. The meaning of the whole, then, depends on the juxtaposition of the parts, much like in Soviet montage theories, yet when brought together, the parts do not constitute an organic whole. Benjamin's description of montage in the 'Artwork' essay highlights the role of the cinematic apparatus in shaping the perception of the audience. The essential process of film production, that of montage, is determined, he writes, by intervention [*Eingreifen*]. Benjamin gives an example of an actor who is supposed to look startled by a knock at the door. If the director is not satisfied with his performance, he can manipulatively create it by having a shot fired in the back of the actor and filming his startled expression.[234] The 'test performance' of the actor in front of the apparatus is exhibited to the spectator. The apparatus thus separates the actor's performance, which remains a recorded 'test', from the audience.

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[231] Ibid, 126 (verify).
[232] Ibid, 126. Vsevolod Pudovkin, *Selected Essays*, ed. Richard Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 106.
[233] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 31.
[234] Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', *SW* 3, 113.

Although different in many ways, both Deleuze and Benjamin's conceptions of montage are marked by Leibniz's cinematic theory of perception, with its artificial devices of perspective and selection amongst virtual worlds. Deleuze and Benjamin each utilise Leibniz's perspectivism to traverse the path from monad to montage, making manifest the ways in which Leibniz's theory lends itself to the modern cinematic medium.

Epilogue:
The Crystal Pyramid, Leibniz's Theodicy

The foundational role of Leibniz's perspectivism for modern cinema and literature is embodied in the myth that seals the *Theodicy*, described by Deleuze as 'a source of all modern literature'.[235]Leibniz's version of the myth gives pride of place to architecture, highlighting construction rather than destruction. He uses expression, that is, the folded or nested structure of the monad, as a principle of narrative construction in which 'layers' of dialogue nest in one another. Its moral supports Leibniz's argument, in the *Theodicy*, for the mutual existence of divine justice and human freedom.

In Deleuze's words, a 'pyramid of crystal' plays a central role therein.[236] In fact, the fable unfurled at the closing section of the *Theodicy* describes a pyramid, though not a crystal one. In Leibniz's description of the 'palace of the fates' at the centre of the fable, he writes that the halls within the palace 'rose in a pyramid'; that is, what looked like a palace from the outside became a pyramid from within, in which every hall transformed into a complete universe, even including its own sun and stars.[237] As Schaub writes, the way in which Leibniz describes the pyramid suggests that it is semi-transparent and semi-permeable.[238]Yet it also seems Deleuze uses the term 'crystal' to describe the pyramid, consciously or not, in order to highlight the debt his own 'crystal image' owes to Leibniz's pyramid. In this mythical pyramid, as in the 'crystal image', virtual and actual coalesce; a perquisite, as Deleuze suggests, for modern literature.

Leibniz choses to end the *Theodicy* by recounting a myth concerning Sextus Tarquinius, son of the last Etruscan king ruling Rome. The Roman Republic was founded following the

[235] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 303n5/ *Cinéma 2*, 171.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Leibniz, *Theodicy* 415, 372.
[238] She quotes Leibniz: 'for the pyramid had a beginning, but one could not see its end; it had an apex, but no base..', *Theodicy* 416, 373; See Mirjam Schaub, 'Transparenz, opak. Eine Begehung von Leibnizens Kristallpalast am Ende der Theodizee', in: Markus Rautzenberg/Andreas Wollsteiner (Hg.), Hide and Seek. Das Spiel von Transparenz und Opazität, München: Fink 2010, 143.

dethronement of Sextus after he raped Lucretia, wife of Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus; thus Sextus' fate played a foundational role in Roman history which lies at the background of Leibniz's retelling. The myth justifies Sextus' punishment, thereby justifying the existence of the Roman republic, and indirectly, that of the Holy Roman Empire supported by Leibniz.

The first among four levels of dialogue, between two speakers, 'Laurentius' representing the author, and 'Antonio' his opposer, is freely reproduced from Laurentius Valla's *Dialogue on Free Will*.[239]As Leibniz concedes, Valla's dialogue was meant to refute what he perceived as the pagan position of Boethius in *Consolation of Philosophy*, to which Leibniz responds as well in the *Theodicy*.[240] In his dialogue, Valla brings the myth of Sextus who went to Apollo seeking a prophecy of his future, only to learn his life would be short and unhappy. Leibniz provides the final words of his position on the conflict between free-will and pre-destination by intervening in this debate between Boethius and Valla.

Leibniz's retelling includes the additional figures of Theodorus, the high priest who was present during the conversation between Jupiter and Sextus, and Pallas Athena, Jupiter's daughter. The forth and most extensive level consists of a dialogue between the two, following Theodorus' traveling to Athens and falling asleep in the Goddess's temple. He wakes up in an unknown land, before a palace. Pallas Athena, daughter of Jupiter appearing at the gates, speaks to him: 'You see here the palace of the fates, where I keep watch and ward. Here are representations not only of that which happens but also of all that which is possible'.[241] Pallas shows Theodorous a multiplicity of possible worlds, brought to life by her voice, every one of which representing a possible fate for Sextus.

Leibniz's version of the fable introduces an architectural wonder: a splendid palace from without, which becomes a pyramid when viewed from within. Similarly every hall, or chamber of the palace turns into a world when Theodorous steps into it.[242]As in a dream, internal and external are one and the same yet distinct. Appearances are deceiving, the palace-pyramid supplying a multiple layered experience in which true and false can no longer be distinguished

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[239] Laurentius Valla, *Dialogue on Free Will*, translated by C. Trinkaus in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, E. Cassirer et al. (eds.), Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948.

[240] Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. Relihan, J. C., Hackett: Indianapolis, 2001. Written around 524, *Consolation of Philosophy* is a prosimetrum (prose with verse intervals), that unfolds an imaginary dialogue between the imprisoned Boethius and 'Lady philosophy' in which the latter defends rational consolation. It was criticised by Valla and others for its apparent preference of philosophy over the Christian doctrine. See Margaret Cameron, 'Ac pene Stoicus: Valla and Leibniz on "The Consolation of Philosophy"', History of Philosophy Quarterly, Vol. 24, No. 4 Oct., 2007, 337–354 .

[241] Leibniz, *Theodicy*, 414, 371.

[242] 'Thereupon the Goddess led Theodorous into one of the halls of the palace: when he was within, it was no longer a hall, it was a world *Solemque suum, sua sidera norat*. Leibniz, *Theodicy* 415, 372.

from one another. Theodorous' dream resembles contemporary virtual reality experiences, activated by touch:

> Theodorous saw the whole life of Sextus as at one glance, and as in a stage presentation. There was a great volume of writings in this hall: Theodorus could not refrain from asking what that meant. It is the history of this world which we are now visiting, the Goddess told him; it is the book of its fates. You have seen a number on the forehead of Sextus. Look in this book for the place which it indicates. Theodorus looked for it, and found there the history of Sextus in a form more ample than the outline he had seen. Put your finger on any line you please, Pallas said to him, and you will see represented actually in all its detail that which the line broadly indicates. He obeyed, and he saw coming into view all the characteristics of a portion of the life of that Sextus.[243]

This passage is remarkable for its construction of a multi-media artistic experience including live performance, sound, vision, text and touch; a 'total installation', as Schaub writes, or a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.[244] As Benjamin mentions, the *Gesamtkunstwerk* was considered an ideal for the *Trauerspiel* form, a 'synthesis of all arts' essential to allegorical creation.[245] Leibniz's retelling of Sextus' myth is moreover allegorical *par excellence* in its abbreviation of history into spatial forms: the book of fates lies within the palace of fates, upon the pages of which Sextus' multiple histories are condensed into symbols, in yet another folded structure of expression.

It is not by chance that it is Pallas Athena, the goddess of wisdom, who guides Theodorous in his journey. Athena stands for 'Lady Philosophy' in Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*.[246] Here, Leibniz takes Boethius' side in the debate against Valla, defending the virtues of philosophical reasoning. As per the closing words of the *Theodicy*, the source of things must be sought in knowledge or intelligence.[247]A key argument of the *Theodicy* conditions freedom upon rational thought, hence Athena as a final guide to wisdom provides it

[243] Leibniz, *Theodicy*, 415, 372.
[244] Schaub, 'Transparenz, opak'147.
[245] Benjamin, *OGTD*, 181.
[246] See Cameron, 344. The key role of women, embodied by Lucretia, Lady philosophy and Pallas Athena, in this foundational myth for modernity, is significant yet cannot be dealt with extensively here.
[247] Leibniz, Ibid. 417, 377.

with a fitting ending. By designating this as the myth of origin of modern literature, Deleuze highlights, then, the philosophical origins of modern literature and cinema.

When Theodorous reaches the apex of the pyramid, he enters an ecstatic state and is drugged by Athena, who places a drop of 'divine liquid' under his tongue: only in a dream and under drugs can the best world and true happiness be experienced.[248] When drugged, that is, when not in full control of his intellectual and perceptual capacities, a state less clear and translucent, Theodorous can finally experience the real world. As Leibniz writes at the end of *Principles of Nature and Grace*, happiness consists in constant striving for unattainable perfection; hence it is impossible for Thedorous to experience the world at the apex of the pyramid unaided by narcotics.

In Deleuze's interpretation of the fable, he describes the multiplicity of worlds existing together in the palace as virtuals, actualised in the special circumstance of the dream. Leibniz's cinematic solution to the 'contingent futures' paradox uses the category of 'incompossibility', which precedes that of possibility, in order to separate between the true and what is necessarily true. However for Deleuze, in the 'crystalline' regime all 'incompossible' worlds belong to one and the same universe, with the result that 'narration (...) becomes fundamentally falsifying'.[249]Deleuze cannot accept Leibniz's opposition between the categories of truth and falsity, and therefore extends the mere interchangeability of true and false in Leibniz's myth, stretching Leibniz's intermediary category of 'compossibility' further than originally intended.

Benjamin does not refer to this fable nor to Leibniz's *Theodicy* more generally, yet one could imagine he would have appreciated Leibniz's multi-layered, interpolative account. Although Benjamin's definitions of modern literature include a destructive element lacking from Leibniz's moralistic myth, Leibniz's use of 'total allegory' as a form of expression in which history 'merges into the setting', for the final words of the *Theodicy*, illustrates the roots of modern literary forms in the baroque, as designated by Benjamin in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*.[250]

[248] Ibid.
[249] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 131.
[250] Benjamin, *OGTD*, 92.

Conclusion

> We thought there were windows but actually it's made of mirrors.
> —Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, and Anton Vidokle, *The Internet Does Not Exist*

In 'In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective', Hito Steyerl describes a process in which, in recent years, following the crumbling of the paradigm of linear perspective, our sense of orientation in time and space has changed.[1] Citing Erwin Panofsky, she describes how linear perspective is constructed around the single point of view of the immobile spectator, assuming this view to be objective. Steyerl highlights the role of the horizon, constituted by linear perspective as an abstract line, in contributing to the creation of an illusionary 'reality' viewed in a painting as through a window. Linear perspective, she writes, began to lose its grip as the dominant paradigm in the nineteenth century, a process that was accelerated in the twentieth, culminating with the current dominance of aerial views. Our perception is shaped by a proliferation of technologies developed by the military and applied in the entertainment world; from satellites and drones to Google Earth and 3D animation. The pre-eminence of aerial representation has brought about a horizonless 'condition of free fall'. As she writes,

> If we accept the multiplication and de-linearization of horizons and perspectives, the new tools of vision may also serve to express, and even alter, the contemporary conditions of disruption and disorientation. Recent 3D animation technologies incorporate multiple perspectives, which are deliberately manipulated to create multifocal and nonlinear imagery. Cinematic space is twisted in any way imaginable, organized around heterogeneous, curved, and collaged perspectives. The tyranny of the photographic lens, cursed by the promise of its indexical relation to reality, has given way to hyperreal representations – not of space as it is, but of space as we can make it – for better or worse.[2]

[1] Hito Steyerl, 'In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective', in *The Wretched of the Screen* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), 12–30.
[2] Ibid, 26.

The photographic image no longer prevails, making way for virtual realities more vivid than those met by Theodoros in Leibniz's crystal pyramid, invading our everyday lives and eliminating the ground beneath our feet. This disorienting state, created by a perspectival multiplicity and the contortion of space and time, redistributes power, normalising the disembodied bird's-eye view of superiors onto inferiors. Steyerl cites Eyal Weizman, who describes the Israeli occupation of Palestine as a 'politics of verticality' in which power is distributed across a vertical line.[3]

In his conclusion to *Cinema 2*, Deleuze had anticipated some of the ways in which shifts in digital technologies would reorient our perspectival bearings and bring forth a 'new regime of images':

> The new images no longer have any outside (out-of-field), any more than they are internalized in a whole; rather, they have a right side and a reverse, reversible and non-superimposable, like a power to turn back on themselves. They are the object of a perpetual reorganization, in which a new image can arise from any point whatever of the preceding image. The organization of space here loses its privileged directions, and first of all the privilege of the vertical which the position of the screen still displays, in favour of an omni-directional space which constantly varies its angles and co-ordinates, to exchange the vertical and the horizontal. And the screen itself, even if it keeps a vertical position by convention, no longer seems to refer to the human posture, like a window or a painting, but rather constitutes a table of information, an opaque surface on which are inscribed 'data', information replacing nature, and the brain-city, the third eye, replacing the eyes of nature.[4]

Rather than pronouncing the demise of the analogue photographic image, Deleuze describes a shift in the function of images, which become plastic; no longer having an 'outside', a beginning or end. They construct an 'omnidirectional space' that does not privilege a specific point of view, the reign of the vertical giving way to an exchange between vertical and

[3] See Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*, New edition (London: Verso, 2017).
[4] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 265.

horizontal. The screen constitutes a surface inscribed with data instead of purporting to represent nature.[5]

In *The Fold*, Deleuze suggests that Leibniz's monads are better described as 'tables of information' inscribed with coded lines, than as windows.[6] Leibniz was famously the inventor of a binary numerical system that served the basis of binary code, contributing to the inception of digital technologies.[7] Alongside the calculating machine he constructed in order to implement the code, these are seen as the earliest inventions contributing to the foundation of the Internet.[8] Both Leibniz's binary numerical system, and the universal mathematical language he imagined, *Characteristica Universalis*, function according to the logic of expression, which assumes every facet of reason may be expressed in notation or numerals. This is also the logic behind the table of information and some contemporary data systems. As we have seen in Chapter Three, Leibniz engaged in research in projective geometry, which served as the foundation for linear perspective. Leibniz contributed, then, both to the development and crowning of the paradigm of linear perspective, and to the logic that guides the technologies that effected its downfall and subsequent replacement by virtual realities and excess of information.

In their readings of Leibniz, Benjamin and Deleuze emphasise the disruptive logic that guides Leibniz's philosophy, beyond its harmonious façade. Their Leibniz is a philosopher of *désaccords* alongside *accords*, not the naïve optimist of Voltaire's *Candide*.[9] The ways they read Leibniz reflects the tendencies towards the catastrophic and vertiginous in their own philosophies. Here I agree with Culp's reading of a 'dark Deleuze', against the tendencies of reading him as a uniquely affirmative thinker whose philosophy is devoid of destructive forces.[10]

This aspect of both Deleuze and Benjamin's readings of Leibniz paints a very different picture of Leibniz's philosophy from the renowned philosophical readings of Leibniz conducted in the early twentieth century, such as those of Bertrand Russell, Louis Couturat

[5] In 'Attested Auditor of Books', Benjamin had described the inverse process concerning the written word, in which it had been forced into the 'directorial perpendicular', and that culminated in the three-dimensionality of the card index. Benjamin, *SW* 1, 456.
[6] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 38–39/*Le Pli*, 27.
[7] See Godefroy-Guillaume Leibnitz. 'Explication de l'arithmétique binaire, qui se sert des seuls caractères O et I avec des remarques sur son utilité et sur ce qu'elle donne le sens des anciennes figures chinoises de Fohy'. (Mémoires de mathématique et de physique de l'Académie royale des sciences, Académie royale des sciences, 1703). https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/ads-00104781.
[8] See Martin Davis, *The Universal Computer: The Road from Leibniz to Turing* (New York: Norton, 2000).
[9] Voltaire, *Candide* (London: Penguin, 2001).
[10] See Culp, *Dark Deleuze*.

Ernst Cassirer, and Edmund Husserl, who appropriated his philosophy into logical, neo-Kantian or phenomenological domains.[11]Russel and Coutourat's readings were extremely influential in paving a path for Leibniz's reception in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that privileged his logical and mathematical writings while deeming other parts of his work 'exoteric' and therefore unworthy of serious consideration.[12] Their readings remain influential today, when a more comprehensive collection of Leibniz's writing than ever is available.

The Leibniz who emerged from readings by Russel-Couturat and their followers is a systematic thinker and precursor of Kant's rational philosophy. This approach still dominates the field of Leibniz scholarship, although other voices are beginning to emerge.[13]Deleuze and Benjamin's readings open up a lesser known Leibniz, one suitable for the critical examination of our times, just as Spinoza's philosophy was revived in Marxist theories post 1968.[14] Theirs are conceptual, philosophical readings that views Leibniz's thought as rooted in the baroque, yet at the same time as actual and relevant for their own times; both appropriate his concepts into their own philosophy, breathing new life into them, letting them grow and change. There readings pave very different paths, then, from contemporary philological or historically oriented interpretations of Leibniz's works, often conducted in history of philosophy departments that view Leibniz and his concepts as frozen historical objects.

Deleuze, however, stays within the 'logical Leibniz' paradigm. Notwithstanding the creativity and originality of his reading of Leibniz in *The Fold*, it is still determined by his understanding of Leibniz's concept of expression as logical rather than symbolic, and his preference of an unlimited infinite over a limited one. As we have seen in chapter one, Benjamin criticises Cohen for his 'logical' concept of expression. Deleuze, at heart a Spinozist

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[11] See Russell, *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz: With an Appendix of Leading Passages*; Couturat, *La logique de Leibniz d'après des documents inédits*; Ernst Cassirer, 'Leibniz' System in seinen wissenschaftlichen Grundlagen' *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Birgit Recki (Hamburg: Meiner, 1998); Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and a Phenomenological Philosophy*. trans. R Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989).

[12] While the distinction between esoteric and exoteric is Leibniz's own, Russel took it further, pronouncing a division between Leibniz's 'private' and 'public' texts comprising of two separate philosophies, only the former of significance. See Russel, *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*.

[13] For two novel yet different approaches see Mercer's study which argues for Leibniz's metaphysics drawing heavily on Platonic sources: Christia Mercer. *Leibniz's Metaphysics: Its Origins and Development*. In his recent study Smith highlights the significance of Leibniz's research in biology and life science for the development of his metaphysics; see Justin E. H. Smith, *Divine Machines: Leibniz and the Sciences of Life*. Princeton University Press, 2011.

[14] For example by Althusser in 'The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter', Louis Althusser, François Matheron, and Olivier Corpet, *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-87* (London ; New York: Verso, 2006), and later by Antonio Negri in *The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

who calls for univocity of being, puts forward an unlimited concept of infinity. Yet without limitation, as Benjamin points out, the infinite tends to collapse into itself in regress.[15]

In 'On Freedom' Leibniz introduces the image of the two Labyrinths previously discussed, which he later replicates in the *Theodicy*, using a slightly different formulation: 'For there are two labyrinths in which the human mind is caught. One concerns the composition of the continuum; the other concerns the nature of freedom. And both arise from the same source, namely, the infinite.'[16]The source of both philosophical problems, that of continuity and that of freedom is the concept of the infinite. Any reading of Leibniz hinges, therefore, upon its interpretation of the infinite, and for this reason I have highlighted the divergence between Deleuze and Benjamin on this aspect of Leibniz's philosophy. While in the present work Benjamin and Deleuze's readings of Leibniz have served to open up a wider comparison of their philosophies, these readings diverge in their interpretation of this most significant aspect of Leibniz's thought. This divergence has import implications for the ways in which they understand temporality; Deleuze's critique of Leibniz led him to privilege the unlimited infinity of eternal return, while Benjamin's emphasises the discontinuity of history as manifest in the monadic structure of the event. As we have seen in chapter three, Benjamin had opposed 'qualitative infinity' with 'infinitely empty time' already in his dissertation on the Romantics.[17] For Benjamin, the standstill or cesura in the continuum of history consists of the mirror-image of the 'state of exception' in which the sovereign's power is suspended.[18] Hence the powerful revolutionary force of the limitation of infinite movement.

Deleuze's *The Fold* is written from a position of admiration for Leibniz's philosophy, yet Deleuze's critique of Leibniz as ultimately a philosopher of identity, formulated most clearly in *Difference and Repetition*, remains in place. Leibniz's philosophy is therefore viewed from a critical distance, mediated by the cultural analysis of the baroque.

Nevertheless, Leibniz's multiplicity of virtual worlds expressed in our own, and the category of *incompossibility* were instrumental for Deleuze's definition, in *Difference and Repetition*, of the categories of singularity and difference. Kant wrote of Leibniz that 'we must not allow ourselves to be perplexed by his explanation of sensation as a confused kind of perception'.[19] Deleuze returns to Leibniz from a post-Kantian perspective in order to redefine

[15] See Benjamin's Dissertation on the Romantics, where he writes that unlimited reflection results in 'formless thinking', *SW*1, 129.
[16] Leibniz, 'On Freedom', *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 264.
[17] Benjamin, *SW*1, 168/*GS*1, 92.
[18] Benjamin, *OGTD*, 65.
[19] Kant, 'Über eine Entdeckung, nach der alle neue Kritik der reinen Vernunft durch eine altere entbehrlich gemacht werden soll', quoted in *Monadology and Other Writings*, 209.

perception through sensation. Leibniz's concepts of 'virtuality' and 'force' are viewed as the precursors of Bergson and Nietzsche's concepts, which Deleuze more adamantly adopts.

In Benjamin's reading of Leibniz, other aspects of his philosophy are brought to the foreground. I have argued that in both Benjamin's early and later appropriations of Leibniz, what is at stake for Benjamin is a refiguration of historical knowledge and experience. The expressive nature of the monad and the perspectival nature of the universe persistently appear in Benjamin's writing in different guises: for example, in the 'fore and subsequent life' [*Vor- und Nachleben*] of the work of art, and in his conception of virtual history. Benjamin's 'historical perspectivism', through which he integrates Leibniz's concepts into his philosophy of historical experience, is significant in its contribution to reassessing Leibniz's philosophy of history, a scarcely researched aspect of his work although historiography was his chief career in later life.[20]

In Benjamin's conception of historical experience, the monadic, expressive construction of history and 'intensive image' constitute the 'montage' of history. That is, in Benjamin's late writing on history, expression=construction; as acutely observed by Alliez in relation to Deleuze's *What is Philosophy?*[21] Expression is redefined through construction and therefore montage; a novel redefinition of expression that includes constructive and destructive elements. In his last work, Deleuze approaches Benjamin's interpretation yet without the going as far as introducing destruction into expression.

Against readings of Leibniz as primarily a philosopher of reconciliation, following Benjamin allows a reading of Leibniz's disparate and eclectic texts as montage or constellation rather than searching for the underlying 'synthetic project'.[22] Although Deleuze's reading of Leibniz, especially in *The Fold*, is more elaborate and detailed, and based on a more comprehensive acquaintance with Leibniz's texts, it is Benjamin's reading that better succeeds in breaking the 'logical paradigm' dominating Leibniz's reception, extending the 'anti systematic impulse' within Leibniz's apparent systematicity and uncovering the political potential of Leibniz's texts.

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[20] Antognazza, *Leibniz an Intellectual Biography*, 4.

[21] As he writes, '…toute une machinique de la pensée seront ainsi mobilisées pour *faire la multiple* (car « il faut une méthode qui le fasse effectivement ») et répondre enfin à la question « qu'est-ce que la philosophie? » (« la philosophie est la théorie de multiplicités ») quand viens la vieillesse, et l'heure de parler concrètement, au point singulier ou le concept at la création se rapportent l'un d'autre dans la grand identité. Expressionisme=Constructivisme'. Éric Alliez, *Deleuze, Philosophie Virtuelle*, 1. ed, Collection Les Empêcheurs de Penser en Rond (Le Plessis-Robinson: Synthélabo, 1996), 49.

[22] Maria Rosa Antognazza's influential biography, for example, highlights Leibniz as man of reconciliation, arguing that there is an 'all embracing synthetic project' underlying his work. See *Leibniz, an Intellectual Biography*, 8.

Deleuze and Benjamin both read Leibniz's concept of freedom through Nietzsche's, finding the former as lacking in opposition to the latter. While Deleuze's Nietzschean Leibniz is first and foremost a Leibniz of eternal return, in which the multiplicity of virtual worlds are already in our own, Benjamin's is a nihilistic Nietzschean-Leibniz, a Leibniz of destruction, not only perfection, an 'anti-enlightenment', irrational Leibniz rather than simply a 'pre-enlightenment' savant. Benjamin's could be termed a deconstructive reading, or one that reads Leibniz against Leibniz.[23]

Deleuze and Benjamin's readings converge in their redefinition of perception through bodily sensation against Kant's theory of experience, resulting in corporeal pedagogies that view learning as involving the body. Leibniz's bodies never cease from movement, and Benjamin and Deleuze draw on his conceptions of force, movement, life – which explains why Leibniz's philosophy is crucial for their understanding of how our perception is shaped by cinematics, the art of moving images. Deleuze consciously developed this aspect of Leibniz's philosophy, as he states, 'it's organisms that die, not life. Any work of art points a way through for life, finds a way through the cracks. Everything I've written is vitalistic, at least I hope it is'.[24] However, while Deleuze's appropriations of Leibniz's concepts of force and life result in a pedagogy, Benjamin's results in a politics. This is manifest for example in Benjamin's description of life-forces motivating society as body in the Surrealism essay that materialise into 'revolutionary discharge'.[25]

Benjamin, unlike Deleuze, had a complex relation with vitalism. On the one hand, as already noted, his concept of experience [*Erfahrung*] contained a critique of 'lived experience' [*Erlebnis*], tinged with criticism of the life philosophy [*Lebensphilosophie*] that was in vogue in his time, whose representatives included Bergson, Nietzsche, and Simmel. This critique was explicitly stated, as narrated by Scholem, in Benjamin's adamant rejection of Buber's 'cult of lived-experience[*Erlebnis*]'.Benjamin was critical, as Jay observes, of the manner in which the concept of *Erlebnis* was used to commend the First World War.[26] On the other hand, beyond the significance of corporeal experience for Benjamin, terms such as 'life' and 'energy' abound throughout his writing. McLaughlin argues that Benjamin formulated what he terms a 'biophilology', beginning in his early 'The Life of Students' (1914–15) and running through

[23] Weber discusses the debt Derrida's concept of 'deconstruction' owes to concepts of 'destruction' formulated by Luther and Heidegger; as Weber notes, in the process of deconstruction 'propositions and artefacts that claim to constitute a comprehensive system are reinscribed with respect to their enabling limits'. See *Benjamin's–abilities*, 282.
[24] Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations: 1972–1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 143.
[25] Benjamin, 'Surrealism', *SW*2, 217
[26] Jay, *Songs of Experience*, 317.

to his texts on Baudelaire written in the late 1930s.[27] Benjamin's position vis-à-vis Bergson and Nietzsche's philosophies was both admiring and critical, which further complicates the picture. The tendency of critics to obscure or deride vitalistic elements in Benjamin's philosophy, shaped by Adorno's early critique of these aspects, makes it even more difficult to properly evaluate the function of these conceptions in Benjamin's writing.[28]

In Chapter Two, I have shown how Benjamin's philosophy of history was informed by Leibniz's conceptions of force and virtuality. The recurrent description of force as self-incurred and the theme of automatisation in Benjamin's writing from different periods make manifest that not only the debate around *Lebensphilosophie*, but also Leibniz's understanding of substance as self-moving and intensive played a role in Benjamin's 'vitalism', which, in the 'Artwork' essay and essays on Baudelaire, for example, combined with his response to nascent forms of technology.

Deleuze noted Benjamin's preoccupation with automatic movement in the 'Artwork' essay:

> Walter Benjamin's article set itself inside cinema in order to show how the art of automatic movement (or, as he ambiguously said, the art of reproduction) was itself to coincide with the automization of the masses, state direction, politics become 'art': Hitler as film-maker…[29]

Deleuze reads Benjamin as arguing for a link between technological reproduction and the automatism of the collective as body with the consequence of the 'aestheticization of politics'. As we have seen, Benjamin brings the two together when describing the 'collective physis' in the essay on Surrealism. Automatism is significant for Deleuze's own understanding of cinema; as he writes, 'if cinema is automatism become spiritual art – that is, initially

[27] Kevin McLaughlin, 'Biophilology: Walter Benjamin's Literary Critical Legacy', *MLN* 133, no. 3 (April 2018): 562–84.
[28] In a letter from 1935, for example, Adorno criticised Benjamin's concept of the dialectical image in his first Exposé to the *Arcades Project*. Adorno targets the 'immanent' version of the concept, which, as he writes, 'implies three things: the conception of the dialectical image as belonging to the content of consciousness, even if a collective consciousness; its linear – I would almost say, historical-developmental – relation to the future as utopia; and the notion of the "epoch" as precisely, the self-contained subject corresponding to this particular content of consciousness'. See 'Exchange with Theodor W. Adorno', in *SW*3, 54. Adorno famously rejected Benjamin's essay 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire' from publication by the Institute of Social Research, on the grounds that it was located at the 'crossroads of magic and positivism'. Quoted in Eiland and Jennings, *A Critical Life*, 623.
[29] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 264.

movement-image – it confronts automata, not accidentally, but fundamentally'.[30] Cinema is at its most essential level automated movement, like that which drives Leibniz's 'entelechies' or self-moving monads.

Benjamin and Deleuze's fascination with 'becoming molecular' (Deleuze) or 'miniaturisation' (Benjamin), often linked, in their writing, with the automated production of cinematic or photographic images, also has its sources in Leibniz's logic of expression. Johannßen argues that Benjamin anticipated the shift from mechanical reproduction to digitisation in his theory of reproducibility.[31] This was possible, he suggests, by Benjamin's development of a 'counter concept of miniaturisation' based on the expressive nature of Leibniz's theory of 'minute perceptions' in which details receive close attention.[32] Better suited to describe digital technology, in a sense Leibniz's concept of expression enables a leap over the analogue phase, directly to the horizonless condition described by Steyerl.

Although Leibniz's understanding of time as a relation of succession may have contributed to the development of progressive visions of historiography, his notions of expression and perspectivism, developed within his metaphysics and based on his mathematics and geometry, enables the reimagining of multi-perspectival space and time that travels in circuits and triangles against linear time and space, paving the way for the trail Deleuze blazes between chaos and the brain.[33] The way to the chaotic perspectivism of the internet, which Deleuze pre-empts in his writing, traverses through Benjamin's historical perspectivism. Deleuze, but even more so Benjamin, show us the ways in which we are, and will continue to be, 'still Leibinizian'.[34]

[30] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 263.
[31] Johannßen, 'Miniaturization: Reading Benjamin in the Digital Age', 645.
[32] Ibid, 643.
[33] Deleuze and Guattari, 'Conclusion: from Chaos to Brain', *What is Philosophy?*, 201–218.
[34] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 137.

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