

Feuerbach and the Image of Thought

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INTRODUCTION

‘The Image of Thought’ could be considered to be the most important piece of writing in the entire Deleuzian corpus.¹ This is the chapter of *Difference and Repetition* that several decades later, Deleuze claims is the ‘most necessary and the most concrete’² section of the book, and the one that provides a basis for his later work with Guattari. Here, Deleuze engages with two basic issues. First, he separates out his conception of thinking, and with it, philosophy, from prior philosophical approaches, explaining why the difference of his philosophy from prior systems itself differs from the traditional relationship between philosophical positions. Second, he raises the question of how one should begin to philosophise. As we will see, a philosopher often begins by refuting the implicit presuppositions that they recognise in prior thinkers. Descartes, for instance, criticises Aristotle for presupposing the transparency of categories such as rational and animal. Kant, in turn, criticises Descartes for presupposing the determinability of his own foundational moment, the *cogito*. If we see the development of philosophy as the unmasking and critique of presuppositions of prior systems, then the endpoint of philosophy will be a system entirely without presuppositions. This is the goal Hegel aims at with his system of absolute idealism. Deleuze’s claim is that such a model of the progress of philosophy itself operates within one overarching assumption: the good will of thinking.

In this essay, I want to relate these questions of thinking and

¹ This essay presents an expanded analysis of material originally published in Henry Somers-Hall, *Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition: An Edinburgh Philosophical Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

² Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. xvii.

beginnings to the work of one of Deleuze's predecessors. Deleuze writes of Ludwig Feuerbach that 'Feuerbach is among those who have pursued farthest the problem of where to begin.'³ As we shall see, prefiguring Deleuze, Feuerbach accuses Hegel of operating within 'an image of Reason'. While Feuerbach is famous as a precursor of Marx, and for his critique of traditional accounts of religion, I want to here focus on an early piece by Feuerbach, his *Critique of Hegelian Philosophy*. Here Feuerbach sets out the limitations of traditional philosophical accounts, and provides the groundwork for his own later materialism. Deleuze discovered Feuerbach through his friend Althusser's translation of this work, published in 1960. While many of the intuitions behind Deleuze's critique of the image of thought can be found within a broader pantheon of thinkers, including Nietzsche, Bergson, and Foucault, the specific mechanics of Deleuze's criticism bear a striking resemblance to the formulation of the critique of philosophy in Feuerbach's earlier thought. I want to explore this connection, first by looking at the dialectical interrelation of two thinkers, Descartes and Hegel, to get a sense for how criticism in philosophy typically operates. I then want to move on to look at Feuerbach's critique of Hegel and philosophy more generally, drawing out several aspects that will be taken up by Deleuze himself. I will then look at some of the ways in which Deleuze goes beyond Feuerbach by recognising some of the limitations that persist in Feuerbach's own analysis. I will conclude by showing how Deleuze's desire to think the two common acceptations of aesthetics together (the artistic and the sensible) bring Feuerbach into relation with an unexpected figure: the playwright and poet, Antonin Artaud.

DESCARTES' CRITIQUE OF ARISTOTLE

In this first section, I want to look at the question of how one begins philosophising. I want to take up Descartes' own characterisation of the problem of beginnings. As Hegel notes, Descartes' revolution in philosophy originates in his development of a 'new and absolute beginning' for philosophy: 'thinking as such'.⁴ Both Hegel and Deleuze also note that the central concern of Descartes' *Meditations* is to find some way to avoid making unwarranted presuppositions about the world, since

³ Ibid. p. 319.

⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825–1826*, vol. III, ed. Robert F. Brown, trans. R. F. Brown and J. M. Stewart (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), p. 137.

these could lead us into error. Deleuze himself introduces the question of where to begin in terms of the approaches of Epistemon and Eudoxus,⁵ two characters representing the key differences between the Aristotelian and Cartesian approaches to philosophising. In doing so, Deleuze is alluding to a dialogue written by Descartes, entitled *The Search for Truth by means of the Natural Light*. *The Search for Truth* presents a dialogue between Eudoxus, who represents Descartes, and a scholastic named Epistemon. Descartes presents the situation as follows:

Let us imagine that Eudoxus, a man of moderate intellect but possessing a judgement which is not corrupted by any false beliefs and a reason which retains all the purity of its nature, is visited in his country home by two friends whose minds are among the most outstanding and inquiring of our time. One of them, Polyander ['everyman'], has never studied at all, while the other, Epistemon, has a detailed knowledge of everything that can be learned in the schools.⁶

Epistemon, the scholastic, declares that 'desire for knowledge . . . is an illness that cannot be cured'.⁷ In making this assertion, Epistemon is putting forward the implicit belief that philosophical inquiry involves an investigation of the world, and hence requires us to make a series of assumptions about the nature of things. As he notes, 'there are so many things to be known which seem to us to be possible and which are not only good and pleasant but also very necessary for the conduct of our actions'.⁸ The implications of this statement are that philosophical enquiry is not something purely internal to reason, as it involves some kind of investigation of the external world. It is also the case that it is not inherently systematic. That is, different domains of knowledge may not have any connections in terms of the truths to be discovered, or the methods of enquiry to be employed. In putting forward this model of philosophy, Descartes is alluding to the approach of a thinker such as Aristotle, who develops an essentially empirical approach to philosophy. Eudoxus instead declares that '[his] mind, having at its disposal all the truths it comes across, does not dream there are others to discover'.⁹ Eudoxus' statement carries with it the implication that for a

⁵ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 130.

⁶ René Descartes, 'The Search for Truth', in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. II, trans. Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch, ed. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 401.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 402.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

well-ordered mode of thinking, there is no difference between thinking, and thinking what is true. That is, reason is able to conduct a philosophical inquiry simply by using its own internal resources. This has two further implications. First, that the inferences made by reason, when it is operating correctly, are certain, and second that the meaning of terms which reason uses to think through problems is transparent to reason without further need for investigation.

The difference between these two methods can be seen in that for Epistemon, the role of reason is to act as a corrective to the beliefs given to us by the senses and the imagination. It therefore operates on pre-existing beliefs. For Eudoxus, on the contrary, 'as soon as a man reaches what we call the age of discretion, he should resolve once and for all to remove from his imagination all traces of the imperfect ideas which have been engraved there up till that time'.¹⁰ In order to demonstrate this method, Descartes has Eudoxus propose that Polyander attempt the method of doubt. By doubting everything given by the senses and the imagination, we realise that the only thing that cannot be doubted is one's own existence as a doubting thing. Thus, the self as a thinking substance becomes the foundation for philosophical enquiry. Here, we have arrived at the most famous result of Cartesian philosophy – Descartes' *cogito* argument. As Descartes notes in the *Search for Truth*, however, as well as the existence of the self, we also have a question to answer about what we mean by the *cogito*. The key question is how we might characterise this doubting thing – what kind of being is it? For the Aristotelian, the nature of man is defined by his species, in much the same way that the nature of any other natural kind might be. Man belongs to the genus, animal, and is distinguished from other animals by his rationality. Thus, for Aristotle, the nature of man is ultimately reliant on a series of categories that we discover through empirical enquiry. Eudoxus here explicitly criticises such an approach on the grounds that it relies on terms that are not given by reason alone, and hence are not transparent to it:

First, what is an *animal*? Second, what is *rational*? If, in order to explain what an animal is, he were to reply that it is a 'living and sentient being', that a living being is an 'animate body', and that a body is a 'corporeal substance', you see immediately that these questions would be pure verbiage, which would elucidate nothing and leave us in our original state of ignorance.¹¹

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 406.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 410.

A term such as 'corporeal substance' does not tell us anything more about the world than a term such as 'body', because if we cannot conceive of the terms corporeal and substance clearly, then conjoining them will not help us to conceive of the term 'body' clearly. So how do we determine the meaning of the 'I' of the *cogito*? Once Polyander has concluded his exercise in Cartesian doubt, he realises that 'of all the attributes I once claimed as my own there is only one left worth examining, and that is thought'.¹² That is, the I is determined according to an attribute that is clearly conceived by reason itself. What allows us to determine the essence of man, therefore, is a property that is transparent to thinking itself, and therefore readily comprehensible by any thinking being.

We can now see how Descartes attempts to solve the problem of philosophical beginnings. Descartes rejects the scholastic approach to philosophy because it presupposes a whole nexus of terms which are not given by reason, and which cannot be determined through their systematic relations to one another. To determine what a man is in the Aristotelian manner, not only do we have to rely on determinations which are given to us by the senses, but as we proceed in analysing the term, 'man', our enquiry brings in more unknown terms, rather than reducing the number. Descartes therefore rejects the approach of Epistemon in favour of that of Eudoxus. We can already state here a number of the key claims which Descartes makes about the true method of philosophy. First, it accords a 'natural light' to reason whereby it is the arbiter of truth and falsity. Second, as a consequence of this, it operates internally to reason, excluding the effects of the other faculties on it, as it takes these to be capable of misleading reason. Third, it does not presuppose anything, apart from reason itself. We can also note that Descartes makes Polyander, the 'everyman' conduct the method of doubt, suggesting, as Deleuze notes, that Descartes believes that 'good sense is of all things in the world the most evenly distributed'.¹³ A corollary of this is that Descartes' aim is not to teach metaphysics, but rather to provide an example which, when followed by others, given the universality of reason and the certainty of the deduction, will lead each individual to come to the same conclusion by their own active enquiry ('My present aim, then, is not to teach the method which everyone must

¹² Ibid. p. 415.

¹³ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 131 and René Descartes, 'Discourse on Method and Essays', in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Stoothoff, ed. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), opening line.

follow in order to direct his own reason correctly, but only to reveal how I have tried to direct my own.'¹⁴). By following a deductive method, Descartes therefore believes he has avoided the difficulty of the kinds of presuppositions at play in Aristotle's method.

HEGEL'S CRITIQUE OF DESCARTES

In presenting his own reading of Descartes, Hegel's account clearly frames the question of Descartes' method in terms that see him as a predecessor of Hegel's own thought. What is central to Descartes' project is 'his requirement . . . that thinking should proceed from itself and that therefore no presupposition may be made, since every presupposition is something found already there that thinking has not posited, something other than thinking'.¹⁵ In this respect, Descartes prefigures Hegel's assertion, for instance, that 'science should be preceded by universal doubt, i.e., by total presuppositionlessness'.¹⁶ Nonetheless, Hegel argues that Descartes' foundation of the Cartesian *cogito* is illegitimate for this purpose. The reason is that while Polyander clearly is a subject who is capable of thinking, Descartes illegitimately equivocates between a common sense notion of thinking, and a philosophical conception of thinking. Thinking is in fact always related to a world, and run through with a multiplicity of differences and contingencies. What Descartes in fact requires, however, is what he takes to be the pure substance of thinking that lies behind this contingent surface structure. As such, Hegel reiterates something like Kant's claim that Descartes' *cogito* rests on a paralogism:

But inasmuch as this pure ego must be essential, pure knowing, and pure knowing is not immediately present in the individual consciousness but only as posited through the absolute act of the ego in raising itself to that standpoint, we lose the very advantage which is supposed to come from this beginning of philosophy, namely that it is something thoroughly familiar, something everyone finds in himself which can form the starting point for further reflection; that pure ego, on the contrary, in its abstract, essential nature, is something unknown to the ordinary consciousness, something it does not find therein. Instead, such a beginning brings with it the disadvantage of the illusion that whereas the thing under discussion is supposed to

¹⁴ Descartes, 'Discourse on Method and Essays', p. 112.

¹⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. III, pp. 138–9.

¹⁶ G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic, with the Zusätze*, trans. Theodore F. Geraets, Wallis Arthur Suchting and Henry Sifton Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), §78.

be something familiar, the ego of empirical self-consciousness, it is in fact something far removed from it.¹⁷

As Deleuze notes, therefore, Hegel claims that there is still an illegitimate presupposition in Descartes' work: one could hold to the claim that one should begin with consciousness, but still deny the 'abstract unity'¹⁸ of the *cogito*. What is Hegel's own solution to this difficulty?

Descartes' assumption can be seen as the claim that implicit in our concrete, empirical conception of thinking is the pure, philosophical category of thinking. Hegel's claim is that we cannot begin by assuming the primacy of a philosophical perspective, as to do so is to do violence to our everyday relationship to the world: 'When natural consciousness entrusts itself straightaway to Science, it makes an attempt, induced by it knows not what, to walk on its head too.'¹⁹ Similarly, it cannot declare that consciousness will find within itself intimations of a philosophical view, as such an approach still privileges the assumption of philosophical truth over natural consciousness. It is only a legitimate approach if we have already asserted the superiority of what is intimated over what is already present. Instead, Hegel provides what he calls a 'ladder'²⁰ whereby natural consciousness can develop into a properly philosophical perspective on the world. That is, rather than assuming that notions such as thinking are transparent to consciousness, Hegel attempts to show how our natural consciousness develops its categories of thought through a process of immanent dialectic. It is through the recognition of inherent problems within consciousness' view of the world that we gradually develop an appropriate relationship to the world, by the rejection of ways of relating to the world that are inadequate in favour of those that do not have the same limitations. For Hegel therefore, the process of the development of consciousness to a properly philosophical point of view does not involve the privileging of a philosophical mode of thinking, but rather a process whereby the problems inherent within consciousness lead it to develop a series of more and more adequate interpretations of the world. As such, philosophy need begin neither with the kind of empiricism Descartes criticises Aristotle for, nor with the presupposition of an understanding of philosophical cognition that Descartes takes

¹⁷ G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999), §118.

¹⁸ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. III, p. 142.

¹⁹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. W. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), §26.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

for granted. Rather, it can begin with a simple model of consciousness that contains no assumptions with which anyone would argue. This is the model of sense-certainty, which holds that consciousness at the least knows *that* it is confronted by something, even if it does not consider the nature of what it relates to. As such, we begin with the least determinate formulation of natural consciousness we can come up with. Hegel's claim will therefore be that such a simple mode of consciousness in the end turns out to be incoherent according to its own criteria of knowledge, and through a series of more adequate forms that each in turn show themselves to be problematic, we eventually develop a set of categories of thought adequate to philosophical enquiry immanently.

Despite the differences between Hegel and Descartes, we can see a number of commonalities in their approaches. Both attempt to develop a philosophical position that does not make any presuppositions. In both cases, there is also the implicit assumption that the justification of a philosophical position involves developing an account which can be held with certainty by natural consciousness. As Deleuze puts it, 'postulates in philosophy are not propositions the acceptance of which the philosopher demands; but, on the contrary, propositional themes which remain implicit and are understood in a pre-philosophical manner. In this sense, conceptual philosophical thought has as its implicit presupposition a pre-philosophical or natural Image of thought, borrowed from the pure element of common sense.'²¹ While there is an attempt to eliminate *philosophical* assumptions, therefore, the common sense structure of thinking itself is something that isn't questioned, at least at the outset. Within the thought of Descartes and Hegel, therefore, there are subjective presuppositions about the nature of reason. These presuppositions are also present in Aristotle's thought. Even there, where we begin with objective presuppositions, we still require the assumption of a shared structure of thought according to which we can analyse and relate these different *endoxa* to one another:

As in other cases, we must set out the appearances and run through all the puzzles regarding them. In this way we must prove the credible opinions about these sorts of experiences – ideally, all the credible opinions, but if not all, then most of them, those which are the most important. For if the objections are answered and the credible opinions remain, we shall have an adequate proof.²²

²¹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 131.

²² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd edn, ed. and trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), 1145b2–7.

In the next section, I want to take up Feuerbach's analysis of these subjective presuppositions in order to shed some light on Deleuze's own account of beginnings.

FEUERBACH'S CRITIQUE OF HEGEL

Deleuze's criticism of Descartes and Hegel isn't of the particular assumptions that they make, but rather of 'the form of representation or recognition in general'.²³ It is at this point in his analysis that Deleuze turns to Feuerbach. Ludwig Feuerbach was, leaving aside Marx and Engels, the most influential member of the philosophical movement called the young Hegelians, which emerged in the years following Hegel's death. This movement sought to develop the implications of Hegel's philosophy, and Feuerbach himself began his philosophical career as a thoroughgoing supporter of Hegel. The essay that Deleuze refers to, *Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy* (1839), represents a radical break on Feuerbach's part from Hegel. In this work, Feuerbach sets out a series of criticisms of Hegel's philosophy, revolving around the claims that the work begins with an abstraction from the singularity of real experience, and that it focuses on only those aspects of the subject that are shared by other subjects belonging to the same species. Feuerbach presents three interrelated criticisms of Hegel in this essay, all of which are taken up by Deleuze, and applied to the use of reason in philosophy as a whole. These are that presuppositionlessness usually simply means that the presuppositions of prior philosophies have been removed, that rather than presenting a philosophy of reason, we only attain an image of reason, and that reason emerges through an abstraction from its conditions. I want to go through what Feuerbach's criticisms are, and how they tie into Deleuze's notion of an image of thought, before turning to Deleuze's criticisms of Feuerbach's view.

To understand Feuerbach's criticism of traditional philosophy, we need to look at what Feuerbach thinks philosophy is attempting to do. We can begin by noting that thinking is an activity: 'Plato is meaningless and non-existent for someone who lacks understanding; he is a blank sheet for one who cannot link ideas that correspond with his words.'²⁴ Feuerbach's point is that a philosophical argument is not of value in

²³ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 131.

²⁴ Ludwig Feuerbach, 'Towards a Critique of Hegelian Philosophy', in Lawrence S. Stepelevich (ed.), *The Young Hegelians: An Anthology* (Amherst, NY: Humanities Press, 1997), p. 102.

itself, but only insofar as it is taken up by the understanding of the person to whom it is addressed. That is why in Descartes' *Search for Truth*, Eudoxus does not present an argument for the *cogito*, but rather leads Polyander to discover the conclusion through his own reasoning. Similarly, in the *Discourse on the Method*, Descartes claims that his aim is not 'to teach the method which everyone must follow in order to direct his reason correctly, but only to reveal how I have tried to direct my own'.²⁵ Implicit in this is the view that philosophy is not about demonstration, but rather about communication, with the aim to simply show that the ideas presented are in keeping with my own thought. Feuerbach describes the situation as follows:

For this very reason, what the person demonstrating communicates is not the *subject matter itself*, but only the medium; for he does not instil his thoughts into me like drops of medicine, nor does he preach to deaf fishes like Saint Francis; rather, he addresses himself to *thinking* beings. The main thing – the understanding of the thing involved – he does not give me; he *gives* nothing at all – otherwise the philosopher could really produce philosophers, something which so far no one has succeeded in achieving. Rather he presupposes the faculty of understanding; he shows me – i.e. to the other person as such – my understanding only in a mirror.²⁶

If a philosophical text is primarily a means of communication, rather than a demonstration in its own right, then the question arises, under what conditions is thought able to be communicated?

In order to make my thinking comprehensible to another, the first point is that I need to 'strip my thought of the form of "mine-ness" so that the other person may recognise it as his own'.²⁷ In effect, in putting thinking into language, we eliminate the thinker's 'individual separate-ness', and present a form of thinking which is 'nothing other than the *realization of the species*'.²⁸ That is, philosophical thought abstracts from the particularity of my thinking, and operates by presupposing that which is universal to all thinkers. As Deleuze puts it, '*Everybody knows, no one can deny*, is the form of representation and the discourse of the representative'.²⁹ The second point is that in order to present our thoughts, they must be reformulated in a form that is capable of presentation:

²⁵ Descartes, 'Discourse on Method and Essays', p. 112.

²⁶ Feuerbach, 'Towards a Critique of Hegelian Philosophy', p. 105.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 104.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 103.

²⁹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 130.

And yet, systematic thought is by no means the same as *thought as such*, or *essential* thought; it is only *self-presenting* thought. To the extent that I present my thoughts, I place them in time; an insight that contains all its successive elements within a simultaneity within my mind now becomes a sequence.³⁰

As it stands, Feuerbach has simply noted that there is a fundamental distinction between thought and the presentation of thought. This in itself is not a criticism of prior philosophy, but the difficulties emerge when philosophers succumb to a form of paralogism whereby they mistake the successive, abstract presentation of thinking for thinking itself. For Kant, the term paralogism applies to Descartes' mistaken inference that we can move from the consciousness of thinking to the existence of a thinking substance. Descartes arrives at the existence of a thinking substance by not recognising the fact that a category such as substance can only be applied to something that is given to me in intuition, that is, in time. In applying the category of substance to a subject as it is in itself (the *cogito*), Descartes applies the category of substance to a domain in which its application is illegitimate, and, therefore, falls into error. The same error occurs in our formulation of philosophical thought. The mistake that Hegel and Descartes make, according to Feuerbach, is failing to recognise that in order for thought to be presented, it needs to be presented in a systematic manner (and under the form of time), and in terms of determinate, shared, concepts. In developing a systematic philosophy, therefore, we are, in effect, developing an account of this necessary structure of presentation and communication, rather than presenting thinking itself. To equate thinking with the systematic presentation of thought is therefore to fall into the same kind of paralogistic reasoning that renders Descartes' *cogito* illegitimate. While the inference is illegitimate, it is nonetheless quite natural, since the way in which we present thinking in a systematic manner is not arbitrary, since 'the presentation of philosophy must itself be philosophical'.³¹ There is thus a tendency to make 'form into essence, the being of thought for others into being itself, the *relative goal* into the final goal'.³² This is the reason why Deleuze writes that Hegel 'remains in the reflected element of "representation", within simple generality'.³³ Deleuze supplements this paralogism with an argument that there is a moral element to systems

³⁰ Feuerbach, 'Towards a Critique of Hegelian Philosophy', p. 101.

³¹ *Ibid.* p. 106.

³² *Ibid.* p. 107.

³³ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 10.

that mistake the presentation of thought for thought itself, in that to trust in the structure of thinking as communicative implies a fundamental accord between man and the world, and presupposes the belief that 'thought has a good nature and the thinker a good will'.³⁴

Feuerbach's claim that 'every system is only an expression or image of reason'³⁵ can be seen as a forerunner of Deleuze's own claim that representational thinking rests on an 'image of thought', and the aim of Chapter 3 of *Difference and Repetition* is to explore in more detail what this image consists in, and how it is possible to think outside of it. I now want to explore a number of implications of the image of thought before looking at how Deleuze differs from Feuerbach.

The first implication is that even projects such as those of Descartes and Hegel that attempt to remove all objective presuppositions still make a number of presuppositions in order to operate. As Deleuze notes, the same criticism that Hegel raised against Descartes, the equivocation of the empirical and abstract egos, can also be raised against Hegel himself: both begin with an abstraction.³⁶ While the notion of pure, indeterminate being that Hegel begins with in the *Science of Logic* is communicable, this is only because communication removes the 'mine-ness' of my relation to the world. In actual fact, 'sensible, concrete, empirical being'³⁷ is prior to the abstraction which Hegel takes as a beginning. As well as presupposing empirical reality, philosophy which operates according to the image of thought also presupposes the structure of presentation itself. That is, 'we presuppose the form of representation or recognition in general'.³⁸ As Feuerbach puts it, 'the artist presupposes a sense of beauty – he cannot bestow it upon a person – for in order that we take his words to be beautiful, in order that we accept and countenance them at all, he must presuppose in us a sense of art . . . [Similarly] in order that we recognise [the philosopher's] thoughts as true, in order that we understand them at all, he presupposes reason, as a common principle and measure in us as well as himself.'³⁹ The history of philosophy can from this perspective be seen, not as a progressive extension of our knowledge of the world, but rather as series of more and more accurate ways of systematically providing an image of the presentation of reason. In this respect, Feuerbach considers Hegel not to

³⁴ Ibid. p. 132.

³⁵ Feuerbach, 'Towards a Critique of Hegelian Philosophy', p. 106.

³⁶ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 129.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 131.

³⁹ Feuerbach, 'Towards a Critique of Hegelian Philosophy', p. 103.

have provided the final, presuppositionless, metaphysics, but rather the most accomplished image of reason:

The systematiser is an artist – the history of philosophical system is the picture gallery of reason. Hegel is the most accomplished philosophical artist, and his presentations, at least in part, *are unsurpassed models of scientific art sense*.⁴⁰

What this means is that Feuerbach's critique of prior philosophers isn't a criticism of particular philosophies, but of a whole tradition founded on a faulty conception of reason. Feuerbach sums up this claim as follows: 'Do we not thus come to those general questions that touch upon the truth and reality not only of Hegel's *Logic* but also of philosophy altogether?'⁴¹ This notion that there is 'a single Image in general which constitutes the subjective presupposition of philosophy as a whole'⁴² is one that is fundamental to the project of *Difference and Repetition*, which begins with the need to develop a new philosophical style or mode of presentation that escapes from the paralogism of the image of thought.

The second implication is that if philosophy simply maps out the image of thought in systematic terms, then it will be incapable of novelty. As Feuerbach puts it, 'the *creation* of concepts on the basis of a particular kind of philosophy is not a real but only a formal creation; it is not creation out of nothing, but only the development, as it were, of a spiritual matter lying within me'.⁴³ As we are just dealing with the presentation of what was already implicated in the structure of pre-philosophical thinking, then we have a philosophical thought that "rediscovers" the State, rediscovers "the Church"⁴⁴ during its development.

The third implication is that philosophy must begin with something that is outside of thought. In *The Search for Truth*, Descartes tries to show that if one thinks through the structure of everyday reason, then one arrives at philosophy. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* likewise tries to show that speculative philosophy develops immanently from a common sense worldview. 'Anyone who can countenance being at the beginning of the *Logic* will also countenance the Idea; if this being has been accepted and proved by someone, then he must also accept the

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 106.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 109.

⁴² Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 132.

⁴³ Feuerbach, 'Towards a Critique of Hegelian Philosophy', p. 102.

⁴⁴ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 136.

Idea as proved.⁴⁵ In contrast, if systematic philosophy is simply an expression of pre-philosophical reason, Deleuze argues that philosophy must ‘find its difference or its true beginning, not in an agreement with a *pre-philosophical* Image but in a rigorous struggle against this Image, which it would denounce as *non-philosophical*’.⁴⁶ Here, Deleuze is referring directly to Feuerbach’s rejection of reason as a foundation for philosophy, and arguing for the importance of an outside to reason. For Descartes, while it appears that philosophy relates to the world outside of the subject, we instead find, in his famous wax example, for instance, that perception is always already a form of reasoning, where we use reason to infer the existence of unified substances behind the diverse properties of the things we find around us. Similarly, Feuerbach complains of Hegel that ‘the whole first chapter of the *Phenomenology* is . . . nothing but a verbal game in which thought is already certain of itself as truth plays with natural consciousness’.⁴⁷ In contrast to the Cartesian account, philosophy must begin with a radical encounter with something outside of it:

Demonstrating would be senseless if it were not also *communicating*. However, communication of thoughts is not material or *real* communication. For example, a push, a sound that shocks my ears, or light is real communication. I am only passively receptive to that which is material; but I become aware of that which is mental only through myself, only through self-activity.⁴⁸

As we shall see, a similar claim can also be made for Deleuze’s philosophy, which calls for a ‘shock to thought’ in order to open it to an outside:

Do not count upon thought to ensure the relative necessity of what it thinks. Rather, count upon the contingency of an encounter with that which forces thought to raise up and educate the absolute necessity of an act of thought or a passion to think. The conditions of a true critique and a true creation are the same: the destruction of an image of thought which presupposes itself and the genesis of the act of thinking in thought itself.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Feuerbach, ‘Towards a Critique of Hegelian Philosophy’, p. 109.

⁴⁶ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 132.

⁴⁷ Feuerbach, ‘Towards a Critique of Hegelian Philosophy’, pp. 114–15.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 105.

⁴⁹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 139.

DELEUZE'S CRITIQUE OF FEUERBACH

The claim that philosophy operates according to a paralognism, or a 'transcendental illusion'⁵⁰ is therefore one that is shared by both Deleuze and Feuerbach. In both cases, it is the form of presentation of thinking that is mistaken for thinking itself, and in both cases, this mistake covers over the possibility of the encounter which would form the basis for a proper philosophical approach to the world. As such, Feuerbach forms one of the most important hidden reference points in deciphering Deleuze's project. Nonetheless, while Feuerbach makes explicit some of the key moves in Deleuze's rejection of classical philosophy, Deleuze is still not a Feuerbachian. What, therefore, is the difference between Deleuze and Feuerbach?

The key moment of difference between Deleuze and Feuerbach emerges in their account of the encounter that provides the opening onto truly philosophical thought. For Feuerbach, true thinking begins through an encounter with sensuous intuition, which is prior to the abstractions that generate the 'mediating activity of thought for others'.⁵¹ As such, Feuerbach reinstates something like the Kantian distinction between intuition and understanding. It is for this reason that when he criticises Hegel, for instance, he does so for failing to recognise that the incommensurability of thought and the senses merely shows that the sensible cannot be captured by reason, rather than that it is invalid. In privileging the rational categories over the inherent structure of intuition, and using those categories as a criterion to judge sense experience as empty, Feuerbach claims that 'the *Phenomenology* is nothing but a phenomenological Logic'.⁵² The encounter, for Feuerbach, therefore means returning to the sensuous nature of experience prior to its abstraction into the categories of systematic reason. It is here that we find a difficulty in Feuerbach's account that mirrors the one found in Kant's own philosophy. While the recognition of the difference between intuition and understanding is for Deleuze a revolutionary moment in the history of philosophy, it relies on an illegitimate characterisation of the opposition between activity and passivity, one that inadvertently carries over into Feuerbach's thought. For Kant, the faculty of the understanding was responsible for active synthesis, and therefore organised the world according to its own categories. The active, synthetic

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 265.

⁵¹ Feuerbach, 'Towards a Critique of Hegelian Philosophy', p. 102.

⁵² Ibid. p. 115.

nature of the understanding meant that it rediscovered on an empirical level what it had previously put into the world on a transcendental level. In this sense, we can note that for Kant too, the understanding is incapable of the discovery of genuine novelty. Sensibility provided the material that was organised by the understanding.

For Deleuze, Kant's error was to assume that all synthesis was active synthesis, and hence that all synthesis operated on an inert sensibility. We can see that a similar assumption is being made here by Feuerbach. In rejecting the active element of reason as unable to provide a genuinely novel beginning to philosophy, he is forced to resort to a purely passive notion of sensibility for his alternative beginning. Therefore, we move from reason to that which is materially and passively given to us. As Deleuze puts it, 'he supposes that this exigency of the true beginning is sufficiently met by beginning with empirical, perceptible and concrete being'.⁵³

Once we have recognised the possibility of a passive synthesis, however, we open the possibility that what is given in sensibility is not the sensible itself, but that which gives rise to the sensible. It is this transcendental which is prior to the sensible that will be the site of an encounter for Deleuze. It is in order to explore this realm of the genesis of the sensible that Deleuze calls for the reunification of the two meanings of aesthetics:

Everything changes once we determine the conditions of real experience, which are not larger than the conditioned and which differ in kind from the categories: the two senses of the aesthetic become one, to the point where the being of the sensible reveals itself in the work of art, while at the same time the work of art appears as experimentation.⁵⁴

I want to conclude this chapter by introducing a paradigm case of the encounter with the aesthetic that opens the way to thinking, namely, Deleuze's analysis of Artaud.

CONCLUSION: ARTAUD AND THE ENCOUNTER

As we saw when we looked at the notion of the encounter, Feuerbach dismisses reason as a true medium of encounter, since with reason, what is taken up is that which is already present in the understanding of the subject. He instead favoured a more physical form of encounter ('a push,

⁵³ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 319.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 68.

a sound that shocks my ears, or light'), where an object directly impacts on a subject. In the theatre of the poet, playwright and theorist, Antonin Artaud, we find an attempt to develop such a model of the encounter through the use of disturbing lighting, sound and music, and by the elimination of a clear boundary between the audience and the stage. He emphasises the importance of this move from a theatre of the mind to a theatre of the nervous system in his manifesto for a theatre of cruelty:

Without an element of cruelty at the foundation of every spectacle, the theatre is not possible. In the state of degeneracy, in which we live, it is through the skin that metaphysics will be made to re-enter our minds.⁵⁵

To see what the encounter might consist in for Deleuze, we can turn to the analysis he provides of the correspondence between Jacques Rivière, editor of the avant-garde literary journal *Nouvelle Revue Française*, and Artaud. The correspondence concerned a collection of poems that Artaud submitted for publication in the journal. While the poems themselves were rejected, the subsequent correspondence with Artaud over the process of writing itself was published. In it, we find Rivière misunderstanding the aim of Artaud's poetry. Rivière rejects the poems because Artaud has 'not yet achieved a sufficiently unified impression', and suggests that 'with a little patience, even if this simply means cutting out some of the divergent imagery or traits, you will be able to write perfectly coherent, harmonious poems'.⁵⁶ For Artaud, however, these difficulties in presenting a harmonious image of thought are not contingent failures to properly organise his thought that could be overcome with patience, but rather an attempt to explore the emergence of thinking itself. That is, Artaud's project is precisely to reject the kind of unity that for Rivière would characterise the successful production of a work of art.

In order to escape from the image of thought, therefore, Deleuze follows Artaud in proposing an effort to prevent the presentation of thinking from overcoming the real nature of thought that runs beneath its expression. For Deleuze, this involves a stuttering, or in his own words, a deterritorialisation of language that prevents the kind of reliance on ready-made categories of thought that inhibits true philosophical engagement. In this respect, it is the poetry of Artaud, rather than the

⁵⁵ Antonin Artaud, 'The Theatre of Cruelty: First Manifesto (1932)', in Susan Sontag (ed.), *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976), p. 251.

⁵⁶ Antonin Artaud, 'Correspondence with Jacques Rivière', in Victor Corti (ed.), *Collected Works of Antonin Artaud*, vol. 1 (London: John Calder, 1968), p. 29.

sensible itself, that provides the archetype of the encounter. As Artaud writes:

This diffusion in my poems, these defective forms, this constant falling off of my ideas, must not be set down to lack of practice or control of the instrument I was manipulating, of intellectual development. Rather to a focal collapse of my soul, a kind of essential and fugitive erosion in thought, to a transitory non-possession of physical gain to my development, to the abnormal separation of elements of thought (the impulse to think at every stratifying endpoint of thought, by way of every condition, through all the branching in thought and form).⁵⁷

Rather than straightforwardly rejecting language, as Feuerbach does, in favour of intuition as the starting point for philosophy, Artaud instead attempts to subvert the traditional structures of thinking. Deleuze writes that his early letters show ‘an awareness that his case brings him into contact with a generalised thought process which can no longer be covered by the reassuring dogmatic image but which, on the contrary, amounts to the complete destruction of that image’.⁵⁸ As such, in Artaud, we don’t find the kind of rejection of ‘mineness’ that Feuerbach took to be a prerequisite for the image of thought. Rather, Artaud’s writing maintains the singularity of his thinking, even while recognising that this singularity does not preclude it from relating to objective conditions, even if these conditions fall outside of our normal modes of representation.

In this sense, Artaud’s poetry is first, according to Deleuze at least, not the attempt to present the difficulties in thinking that are peculiar to Artaud, but the difficulties in genuinely thinking outside of representation for all thought. Artaud’s poetry is the model of a transcendental exercise of a faculty. It becomes transcendental because it operates at the limits of language. Artaud’s project mirrors Descartes’, but rather than seeking those ideas which cannot be doubted, the innate ideas that are the first principles of knowledge (and of the image of thought), Artaud is interested in the principles that give rise to the structure of thought itself. When Deleuze therefore claims that ‘Artaud opposes *genitality* to innateness in thought’,⁵⁹ the point he is making is that the image of thought rests on conditions that themselves are non-representational (the thinking in thought). Descartes’ principles are themselves a part of the image of thought, and are those features of the image of thought that

⁵⁷ Ibid. pp. 30–1.

⁵⁸ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 147.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

are necessary features of a representation of thought. What Artaud discovers is different in kind from the image of thought, and the apparent weaknesses in his poetry signify this difference in kind of thinking to the 'coherent, harmonious' nature of the image of thought itself.

The encounter is not, therefore, with the sensible itself, but rather with the conditions which give rise to the sensible. As we saw, the difficulty with the traditional image of thought was that it relied on a paralogism. Feuerbach's claim was that we needed to return to a moment of intuition outside of the image of thought in order to properly begin to philosophise. I want to conclude by returning to this point. In what sense is the aesthetics of Artaud related to the classical Kantian (and Feuerbachian) notion of aesthetics as the domain of the sensible? In a short piece entitled 'Man against Destiny', Artaud himself clarifies this relation. He says the following:

You all know that one cannot grasp thought. In order to think, we have images, we have words for these images, we have representations of objects. We separate consciousness into states of consciousness. But this is merely a way of speaking. All this has no real value except insofar as it enables us to think. In order to consider our consciousness we are obliged to divide it, otherwise the rational faculty which enables us to see our thoughts could never be used. But in reality, consciousness is a whole, what the philosopher Bergson calls *pure duration*. There is no stopping the motion of thought. That which we place before us so that the reason of the mind can consider it is in reality already past; and that which reason holds is merely a form, more or less empty of real thought.⁶⁰

Here we find Artaud recognising the structure of the necessary illusion in the image of thought, and the recognition that the aim of his aesthetics of theatre is to open us up to a moment of that other acceptance of aesthetics: time itself. This moment prior to the genesis of the image of thought is not the time of Feuerbach, however, with its already constituted diversity of things and properties. Rather, thinking moves upstream to a point prior to this, to Bergson's pure process of duration, before the moment of reflection that constitutes for us a world of objects.

⁶⁰ Antonin Artaud, 'Man Against Destiny', in Susan Sontag (ed.), *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976), pp. 357–8.