The question *what is philosophy?* can perhaps be posed only late in life, with the arrival of old age and the time for speaking concretely. In fact, the bibliography on the nature of philosophy is very limited. It is a question posed in a moment of quiet restlessness, at midnight, when there is no longer anything to ask. It was asked before; it was always being asked, but too indirectly or obliquely; the question was too artificial, too abstract. Instead of being seized by it, those who asked the question set it out and controlled it in passing. They were not sober enough. There was too much desire to do philosophy to wonder what it was, except as a stylistic exercise. That point of nonstyle where one can finally say, "What is it I have been doing all my life?" had not been reached. There are times when old age produces not eternal youth but a sovereign freedom, a pure necessity in which one enjoys a moment of grace between life and death, and in which all the parts of the machine come together to send into the future a feature that cuts across
all ages: Titian, Turner, Monet. In old age Turner acquired or won the right to take painting down a deserted path of no return that is indistinguishable from a final question. Vie de Racez could be said to mark both Chateaubriand’s old age and the start of modern literature. Cinema too sometimes offers us its gifts of the third age, as when Ivans, for example, blends his laughter with the witch’s laughter in the howling wind. Likewise in philosophy, Kant’s Critique of Judgment is an unrestrained work of old age, which his successors have still not caught up with; all the mind’s faculties overcome their limits, the very limits that Kant had so carefully laid down in the works of his prime.

We cannot claim such a status. Simply, the time has come for us to ask what philosophy is. We had never stopped asking this question previously, and we already had the answer, which has not changed: philosophy is the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts. But the answer not only had to take note of the question, it had to determine its moment, its occasion and circumstances, its landscapes and personae, its conditions and unknowns. It had to be possible to ask the question “between friends,” as a secret or a confidence, or as a challenge when confronting the enemy, and at the same time to reach that twilight hour when one distrusts even the friend. It is then that you say, “That’s what it was, but I don’t know if I really said it, or if I was convincing enough.” And you realize that having said it or been convincing hardly matters because, in any case, that is what it is now.

We will see that concepts need conceptual personae [personnages conceptuels] that play a part in their definition. Friend is one such persona that is even said to reveal the Greek origin of philosophy:

other civilizations had sages, but the Greeks introduce these “friends” who are not just more modest sages. The Greeks might seem to have confirmed the death of the sage and to have replaced him with philosophers—the friends of wisdom, those who seek wisdom but do not formally possess it. But the difference between the sage and the philosopher would not be merely one of degree, as on a scale: the old oriental sage thinks, perhaps, in Figures, whereas the philosopher invents and thinks the Concept. Wisdom has changed a great deal. It is even more difficult to know what friend signifies, even and especially among the Greeks. Does it designate a type of competent intimacy, a sort of material taste and potentiality, like that of the joiner with wood—is the potential of wood latent in the good joiner; is he the friend of the wood? The question is important because the friend who appears in philosophy no longer stands for an extrinsic persona, an example or empirical circumstance, but rather for a presence that is intrinsic to thought, a condition of possibility of thought itself, a living category, a transcendental lived reality [en vécu transcendantal]. With the creation of philosophy, the Greeks violently force the friend into a relationship that is no longer a relationship with an other but one with an Entity, an Objectality [Objectité], an Essence—Plato’s friend, but even more the friend of wisdom, of truth or the concept, like Philaletes and Theophilus. The philosopher is expert in concepts and in the lack of them. He knows which of them are not viable, which are arbitrary or inconsistent, which ones do not hold up for an instant. On the other hand, he also knows which are well formed and attest to a creation, however disturbing or dangerous it may be.

What does friend mean when it becomes a conceptual persona, or
a condition for the exercise of thought? Or rather, are we not talking of the lover? Does not the friend reintroduce into thought a vital relationship with the Other that was supposed to have been excluded from pure thought? Or again, is it not a matter of someone other than the friend or lover? For if the philosopher is the friend or lover of wisdom, is it not because he lays claim to wisdom, striving for it potentially rather than actually possessing it? Is the friend also the claimant then, and is that of which he claims to be the friend the Thing to which he lays claim but not the third party who, on the contrary, becomes a rival? Friendship would then involve competitive distrust of the rival as much as amorous striving toward the object of desire. The basic point about friendship is that the two friends are like claimant and rival (but who could tell them apart?). It is in this first aspect that philosophy seems to be something Greek and coincides with the contribution of cities: the formation of societies of friends or equals but also the promotion of relationships of rivalry between and within them, the contest between claimants in every sphere, in love, the games, tribunals, the jurisdictions, politics, and even in thought, which finds its condition not only in the friend but in the claimant and the rival (the dialectic Plato defined as *amphikthesis*). It is the rivalry of free men, a generalized athleticism: the agon. Friendship must reconcile the integrity of the essence and the rivalry of claimants. Is this not too great a task?

Friend, lover, claimant and rival are transcendental determinations that do not for that reason lose their intense and animated existence, in one persona or in several. When again today Maurice Blanchot, one of the rare thinkers to consider the meaning of the word *friend* in philosophy, takes up this question internal to the conditions of thought as such, does he not once more introduce new conceptual personae into the heart of the purest Thought? But in this case the personae are hardly Greek, arriving from elsewhere as if they had gone through a catastrophe that draws them toward new living relationships raised to the level of a priori characteristics—a turning away, a certain tiredness, a certain distress between friends that converts friendship itself to thought of the concept as distrust and infinite patience. The list of conceptual personae is never closed and for that reason plays an important role in the evolution or transformations of philosophy. The diversity of conceptual personae must be understood without being reduced to the already complex unity of the Greek philosopher.

The philosopher is the concept's friend; he is potentiality of the concept. That is, philosophy is not a simple art of forming, inventing, or fabricating concepts, because concepts are not necessarily forms, discoveries, or products. More rigorously, philosophy is the discipline that involves *creating* concepts. Does this mean that the friend is friend of his own creations? Or is the actuality of the concept due to the potential of the friend, in the unity of creator and his double? The object of philosophy is to create concepts that are always new. Because the concept must be created, it refers back to the philosopher as the one who has it potentially, or who has its power and competence. It is no objection to say that creation is the prerogative of the sensory and the arts, since art brings spiritual entities into existence while philosophical concepts are also "sensible." In fact, sciences, arts, and philosophies are all equally creative, although only philosophy creates concepts in the strict sense. Concepts are not waiting for us ready-made, like heavenly bodies. There is no heaven for concepts. They must be invented, fabricated, or rather created and would be nothing without their creator's signature. Nietzsche laid down the task of philosophy when he wrote, "[Philosophers] must no longer accept concepts as a gift, nor merely purify and polish them, but first make and create them, present them and make them convincing. Hitherto one has generally trusted one's concepts as if they were a wonderful dowry from some sort of wonderland," but trust must be
Introduction: The Question Then

replaced by distrust, and philosophers must distrust most these concepts they did not create themselves (Plato was fully aware of this, even though he taught the opposite). Plato said that Ideas must be contemplated, but first of all he had to create the concept of Idea. What would be the value of a philosopher of whom one could say, “He has created no concepts; he has not created his own concepts”?

We can at least see what philosophy is not: it is not contemplation, reflection, or communication. This is the case even though it may sometimes believe it is one or other of these, as a result of the capacity of every discipline to produce its own illusions and to hide behind its own peculiar smokescreen. It is not contemplation, for contemplations are things themselves as seen in the creation of their specific concepts. It is not reflection, because no one needs philosophy to reflect on anything. It is thought that philosophy is being given a great deal by being turned into the art of reflection, but actually it loses everything. Mathematicians, as mathematicians, have never waited for philosophers before reflecting on mathematics, nor artists before reflecting on painting or music. So long as their reflection belongs to their respective creation, it is a bad joke to say that this makes them philosophers. Nor does philosophy find any final refuge in communication, which only works under the sway of opinions in order to create “consensus” and not concepts. The idea of a Western democratic conversation between friends has never produced a single concept. The idea comes, perhaps, from the Greeks, but they distrusted it so much, and subjected it to such harsh treatment, that the concept was more like the ironical soliloquy bird that surveyed [sursolair] the battlefield of destroyed rival opinions (the drunken guests at the banquet). Philosophy does not contemplate, reflect, or communicate, although it must create concepts for these actions or passions. Contemplation, reflection and communication are not disciplines but machines for constituting Universals in every discipline. The Universals of contemplation, and then of reflection, are like two illusions through which philosophy has already passed in its dream of

dominating the other disciplines (objective idealism and subjective idealism). Moreover, it does no credit to philosophy for it to present itself as a new Athens by falling back on Universals of communication that would provide rules for an imaginary mastery of the markets and the media (intersubjective idealism). Every creation is singular, and the concept as a specifically philosophical creation is always a singularity. The first principle of philosophy is that Universals explain nothing but must themselves be explained.

To know oneself, to learn to think, to act as if nothing were self-evident—wondering, “wondering that there is being”—these, and many other determinations of philosophy create interesting attitudes, however tiresome they may be in the long run, but even from a pedagogical point of view they do not constitute a well-defined occupation or precise activity. On the other hand, the following definition of philosophy can be taken as being decisive: knowledge through pure concepts. But there is no reason to oppose knowledge through concepts and the construction of concepts within possible experience on the one hand and through intuition on the other. For, according to the Nietzschean verdict, you will know nothing through concepts unless you have first created them—that is, constructed them in an intuition specific to them: a field, a plane, and a ground that must not be confused with them but that shelters their seeds and the personae who cultivate them. Constructivism requires every creation to be a construction on a plane that gives it an autonomous existence. To create concepts is, at the very least, to make something. This alters the question of philosophy’s use or usefulness, or even of its harmfulness (to whom is it harmful?).

Many problems hurry before the hallucinating eyes of an old man who sees all sorts of philosophical concepts and conceptual personae confronting one another. First, concepts are and remain signed: Aristotle’s substance, Descartes’s cogito, Leibniz’s monad, Kant’s condition, Schelling’s power, Bergson’s duration [dureté]. But also, some concepts must be indicated by an extraordinary and sometimes even
barbarous or shocking word, whereas others make do with an ordinary, everyday word that is filled with harmonics so distant that it risks being imperceptible to a nonphilosophical ear. Some concepts call for archaisms, and others for neologisms, shot through with almost crazy etymological exercises: etymology is like a specifically philosophical athleticism. In each case there must be a strange necessity for these words and for their choice, like an element of style. The concept's baptism calls for a specifically philosophical taste that proceeds with violence or by insinuation and constitutes a philosophical language within language—not just a vocabulary but a syntax that attains the sublime or a great beauty. Although concepts are dated, signed, and baptized, they have their own way of not dying while remaining subject to constraints of renewal, replacement, and mutation that give philosophy a history as well as a turbulent geography, each moment and place of which is preserved (but in time) and that passes (but outside time). What unity remains for philosophies, it will be asked, if concepts constantly change? Is it the same for the sciences and arts that do not work with concepts? And what are their respective histories the histories of? If philosophy is this continuous creation of concepts, then obviously the question arises not only of what a concept is as philosophical Idea but also of the nature of the other creative Ideas that are not concepts and that are due to the arts and sciences, which have their own history and becoming and which have their own variable relationships with one another and with philosophy. The exclusive right of concept creation secures a function for philosophy, but it does not give it any preeminence or privilege since there are other ways of thinking and creating, other modes of ideation that, like scientific thought, do not have to pass through concepts. We always come back to the question of the use of this activity of creating concepts, in its difference from scientific or artistic activity. Why, through what necessity, and for what use must concepts, and always new concepts, be created? And in order to do what? To say that the greatness of philosophy lies precisely in its not having any use is a frivolous answer that not even young people find amusing any more. In any case, the death of metaphysics or the overcoming of philosophy has never been a problem for us: it is just tiresome, idle chatter. Today it is said that systems are bankrupt, but it is only the concept of system that has changed. So long as there is a time and a place for creating concepts, the operation that undertakes this will always be called philosophy, or will be indistinguishable from philosophy even if it is called something else.

We know, however, that the friend or lover, as claimant, does not lack rivals. If we really want to say that philosophy originates with the Greeks, it is because the city, unlike the empire or state, invents the agon as the rule of a society of “friends,” of the community of free men as rivals (citizens). This is the invariable situation described by Plato: if each citizen lays claim to something, then we need to be able to judge the validity of claims. The joiner lays claim to wood, but he comes up against the forester, the lumberjack, and the carpenter, who all say, “I am the friend of wood.” If it is a matter of the care of men, then there are many claimants who introduce themselves as man’s friend: the peasant who feeds people, the weaver who clothes them, the doctor who nurses them, and the warrior who protects them.7 In all these cases the selection is made from what is, after all, a somewhat narrow circle of claimants. But this is not the case in politics where, according to Plato, anyone can lay claim to anything in Athenian democracy. Hence the necessity for Plato to put things in order and create authorities for judging the validity of these claims: the Ideas as philosophical concepts. But, even here, do we not encounter all kinds of claimants who say, “I am the true philosopher, the friend of Wisdom or of the Well-Founded”? This rivalry culminates in the battle between philosopher and sophist, fighting over the old sage’s remains. How, then, is the false friend to be distinguished from the true friend, the concept from the simulacrum? The simula-
tor and the friend: this is a whole Platonic theater that produces a proliferation of conceptual personne by endowing them with the powers of the comic and the tragic.

Closer to our own time, philosophy has encountered many new rivals. To start with, the human sciences, and especially sociology, wanted to replace it. But because philosophy, taking refuge in universals, increasingly misunderstood its vocation for creating concepts, it was no longer clear what was at stake. Was it a matter of giving up the creation of concepts in favor of a rigorous human science or, alternatively, of transforming the nature of concepts by turning them into the collective representations or worldviews created by the vital, historical, and spiritual forces of different peoples? Then it was the turn of epistemology, of linguistics, or even of psychoanalysis and logical analysis. In successive challenges, philosophy confronted increasingly insolent and calamitous rivals that Plato himself would never have imagined in his most comic moments. Finally, the most shameful moment came when computer science, marketing, design, and advertising, all the disciplines of communication, seized hold of the word concept itself and said: “This is our concern, we are the creative ones, we are the ideas men! We are the friends of the concept, we put it in our computers.” Information and creativity, concept and enterprise: there is already an abundant bibliography. Marketing has preserved the idea of a certain relationship between the concept and the event. But here the concept has become the set of product displays (historical, scientific, artistic, sexual, pragmatic), and the event has become the exhibition that sets up various displays and the “exchange of ideas” it is supposed to promote. The only events are exhibitions, and the only concepts are products that can be sold. Philosophy has not remained unaffected by the general movement that replaced Critique with sales promotion. The simulacrum, the simulation of a packet of noodles, has become the true concept; and the one who packages the product, commodity, or work of art has become the philosopher, conceptual persona, or artist. How could philosophy, an old person, compete against young executives in a race for the universal of communication for determining the marketable form of the concept, Mertz?”

Certainly, it is painful to learn that Concept indicates a society of information services and engineering. But the more philosophy comes up against shameless and inane rivals and encounters them at its very core, the more it feels driven to fulfill the task of creating concepts that are aerolites rather than commercial products. It gets the giggles, which wipe away its tears. So, the question of philosophy is the singular point where concept and creation are related to each other.

Philosophers have not been sufficiently concerned with the nature of the concept as philosophical reality. They have preferred to think of it as a given knowledge or representation that can be explained by the faculties able to form it (abstraction or generalization) or employ it (judgment). But the concept is not given, it is created; it is to be created. It is not formed but posits itself in itself—it is a self-positing. Creation and self-positing mutually imply each other because what is truly created, from the living being to the work of art, thereby enjoys a self-positing of itself, or an autopoietic characteristic by which it is recognized. The concept posits itself to the same extent that it is created. What depends on a free creative activity is also that which, independently and necessarily, posits itself in itself: the most subjective will be the most objective. The post-Kantians, and notably Schelling and Hegel, are the philosophers who paid most attention to the concept as philosophical reality in this sense. Hegel powerfully defined the concept by the Figures of its creation and the Moments of its self-positing. The figures become parts of the concept because they constitute the aspect through which the concept is created by and in consciousness, through successive minds; whereas the Mo-

*Mertz is the term coined by the artist Kurt Schwitters to refer to the aesthetic combination of any kind of material, and the equal value of these different materials, in his collages and assemblages. The term itself came from a fragment of a word in one of his assemblages, the whole phrase being “Kommerz und Privatbank.”*
ments form the other aspect according to which the concept posits itself and unites minds in the absolute of the Self. In this way Hegel showed that the concept has nothing whatever to do with a general or abstract idea, any more than with an uncreated Wisdom that does not depend on philosophy itself. But he succeeded in doing this at the cost of an indeterminate extension of philosophy that, because it reconstituted universals with its own moments and treated the personae of its own creation as no more than ghostly puppets, left scarcely any independent movement of the arts and sciences remaining. The post-Kantians concentrated on a universal encyclopedia of the concept that attributed concept creation to a pure subjectivity rather than taking on the more modest task of a pedagogy of the concept, which would have to analyze the conditions of creation as factors of always singular moments. If the three ages of the concept are the encyclopedia, pedagogy, and commercial professional training, only the second can safeguard us from falling from the heights of the first into the disaster of the third—an absolute disaster for thought whatever its benefits might be, of course, from the viewpoint of universal capitalism.
1. What Is a Concept?

There are no simple concepts. Every concept has components and is defined by them. It therefore has a combination [chiffre*]. It is a multiplicity, although not every multiplicity is conceptual. There is no concept with only one component. Even the first concept, the one with which a philosophy "begins," has several components, because it is not obvious that philosophy must have a beginning, and if it does determine one, it must combine it with a point of view or a ground [une raison]. Not only do Descartes, Hegel, and Feuerbach not begin with the same concept, they do not have the same concept of beginning. Every concept is at least double or triple, etc. Neither is there a concept possessing every component, since this would be chaos pure and simple. Even so-called universals as ultimate concepts must escape the chaos by circumscribing a universe that explains them (contemplation, reflection, communication). Every concept has an irregular contour defined by the sum of its compo-

*See translators' introduction.
ments, which is why, from Plato to Bergson, we find the idea of the
concept being a matter of articulation, of cutting and cross-cutting.
The concept is a whole because it totalizes its components, but it is a
fragmentary whole. Only on this condition can it escape the mental
chaos constantly threatening it, stalking it, trying to reabsorb it.

On what conditions is a concept first, not necessarily but in relation
to another? For example, is another person (autrain) necessarily second
in relation to a self? If so, it is to the extent that its concept is that of
an other—a subject that presents itself as an object—which is special
in relation to the self: they are two components. In fact, if the other
person is identified with a special object, it is now only the other
subject as it appears to me; and if I identify it with another subject,
it is me who is the other person as I appear to that subject. All
concepts are connected to problems without which they would have
no meaning and which can themselves only be isolated or understood
as their solution emerges. We are dealing here with a problem con-
cerning the plurality of subjects, their relationship, and their recipro-
cal presentation. Of course, everything changes if we think that we
discover another problem: what is the nature of the other person’s
position that the other subject comes to “occupy” only when it ap-
ppears to me as a special object, and that I in turn come to occupy as
special object when I appear to the other subject? From this point of
view the other person is not anyone—neither subject nor object.
There are several subjects because there is the other person, not the
reverse. The other person thus requires an a priori concept from
which the special object, the other subject, and the self must
all derive, not the other way around. The order has changed, as has
the nature of the concepts and the problems to which they are sup-
posed to respond. We put to one side the question of the difference
between scientific and philosophical problems. However, even in
philosophy, concepts are only created as a function of problems which
are thought to be badly understood or badly posed (pedagogy of the
concept).

Let us proceed in a summary fashion: we will consider a field of
experience taken as a real world no longer in relation to a self but to
a simple “there is.” There is, at some moment, a calm and restful
world. Suddenly a frightened face looms up that looks at something
out of the field. The other person appears here as neither subject nor
object but as something that is very different: a possible world, the
possibility of a frightening world. This possible world is not real, or
not yet, but it exists nonetheless: it is an expressed that exists only in
its expression—the face, or an equivalent of the face. To begin with,
the other person is this existence of a possible world. And this possi-
ble world also has a specific reality in itself, as possible: when the
expressing speaks and says, “I am frightened,” even if its words are
untruthful, this is enough for a reality to be given to the possible as
such. This is the only meaning of the “I” as linguistic index. But it is
not indispensable: China is a possible world, but it takes on a reality
as soon as Chinese is spoken or China is spoken about within a given
field of experience. This is very different from the situation in which
China is realized by becoming the field of experience itself. Here,
then, is a concept of the other that presupposes no more than the
determination of a sensory world as condition. On this condition the
other appears as the expression of a possible. The other is a possible
world as it exists in a face that expresses it and takes shape in a
language that gives it a reality. In this sense it is a concept with
three inseparable components: possible world, existing face, and real
language or speech.

Obviously, every concept has a history. This concept of the other
person goes back to Leibniz, to his possible worlds and to the monad
as expression of the world. But it is not the same problem, because in
Leibniz possibles do not exist in the real world. It is also found in the
modal logic of propositions. But these do not confer on possible
worlds the reality that corresponds to their truth conditions (even
when Wittgenstein envisages propositions of fear or pain, he does not
see them as modalities that can be expressed in a position of the other
person because he leaves the other person oscillating between another subject and a special object). Possible worlds have a long history. In short, we say that every concept always has a history, even though this history zigzags, though it passes, if need be, through other problems or onto different planes. In any concept there are usually bits or components that come from other concepts, which corresponded to other problems and presupposed other planes. This is inevitable because each concept carries out a new cutting-out, takes on new contours, and must be reactivated or recut.

On the other hand, a concept also has a becoming that involves its relationship with concepts situated on the same plane. Here concepts link up with each other, support one another, coordinate their contours, articulate their respective problems, and belong to the same philosophy, even if they have different histories. In fact, having a finite number of components, every concept will branch off toward other concepts that are differently composed but that constitute other regions of the same plane, answer to problems that can be connected to each other, and participate in a co-creation. A concept requires not only a problem through which it recasts or replaces earlier concepts but a junction of problems where it combines with other coexisting concepts. The concept of the Other Person as expression of a possible world in a perceptual field leads us to consider the components of this field for itself in a new way. No longer being either subject of the field or object in the field, the other person will become the condition under which not only subject and object are redistributed but also figure and ground, margins and center, moving object and reference point, transitive and substantial, length and depth. The Other Person is always perceived as an other, but in its concept it is the condition of all perception, for others as for ourselves. It is the condition for our passing from one world to another. The Other Person makes the world go by, and the “I” now designates only a past world (“I was peaceful”). For example, the Other Person is enough to make any length a possible depth in space, and vice versa, so that if this concept did not function in the perceptual field, transitions and inversions would become incomprehensible, and we would always run up against things, the possible having disappeared. Or at least, philosophically, it would be necessary to find another reason for not running up against them. It is in this way that, on a determinable plane, we go from one concept to another by a kind of bridge. The creation of a concept of the Other Person with these components will entail the creation of a new concept of perceptual space, with other components to be determined (not running up against things, or not too much, will be part of these components).

We started with a fairly complex example. How could we do otherwise, because there is no simple concept? Readers may start from whatever example they like. We believe that they will reach the same conclusion about the nature of the concept or the concept of concept. First, every concept relates back to other concepts, not only in its history but in its becoming or its present connections. Every concept has components that may, in turn, be grasped as concepts (so that the Other Person has the face among its components, but the Face will itself be considered as a concept with its own components). Concepts, therefore, extend to infinity and, being created, are never created from nothing. Second, what is distinctive about the concept is that it renders components inseparable within itself. Components, or what defines the consistency of the concept, its endoconsistency, are distinct, heterogeneous, and yet not separable. The point is that each partially overlaps, has a zone of neighborhood [zone de voisinage*], or a threshold of indiscernibility, with another one. For example, in the concept of the other person, the possible world does not exist outside the face that expresses it, although it is distinguished from it as expressed and expression; and the face in turn is the vicinity of the words for which it is already the megaphone. Components remain distinct, but something passes from one to the other, some-

*See translator’s introduction
thing that is undecidable between them. There is an area of that
belongs to both a and b, where a and b "become" indiscernible.
These zones, thresholds, or becomings, this inseparability, define the
internal consistency of the concept. But the concept also has an
exocoordinate with other concepts, when their respective creation
implies the construction of a bridge on the same plane. Zones and
bridges are the joints of the concept.

Third, each concept will therefore be considered as the point of
coincidence, condensation, or accumulation of its own components.
The conceptual point constantly traverses its components, rising and
falling within them. In this sense, each component is an intensive
feature, an intensive ordinate [ordonnée intensive'], which must be
understood not as general or particular but as a pure and simple
singularity—"a" possible world, "a" face, "some" words—that is
particularized or generalized depending upon whether it is given
variable values or a constant function. But, unlike the position in
science, there is neither constant nor variable in the concept, and we
no more pick out a variable species for a constant genus than we do a
constant species for variable individuals. In the concept there are
only ordinate relationships, not relationships of comprehension or
extension, and the concept's components are neither constants nor
variables but pure and simple variations ordered according to their
neighborhood. They are processual, modular. The concept of a bird
is found not in its genus or species but in the composition of its
postures, colors, and songs: something indiscernible that is not so
much synesthetic as syncnetic. A concept is a heterogenesis—that is
to say, an ordering of its components by zones of neighborhood. It is
ordinal, an intension present in all the features that make it up. The
concept is in a state of survey [surveillé] in relation to its components,
endlessly traversing them according to an order without distance. It

is immediately co-present to all its components or variations, at no
distance from them, passing back and forth through them: it is a
retrain, an opus with its number (chiffre).

The concept is an incorporeal, even though it is incarnated or
effectuated in bodies. But, in fact, it is not mixed up with the state
of affairs in which it is effectuated. It does not have spatiotemporal
coordinates, only intensive ordinates. It has no energy, only intensities;
it is an energetic (energy is not intensity but rather the way in
which the latter is deployed and nullified in an extensive state of
affairs). The concept speaks the event, not the essence or the thing—
pure Event, a hecasyly, an entity: the event of the Other or of the face
(when, in turn, the face is taken as concept). It is like the bird as
event. The concept is defined by the inseparability of a finite number
of heterogeneous components traversed by a point of absolute survey at
infinite speed. Concepts are "absolute surfaces or volumes," forms
whose only object is the inseparability of distinct variations. The
"survey" [surveillé] is the state of the concept or its specific infinity,
although the infinities may be larger or smaller according to the
number of components, thresholds and bridges. In this sense the
concept is act of thought, it is thought operating at infinite (although
greater or lesser) speed.

The concept is therefore both absolute and relative: it is relative to
its own components, to other concepts, to the plane on which it is
defined, and to the problems it is supposed to resolve; but it is
absolute through the condensation it carries out, the site it occupies
on the plane, and the conditions it assigns to the problem. As whole
it is absolute, but insofar as it is fragmentary it is relative. It is infinite
through its survey or its speed but finite through its movement that traces
the contour of its components. Philosophers are always recasting and
even changing their concepts: sometimes the development of a point
of detail that produces a new condensation, that adds or withdraws
components, is enough. Philosophers sometimes exhibit a forgetfulness
that almost makes them ill. According to Jaspers, Nietzsche,
"corrected his ideas himself in order to create new ones; without explicitly admitting it; when his health deteriorated he forgot the conclusions he had arrived at earlier." Or, as Leibniz said, "I thought I had reached port; but . . . I seemed to be cast back again into the open sea." What remains absolute, however, is the way in which the created concept is posited in itself and with others. The relativity and absoluteness of the concept are like its pedagogy and its ontology, its creation and its self-positing, its ideality and its reality—the concept is real without being actual, ideal without being abstract. The concept is defined by its consistency, its endoconsistency and exoconsistency, but it has no reference: it is self-referential; it posits itself and its object at the same time as it is created. Constructivism unites the relative and the absolute.

Finally, the concept is not discursive, and philosophy is not a discursive formation, because it does not link propositions together. Confusing concept and proposition produces a belief in the existence of scientific concepts and a view of the proposition as a genuine "intension" (what the sentence expresses). Consequently, the philosophical concept usually appears only as a proposition deprived of sense. This confusion reigns in logic and explains its infantile idea of philosophy. Concepts are measured against a "philosophical" grammar that replaces them with propositions extracted from the sentences in which they appear. We are constantly trapped between alternative propositions and do not see that the concept has already passed into the excluded middle. The concept is not a proposition at all; it is not propositional, and the proposition is never an intension. Propositions are defined by their reference, which concerns not the Event but rather a relationship with a state of affairs or body and with the conditions of this relationship. Far from constituting an intension, these conditions are entirely extensional. They imply operations by which abscissas or successive linearizations are formed that force intensive ordinates into spatiotemporal and energetic coordinates, by which the sets so determined are made to correspond to each other.

These successions and correspondences define discursiveness in extensive systems. The independence of variables in propositions is opposed to the inseparability of variations in the concept. Concepts, which have only consistency or intensive ordinates outside of any coordinates, freely enter into relationships of nondiscursive resonance—either because the components of one become concepts with other heterogeneous components or because there is no difference of scale between them at any level. Concepts are centers of vibrations, each in itself and every one in relation to all the others. This is why they all resonate rather than cohere or correspond with each other. There is no reason why concepts should cohere. As fragmentary totalities, concepts are not even the pieces of a puzzle, for their irregular contours do not correspond to each other. They do form a wall, but it is a dry-stone wall, and everything holds together only along diverging lines. Even bridges from one concept to another are still junctions, or detours, which do not define any discursive whole. They are movable bridges. From this point of view, philosophy can be seen as being in a perpetual state of degression or digressiveness.

The major differences between the philosophical enunciation of fragmentary concepts and the scientific enunciation of partial propositions follow from this degression. From an initial point of view, all enunciation is positional. But enunciation remains external to the proposition because the latter's object is a state of affairs as referent, and the references that constitute truth values as its conditions (even if, for their part, these conditions are internal to the object). On the other hand, positional enunciation is strictly immanent to the concept because the latter's sole object is the inseparability of the components that constitute its consistency and through which it passes back and forth. As for the other aspect, creative or signed enunciation, it is clear that scientific propositions and their correlates are just as signed or created as philosophical concepts: we speak of Pythagoras's theorem, Cartesian coordinates, Hamiltonian number, and Lagrangian function just as we speak of the Platonic Idea or Descartes's cogito.
and the like. But however much the use of proper names clarifies and confirms the historical nature of their link to these connotations, these proper names are masks for other beings and serve only as pseudonyms for more secret singular entities. In the case of propositions, proper names designate extrinsic partial observers that are scientifically definable in relation to a particular axis of reference; whereas for concepts, proper names are intrinsic conceptual personae who haunt a particular plane of consistency. It is not only proper names that are used very differently in philosophies, sciences, and arts but also syntactical elements, and especially prepositions and the conjunctions, “now,” “therefore.” Philosophy proceeds by sentences, but it is not always propositions that are extracted from sentences in general. At present we are relying only on a very general hypothesis: from sentences or their equivalent, philosophy extracts concepts (which must not be confused with general or abstract ideas), whereas science extracts prospects (propositions that must not be confused with judgments), and art extracts percepts and affects (which must not be confused with perceptions or feelings). In each case language is tested and used in incomparable ways—but in ways that do not define the difference between disciplines without also constituting their perpetual interbreeding.

**EXAMPLE 1**

To start with, the preceding analysis must be confirmed by taking the example of one of the best-known signed philosophical concepts, that of the Cartesian cogito, Descartes’s I: a concept of self. This concept has three components—doubting, thinking, and being (although this does not mean that every concept must be triple). The complete statement of the concept qua multiplicity is “I think ‘therefore I am’” or, more completely, “Myself who doubts, I think, I am, I am a thinking thing.” According to Descartes the cogito is the always-renewed event of thought.

The concept condenses at the point I, which passes through all the components and in which I’ (doubting), I” (thinking), and I’’ (being) coincide. As intensive ordinates the components are arranged in zones of neighborhood or indiscernibility that produce passages from one to the other and constitute their inseparability. The first zone is between doubting and thinking (myself who doubts, I cannot doubt that I think), and the second is between thinking and being (in order to think it is necessary to be). The components are presented here as verbs, but this is not a rule. It is sufficient that there are variations. In fact, doubt includes moments that are not the species of a genus but the phases of a variation: perceptual, scientific, obsessional doubt (every concept therefore has a phase space, although not in the same way as in science). The same goes for modes of thought—feeling, imagining, having ideas—and also for types of being, thing, or substance—infinitive being, finite thinking being, extended being. It is noteworthy that in the last case the concept of self retains only the second phase of being and excludes the rest.
of the variation. But this is precisely the sign that the concept is closed as fragmentary totality with "I am a thinking thing!"; we can pass to other phases of being only by bridges or crossroads that lead to other concepts. Thus, "among my ideas I have the idea of infinity" is the bridge leading from the concept of self to the concept of God. This new concept has three components forming the "proofs" of the existence of God as infinite event. The third (ontological proof) assures the closure of the concept but also in turn throws out a bridge or branches off to a concept of the extended, insofar as it guarantees the objective truth value of our other clear and distinct ideas.

When the question "Are there precursors of the cogito?" is asked, what is meant is "Are there concepts signed by previous philosophers that have similar or almost identical components but from which one component is lacking, or to which others have been added, so that a cogito does not crystallize since the components do not yet coincide in a self?" Everything seems ready, and yet something is missing. Perhaps the earlier concept referred to a different problem from that of the cogito (a change in problems being necessary for the Cartesian cogito to appear), or it was developed on another plane. The Cartesian plane consists in challenging any explicit objective presupposition where every concept refers to other concepts (the rational-animal man, for example). It demands only a prephilosophical understanding, that is, implicit and subjective presuppositions: everyone knows what thinking, being, and I mean (one knows by doing it, being it, or saying it). This is a very novel distinction. Such a plane requires a first concept that presupposes nothing objective. So the problem is "What is the first concept on this plane, or by beginning with what concept can truth as absolutely pure subjective certainty be determined?" Such is the cogito. The other concepts will be able to achieve objectivity, but only if they are linked by bridges to the first concept, if they respond to problems subject to the same conditions, and if they remain on the same plane. Objectivity here will assume a certainty of knowledge rather than presuppose a truth recognized as preexisting, or already there.

There is no point in wondering whether Descartes was right or wrong. Are implicit and subjective presuppositions more valid than explicit objective presuppositions? Is it necessary "to begin," and, if so, is it necessary to start from the point of view of a subjective certainty? Can thought as such be the verb of an I? There is no direct answer. Cartesian concepts can only be assessed as a function of their problems and their plane. In general, if earlier concepts were able to prepare a concept but not constitute it, it is because their problem was still trapped within other problems, and their plane did not yet possess its indispensable curvature or movements. And concepts can only be replaced by others if there are new problems and another plane relative to which (for example) "I" loses all meaning, the beginning loses all necessity, and the presuppositions lose all difference—or take on others. A concept always has the truth that falls to it as a function of the conditions of its creation. Is there one plane that is better than all the others, or problems that dominate all others? Nothing at all can be said on this point. Planes must be constructed and problems posed, just as concepts must be created. Philosophers do the best they can, but they have too much to do to know whether it is the best, or even to bother with this question. Of course, new concepts must relate to our problems, to our history, and, above all, to our becoming. But what does it mean for a concept to be of our time, or of any time? Concepts are not eternal, but does this mean they are temporal? What is the philosophical form of the problems of
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a particular time? If one concept is “better” than an earlier one, it is because it makes us aware of new variations and unknown resonances, it carries out unforeseen cuttings-out, it brings forth an Event that surveys [survive] us. But did the earlier concept not do this already? If one can still be a Platonist, Cartesian, or Kantian today, it is because one is justified in thinking that their concepts can be reactivated in our problems and inspire those concepts that need to be created. What is the best way to follow the great philosophers? Is it to repeat what they said or to do what they did, that is, create concepts for problems that necessarily change?

For this reason philosophers have very little time for discussion. Every philosopher runs away when he or she hears someone say, “Let’s discuss this.” Discussions are fine for roundtable talks, but philosophy throws its numbered dice on another table. The best one can say about discussions is that they take things no farther, since the participants never talk about the same thing. Of what concern is it to philosophy that someone has such a view, and thinks this or that, if the problems at stake are not stated? And when they are stated, it is no longer a matter of discussing but rather one of creating concepts for the undiscussible problem posed. Communication always comes too early or too late, and when it comes to creating, conversation is always superfluous. Sometimes philosophy is turned into the idea of a perpetual discussion, as “communicative rationality,” or as “universal democratic conversation.” Nothing is less exact, and when philosophers criticize each other it is on the basis of problems and on a plane that is different from theirs and that melt down the old concepts in the way a cannon can be melted down to make new weapons. It never takes place on the same plane. To criticize is only to establish that a concept vanishes when it is thrust into a new milieu, losing some of its components, or acquiring others that transform it. But those who criticize without creating, those who are content to defend the vanished concept without being able to give it the forces it needs to return to life, are the plague of philosophy. All these debaters and communicators are inspired by resentment. They speak only of themselves when they set empty generalizations against one another. Philosophy has a horror of discussions. It always has something else to do. Debate is unbearable to it, but not because it is too sure of itself. On the contrary, it is its uncertainties that take it down other, more solitary paths. But in Socrates was philosophy not a free discussion among friends? Is it not, as the conversation of free men, the summit of Greek sociability? In fact, Socrates constantly made all discussion impossible, both in the short form of the contest of questions and answers and in the long form of a rivalry between discourses. He turned the friend into the friend of the single concept, and the concept into the pitiless monologue that eliminates the rivals one by one.

EXAMPLE 2

The Parmenides shows the extent to which Plato is master of the concept. The One has two components (being and nonbeing), phases of components (the One superior to being, equal to being, inferior to being; the One superior to nonbeing, equal to nonbeing), and zones of indiscernibility (in relation to itself, in relation to others). It is a model concept.

But is not the One prior to every concept? This is where Plato teaches the opposite of what he does: he creates concepts but needs to set them up as representing the uncreated that precedes them. He puts time into the concept, but it is a time that must be Anterior. He constructs the concept but as something that attests to the preexistence of an objectality [objecté], in the form of a difference of time capable of measuring the distance or closeness of the concept’s possible constructor. Thus, on the Platonic plane, truth is posed as presupposition, as already there. This is the Idea. In the Platonic concept of the Idea, first takes on a precise sense, very different from the meaning it will have in Descartes: it
is that which objectively possesses a pure quality, or which is not something other than what it is. Only Justice is just, only Courage courageous, such are Ideas, and there is an Idea of mother if there is a mother who is not something other than a mother (who would not have been a daughter), or of hair which is not something other than hair (not silicon as well). Things, on the contrary, are understood as always being something other than what they are. At best, therefore, they only possess quality in a secondary way, they can only lay claim to quality, and only to the degree that they participate in the Idea. Thus the concept of Idea has the following components: the quality possessed or to be possessed; the Idea that possesses it first, as unperticipable; that which lays claim to the quality and can only possess it second, third, fourth; and the Idea participated in, which judges the claims—the Father, a double of the father, the daughter and the suitors, we might say. These are the intensive ordinates of the Idea: a claim will be justified only through a neighborhood, a greater or lesser proximity it “has had” in relation to the Idea, in the survey of an always necessarily anterior time. Time in this form of anteriority belongs to the concept; it is like its zone. Certainly, the cogito cannot germinate on this Greek plane, this Platonic soil. So long as the preexistence of the Idea remains (even in the Christian form of archetypes in God’s understanding), the cogito could be prepared but not fully accomplished. For Descartes to create this concept, the meaning of “first” must undergo a remarkable change, take on a subjective meaning; and all difference of time between the idea and the soul that forms it as subject must be anulled (hence the importance of Descartes’s point against reminiscence, in which he says that innate ideas do not exist “before” but “at the same time” as the soul). It will be necessary to arrive at an instantaneous of the concept and for God to create even truths. The claim must change qualitatively; the suitor no longer receives the daughter from the father but owes her hand only to his own chivalric prowess—to his own method. Whether Malebranche can reanimate Platonic components on an authentically Cartesian plane, and at what cost, should be analyzed from this point of view. But we only wanted to show that a concept always has components that can prevent the appearance of another concept or, on the contrary, that can themselves appear only at the cost of the disappearance of other concepts. However, a concept is never valued by reference to what it prevents: it is valued for its incomparable position and its own creation.

Suppose a component is added to a concept: the concept will probably break up or undergo a complete change involving, perhaps, another plane—at any rate, other problems. This is what happens with the Kantian cogito. No doubt Kant constructs a “transcendental” plane that renders doubt useless and changes the nature of the presuppositions once again. But it is by virtue of this very plane that he can declare that if the “I think” is a determination that, as such, implies an undetermined existence (“I am”), we still do not know how this undetermined comes to be determinable and hence in what form it appears as determined. Kant therefore “criticizes” Descartes for having said, “I am a thinking substance,” because nothing warrants such a claim of the “I.” Kant demands the introduction of a new component into the cogito, the one Descartes repressed—the time. For it is only in time that my undetermined existence is determinable. But I am only determined in time as a passive and phenomenal self, an always affectable, modifiable, and variable self. The cogito now presents four components: I think, and as such I am active; I have an existence; this existence is only determinable in time as a passive self; I am therefore determined as a
passive self that necessarily represents its own thinking activity to itself as an Other (Autre) that affects it. This is not another subject but rather the subject who becomes an other. Is this the path of a conversion of the self to the other person? A preparation for “I am an other”? A new syntax, with other ordinates, with other zones of indiscernibility, secured first by the schema and then by the affection of self by self [soi par soi], makes the “I” and the “Self” inseparable.

The fact that Kant “criticizes” Descartes means only that he sets up a plane and constructs a problem that could not be occupied or completed by the Cartesian cogito. Descartes created the cogito as concept, but by expelling time as form of anteriority, so as to make it a simple mode of succession referring to continuous creation. Kant reintroduces time into the cogito, but it is a completely different time from that of Platonic anteriority. This is the creation of a concept. He makes time a component of a new cogito, but on condition of providing in turn a new concept of time: time becomes form of exteriority with three components—succession, but also simultaneity and permanence. This again implies a new concept of space that can no longer be defined by simple simultaneity and becomes form of exteriority. Space, time, and “I think” are three original concepts linked by bridges that are also junctions—a blast of original concepts. The history of philosophy means that we evaluate not only the historical novelty of the concepts created by a philosopher but also the power of their becoming when they pass into one another.

The same pedagogical status of the concept can be found everywhere: a multiplicity, an absolute surface or volume, self-referents, made up of a certain number of inseparable intensive variations according to an order of neighborhood, and traversed by a point in a state of survey. The concept is the contour, the configuration, the constellation of an event to come. Concepts in this sense belong to philosophy by right, because it is philosophy that creates them and never stops creating them. The concept is obviously knowledge—but knowledge of itself, and what it knows is the pure event, which must not be confused with the state of affairs in which it is embodied. The task of philosophy when it creates concepts, entities, is always to extract an event from things and beings, to set up the new event from things and beings, always to give them a new event: space, time, matter, thought, the possible as events.

It is pointless to say that there are concepts in science. Even when science is concerned with the same “objects” it is not from the viewpoint of the concept; it is not by creating concepts. It might be said that this is just a matter of words, but it is rare for words not to involve intentions and ruses. It would be a mere matter of words if it was decided to reserve the concept for science, even if this meant finding another word to designate the business of philosophy. But usually things are done differently. The power of the concept is attributed to science, the concept being defined by the creative methods of science and measured against science. The issue is then whether there remains a possibility of philosophy forming secondary concepts that make up for their own insufficiency by a vague appeal to the “lived.” Thus Gilles-Gaston Granger begins by defining the concept as a scientific proposition or function and then concedes that there may, nonetheless, be philosophical concepts that replace reference to the object by correlation to a “totality of the lived” [totalité du vécu]. But actually, either philosophy completely ignores the concept, or else it enjoys it by right and at first hand, so that there is nothing of it left for science—which, moreover, has no need of the concept and concerns itself only with states of affairs and their conditions. Science needs only propositions or functions, whereas philosophy, for its part, does not need to invoke a lived that would give only a ghostly and extrinsic life to secondary, bloodless concepts. The philosophical concept does not refer to the lived, by way of
compensation, but consists, through its own creation, in setting up an event that surveys the whole of the lived no less than every state of affairs. Every concept shapes and reshapes the event in its own way. The greatness of a philosophy is measured by the nature of the events to which its concepts summon us or that it enables us to release in concepts. So the unique, exclusive bond between concepts and philosophy as a creative discipline must be tested in its finest details. The concept belongs to philosophy and only to philosophy.

2. The Plane of Immanence

Philosophical concepts are fragmentary wholes that are not aligned with one another so that they fit together, because their edges do not match up. They are not pieces of a jigsaw puzzle but rather the outcome of throws of the dice. They resonate nonetheless, and the philosophy that creates them always introduces a powerful Whole that, while remaining open, is not fragmented: an unlimited One-All, an “Omnitudo” that includes all the concepts on one and the same plane. It is a table, a plateau, or a slice; it is a plane of consistency or, more accurately, the plane of immanence of concepts, the phenomenon. Concepts and plane are strictly correlative, but nevertheless the two should not be confused. The plane of immanence is neither a concept nor the concept of all concepts. If one were to be confused with the other there would be nothing to stop concepts from forming a single one or becoming universals and losing their singularity, and the plane would also lose its openness. Philosophy is a constructivism, and con-