Deleuze and the Passions

Ceciel Meiborg, Sjoerd van Tuinen

Published by Punctum Books

Ceciel Meiborg and Sjoerd van Tuinen.
Deleuze and the Passions.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/76518

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=2691076

Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.
Friedrich Nietzsche, in “‘Reason’ in Philosophy” from *Twilight of the Idols*, alerts us to the pitfalls of a metaphysical history that grounds itself on a fundamental error of temporality:

Change, mutation, becoming in general were formerly taken as proof of appearance, as a sign of the presence of something which led us astray. Today, on the contrary, we see ourselves as it were entangled in error, *necessitated* to error, to precisely the extent that our prejudice in favor of reason compels us to posit unity, identity, duration, substance, cause, materiality, being; however sure we may be, on the basis of a strict reckoning, *that* error is to be found here.¹

These errors of Reason — unity, identity, mechanistic causality, and permanence — erect a tradition of judgment in the history of philosophy. The fundamental error of Reason is temporal in nature, where discontinuous states of Being supplant continuous processes of becoming. For Nietzsche, this amounts to a subordination of sense to a moralistic framework that never shakes

Deleuze and the Passions

off the onto-theological hangover of the Ancient Greeks, save Heraclitus.² Reason in the history of philosophy is a mortification of thought — concepts are lifeless artifacts of the past. If we eradicate Reason from philosophy, then what are we doing? As Gilles Deleuze exclaims, “We're looking for ‘vitality.”³ Deleuze takes seriously the errors of Reason, as outlined by Nietzsche, and rather than do away with metaphysics, he shatters the pillars of Reason with his critique of the dogmatic “image of thought.” Just as the Signifier dies along with God, judgment in philosophy dies along with Reason. In this essay, I will illuminate the concept of becoming that Deleuze uses to reconfigure the history of metaphysics along the lines of Nietzsche’s critique of Reason. As the temporal logic of becoming in Deleuze splits into the becoming of pure events and the becoming of sensation, a philosophy of affects corrects the errors which arose from Reason. Ultimately, Deleuze creates a metaphysical system beyond good and evil, replacing the dogmatic errors of Reason with the aesthetic potential of the new.

Using the centrifugal force of the eternal return of difference, Deleuze’s philosophical collage of the likes of Spinoza, Hume, Leibniz, Borges, Proust, Bergson, Simondon, Duns Scotus, and others forms a universe of immanence that is at base a metaphysical system in concert with Nietzsche’s thought. The positive formulation of Nietzsche’s critique of Reason is a pre-individual world of affects where all identities are merely an effect of the unconditioned flux of force. In the beautiful aphorism that closes The Will to Power, Nietzsche depicts his anti-philosophical world at odds with the history of metaphysics. When he asks,

² “Philosophy in the only way I still allow it to stand, as the most general form of history, as an attempt somehow to describe Heraclitean becoming and to abbreviate it into signs (so to speak, to translate and mummify it into a kind of illusory being).” Friedrich Nietzsche, Writings from the Late Notebooks, ed. Rüdiger Bittner, trans. Kate Sturje (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 26.
“And do you know what ‘the world’ is to me?”⁴ we discover a play of forces in contradiction, both one and many, perpetually in-between, and eternally recurring without a goal but the act of recurrence itself.

Nietzsche begins the description of his Dionysian world with an “AND,” where the power of the false breaks with the logic of identity, the principle of sufficient reason, the law of excluded middle, and the law of non-contradiction. Furthermore, negation and nothingness play no role in Nietzsche’s world, for all forms, structures, institutions, and things are undone through the eternal return of difference and the unhinging of efficient, formal, material, and final causation. Pre-subjective forces form multiplicities that are always in-between, “anchoring” all individuation in chaotic flux, painting an aesthetic ontology of pure intensities beyond the reifying logic of Reason. After Nietzsche, it becomes unthinkable to do metaphysics in the same way. To invent a new and rigorous metaphysics requires the elaboration of a complex set of processes and (anti-)logic that systematizes all of the features of Nietzsche’s Dionysian world without resorting to mechanisms of transcendence, and this is precisely what Deleuze accomplishes. The first step in developing a new image of thought is holding all processes to the light of becoming, to maintain the primacy of the unconditioned as the driving force of a new metaphysics.

When Deleuze attacks the four shackles of representational thought (analogy, opposition, resemblance, and identity), he simultaneously opens the way for an alternative image of thought. Each of the shackles can be traced to a fundamental temporal error: the attempt to conceive of change as a structural derivative of the immutable. Henri Bergson and Nietzsche converge on the criticism of mechanistic causality and its employment of “reason” to freeze pure flux in order to construct an image of becoming. Deleuze connects these criticisms and asks how

Deleuze and the Passions

a counter-causal process appropriate to the concept of becoming might be created. Of the list of errors in reason provided by Nietzsche: unity is replaced by multiplicity; identity is replaced by difference, while essences are replaced by assemblages or haecceities; duration (which means something akin to permanence for Nietzsche) is replaced by instantaneity; substance is replaced by virtual relation; mechanistic causality is replaced by quasi-causality; materiality is replaced by intensity; and, throwing all the features of this new anti-reason in motion: being is replaced by becoming.\(^5\)

In accordance with Nietzsche's critique of Reason, Deleuze enlists artists and philosophers who shake the very foundation of a philosophical history which is plagued by temporal distortion. In “On Nietzsche and the Image of Thought” he states, “Hume, Bergson, and Proust interest me so much because in their work can be found profound elements for a new image of thought. There’s something extraordinary in the way they tell us: thinking means something else than what you believe.”\(^6\)

All of the thinkers invoked in Deleuze’s revolutionary image of thought radically rethink temporality. They agree that Understanding cannot produce an encounter with becoming — it is only through encounters in sensation that we are thrown into its chaotic flux. In Deleuze’s temporal collage, David Hume provides the system of relations arising from a new image of thought; this is the principle of exteriority, which encourages the conjunctive proliferation of pre-individual intensities below the logic of the Same seen in re-presentation. In this revised, pre-individual, nomadic image of thought Deleuze announces the pitfalls of representation and its reified structure of time, and categorical conditions are cast aside in favor of an exploration of the unconditioned. The reading that Deleuze gives to Nietzsche’s philosophical project in the following passage can also be applied to Deleuze: “For Nietzsche, it is about getting something through in every past, present, and future code,

\(^{5}\) Ibid.
\(^{6}\) Deleuze, Desert Islands, 139.
Deleuze's aesthetic ontology something which does not and will not let itself be recoded.”7 That which repeats throughout past, present, and future, yet escapes all coding, is difference, the new, in short: becoming.

Nietzsche's Dionysian world directly contends with Reason and the use of judgment in representational Being. In *Difference and Repetition*, the categorical application of judgment is decried through its two uses of distribution and hierarchization. Distribution partitions concepts through the use of common sense, hierarchization measures subjects through primary or good sense.8 Difference is neutralized through categorical distribution, and all categorical thought—that of Aristotle, Kant, and even Hegel—implies the philosophy of judgment. Subsequently, it is impossible to think of the unconditioned, or the uncoded, when employing judgment, since judgment retains identity in the concept by using analogy to relate to being.9 The error in judgment emerges from the immobilizing mechanisms of chronological, homogeneous time, which reifies becoming in an attempt to categorize it. Consequently, an aesthetic ontology is needed to counter the categorical logic of judgment, and this is accomplished through the construction of a concept of becoming that deploys the generative “both/and” in its process of individuation.

Deleuze's concept of becoming is pivotal to his metaphysics, yet it is often misunderstood or invoked in a vague sense that conflates its divergent processes. Mapping “becoming” across Deleuze's works involves wading through terminological variance (e.g., becoming, difference, becomings, Aion, becoming-mad, becoming-woman, eternal return of difference, becoming-imperceptible, blocs of becoming), tracking the regional logics that form the ontological neighborhoods in his texts, and tracking the points of convergence between being and time. With respect to the latter, Deleuze's thought pushes ontology to the

7 Ibid., 253.
9 Ibid.
limit, even farther than Martin Heidegger, causing the distinction between ontology and temporality to collapse. This collapse is admitted outright by Deleuze in an interview with Jean-Noël Vuarnet: “Yes, I finished the book — on repetition and difference (they’re the same thing) as the actual categories of our thought.”10 In an ontology premised by absolute becoming, that which was an “is” necessarily becomes an “and,” becomes temporality itself.

In other work11 I have delineated Deleuze’s revolutionary notion of becoming as it deploys two divergent modes of becoming, which he hints at in What Is Philosophy?: sensory becoming and absolute becoming, the latter Deleuze and Félix Guattari term “conceptual becoming.”12 Sensory becoming falls under an umbrella of terms throughout his canon: at the beginning of his career his use of sensory becoming is often referred to simply as “becoming,” and later it is known as “becomings,” “a becoming,” “becoming-mad,” “sensory-bloc,” and so on. Having mapped the processes of becoming across Deleuze’s works, the double nature of becoming is made clear. Not only is every instant distributed into the opposing streams of the past and the future, there are two distinct modes of becoming at work in Deleuze’s ontology.

Sensory becoming functions through what he calls “a molecular memory, but as a factor of integration into a majoritarian or molar system.”13 This mode of becoming pertains to sensation, and is an appropriation of late Bergsonian duration (duration without consciousness), yet endowed with the telescoping power of sensation witnessed in Proustian reminiscence. Deleuze

---

10 Deleuze, Desert Islands, 142, emphasis in original.
11 Samantha Bankston, Deleuze and Becoming(s) (London: Bloomsbury Publications, 2015).
follows Bergson in distinguishing duration from becoming. In *Bergsonism*, Deleuze notes that duration is a mode of becoming when he states that duration is “a becoming that endures, a change that is substance itself.”14 By combining an enduring becoming and substance, Deleuze redefines the materiality of the present according to the Bergsonian model of internal change, and consequently, he redefines substance as a *relationship* in the process of becoming; substance is replaced by intensive process in materiality. Thus through Bergsonian duration, or what later is termed sensory becoming, Deleuze replaces the notion of substance with the self-differing relation. Not only is becoming the vehicle that produces what we perceive as substance in the lived present, but Deleuze also leaves us a clue pertaining to the multiplicity of the concept of becoming by writing “*a becoming*.”15 This mode of becoming subverts the chronological present by retaining a molecular memory that disorients all organization, and forms blocs of coexistence within sensation. Sensory becoming is a virtual multiplicity that expresses the logic of assemblages. In other words, it is the subversive temporality of the depth of bodies. For Deleuze, duration signifies the ontological memory of the pure past. In the chapter entitled “1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible” in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari prankishly interpose “memory” and “becoming,” and then they reveal that “[w]herever we used the word ‘memories’ in the preceding pages, we were wrong to do so; we meant to say ‘becoming,’ we were saying becoming.”16 This intentional erasure distinguishes molar from molecular memory. Sensory becoming is not anti-memory, only anti-molar-memory. Becomings endure, cohering through ontological memory, which is at the level of the molecular. The individuating process of ontological memory — the memory of becomings — is expressed by Deleuze in terms of Proustian

15 Emphasis is mine.
reminiscence and is a supplemental entrance into Bergson’s and Marcel Proust’s notion of the pure past. Deleuze writes, “to remember is to create, is to reach that point where the associative chain breaks, leaps over the constituted individual, is transferred to the birth of an individuating world.”17 The process of creation that arises from ontological memory is the code breaking logic (or “antilogos”) of sensory becoming whose molecular durations ignite individuation beneath the representation of entities, subjects, and objects. This is not the memory of a molar subject, one constructed by an act of re-presentation. Opposed to what he calls “molar subjects,” the differenciated becoming in sensation is a pre-subjective molecular collectivity and is consistent with Deleuze’s re-appropriation of the multiplicity of duration.18 When Deleuze speaks in terms of a becoming, or becomings, he is speaking of a concept of becoming that unfolds serially along the points of molecular duration. As opposed to sensory becoming, absolute becoming is the immaterial mode of becoming, the eternal return of difference. As was the case with sensory becoming, absolute becoming is subject to terminological variance across Deleuze’s works. The most common formulations of the concept appear as either “the eternal return,” “the pure and empty form of time,” or “Aion.” The temporal logic of absolute becoming differs in kind from sensory becoming precisely on the axis of memory.

When developing the notion of the eternal return, Deleuze explains that it is the being of becoming. He, of course, does not mean Being, as understood in Nietzsche’s errors of Reason,

17 Gilles Deleuze, Proust and Signs, trans. Richard Howard (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 111.
18 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 275. Sensory becoming involves a molecular composition that defies the effectuated causality of representation. Molecular becoming is connected to the “pathology of duration,” whereby the relationship established between two things encourages the exchange of their intensive features, or their molecules. “Yes, all becomings are molecular: the animal, flower, or stone one becomes are molecular collectivities, haecceities, not molar subjects, objects, or form that we know from the outside and recognize from experience, through science, or by habit.”
but something else entirely. For Deleuze and Nietzsche, Being is overturned by becoming, and the eternal return is the uncoded virtual relation that is in-between being. Throughout Deleuze’s works, but particularly in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, it is clear that what returns is the act of returning itself. The eternal return as the pure and empty form of time is the being of becoming, fusing temporality and ontology. Deleuze himself remarks, “As we have seen, the condition of the action by default does not return; the condition of the agent by metamorphosis does not return; all that returns, the eternal return, is the *unconditioned* in the product.”19 The unconditioned in the product is not itself a product; instead of being static, it is the differential relation and pure process. Furthermore, it is the selectivity of the eternal return that keeps the first two syntheses, present and past, from returning. Building upon his elaboration of the eternal return in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze describes absolute becoming in *Desert Islands* as follows:

It is the law of a world without being, without unity, without identity. Far from *presupposing* the One or the Same, the eternal return constitutes the only unity of the multiple as such, the only identity of what differs: coming back is the only “being” of becomings.20

Thus, absolute becoming fractures identity, substance, permanence, and materiality along Nietzsche’s Dionysian lines. Nothing that existed in actual form returns in the third synthesis of time: the future — neither partially nor wholly. All associative chains of memory break, enacting a repetition of ontological forgetting.

Deleuze accentuates the necessity of active forgetting in the dissolution of identities through absolute becoming. He takes note of Pierre Klossowski’s interpretation of the eternal return,

19 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 297.  
20 Deleuze, *Desert Islands*, 124.
which moves from the act of willing to becoming-other.\textsuperscript{21} The chain of duration (molecular memory) is broken through the movement of the eternal return, which is the dissimulation of absolute becoming. Deleuze implicates the forgetfulness of absolute becoming when he states that the eternal return constitutes the only unity of the world in its repetition and is “the only identity of a world which has no ‘same’ at all except through repetition.”\textsuperscript{22} He agrees with Klossowski’s (and Michel Foucault’s) assessment that the death of God necessarily implies the death of the self, which is revealed through the active forgetfulness of becoming. The dissolution of identities ignites the break of durational becoming through active forgetfulness at the ontological level. Ontological forgetfulness is not restricted to consciousness, or to the selectivity of thought, but is an integral aspect of becoming. Klossowski claims that “[f]orgetting thus raises eternal becoming and the absorption of all identity to the level of being.”\textsuperscript{23} The forgetfulness of becoming is a necessary condition for the enactment of the eternal return, as well as its dissolution of forms and identities. Deleuze appropriates the representational forgetfulness on the surface level of forgetting in Klossowski and injects it into the pre-individual movement of absolute becoming. The ontological forgetfulness of absolute becoming mimics Nietzsche’s call toward active forgetting in the affirmative creation of the future.

\textsuperscript{21} The following passage on Klossowski demonstrates the confluence of the will to power and the eternal return as effectively undoing the opposition between the one and the many. The connection to willing and becoming-other reappears in Deleuze’s ontology as the relationship between the manifest levels of the eternal return in willing and the latent levels of the return in pre-subjective chaos. “It is in this sense that Mr. Klossowski wanted to show us a world of intense fluctuations in the Will to power, where identities are lost, and where each one cannot want itself without wanting all the other possibilities, without becoming innumerable ‘others,’ without apprehending itself as a fortuitous moment, whose very chance implies the necessity of the whole series” (ibid., 122).

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 123.

In addition to its primordial features of active forgetting and selectivity of being, Deleuze formulates absolute becoming (or the eternal return) in terms of intensive quantity. Rejecting interpretations of Nietzsche that ascribe purely qualitative readings to force, Deleuze posits a notion of intensive quantity as early as *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Rather than forfeit quantity to chronometric homogeneous measure, he argues for the existence of intensive quantity in Nietzsche’s thought. Thus absolute becoming is understood to be the differential relation of intensive quantities. A theory of intensive quantity installs a precise mathematical model into the notion of force in Nietzsche’s philosophy. Whenever Nietzsche criticizes the tendency of science to reduce qualitative difference to extensive quantities of equal measure, he is calling for an understanding of force as quantitative difference. Qualitative difference always includes a quantitative difference, and this notion of intensive quantitative difference is central to Deleuze’s theory of absolute becoming: “Difference in quantity is the essence of force and of the relation of force to force.”24 Conceiving of difference through processes of intensive quantity opens up a theory of becoming that is premised on relations and not fixed terms. This is the point at which Deleuze enlists Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz into his elaboration of absolute becoming. He restructures the Leibnizian calculus through processes of immanence and thus provides a foundation for a quantitative theory of absolute becoming, using a revised theory of Nietzschean force. Because Deleuze articulates this force as intensive quantity, he is able to plug intensities into differential equations, restructuring the concept of becoming—both sensory and absolute—through the infinitesimal calculus. In Deleuze’s Leibniz, transcendence and harmony are replaced with immanence and chaos, thus deploying the power of the false, whereby Deleuze provides a Nietzschean reading of Leibniz via Jorge Luis Borges. Where incompossibilities are able to exist in the same world, virtually, the eternal return of

absolute becoming produces a garden of forking paths. Borges’ “The Garden of Forking Paths,” where the protagonist is able to activate infinite unselected potential futures that exist in the virtual realm simultaneously, serves as a model of incompossible lines of becoming, or divergent syntheses of time. Absolute becoming is the process of bifurcation that splits the past and the future, causing time to fork virtually, simultaneously subverting the chronological present in a mad process of material becoming in sensation.

In terms of Deleuze’s appropriation of Leibniz’s infinitesimal calculus, absolute becoming refers to the differential relation, while sensory becoming refers to the integration. As Simon Duffy explains, integration is not only the summation of differentials, but also the inverse of the differential relation. In a stroke of brilliance, Deleuze formulates both modes of becoming as inversions of one another with respect to Leibniz’s differential calculus. Absolute becoming as the model of the differential relation has zero duration and is the paradoxical sidestepping of the present in its nomadic distribution of singularities throughout the virtual. Meanwhile, sensory becoming is the model of integration, the summation of differentials of molecular memory in sensation. The question then arises as to how these two ontological mirrors interact, what are the virtual processes that connect them? Clearly, any form of causality elaborated in the history of metaphysics will be inadequate to a purely immanent ontology. Instead of dismissing causality as an illusory production in representational thought that expels difference, Deleuze seeks to reconstruct causality according to the heterogeneous features of becoming. He elaborates his theory

of quasi-causality in *The Logic of Sense*, and the notion hardly appears elsewhere. The quasi-cause is the untimely operator between absolute becoming of the eternal return and sensory becoming of molecular memory. Quasi-causality differs from other forms of causality in its distributive power of difference and its ability to create an ultimate divide between the cause and the effect. It does not function along the lines of material, formal, efficient, or final causes. Furthermore, as pointed out by Daniel W. Smith, quasi-causality differs from the medieval categories of emanative and transitive causalities. Deleuze borrows the notion of immanent causation from Spinoza, but maintains a Nietzschean critique of substance in the process. Smith explains this appropriation when he says,

> In Spinoza’s immanent causality, not only does the cause remain in itself, but its effect remains “immanate” within it, rather than emanating from it. The effect (mode) remains in its cause no less than the cause remains in itself (substance).

However, as Smith points out, Deleuze eliminates Spinoza’s substance, making ontology purely modal. A modal, or differential, world forces Deleuze to re-conceptualize the content of immanent causation. Since there is no God, no transcendental signifier, difference is immanent to the cause itself, which results in can be seen as a tribute to Nietzsche. Deleuze reconstructs causality to correct the criticisms launched by Nietzsche. The imagistic construction of causality, and its elimination of difference and becoming, is absorbed into an anti-causal causality in Deleuze. Nietzsche ruthlessly critiqued the retroactive projection of cause and effect into the flux of nature. We see this salient criticism often in his works, particularly in *The Gay Science*.

> “We have uncovered a manifold one-after-another where the naïve man and inquirer of older cultures only saw two separate things ‘Cause’ and ‘effect’ is what one says; but we have merely perfected the image of becoming without reaching beyond the image or behind it.”


29 Ibid., 174.
a distributive destruction of the logic of identity. Deleuze paints a universe that repeats the unconditioned of the cause in the effect when he eliminates all transcendence in immanent causation. As he explains, “The autonomy of the effect is thus defined initially by its difference in nature from the cause; in the second place, it is defined by its relation to the quasi-cause.”

The effect is synonymous with the event and is bestowed full autonomy by the operation of the counter-causal process. There are no longer real causes in the virtual, only effects. As the effect differs in kind from corporeal bodies in mixture, it is independent of the cause in the classical sense and is impenetrable, impassive, neutral, and devoid of qualitative distinction. Despite the impassibility of events (also called singularities, extraordinary points of inflection), they perpetually resonate with other events through the series of effects produced in the nexus of becoming. The paradoxical series, or lines, proliferated through the absolute becoming of Aion, fragment the separation between past and future, where the quasi-cause nomadically distributes singularities in no fewer than two temporal series.

In an attempt at speculation, Deleuze presents the inner mechanics of a virtual, immanent plane as the resonance of diverging and converging series produced through the proliferating force of becoming. The quasi-cause illuminates a system connected through difference. Events do not have external causes, and they communicate not through admixture but through the differential distribution of nomadic singularities. Deleuze’s complex concept of quasi-causality retains the Dionysian world of sensation and rejects the immobilizing categories of Being. All relations occur externally through the operation of the quasi-cause, rather than internally, which would lead to the static mechanism inherent to the logic of identity.

As such, the quasi-cause extracts singularities from the passing present and distributes them in a double movement that

---

constructs events. Since absolute becoming functions according to the logic of the paradoxical instant—the self-eluding moment that is never present—it is simultaneously more contracted than the smallest unit of actual time and more elongated than the entire circle of actuality. The present instantaneously gives rise to the event, and the truth of the event doubles—as a phantasm of the broken present (the past), and as the constellation of singularities that may be actualized in the present (the future). That is not to say that the event, once actualized, resembles its virtual counterpart, but rather that its movement is automatically doubled in the extracting moment of the quasi-cause. Deleuze remarks on the distancing mechanism of the quasi-cause when he writes,

But the event nonetheless retains an eternal truth upon the line of the Aion, which divides it eternally into a proximate past and an imminent future. The Aion endlessly subdivides the event and pushes away past as well as future, without ever rendering them less urgent.31

It is important to recall that the pure event never happens but is a confluence of forces, or jets of singularities that are perpetually displaced by the instantaneous machine of becoming. The garden of forking paths in Borges serves as a model for the line of Aion. Eternally proliferating incompossible series continue to fork as the empty form of time: the future. Depending upon the neighborhoods of proximity, one may initiate a line of flight that activates, say, a Karl Marx effect, which is actualized in a way that was never actually lived by Marx himself. The individualization of singularities along the line of Aion informs actual effects, which in turn reorients their virtual counterparts. The genesis of virtual events is static, as it divests all singularities of memory trace, while the virtual relations in sensation are characterized by a spatiotemporal dynamism of molecular duration. Meanwhile, both modes of becoming contingently destabilize

31 Ibid., 63.
individuated forms in the actual. And although Deleuze and Guattari focus more on the depth of bodies, or sensory becoming, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, it is essential to understand the integral relationship between the becoming of events, or what they will later discuss as “conceptual becoming,” and the becoming of sense. Too often, these two divergent processes of becoming are conflated in the secondary literature, which results in an “otherworldly” misreading of Deleuze. This very conflation is the central error in both Slavoj Žižek’s and Alain Badiou’s mischaracterization of Deleuze as a philosopher of the One. The absence of negation and lack does not result in monism. The processes of becoming diverge, whether they involve sensation or concepts, and although absolute flux applies to both, this plays out in vastly different ways. Think of the ritornello, a concept invented by Deleuze and Guattari, which is the eternal return oriented toward sensation, where baroque whirls and folds repeat as a matter of expression. Therefore, in sensation, the Nietzschean world of intensities unfettered by causal relations is maintained. Nietzsche’s disavowal of “causality” is also metaphysically maintained in absolute becoming, the appropriation of Nietzsche’s eternal return for the sake of difference. The two opposing temporal features of memory and forgetting are different tendencies of the same concept of becoming, since becoming is a multiplicity that corresponds to the plane upon which it is operating. In the realm of materiality we have the subversive sensory becoming of ontological memory; in the realm of ideas we have absolute becoming of ontological forgetting, yet the two are inexorably co-generative.

Deleuze makes forgetfulness ontological by posing it against the category of negation in representational thought. The eternal return escapes the trappings of negation through the force of active forgetting. Nietzsche, and therefore also Deleuze, posit forgetfulness against the memory complexes of duration to sidestep the act of negation, which relies upon the identity of essence in its operation. Without memory, there is nothing, or no “thing,” to negate. We are left with intensities, and ultimately, singularities that have lost all chains of association,
even at the molecular level. To reconnect to Leibniz’s calculus, this is the differential equation, where $dy/dx$ forces the terms to infinitely approach 0, always-already vanishing, while the relation itself remains determinable. The differential mechanism is the quasi-cause, and the molar memory of actual forms is expelled through the infinite splitting of the past and future in the self-differing eluded present. Absolute becoming, the function of counter-causality, creates a gap between the future and the past. It makes a ghost of duration and divides the past from the future in perpetuum, forcing all three syntheses of time to become according to the logical planes of their operation, whether in sensation or ideational events. An ordinate of the circle, the moment unwinds the circle of the past as a synthesis of the future. This is the portrait of Deleuze’s eternal return that is most prevalent in the secondary literature: the broken circle of time stretched out in a straight line. The third synthesis of time, or the future, finds its most exhaustive exposition in *Difference and Repetition*. The future is emptied of content, including all duration; it is the repetition of the unconditioned. By usurping the ground of the pure past, the third synthesis of time expresses the death of God and man, and appropriately, the destruction of all identity. The result is a metaphysical system, Nietzschean to the core, whereby aesthetic ontology replaces the judgment of Reason. Through the use of quasi-causality, the two inverted modes of becoming — sensory becoming and absolute becoming — constitute a world of pre-individual singularities, without negation, binary structures, or any of the trappings of Being. Unity, identity, duration (permanence), substance, cause, and materiality are unhinged from Reason in philosophy. In the end, Deleuze invents a logic of becoming that produces an aesthetic metaphysical system expressive of Nietzsche’s Dionysian world.