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*LIVING IN THE LAND OF THE DEAD: GEORGE ROMERO, GILLES DELEUZE,
AND THE QUESTION OF THE ZOMBIE*



It would seem that the living dead are ubiquitous these days. The last few years alone have produced such highly successful zombie films as *The Cabin in the Woods*;¹ the teenage 'romantic comedy' *Warm Bodies*;² and the apocalyptic adrenaline-fueled *World War Z*;³ in addition to a veritable smorgasbord of less commercially successful films. Then of course we would be remiss to overlook the stunning and steadily growing success of AMC's runaway television hit, *The Walking Dead*, which has increasingly attracted a far more demographically diverse following than the 'typical' zombie film traditionally has, and which recently aired its season four finale to record-high ratings.⁴

¹ *The Cabin in the Woods*, directed by Drew Goddard (2012; Santa Monica, CA: Lions Gate, 2012), DVD.

² *Warm Bodies*, directed by Jonathan Levine (2013; Universal City, CA: Summit Entertainment LLC, 2013), DVD.

³ *World War Z*, directed by Marc Forster (2013; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2013), DVD.

⁴ <http://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com/2014/03/31/the-walking-dead-season-4-finale-delivers-15-7-million-viewers-10-2-million-adults-18-49/249361/> (accessed on May 4, 2014).

Whether plumbing the depths of humanity's worst tendencies, exposing class inequalities, challenging our conceptions of 'otherness,' or simply calling forth our primal fear and adrenal responses for entertainment purposes, the zombie phenomenon is as pervasive now as it has ever been. Culturally, zombies are *everywhere*.

The overwhelming success of this genre—which far transcends any mere 'horror' fandom—is due almost entirely to George A. Romero who in 1968 practically single-handedly solidified in the Euro-American psyche the vision of the zombie that has remained more or less unchanged since.⁵ The film was of course *Night of the Living Dead*.⁶ Although Romero himself created the film with the most modest of intentions, hoping simply to produce a haunting and memorable drive-in thriller, the lead role casting of Duane Jones—an African-American politically activist graduate of the Sorbonne in Paris—destined the film for far greater and unforeseeable cultural relevance. *Night of the Living Dead's* startling explorations of racial and societal relations in late-1960s America were and remain undeniable and inescapable. Since then, Romero has continued to analyze and reflect the idiosyncrasies and hypocrisies of American culture, and Western culture generally, through the eyes of the living dead. At this task, Romero is to this day a formidable artist, masterfully striking a delicate balance between the farcically absurd revelry in shocking violence and gore, and the provocation of penetrating cultural self-analysis.

That same year (1968), across the Atlantic Ocean in Paris, another—arguably unrelated—'event' took place. This was the publication of Gilles Deleuze's *Différence et Répétition*,⁷ defended as the principal thesis for his *doctorat d'état* at the Sorbonne. Prior to this, Deleuze had published extensively, but pieces dedicated almost exclusively to the writings of other thinkers, both philosophers and literary figures: David Hume, Friedrich Nietzsche, Gilbert Simondon, Immanuel Kant, Marcel Proust, Henri Bergson, and Leopold Sacher-Masoch, along with Deleuze's secondary, historical thesis – on Benedict de Spinoza. *Difference and Repetition* is significant not only because it is Deleuze's first attempt at his own truly 'original'⁸ philosophy—as he says, "the first book in which I

⁵ This claim would have to be qualified, of course, in the sense that there have been many variations on the zombie motif, to be sure. Some of these variations have included the *source* of the zombie reanimation (viral, synthetic, etc.), the speed with which the zombies move (a slow, somewhat awkward and stumbling pace versus an intense animalistic charge), and the dietary preferences of the zombies (brains alone or human flesh more generally). Nonetheless, the general figure of the inexplicably reanimated corpse that feasts on the flesh of the living, and can only be killed by destroying the brain, this vision belongs to Romero. See Peter Dendle, *The Zombie Movie Encyclopedia* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2001), 6.

⁶ *Night of the Living Dead*, directed by George A. Romero (1968; New York, NY: The Weinstein Company, 2008), DVD.

⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968); *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

⁸ This comment also requires qualification. As is well known, for better or worse (depending upon one's tastes), Deleuze's 'commentaries' in the history of philosophy are themselves highly original expositions. He himself famously compared these works to a

tried to 'do philosophy'⁹; it is significant also in the sheer measure of its originality. Posing a monumental critique to the philosophical tradition's history of 'representation' and of representational thinking, *Difference and Repetition* offers a reformulation of the activity of thinking itself, along with a thoroughgoing ontology, arguably the first of its kind, rooted entirely in the notion of 'difference'; an ontology of becoming that, in addition to Deleuze's aforementioned forbears, incorporates elements from 1960s French philosophy of science and philosophy of mathematics into a powerfully sweeping vision of the whole of being. Alongside the 1960s works of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, *Difference and Repetition* remains one of the landmark texts of French post-structuralist theory. What then, does the one event have to do with the other? *What, indeed, has French post-structuralism to do with the zombie?*¹⁰

In 1983, Deleuze once again shocked the French intellectual world, when he published his now-famous *Cinéma I: l'Image-Mouvement*, which he followed in 1985 with *Cinéma II: l'Image-temps*.¹¹ Considering that, prior to this event, Deleuze had only mentioned in passing a handful of films in the context of larger arguments which were by and large unrelated to film, the *Cinema* texts are remarkable in that they demonstrate a deep and extensive knowledge of the entire history of the cinema. This knowledge includes a broad familiarity not only with the films themselves (French, Italian, German, Japanese, Russian, American, British, etc.), but also with the overall shifting trends in cinema, the styles and motivations of particular directors, the attitudes of specific directors towards their own crafts and their own works, and finally, the vast scope of critical and theoretical works, spanning over half a century, dedicated to the cinema. Deleuze, who had formerly exercised a profound level of agile conversance in Nietzsche, Bergson, Kant, Spinoza, and Marx, was now demonstrating an equally stunning level of comfort with Hitchcock, Chaplin, Kubrick, Welles, Tarkovsky, Resnais, Bazin, Mitry, and Eisenstein. The *Cinema* texts were interesting, moreover, not only for their demonstration of Deleuze's vast knowledge of the cinema; they were even more significant for the profound metaphysics they put forth. The task of the *Cinema* volumes is not simply to offer

sort of 'buggery': "I suppose the main way I coped with it at the time was to see the history of philosophy as a sort of buggery or (it comes to the same thing) immaculate conception. I saw myself as taking an author from behind and giving him a child that would be his own offspring, yet monstrous. It was really important for it to be his own child, because the author had to actually say all I had him saying. But the child was bound to be monstrous too, because it resulted from all sorts of shifting, slipping, dislocations, and hidden emissions that I really enjoyed." Gilles Deleuze, *Pourparlers* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1990); *Negotiations*, trans. Margin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 6.

⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, xv.

¹⁰ This is a paraphrase of a well-known rhetorical question, posed by Tertullian: "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" Tertullian, *De Praescriptione haereticorum*, ch. 7.

¹¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma I: l'Image-Mouvement* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1983); *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minnesota: The University of Minnesota Press, 1986); Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma II: l'Image-temps* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1985); *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minnesota: The University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

'readings' of various films that more or less 'apply' a pre-given philosophy, thereby turning the film into the handmaid of the text. Rather, Deleuze's project is to demonstrate what images themselves can *give* to philosophy; employing C.S. Peirce's taxonomy of signs, and fusing it with elements from Bergson's ontology of the image, Deleuze creates yet another, highly original vision of an ontology of thought and time.

In *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Deleuze explicitly employs the figure of the zombie, an embodiment of desubjectivized otherness, for the purpose of cinematically elucidating a reformulation, long at work in Deleuze's published writings, of the activity of philosophical thinking. This reformulation is a concept that Deleuze takes in part from Foucault—'the thought of the outside.' The thought of the outside, for Foucault and Deleuze, is the 'unthinkable' that lies at the heart of thinking; a violent shock to the interiority of the classical model of subjectivity, a shock that brings the thought of subjectivity into relation with the constitutive forces that engender it, thereby creating new possibilities for thinking. The unfolding that opens the subject to the force of the outside is always coupled with a folding that reconstitutes a new self-relation, in an oscillation akin to a movement between death and rebirth, or for our purposes, zombie and human.

Thus, this paper offers an objection, through the lenses of Deleuze's cinematic philosophy, to Romero's characterization of his own zombie films, that the zombies in his films are *merely* zombies, and that the only significant conceptual revelation in his films is the *human* response portrayed therein. Contrary to this, I argue that the *evolution* of the zombie in Romero's films, an evolution to which Romero himself points on numerous occasions, is evidence that in fact the zombies are themselves problematic, that they *do* play a central role to the conceptual unfolding of Romero's vision, namely, the zombies *mirror* the human; but, moreover, if the zombie mirrors the human, then the human also mirrors the zombie. Given then that the zombie and the human are reciprocal reflections of one another, when one takes into account the explicit¹² element of social critique that runs through Romero's films, coupled with the apparent mindlessness of the zombie character, what seems to be the case is that Romero's films are films about *thinking*, and more specifically, *the human inability to think*, with the zombie character embodying the 'unthinkable' that lies at the heart of thought. In order to build this case, we will take a detour through the nature of philosophical thought, and more specifically, through the notion, coming from the writings of Deleuze and Michel Foucault, of the "thought of the outside."

Romero and His Zombies

George Romero has never relinquished his assertion that the zombies in his films are nothing more than zombies. In a 1969 interview about *Night of the Living Dead*, Romero says, "I thought once you accept the outlandish premise then just concentrate on the little things that people would get involved in. I didn't want

¹² 'Explicit' in that Romero himself explicitly states that his films are meant to provoke cultural self-reflection.

to put any characters like a scientist, just regular people in a farmhouse, and what they would be in disagreement about.”¹³ As we now know, Romero abandons his commitment to include only ‘regular people’ in the film’s successors.¹⁴ Nevertheless, Romero’s assertion that his films are about the *people* in the situation, and not about the zombies, never goes away, as is revealed in this piece from a 2005 interview, given on the event of *Land of the Dead*’s release: “To me, the zombies have *always* just been zombies... My stories are about humans and how they react, or fail to react, or react stupidly. I’m pointing the finger at *us*, not the zombies.”¹⁵ The implication is that the zombies provide simply an embodiment of a crisis situation of unimaginable proportions, which reflect the human condition—through the human response—of the film’s particular historical and cultural *milieu*; even in moments when we ought most to band together and help one another, humanity by and large has the irrepressible tendency to recreate within the new, chaotic order of things—replete with the living dead—the very same conditions of division and oppression that structured the pre-zombie world, with the qualification that they are now intensified and rigidified by the sheer horror of the zombie epidemic. As Noël Carroll writes, remarking on *Night of the Living Dead*, “it signals that the humans are in danger of fighting among themselves when they can least afford to.”¹⁶ The *key* to watching Romero’s films then, if one wishes to grasp their underlying conceptual apparatus, is to focus on the *human response*. Do not attempt to metaphorize, psychoanalyze, or otherwise assess the *meaning* of the zombies, for there is none other to be had; or so Romero would have us believe.

Certainly, focusing attention solely on the *human response* affords no shortage of opportunity for reflection and analysis, as each of Romero’s zombie films highlights a somewhat different shade of the bleakness of the human being’s world (racism and poverty, self-alienating consumerism, rampant militarism, media corruption, human brutality, the compulsion to ‘master’ the dynamical sublime, the ubiquity of scientific authority, etc). But if we *do* focus exclusively on the human beings in this manner, we miss something essential at the heart of Romero’s films. After all, one need not employ *zombies* in order to present a portrayal of *unfathomable* shock to the system of thought; *any* disaster, if amplified to an extreme degree, could perform this task just as effectively, as could any random *monstrous* creature. But Romero’s films are *zombie* films, and a zombie is unique in its monstrosity, as it is a being who looks almost

¹³ “*Night of the Living Dead* – Inter/view with George A. Romero,” William Terry Ork and George Abagnalo/1969, in ed. Tony Williams, *George A. Romero: Interviews* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), 6.

¹⁴ There is a sense in which this claim is not, strictly speaking, true even of *Night of the Living Dead*, as it includes televised interview ‘attempts’ with scientists (Romero’s famous cameo appearance as a Washington reporter), and media reports of speculations on the causes of the reanimation of the dead. Not to mention that the ‘lynch mob’ at the end is led by a local sheriff, who gives the force of law to unmitigated, untempered violence. Already in *Night of the Living Dead*, the proverbial ‘powers that be’ play a role.

¹⁵ <http://www.vanityfair.com/online/oscars/2010/05/george-romero> (accessed May 8, 2014).

¹⁶ Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 141.

indistinguishably like a human being, and is all the more haunting and unsettling for this very fact. Therefore, to myopically turn the gaze *away from* the zombie and focus exclusively on the human beings in the films is to watch only a portion of the film, as the zombie is of integral importance to a *zombie* film, despite what Romero asserts in his interviews throughout his career.

Indeed, it appears as though Romero is, at least in some sense, aware of this fact. For example, in each of his films there is at least one instance of a familiar character from the film who, having died, emerges from death as a zombie.¹⁷ This device is particularly effective and disturbing—the innumerable anonymous zombies in the films notwithstanding, there is nevertheless something compelling and horrifying about seeing a character whose personal identity has become familiar to the viewer, rise as a zombie. It cannot *but* evoke comparisons between the human and the zombie. As Kim Paffenroth writes, “But what makes zombies more terrifying than other monsters is that this confusing resemblance of zombies to normal people never goes away.”¹⁸

Moreover, Romero’s own representation and understanding of the zombie figure constantly effaces itself, often within the context of a single film. Against the view of the zombie as an aimlessly entranced figure, acting solely out of primal instinct, (a characterization that is often emphasized by those ‘in power’ or ‘in the know’ in Romero’s films—scientists, professors, police, military, etc.), the viewer frequently sees the zombie engaging in very human-like activities. Throughout *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), for instance, the news reports convey that the creatures appear to be in a *kind of trance*, which would lend support to the standard, anthropocentric understanding of the zombie, wandering slowly and listlessly, without passion or urgency, toward the living. Yet, we also see these same creatures using rocks to shatter car windows, employing blunt objects in an effort to penetrate the farmhouse, and at one point using a spade shovel to stab a woman to death; these are all activities that demonstrate rudimentary *problem-solving* skills and tool usage, traditionally considered to be distinctively human behaviors.

When we come to *Dawn of the Dead* a decade later (1978), this apparently dichotomous depiction of an insuperable gap between human and zombie is

¹⁷ In *Dawn of the Dead* there is a particularly revelatory moment of this event. Roger, having been bitten by a zombie while working with Peter to block the mall entrances with delivery trucks, wiles away his twilight hours in a back room, with Peter there as his friend and support. Roger specifically requests of Peter that when he has passed, Peter shoot him, *before* he can return as a zombie. As Kim Paffenroth notes, “Roger also gives Peter the ultimate honor, as well as the most horrible responsibility, by asking him to swear to shoot him before he can come back as a zombie.” Kim Paffenroth, *Gospel of the Living Dead: George Romero’s Visions of Hell on Earth* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 63. However, after Roger expires, Peter patiently waits, until the moment when Roger *does* reanimate, and begins to rise from the cot, before putting him down; as if to suggest that even in *death*, until the moment that the being emerges as a zombie, it is still a human, worthy of respect. See also, *Dawn of the Dead*, directed by George A. Romero (1978; Beverly Hills, CA: Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2004), DVD.

¹⁸ Paffenroth, *Gospel of the Living Dead*, 9.

more rigidly asserted, but then once again effaced. Doctor Millard Rausch claims, "There are reports of these creatures using tools. But even these actions are the most primitive. The use of external articles as bludgeons and so forth. I will point out to you that even animals will adopt the basic use of tools in this manner. These creatures are nothing but pure, motorized, instinct. We must not be lulled by the concept that these are our family members or our friends. They are not. They will not respond to such emotions. They must be destroyed on sight!"¹⁹ At the same time, however, the zombie's reflections of the human in *Dawn of the Dead* grow more salient as well. In one scene, as the male protagonists are running through a J.C. Penney store, one of the zombies poses in a still position, appearing almost mannequin-esque, suddenly leaping forth and grabbing hold of Roger, and wrestling him to the ground. There is, moreover, a moment of what appears to be mutual recognition between human and zombie, when Fran sits gazing through the J.C. Penney glass at the zombified baseball player, who is likewise gazing back at her—without aggressivity, without the slightest attempt to reach her—a moment of reciprocal observation. Finally, it is in *Dawn of the Dead* that we encounter for the first time one of the zombies picking up a gun. Wrestling it from the hands of Roger as they are trying to close the glass gates to the J.C. Penney store, he carries it throughout the remainder of the film, attempting at various moments to *point* it, and ultimately trading it for Peter's rifle at the end of the film.

In *Day of the Dead* (1985),²⁰ one of the dominant, (if not *the* dominant) storylines is the *evolution* of the zombie, with a highlighted role occupied by "Bub," the zombie that Dr. Logan is attempting to *civilize* and *control*. In one scene, Bub strokes a razor across his face, as he stares in recognition at his reflection in a mirror across the room. In a film that achieves almost cartoonish levels of violence and gore, and one that is, by and large, bereft of human sentiment, (arguably the most mechanized and 'institutional' of Romero's original trilogy), the one strikingly moving scene in the film is the moment when, having discovered Dr. Logan's lifeless body, Bub mourns, his shoulders sinking in despair, and then wildly whips his chain back and forth in anger. It is following this scene that Bub shoots Captain Rhodes (the first time one of the zombies actually *shoots* a gun), leaving him at the mercy of the zombies, even saluting as he is dragged away, in what may be a depiction of sarcasm. The Bub character, according to Romero is *central* to the film: "Yeah, even though Sarah's character (acted by Lori Cardille) represents the audience. Everything happens through her eyes. But in terms of the films collectively, I think Bub's the key. He ain't nothin' more than a misunderstood monster!"²¹ Bub, the emblem of zombie evolution, is the key, Romero claims, not just to *Day of the Dead*, but to its two predecessors as well.

Finally, Romero in 2005, following a two-decades-long hiatus from the genre

¹⁹ *Dawn of the Dead*, Romero, 1978.

²⁰ *Day of the Dead*, directed by George A. Romero (1985; Beverly Hills, CA: Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2004), DVD.

²¹ "George Romero on Directing *Day of the Dead*," Paul Gagne, 1985, in ed. Tony Williams, *George Romero: Interviews*, 103.

which he helped to create, returned with *Land of the Dead*, of all his films the one most engaged with an 'evolution' of the zombie.²² Once again, there is a zombie 'hero' of the film, this time an African-American former gas station owner, named in the film, 'Big Daddy.' Big Daddy is a leader of the zombie group, who gives commands to the other zombies, who trains them to use weapons (including guns), who shows them how to penetrate fortresses, etc. In one of his grand displays of intelligence, Big Daddy utilizes a gas pump in a parking garage to douse a vehicle with fuel, inside and out, in order to kill the 'villain,' Kaufman,²³ who is trapped inside, before Big Daddy ascends the garage ramp and rolls a makeshift Molotov cocktail down the ramp, causing a massive explosion and killing Kaufman. In the film's final moments, as the zombie clan makes its way up the ramp out of the garage, Big Daddy pauses, looking across the garage at Riley, (the film's human 'hero'), in what appears to be a moment of mutual understanding, before Big Daddy solemnly turns his head and makes his way up the ramp. At this point, Pretty Boy has the opportunity to fire on and kill Big Daddy and his accompanying zombies, but Riley says to her, "No... They're just looking for a place to go... same as us..."²⁴ *Land of the Dead*, therefore, gives us the best possible glimpse into the vision of George Romero, and his use of the zombie in manifesting this vision. In a 2005 interview on Romero's *Land of the Dead*, Romero says, "If you look at my other films, it begins at the end of 'Dawn.' The zombie drags a gun around for the whole movie and then at the very end grabs the hero's gun and decides that's better... Then in 'Day of the Dead' there's a zombie named Bub who actually shoots the villain in the end. He's this very sympathetic guy... Now in this film when Big Daddy does it, there's other zombies that come around and imitate the behavior."²⁵ Romero, therefore, is aware of the significance of this zombie evolution. In other words, at the same point in his career, 2005, that Romero is reasserting his unwavering stance that *the zombies are merely zombies*, he also claims, echoing the 1985 interview surrounding the release of *Day of the Dead*, that an essential element of his films lies in the evolution of his zombies, and this evolution reaches a crescendo in *Land of the Dead*. As Manohla Dargis writes, "With each of Mr. Romero's zombie movies, the walking dead have grown progressively more human while the living have slowly lost touch with their humanity."²⁶ Romero's zombies, then, cannot be *merely zombies*, regardless of Romero's repeated insistences.

At this time, let us turn to the conceptual apparatus which will help us in working out some understanding of what Romero's zombies embody. This conceptual apparatus will be taken, as we have said, from the philosophy of

²² *Land of the Dead*, directed by George A. Romero (2005; Universal City, CA: Universal Studios, 2005), DVD.

²³ Kaufman is played by film legend, Dennis Hopper.

²⁴ *Land of the Dead*, Romero, 2005.

²⁵ <http://movies.about.com/od/landofthedeath/a/deadgr062105.htm> (accessed May 8, 2014).

²⁶ Manohla Dargis, "Not Just Roaming, Zombies Rise Up: Review of *Land of the Dead*," *The New York Times*, June 24, 2005.

http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/24/movies/24rome.html?_r=1& (accessed May 8, 2014).

Gilles Deleuze.

The Virtual and the Actual

As we have mentioned, in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze attempts to formulate a thoroughgoing ontology, based completely on the notion of 'difference,' or what we might call 'productive relationality.' An integral component to such a reformulation of ontology is a reconsideration of the very meaning of 'condition' and the nature of such notions as 'genesis' and 'constitution.' How, in other words, are we to think the conditions of experience? More fundamentally, what is the meaning of 'condition', and how are we to think it?

To this end, Deleuze, borrowing from Henri Bergson, offers the paradigm of the 'virtual' and the 'actual', as a way of surpassing the traditional distinction between the 'possible' and the 'real.' The virtual serves as the genetic *ground* of the actual in Deleuze's ontology, as the possible has traditionally been conceived as the genetic ground of the real. However, unlike its traditional analogue, the possible, the virtual is not meant to be understood as a conceptual or ideal abstraction from or doubling of the real; the virtual is itself *real*, every bit as *real* as the actual. In *Difference and Repetition*, the virtual-actual account focuses primarily on the organic, on the constitutive, differential relations of forces (virtual) out of which the 'givenness' of the empirical world (actual) emerges. To characterize the relation between the virtual and the actual, Deleuze employs another conceptual distinction: the differentiation-differenciation distinction: "Whereas differentiation determines the virtual content of the Idea as problem, differenciation expresses the actualization of this virtual and the constitution of solutions (by local integrations)."²⁷ The Idea is, for Deleuze, the *material* of the virtual, the problematic multiplicity of differential relations, each of which is periplicated, ultimately, with all others. What Deleuze calls *differenciation* is the perpetual restructuring and redetermination of the virtual. On the basis of these configurations, the virtual is *actualized*, and the actualization is analogous to *solving* the problem. This actualization is itself the result of a *process of differing*, which Deleuze also calls *differenciation*. "In this regard, four terms are synonymous: actualize, differentiate, integrate, and solve."²⁸

Connecting the virtual to the actual is what Deleuze calls the *singularity*: "On the one hand, complete determination carries out the differentiation of singularities, but it bears only upon their existence and their distribution. The nature of these singular 'points' is specified only by the form of the neighboring integral curves—in other words, by virtue of the actual or differentiated species and spaces."²⁹ The singularity, for Deleuze, is the differential *element*, or *difference-in-itself*, known as the *intensity*, which he says is an *implicated multiplicity*;³⁰ an elemental imbalance or difference incapable of changing its quantity without

²⁷ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 209.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 211.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 210.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 244.

thereby changing its nature. For Deleuze, the virtual *differentiates singularities*, but only with respect to their existence and distribution. The virtual constitutes these singular intensities, but as they combine and reconfigure with other intensities in various series and systems, they are themselves reciprocally determinative. In other words, the intensities borne by the virtual are themselves teeming with vitality, and the actual is itself, on Deleuze's understanding, vibrant and vital.

In *The Time-Image*, the account of the virtual and the actual, though no less ontological in nature, is presented imagistically. The virtual for Bergson is memory itself, the past, but as both the *condition of* and as persistently *co-present with* the *present* itself. The past for Bergson does not slip into non-being; rather, it continues to shape and to inhabit, at each moment of its passage, the present itself. The 'virtual' serves, therefore, as the *ground* of the actual, (or the present perception), but, as is the case with memory itself, the virtual is also the *reflection* of the actual. A time-image for Deleuze, what he at this juncture calls a 'hyalosign,' will therefore be an image that in some way brings the actual into direct, indiscernible contact with the virtual, as this is the very being of time itself—the contraction of the past within the present. To give some indication of where this line of thinking will take us, we can say that, given the evolution of Romero's zombies, given that they progressively become more and more 'human', the zombie is a virtual human, and likewise, the human is a virtual zombie; taken together, therefore, Romero's zombie-human relation offers us a 'hyalosign'. But in order to argue this case, let us consider Deleuze's conception of thought, by first addressing the position against which Deleuze is arguing, what he calls 'the dogmatic image of thought.'

The Dogmatic Image of Thought

As we have mentioned, Deleuze's project is deeply engaged with the question of what it means to think. Martin Heidegger famously writes, "*Most thought-provoking in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking.*"³¹ Deleuze agrees, locating this incapacitation or sedimentation in a fundamentally *reactive* conception of the nature of thought itself, which in its various forms would seek to limit, restrain, confine, or constrain the activity of thinking. Despite its self-conception as the *presuppositionless* science, and even in its most seemingly radical and transformative moments, philosophy seems incapable of escaping the model of the circle: the presupposition that thought can only *recognize* what was already there in the beginning. To answer Meno's paradox, Socrates argues that all knowledge is gained by way of *recollection* of true beliefs, all of which are contained within the soul.³² Descartes, after doubting the veracity of all of his beliefs, relies upon the presuppositions of self and thought to buy it all back: "it is presumed that everyone knows, independently of concepts, what is meant by self, thinking, and being."³³ Edmund Husserl rejects the traditional, puncti-linear

³¹ Martin Heidegger, *Was Heisst Denken* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1954); *What is Called Thinking?*, trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1968), 6.

³² Plato, *Meno*, 80d-86c.

³³ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 129.

model of time, only to reinstate it with his notion of the *primal impression*, a punctuated *now* which he calls the *source-point* of retention;³⁴ and Heidegger himself explicitly invokes a *pre-ontological* understanding of being, relying upon the image of the *circle* in his explication of *Dasein*.³⁵ The philosophical conception of thought is in fact founded upon a “pre-philosophical and natural Image of thought, borrowed from the pure element of common sense.”³⁶ That there is assumed a fundamental framework to the activity of thinking, a body of content that *everybody knows* has, according to Deleuze, perennially been the crippling stroke of philosophical endeavor, that which prevents thinking from fulfilling its transformative function: “We may call this image of thought a dogmatic, orthodox, or moral image.”³⁷

The notion of a *dogmatic image of thought* marks Deleuze’s work from his first published book on Nietzsche,³⁸ and it plays a central role in *Difference and Repetition*. The dogmatic image of thought consists of three key elements: common sense, good sense, and a method of thinking. “Common sense,” Deleuze says, is understood “under the double aspect of a *good will on the part of the thinker* and an *upright nature on the part of thought*.”³⁹ Thought has a natural affinity with *truth*, and the thinker naturally loves and desires truth, or, “All men by nature desire to know.”⁴⁰ It is for this reason that *everybody knows* what it means to think. The reciprocal component to common sense is *good sense*, “the capacity for thought,”⁴¹ the presupposed ability that thought naturally possesses to *attain* truth. Thinking, it is held, is the *natural exercise* of the faculty of thought, which is understood to be the unity of all the other faculties, centralized in a single and unified *subject*.⁴² Common sense dictates that the faculty of thought naturally desires truth, while good sense declares that it is essentially capable of attaining it. Thought, therefore, is “naturally sound,”⁴³ inherently pure, and morally upright.⁴⁴

³⁴ See Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins* (1893-1917). *Husserliana Band X* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1992); *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* (1893-1917), trans. John Barnett Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992), 70.

³⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1927); *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 195.

³⁶ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 131.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ See Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962); *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 103-110.

³⁹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 131.

⁴⁰ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book I, Part I.

⁴¹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 132.

⁴² Here it is worth noting that Descartes, in the second *Meditation*, explicitly clusters together doubting, understanding, affirming, denying, willing, wanting, refusing, imagining, and sensing, under the banner of ‘thinking.’

⁴³ Paul Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, (New York: Routledge, 2000), 18.

⁴⁴ Here we should note that in Kant, this is made explicit, when in *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, he directly argues that morality is inseparable from rationality.

Nevertheless, and in spite of the assumption of thought's *natural affinity with truth*, philosophers almost without exception have held that *truth* is very difficult to attain, and most human beings are simply not up to the task. For Christianity, this is because human nature is *fallen* and corrupt. For Platonism, it is because our soul is constituted not only by reason, but also by spirit and appetites. For Descartes, it is because our will, being infinite, exceeds our judgment which is finite. If truth is understood as the natural object of thought, then its natural enemy is *error*. The thinker is led astray in her activity of thinking when she allows forces, external to the faculty of thought itself, "(body, passions, sensuous interests)"⁴⁵ to infiltrate the act of thinking and contaminate it with what is foreign to it. Error then, or the failure to reach or isolate the truth, is understood as "the effect, in thought as such, of external forces which are opposed to thought."⁴⁶ What is therefore required in order to keep the activity of thinking on the *straight and narrow path* towards truth is an explicit and meticulously formulated *method*.

The method, Deleuze claims, is founded upon the model of recognition, understood as "the harmonious exercise of all the faculties upon a supposed same object: the same object may be seen, touched, remembered, imagined, or conceived."⁴⁷ Here we can think of Descartes' famous wax example in the second *Meditation*, that "it is of course the same wax which I see, which I touch, which I picture in my imagination, in short the same wax which I thought it to be from the start."⁴⁸ Alternatively, we may consider one of the perennial objects of philosophical affection: the truths of mathematics; $7 + 5 = 12$, for example. What makes this proposition true, I *recognize*, is that in virtue of the meanings of the terms involved, the solution holds. Furthermore, it is undeniably certain to any other rational subject who, like myself, understands the meanings of the terms and symbols involved. Moreover, it would be true, *even if there were no rational subjects at all to recognize the meanings of the respective terms and symbols*. A *question*, on this model is akin to the kind of question posed to the schoolchild on an exam: "On what date did Japanese forces bomb Pearl Harbor?" "What is the square root of 144?" Etc. The *solution* to the question, the dogmatic image holds, is one that is indeed accessible - even if it is not currently known - to all who would embark faithfully upon the path to knowledge. As Paul Patton notes, knowledge in the model of recognition "is understood in terms of solutions to particular puzzles or problems which can be expressed in propositional form."⁴⁹ In this mode philosophical argumentation proceeds by way of a series of *premises* (which the philosopher believes the reader will *recognize*, *prima facie*, to be true), to a conclusion, (which, given the recognition of the truth of the premises and the validity of the argument, is, in the end, equally *recognizable*). Recognition thus unites the presupposition of the *identity* of the object of knowledge (not only for *myself* but for all other rational subjects) and the *identity* of the subject (insofar as I adhere strictly to the established method of avoiding error); it unites common

⁴⁵ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 103.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 133.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* Here, Deleuze cites this passage from the second *Meditation*.

⁴⁹ Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, 20.

sense and good sense, “the two halves of the *doxa*.”⁵⁰

Deleuze’s criticisms of the dogmatic image of thought are not that it is *false* or *in error*, per se, as recognition has its uses. Rather, it is the case that - for Deleuze - *thinking* designates something more transformative and revolutionary. His criticisms are therefore as follows: (1) If the *beginning* of philosophy is indeed the *elimination of all presuppositions*,⁵¹ (and Deleuze thinks that it is), the dogmatic image of thought, (insofar as it presupposes certain restrictions on the activity of thinking) fails to accomplish this. If, moreover, the task of philosophy is the overturning of the *doxa* (and Deleuze thinks that it is), then adhering to a philosophical *orthodoxy*, (however institutionalized, however traditional, it may be), is in fact antithetical to the practice of philosophy: “The supposed three levels – a naturally upright thought, an in principle natural common sense, and a transcendental model of recognition – can constitute only an ideal orthodoxy. Philosophy is left without means to realize its project of breaking with *doxa*”;⁵² (2) Recognition as the model of thinking fundamentally serves as a justification for systems of oppression currently in vogue. Throughout history the most horrific acts have almost always been founded upon the assertion of *everybody knows*. For instance, at various moments in time, *everybody knew* that people of African descent were naturally inferior to people of European descent; that Jews were parasitic greed-mongers; that women were naturally emotional creatures, incapable of thinking or behaving rationally; that non-human animals could not feel pain, and so forth. In the United States today, *everybody knows* that the solution to gun violence is the expansion of accessibility to guns; that market competition is synonymous with democracy; that an Iraqi civilian’s life is worth less in the grand scheme of things than the life of an American; that America was founded upon the teachings of the Bible; that socialism is a failed experiment; etc. A great many atrocities and tyrannies have been perpetrated in history in the name of principles that *everybody knows*; (3) Finally, and most fundamentally, it ignores other modes and possibilities of thought, such as malevolence, madness, and stupidity. From the perspective of the dogmatic image of thought, madness and stupidity can only be conceived as empirical, inessential, and accidental states of the subject. They are understood as conditioned by forces *external* to thinking. Hence, “The sole effect of these forces in thought is then assimilated precisely to error, which is supposed in principle to include all the effects of factual external causes”⁵³; yet, schizophrenia *is* a way in which thought occurs; stupidity *is* a way in which thought (unfortunately, quite frequently) occurs. The dogmatic image is thus an account of thought, which deliberately and explicitly fails to take note of some of the most common types of thought, that is to say, of anything that undermines its already accepted understanding of what thought is: “Cowardice, cruelty, baseness and stupidity are not simply corporeal capacities or traits of character or society; they are structures of thought as such. The transcendental landscape comes to life: places for the tyrant, the slave and the imbecile must be found within it – without the place resembling the figure who

⁵⁰ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 134.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 134.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 149.

occupies it..."⁵⁴ The transcendental must not *resemble* the empirical, for if it does, then, just as Philo explains in *Part IV* of Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, it (the transcendental) is nothing more than an imagined *double* or *copy* of the empirical. The transcendental then would also require its own explanation and therefore it explains nothing at all. (Correlatively this also factors into Deleuze's rejection of the 'possible'). A truly philosophical conception of thinking must take into account "the real forces that *form* thought..."⁵⁵ the forces that make possible not only recognition, but also the myriad forms of what we call *error*: "The reduction of stupidity, malevolence and madness to the single figure of error must therefore be understood to occur in principle—whence the hybrid character of this weak concept which would not have a place within pure thought if thought were not diverted from without, and would not be occasioned by this outside if the outside were not within pure thought."⁵⁶ The dogmatic image of thought, taking no notice of this *outside*, guides almost all of what we think and do, and for Deleuze, what is crucial is that *we do not recognize it*. Fundamental then to genuine, revolutionary 'thinking,' is the opening of the self to this outside, which serves as the very conditions of thinking and of subjectivity for Deleuze. This brings us to the "thought of the outside," a notion inspired by Foucault.

The Thought of the Outside

Michel Foucault's 1966 essay, titled, "The Thought of the Outside," is dedicated to the writings of Maurice Blanchot. This essay has received little scholarly attention in the United States,⁵⁷ likely because the larger part of Foucault's work deals so extensively with archaeologies and genealogical analyses of institutions of power and knowledge. However, this essay is arguably one of the more significant among Foucault's work from a theoretical or programmatic

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁵⁵ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 103.

⁵⁶ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 149.

⁵⁷ With a few exceptions; most notably, Leonard Lawlor's most recent book is oriented entirely around this theme. Leonard Lawlor, *Early Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), esp. 174-202. If I am not mistaken, the original sub-title of Lawlor's book was to be, "Toward the Outside." I am deeply indebted to Leonard Lawlor for turning me on to this essay in the Fall, 2005 seminar at the University of Memphis, titled, "Recent Continental Philosophy." Another noteworthy example is in Miller's biography of Foucault, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, where, on p. 153, he writes that this essay in particular provides a key to understanding some of the more enigmatic passages of *The Order of Things*, which is without question one of the so-called 'canonical' texts of the Foucaultian faithful. See also, Gary Gutting, *Foucault: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 17-18. The essay does not, however, figure prominently in many other scholarly works on Foucault, both American and internationally. For instance, Todd May, *The Philosophy of Foucault* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006); Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Béatrice Han, *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical*, trans. Edward Pile (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Rudi Visker, *Michel Foucault: Genealogy as Critique*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1995).

perspective. For the shift away from the orthodoxy of Foucault's day, "a Hegelianism permeated with phenomenology and existentialism, centered on the theme of the unhappy consciousness,"⁵⁸ entailed a movement of the decentering of the subject, a movement for which Foucault found in Blanchot⁵⁹ a primary source of inspiration: "Blanchot..." Foucault claims, represented, "First, an invitation to call into question the category of the subject, its supremacy, its foundational function. Second, the conviction that such an operation would be meaningless if it remained limited to speculation. Calling the subject in question meant that one would have to experience something leading to its actual destruction, its decomposition, its explosion, its conversion into something else."⁶⁰ Thus, it seems likely, given Foucault's assertion of Blanchot's centrality to his thinking, that the essay on Blanchot is more than a mere literary foray for an intellectual whose work otherwise involves mostly analyses of an historico-philosophical (indeed, political) sort. Secondly, (and more importantly for our purposes), Deleuze holds this essay in very high regard, seeing it as the linchpin that holds together the entirety of Foucault's work: "In truth, one thing haunts Foucault—thought. The question: 'What does thinking signify? What do we call thinking?' is the arrow first fired by Heidegger and then again by Foucault. He writes a history, but a history of thought as such."⁶¹ With this in mind, Deleuze's textual engagement with Foucault begins by connecting the early works (the 'archaeologies')⁶² to the 'middle' works (the 'genealogies')⁶³ by way of Foucault's 1969 text *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Then from there, he builds to the concluding reading of *The Use of Pleasure* (1984), tying together the works from 1961-1976 with Foucault's final works of 1984 through an engagement with the question of *power*, which is inherently tied, for Deleuze, to the thought of the outside.⁶⁴ Put more succinctly, this brief 1966 essay is seen by Deleuze as engendering the shift in Foucault's thought that takes place between the early works on power and knowledge and the final works on ethics. Let us look to Foucault's essay.

⁵⁸ Michel Foucault, "Interview with Michel Foucault," in ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley, et. al. *The Essential Works of Foucault: 1954-1984, Volume 3: Power*, series ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 2000), 246.

⁵⁹ Along with Georges Bataille and Friedrich Nietzsche.

⁶⁰ Foucault, "Interview with Michel Foucault," 247.

⁶¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1986); *Foucault*, trans. Seán Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 116.

⁶² Michel Foucault, *L'histoire de la Folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), originally published as *Folie et déraison* (Paris: Plon, 1961); *History of Madness*, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (London and New York: Routledge, 2006); Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la Clinique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963); *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1973); *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966); *The Order of Things*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1973).

⁶³ Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et Punir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975); *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977); Michel Foucault, *La volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976); *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

⁶⁴ The chapter on the thought of the outside is chapter 4 in a 5-chapter book.

Central to the essay is the notion that to think the being of language opens the subject to a radical exteriority that threatens its own undoing. The title of the essay's first section is, "I Lie, I Speak," and the centrality of the *I* indicates the centrality of the Cartesian subject as the point of departure. The statement *I speak* is an ostensibly unproblematic statement. There is no content or object about which I might possibly be mistaken in my assertion; the subject, 'I,' acts merely as a place-holder for the act of speaking, so I cannot be wrong with respect to the speaker either. To say that I am speaking entails its own truth. "It is therefore true, undeniably true, that I am speaking when I say that I am speaking."⁶⁵ Here we must hear the echoes of Descartes who, in the second *Meditation*, writes, "I must finally conclude that this proposition, *I am, I exist*, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind."⁶⁶ While the Cartesian subject relies upon the interiority of thought, the expression of the Foucaultian subject is founded upon the *exteriorization* of language itself in its operation.

However these two subjectivities are in no way comparable or interchangeable. In the articulation of the phrase *I speak*, there is an implied recipient, and an implied referent or object—*I speak to you about x...* However, as Foucault notes, in the formulation *I speak*, the discourse that would serve as our object is absent. The assertion itself is isolated to its essential core, *speaking speaking*. But as a result, the being of language itself takes center stage, and the "slight and singular point" into which we had crystallized the *speaking of speaking* opens into the endless dissemination of possibility and referentiality, of which language is divested each time an *I* attempts to communicate a subjective meaning to a *you*. Foucault writes, "Any possibility of language dries up in the transitivity of its execution. The desert surrounds it."⁶⁷ The assertion: *I speak*, indeed points to a referent, but in its absence, this *referentiality* entails an infinite openness of the *I speak*. It points the subject to an *I-know-not-what*. The thought of this assertion thus highlights a dimension of the being of language, wherein a *speaking about speaking* is laid bare and language is understood in its pure form, as "an unfolding of pure exteriority."⁶⁸ This understanding of language, wherein the communicative function of language is suspended, is a thought of the subject where the subject is no longer the *sovereign* bearer, responsible for the communicative enactment of meaning, but rather, the *nothing* or the *void* through which this infinite outpouring flows. Thus, while the Cartesian subject is a self-contained, self-identical *Cogito*, standing as the locus and guarantor of truth, the Foucaultian subject is here revealed as nothing more than its own disappearance:

⁶⁵ Michel Foucault, *La pensée du dehors*, in *Critique* 229 (June, 1966); "The Thought of the Outside," trans. Brian Massumi, in *The Essential Works of Foucault: 1954-1984, Volume 2: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, 148.

⁶⁶ René Descartes, *Meditationes de prima philosophia, in qua Dei existential et animae immortalitas demonstratur* (Paris: Apud Michaellem Soly, 1641); *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Volume II*, translated by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 17.

⁶⁷ Foucault, "The Thought of the Outside," 148.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

"... 'I speak' runs counter to 'I think.' 'I think' led to the indubitable certainty of the 'I' and its existence; 'I speak,' on the other hand, distances, disperses, effaces that existence and lets only its empty emplacement appear."⁶⁹

The being of language only allows itself to be shown with the death of the subject, in all of its traditional and residual forms. This, however, requires a *new mode of thought*, "perhaps through a form of thought whose still vague possibility was sketched by Western culture in its margins. A thought that stands outside subjectivity, setting its limits as though from without, articulating its end, making its dispersion shine forth, taking in only its invincible absence...a thought that, in relation to the interiority of our philosophical reflection and the positivity of our knowledge, constitutes what in a phrase we might call 'the thought of the outside.'"⁷⁰

The outside is conceived as an absolute outside, radically exterior to the interiority of the subject, and along with it, to any interiority at all. It has no interior *essence* or positive presence of its own that a sovereign subject might hope to master or possess within the domain of her own subjectivity, a self-contained *interiority* that I, in the self-contained interiority of my subjectivity, bear. Nor can I, strictly speaking, hope to *enter* the outside either. For to do so would entail two interiorities forbidden by the thought of the outside: (1) The interior nature of the outside itself, into which I will have presumably now passed; (2) The interiority of the I who has apparently maintained its integrity in the passage to the outside. The I is always "irremediably outside the outside."⁷¹ One can only experience the outside by *becoming-other*.

But insofar as one *suffers*—"in emptiness and destitution—the presence of the outside"⁷² and its *irremediable* exteriority, the outside must, at least in a certain sense, be *within* the I. But this *within the I* cannot be the Cartesian or phenomenological subject, characterized by its pure interiority. Rather, the experience of the outside is precisely the constant experience of my own undoing, which opens the subject up to the relations of forces which engender it, as Deleuze says, the outside "within pure thought."⁷³

This is why, for Foucault, the thought of the outside reveals the two-sided, infinite oscillation of death and origin: "The pure outside of the origin, if that is indeed what language is eager to greet, never solidifies into a penetrable and immobile positivity; and the perpetually rebegun outside of death, although carried toward the light by the essential forgetting of language, never sets the limit at which truth would finally begin to take shape."⁷⁴ To push thought to the outside is to bring oneself and one's subjectivity into explicit relation with the forces of thinking which constitute one's own subjectivity. It is to make possible,

⁶⁹ Ibid., 149.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 150.

⁷¹ Ibid., 154.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 149.

⁷⁴ Michel Foucault, "The Thought of the Outside," 168.

to welcome even, the constant death and rebirth of oneself, to welcome one's own undoing with the promise of *becoming-other*. "When language is revealed to be the reciprocal transparency of the origin and death, every single existence receives, through the simple assertion 'I speak,' the threatening promise of its own disappearance, its future appearance."⁷⁵

Folding: Back to the Inside

The second pole of this oscillation—rebirth—is what will ultimately be significant for Foucault, (and for Deleuze). This is the process whereby one finds the "full, positive power of the individual as such."⁷⁶ This emphasis, a preoccupation present at least as early as *Difference and Repetition*, is what is absolutely crucial. The unfolding that opens the interiority of the subject to the force of the outside is always coupled with a folding that bends and reshapes force back upon itself into a new self-relation: "the theme which has always haunted Foucault is that of the double. But the double is never a projection of the interior; on the contrary, it is an interiorization of the outside. It is not a doubling of the One, but a redoubling of the Other. It is not a reproduction of the Same, but a repetition of the Different. It is not the emanation of an 'I', but something that places in immanence an always other or a Non-self. It is never the other who is a double in the doubling process, it is a self that lives me as the double of the other."⁷⁷

Power for Foucault, (as for Deleuze), is purely relational—it is nothing more than relations between forces; as such it is never singular, but always essentially multiple. Moreover, "every relation between forces is a 'power relation'."⁷⁸ Power therefore has no essentiality or substantiality by which it might be definable. It is not a badge of authority that some possess and others do not. Instead power, insofar as it is purely relational, "passes through the hands of the mastered no less than through the hands of the masters... A profound Nietzscheanism."⁷⁹ Power produces its own truths, its own self-justifying discourses, its "strata," or "historical formations, positivities, or empiricities."⁸⁰

One's own subjectivity, (and hence, the corpus of the *everybody knows* with which one is inculcated), always begins as a constituted element in the nexus of these stratified formations. Therefore thought always seeks, however disruptive or revolutionary it may appear, to justify the strata themselves if it remains *within the context of these strata*. This is why, according to Deleuze, the antiquated notion of *free will* is always merely a reactionary abstraction. Within the constituted system, one may of course be *free* to do what one *wills*, but the more interesting and relevant question, (almost always ignored in discussions of *liberty*), for Deleuze and for Foucault with regard to *freedom*, is *why one wills what one does*.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 258.

⁷⁷ Deleuze, *Foucault*, 98.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 70.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 71.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 47.

For Deleuze and Foucault, one wills what one wills precisely because the system has constituted it to do so—our desires are not our own. “But the outside concerns force: if force is always in relation with other forces, forces necessarily refer to an irreducible outside which no longer has any form and is made up of distances that cannot be broken down through which one force acts upon another or is acted upon by another.”⁸¹ The strata themselves are rigidified *forms*,⁸² sedimented expressions that emerge on the basis of differential relations of forces. Thinking itself, when unleashed, is a force. But forces can act only upon other forces; thus if one would seek to change oneself or the world, one must first engage in thinking, and “thinking addresses itself to an outside that has no form. To think is to reach the non-stratified.”⁸³

But when thought pushes toward the direction of the unthought, it finds that the unthought is “not external to thought but lies at its very heart, as that impossibility of thinking which doubles or hollows out the outside.”⁸⁴ The unthought is the *condition* of thinking, because it is what *cannot be thought*, and hence it is what *demand*s to be thought. Therefore, the recognition for the necessity of the passage of thought to the outside is always doubled back in a movement that folds force back onto itself, exposing “the floating and fluid character of individuality itself,”⁸⁵ opening a genuine Deleuzian space of subjectivity and *freedom*, understood according to Deleuze’s adoption and adaptation of Nietzsche’s *eternal return*. Here, eternal return is the return of the Same, but the Same as the Different. The eternal return is the reason that being is not simply an undifferentiated chaotic abyss, a *chaosmos* rather than a *chaos*. And the eternal return is “said only of the theatrical world of the metamorphoses and masks of the Will to power, of the pure intensities of that Will which are like mobile individuating factors unwilling to allow themselves to be contained within the factitious limits of this or that individual, this or that Self.”⁸⁶ Will to power wills itself, but it wills itself as that “which is capable of transforming itself,”⁸⁷ as this is the mark of the highest degree of power. The will to power thus *wills* a differential Self, which is nothing more than an ongoing, infolding, process of individuation:

The great discovery of Nietzsche’s philosophy, which marks his break with Schopenhauer and goes under the name of will to power or the Dionysian world, is the following: no doubt the I and the Self must be replaced by an undifferentiated abyss, but this abyss is neither an impersonal nor an abstract Universal beyond individuation. On the contrary, it is the I and the self which are the abstract universals. They must be replaced, but in and by individuation, in the direction of individuating factors

⁸¹ Ibid., 86.

⁸² Deleuze uses this term throughout the *Foucault* book in opposition to *forces*.

⁸³ Deleuze, *Foucault*, 87.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 97.

⁸⁵ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 258.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 41.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

which consume them and which constitute the fluid world of Dionysus. What cannot be replaced is individuation itself. Beyond the self and the I we find not the impersonal but the individual and its factors, individuation and its fields, individuality and its pre-individual singularities.⁸⁸

Thinking, therefore, as the encounter with the outside, is the only thing that constitutes a subject in the Deleuzian sense. For Deleuze, the practice of philosophy consists of the activity of formulating problems in the face of impossibilities, problems which Deleuze calls *Ideas*.⁸⁹ The *solutions*, (or, we might say, the 'solings') to these problems constitute the Deleuzian actual. Ideas, we have seen, occupy the Deleuzian *virtual*.⁹⁰ To think is to step into the virtual. Thinking, then, amounts to the very reconfiguration of the virtual itself, the genetic ground of the actual. Thought, for Deleuze, only *thinks* when it is *forced* to think; this is but another way of saying that thinking only arises at the insistence of an *outside*, (not from the spontaneous interiority of the Cartesian subject, which, as we have discussed it, is a reactionary illusion); thought is faced with impossibilities and unthinkables *at every turn*, on a nearly constant basis.

Philosophical thinking, then, formulates Ideas in order to *think* these impossibilities. In so doing, it has a hand in the act of creation itself; it *becomes* a self, and in becoming a self, it changes the world. "It is Ideas which lead us from the fractured I to the dissolved Self. As we have seen, what swarms around the edges of the fracture are Ideas in the form of problems—in other words, in the form of multiplicities made up of differential relations and variations of relations, distinctive points and transformations of points."⁹¹ The self of this subjectivity resembles an ongoing oscillation between death and rebirth, or zombie and human.

Conclusion: Zombies, Virtualities, and Thought

Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the cinematic figure best suited to embody this thought of the outside in Deleuze's philosophy is the figure of the zombie. To think the outside and open oneself to the *force* of the outside, is to allow the outside to reformulate or to 'think' the self; when the self stares into the abyss, the abyss stares back. The philosopher is she who has passed from life into death, and from death back to life. Plato's cave escapee, once completely liberated from his illusions, does not remain soaked in the light of the sun; rather he returns to the cave.⁹² The philosopher is "Lazarean"⁹³ in this sense. As Deleuze writes, "For philosophers are beings who have passed through a death, who are born from it, and go towards another death, perhaps the same one. [...] the philosopher is someone who believes he has returned from the dead, rightly or wrongly, and

⁸⁸ Ibid., 258.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 168.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 209.

⁹¹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 259.

⁹² Plato, *Republic*, VII. 516c-517a.

⁹³ Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 207.

who returns to the dead in full consciousness. The philosopher has returned from the dead and goes back there. This has been the living formulation of philosophy since Plato."⁹⁴

We must keep in mind that this thought of the outside is an unthought or an 'unthinkable', lying at the very heart of and as the condition of thinking itself. The unthinkable demands to be thought, precisely because it *cannot* be thought, and so it is central and essential to thought itself. For Deleuze, this points to an otherness that thinks *through* me—an apersonal, desubjectivized *otherness*, which Deleuze calls, taking a lead from Spinoza, a *spiritual automaton*. In the "Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect," Spinoza writes that he conceives the soul "as acting according to fixed laws, a sort of spiritual automaton [*automata spiritual*]." ⁹⁵ As Spinoza understands it, the soul (conceived under the attribute of *thought*), like the body (conceived under the attribute of *extension*), exists in a causal nexus, and hence is inextricable from the laws of cause and effect that condition it. Consciousness *recognizes* its ideas, and hence, considers itself to be the *cause* of these ideas, but, Spinoza argues that consciousness cannot see the conditions that forms its idea themselves; consciousness registers only *effects*, not *causes*. Consciousness or the soul therefore operates as a 'spiritual automaton.' Deleuze adapts Spinoza's *spiritual automaton* as the "presence to infinity of another thinker in the thinker, who shatters every monologue of a thinking self,"⁹⁶ the force of the outside that rethinks the subject itself. Deleuze's appropriation of the *spiritual automaton* is the membrane or the exteriority within the thinker that *opens* itself to its own constitutive relations, in the force of the outside. Here we discover once again Romero's zombie, or in Deleuze's language, "this dismantled, paralyzed, petrified, frozen instance which testifies to the 'impossibility of thinking that is thought.'" ⁹⁷ If the force of the outside is that which empties the subject of its interiority, the character of the zombie then serves as the imagistic manifestation of this hollowing power, which brings together into an identity brain and world, inasmuch as each becomes indistinguishable from the other, "as if zombies peopled the brain-world for a moment..."⁹⁸ The zombie is the visual embodiment of this exteriorization of self, omnipresent in the new order of things. Philosophical thought is thus pushed *toward the outside*, toward the death from which it once emerged. Like the philosopher herself, the zombie emerges *from* death, and is on the way again *toward* death.

Let us now conclude by drawing this discussion back to Romero, with whom it began. For the point of Romero's zombie is that it does not *stay* on the outside, but forces its way into the interior of the human; the spiritual automaton rethinks

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 208-209.

⁹⁵ Benedict de Spinoza, *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione, et de via qua optime in veram rerum cognitionem dirigitur*, in *Opera Posthuma* (Amsterdam: Jan Rieuwertsz, 1677); "Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect," trans. Samuel Shirley, in *Spinoza: Complete Works*, ed. Michael Morgan (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002), 24.

⁹⁶ Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 168.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 208.

the interior of the self. The fulcrum on which this application of Deleuze to Romero rests, is the fact that Romero's zombies *evolve* throughout the course of his films, adopting more and more of the behaviors that we traditionally consider to be exclusively characteristic of the *human being*. We might therefore say, taking Romero's corpus as a whole, that his zombies are on the way to *becoming-human*. Above, we characterized the concept of 'genesis' in terms of the virtuality-actuality paradigm; the virtual, on Deleuze's ontology, serves as the condition of the actual. A thing's 'becoming' is thus the actualization of a virtuality. Likewise, when this paradigm is brought to bear specifically on the question of the relation between time, thought, and the image, in the context of the *Cinema* volumes, we noted above that the virtual also 'reflects' the actual, as memory 'reflects' experience and the past 'reflects' the present. In this light, Romero's zombies, on the way to *becoming-human*, are themselves at the same time the reflection of an *old* humanity and the condition of a new humanity. That is to say, speaking with Gilles Deleuze, the actual zombie is at the same time a *virtual* human. Likewise, as Romero never ceases to remind us, every actual human is also a virtual zombie, on the way to *becoming-zombie*. All of the humans, every last one, will die, and when they die they will, if not destroyed, return to *life* in the form of a zombie. So the actual zombie is a virtual human, but the actual human is a virtual zombie as well; each is therefore a reflection of the other.

On the one hand, this applies generally to the zombies in Romero's films. The zombie and the human are each reflections of the other. But as we have already seen, Romero also gives us brief respites amidst the carnage, in order that we might appreciate this relation in particular instances. When Fran stares motionlessly into the face of the zombified baseball player, she is staring into the face of death, the abyss from which life emerges, and to which life ultimately returns; likewise the abyss stares back into her. When Riley and Big Daddy exchange their regards from across the parking garage, we are given a direct glimpse into this reflection of virtual and actual, where each acknowledges the recognition and understanding of the other. This is made explicit when Riley prevents Pretty Boy's attack, saying to her, "They're just looking for a place to go... same as us..." Each is the virtuality to the other's actuality. In these still moments, then, we see the contraction of time itself—life contracted in death and death in life, the virtual and the actual in direct, reciprocal, and indiscernible relation with one another. As Deleuze says, "If we take this direction to its limit, we can say that the actual image itself has a virtual image which corresponds to it like a double or a reflection...there is a formation of an image with two sides, actual *and* virtual."⁹⁹ This is, in Deleuze's terms, a direct time-image, or what he calls a 'hyalosign'—an image that gives the direct and immediate contraction of the past within the present.

But even more significantly, if the zombie is indeed a *virtual* human being, which is to say, on the way to *becoming-human*, then in the face of the zombie the *actual* human is, we might say, a being of *old age* or *twilight*, a being whose best days are

⁹⁹ Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 68.

behind it. In Romero's films, it is often the zombie who is *most* adaptable and malleable, akin to a child first waking up to the world; while the humans in the films, especially when they are rigidified in their stratified fears and bigotries, are most typically incapable of adaptation and transformation in response to the new incomprehensible dangers they face, and it is quite frequently this rigidification that ultimately begets their succumbing to these dangers entirely. To the zombie, the world is strange, mysterious, and wondrous, while to the human it is fearful, dark, and unfathomably rotten. Conversely, it follows that if the human is a *virtual* zombie, on the way to *becoming-zombie*, then the actual zombie marks, in a sense, the overcoming or surpassing of this condition, the promise or hope for a new beginning. It would seem then, that it is this characteristically human rigidity that Romero rejects with his zombies. We recall the elements of the 'dogmatic image of thought' – they are best summed up with the formulation: 'thinking is recognition.' For the dogmatic image of thought, *thinking* is, at bottom, to methodologically navigate one's way between possible 'answers' – given or at least 'givable' at the outset – to whatever problem one faces, until the mind lands upon what one 'recognizes' to be true. To think is thus, (according to the dogmatic image), to discover in the end what was always already there in the beginning. It is this conception of thinking that the zombie – the imagistic embodiment of the 'thought of the outside' – destroys, inasmuch as the zombie brings only the irrepressible force of the unthinkable, thereby disallowing the persistence of human thinking *as* human. The human 'error' in Romero's films is almost always conceptualized as the attempt to recreate in this new and incomprehensible world the conditions and structures of the old, to live pretending as though the world can ever again be what it was before, as though the zombie never roamed the earth. In *Dawn of the Dead*, the characters make believe for a time as though they have landed in an impenetrable bourgeois 'paradise regained', dressing themselves in furs and fine jewelry, feasting on delicacies and fine wine, even futilely stealing cash from the registers. Or sometimes this rigidity takes the form of strict militaristic control or the attempt at scientific mastery of the situation, as in the underground haven in *Day of the Dead*. But wherever this reactionary desire to restore the *old human* world to order reigns in Romero's films, the viewer can be sure that its sudden destruction is just around the corner. The attempt to keep out the force of the outside – to stubbornly adhere to the image of thinking as recognition – always results in Romero's films in the physical annihilation of the human.

This new world shatters the old with the force of the unthinkable. The unthinkable is that which demands to be thought; but the unthinkable cannot be *thought* by way of the old structures of the dogmatic image of thought. To think is to step into the virtual, and in Romero's world, the virtual with respect to the human is the zombie. The only way to *live* in the land of the dead is to welcome the force of the outside; and to welcome the force of the outside is to welcome the dissolution of what formerly constituted humanity. It is to allow the passing away of the old order of things, in passage to the new. The only way for the human to live in Romero's world is to *welcome* the zombie. This is precisely what we see in the very end of *Land of the Dead*, when Riley prevents Pretty Boy's attack on Big Daddy and his clan – in this moment of recognition and

affirmation, we see the welcoming of the outside which constitutes the “the floating and fluid character of individuality itself.”¹⁰⁰

Whatever his self-conception of his own films may be then, the conclusion is unavoidable that the zombies in George Romero’s films are indeed essential, even and perhaps especially, as they relate to the *human* condition. It is the zombie at the heart of humanity that produces the shock to the thinking system, what Deleuze calls the *nooshock*, that forces thinking to occur; to think is thus to welcome the zombie, and to *think* is to create new possibilities. As Deleuze says, “To think is to create—there is no other creation—but to create is first of all to engender ‘thinking’ in thought.”¹⁰¹ To engender thinking in thought is to call into question and actively disrupt the dogmatic image of thought, thereby embarking upon the destratification of sedimented values, or, *thinking*—“the power of a new politics which would overturn the image of thought.”¹⁰² Thinking is thus fundamentally affirmative. Perhaps it is for this reason that, (with the exception of *Night of the Living Dead*), one cannot help but sense a joyous revelry in Romero’s zombie films, even at their bloodiest. “This is the opposite of a cult of death. Between the two sides of the absolute, between the two deaths—death from the inside or past, death from the outside or future—the internal sheets of memory and the external layers of reality will be mixed up, extended, short-circuited and form a whole moving life, which is at once that of the cosmos and of the brain, which sends out flashes from one pole to the other. Hence zombies sing a song, but it is that of life.”¹⁰³

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¹⁰⁰ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 258.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁰³ Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 209.