

DELEUZE AND THE
NAMING OF GOD

POST-SECULARISM
AND THE **FUTURE OF IMMANENCE**

Daniel Colucciello Barber

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‘It’s not a matter of bringing all sorts of things together under a single concept but rather of relating each concept to variables that explain its mutations.’

Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*

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Daniel Colucciello Barber

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Introduction

A Proclamation

It's been awhile since Nietzsche's madman passed through the marketplace, proclaiming 'God is dead!'¹ Should we imagine that we have, by now, taken his proclamation to heart? A look at the contemporary marketplace shows that we still imagine quite a few things. Some imagine that a world without God has been achieved. Such a world includes exceptions, of course, but they are imagined as survivals, antiquarian curiosities bound to be swept away as secularisation advances. Alongside such confident ones there are more polemical advocates of Enlightenment, who imagine that a world without belief in God will emerge only by taking the fight against religion more seriously. Belief in God, say such polemicists, will go away only when we push it out the door. On the other side, however, there are those who contest Nietzsche's proclamation by continuing to imagine God's existence, or by doing so in a new manner. Sometimes this takes the form of an imagination of God that sees itself as having accounted for Nietzsche's proclamation, such that we might speak of a post-Nietzschean image of God. At other times, this imagination of God's existence is discursively linked to a so-called 'return of religion'.

All of this is to say that the imagination is profligate. Such profligacy exceeds the limits that are imposed when we attempt to frame responses to Nietzsche's proclamation in terms of direct affirmation and negation. This, however, seems to be something Nietzsche already understood, for his proclamation is meant primarily not as a denotative claim, but rather as an invocation of the imagination and its power. To proclaim the death of God is to proclaim that God belongs to the imagination, it is to proclaim that the imagination is capable of creating something so powerful that it can be recognised as the essence of all existence. Nietzsche, of course, is calling for a liberation of existence from this divine essence. Yet such existence is inseparable from its imagination as that which is liberated from something else (God), which is also being imagined. We are always

imagining, even when we seek to liberate ourselves from what has been imagined.

It is along these lines that we can understand Nietzsche's proclamation to be concerned not just with God but also with the power of the imagination – that is, with the imagination's productivity, its profligacy, its capacity to generate a world. In fact, Nietzsche's proclamation presumes that there is no world without the imagination of that world, and that the world that exists is the world we have imagined. To imagine is to make the world; to call for a different imagination, or to imagine differently, is to make a different world. We should, in virtue of these claims, interpret Nietzsche's proclamation as having less to do with God's existence than with the world produced by the imagination of God's existence. It is a proclamation that concerns theology, but it is just as much one that concerns what is at stake in making a world. And to be concerned with the making of a world is to be concerned with the political. Nietzsche's proclamation, then, is a theopolitical proclamation, one that concerns both God and the task of making the world, but one that always and only does so by way of the imagination.

To invoke Nietzsche's proclamation in the way that I am doing is to read it squarely as being about the theopolitical, but in such a way that attention² is directed not to the specific claim about God's death so much as to the fact that God's death, as well as God's life, stands or falls on the power of the imagination. In other words, what is at issue here is not just a Nietzschean version of an already settled theopolitical imagination, but also, and more so, an instance in which the *act* of imagining the theopolitical is brought to the fore. To be even more precise, this is an instance in which the act of imagining God – or of naming God, that is, theology – is brought into relation with the act of imagining and making the world. Theology is at issue insofar as this act of imagination addresses itself to the purportedly highest value, the value that is imagined to give value to the world. The political, on the other hand, is at issue insofar as this act of imagination wants to evaluate the name of God in virtue of the world that the imagination of God brings into being, and in virtue of the world that might be brought into being through a different imagination.

When we keep in mind this aspect of Nietzsche's proclamation – that is, the way that it raises the question of world-making – it becomes a bit clearer why we are today able to find a variety of responses, a variety that does not correspond to anything like a straightforwardly affirmative or negative position on the proclama-

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tion. If there are a variety of positions on ‘the death of God’, this is not because it is hard to decide one way or the other, to agree or disagree, but rather because such a proclamation is not ultimately about responding with a yes or a no. What is ultimately put forth by this proclamation is the task of imagining a world, the task of world-making. If Nietzsche’s proclamation has charged us with a demand, then it is not a demand to say yes or no to God, it is instead a demand to say yes or no to the world we find ourselves always already imagining – and there are, I think it is clear, very many ways of imagining and making a world. The variety of responses to the death of God, then, correspond to the variety of ways that the world may be imagined, or to the variety of worlds that could be made. This is also to say that disagreement about the death of God emerges from disagreement about the political, where the political is broadly understood in terms of the decision or decisions made about the world that is to be made. If God is important here – and I believe God, or at least the name of God, most definitely is – then this is because it is with God that the stakes of world-making are pushed to the highest degree.

But why is this the case? Why is it that God plays such a special role in the act of world-making? The most direct answer is that God names the value of values, or the value in terms of which the world is evaluated. Consequently, if what is in play is the evaluation of the given world, then this cannot take place without addressing the given world’s axis of evaluation. Whether this *has* to be the case – that is, whether it is somehow necessary to begin by thinking of the highest value in terms of God – is, in the end, a scholastic preoccupation. For it is, *in fact*, the case that the world that is presently given, at least for Nietzsche, is a world in which this is the case. There can be no evaluation of the world, therefore, without an encounter with and evaluation of the name of God. Pushing this point a bit further, we can observe that any attempt to evaluate the world, or to imagine another one, that does not encounter the name of God, or that attempts to bracket the name of God out of the discussion, is going to have a hard time accomplishing its purposes. For this reason, the question of the political will have to be, at least for the time being, a question of the theopolitical. For the same reason, secularisation – insofar as it tries to define the political in such a way that the name of God is put to the side – will fail to encounter the political at its broadest level. This broadest level is the imagination of the world, a world that has, for a very long time, been associated with God. If such a

world is to be changed, then the name of God must be encountered rather than bracketed.

There is another – though not unrelated – answer that may be given to the question of why God plays such a special role in the act of world-making, and this is that the name of God has a tendency to subsume within itself the act by which God is named. Put otherwise, this is to say that God, imagined as the value of all values, subordinates imagination to itself. The production of God is the production of a value that devalorises the act by which value is produced; the God that is imagined captures and imposes itself on imagination. This is the meaning of the transcendent, of what Nietzsche has in mind when he tells us: ‘do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes!’³ God here names the otherworldly – that is, the value that takes one away from the world, that takes one away from the act of imagining the world. Of course, even when we name God, even when we invest ourselves in a hope that is otherworldly, we are still imagining the world, which is to say that the link between imagination and world-making does not go away. It is just that this link is obscured, it is subordinated to the form of evaluation named by God, as if this God somehow pre-existed the act of imagination. Along these lines, we can say that Nietzsche’s antagonism toward God, or the otherworldly, stems not from something else that he wants to imagine, but rather from the indissoluble link between imagination and its world. In short, the reason that the name of God plays a special role in the act of world-making is because it is with God that the act of world-making becomes separated from its power.

This power is that of immanence. If God here names the transcendent, then the imaginative productivity of world-making names immanence. More exactly, immanence refers to the relation between the act of imagination and the making of the world. The relation between imagination and world is an immanent one, which means that to speak of the world is to speak of imagination and to speak of imagination is to speak of the world. If God is transcendent, then it is precisely because God interrupts this immanent relation, because God makes both imagination and the world into God’s subordinates.

Three Trajectories for Deleuze’s Immanence

To transpose Nietzsche’s proclamation into the terms of an opposition between transcendence and immanence is to link the milieu of problems addressed and produced by this proclamation to Gilles

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Deleuze's philosophy of immanence, which is the central interest of this book.⁴ I will not speak of immanence in general, such that Nietzsche and Deleuze could appear as differing instances of the same immanent philosophy. In fact, there will be no analysis of Nietzsche's thought, much less a survey of various thinkers of immanence. The aim is much more exact, namely to think immanence in Deleuze, or to use the question of immanence to think Deleuze. In commencing with Nietzsche, then, I am retroactively summoning a precursor to Deleuze. I am introducing, through retroactive philosophical figuration, a problematic field that makes the work of Deleuze possible, even as this work proceeds in a register of philosophical prose that may seem to depart from the manifestly rhetorical and interpellative character of Nietzsche's proclamation. The aim, in other words, is to use Nietzsche's forceful language, his intensified call, as a contextualisation, and as a reminder in advance, of what is at stake in the more serene, arid, and conceptual work of Deleuze. Accordingly, before turning more explicitly to Deleuze and to a description of the work this book will do with, from, on, and against him, it will be beneficial to reflect a bit further on the context that emerges from Nietzsche's proclamation and for Deleuze's immanence. This reflection can be articulated along three trajectories, each of which poses a task for Deleuze's immanence.

First of all, it is important to observe a slippage between 'God' and 'otherworldliness'. They appear to be interchangeable, or at least mutually supportive, in the proclamation: to remove God from the picture is to refuse otherworldly hope, and the reason otherworldly hope is bankrupt is because God is dead. Still, they do not immediately signify the same thing, and so we must ask what binds them together, or what makes them part of a common project. In fact, as long as we lack a sense of what renders God and otherworldliness interchangeable, we will remain uncertain of what it is, exactly, that is being opposed. More to the point, we will remain uncertain of why, and even whether, they really do entail one another.

The question, we could say, is whether the naming of God *must* be linked with an otherworldly investment. Nietzsche's proclamation seems to presume that this is the case. It is as if Nietzsche, having proclaimed the death of God, felt the need to elaborate just what is so valuable about affirming this death, about becoming finished with God, and responded to this need by observing that the imagination of God produces otherworldly hopes. What is wrong with the imagination of God's existence, then, is that it enables our attention

to become affixed to and captured by the otherworldly. In this sense, the obstacle that the proclamation ultimately seeks to destroy would be not God but otherworldliness. For my own part, this is a compelling way to put the issue, and it is for this reason that I have already introduced and given centrality to the opposition between transcendence and immanence. What is felicitous about these terms is their ability to characterise, respectively, the obstacle that is otherworldliness and the promise that belongs to the link between the imagination and the world. To take up Nietzsche's proclamation is thus to take up the opposition of transcendence and immanence.⁵ But is it also to take up the opposition of God and immanence? Is it possible, for instance, to name God while affirming immanence, or to refuse God while remaining caught up in the transcendent? These are the kind of questions left unaddressed by Nietzsche's proclamation. They are also the kind of questions that need to be addressed by Deleuze's immanence.

Second, we should take note of the way that Nietzsche's proclamation is unthinkable apart from the question of change. The death of God is proclaimed because of, and is evaluated in relation to, a dissatisfaction with the presently given, or with what is taken to be given in the present. It is issued in response to a dissatisfaction with the way things are, and to a demand to produce a state of affairs, a future, that would be different. This is what I mean when I speak of change. One might also speak of this in terms of transformation or emergence, although these terms tend to have more specific connotations than those carried by change in general. If this means, on the other hand, that change remains too vague and refers to more modalities of development than are implied by Nietzsche's proclamation, then it seems best, when speaking of change, to speak of it as the constitution of a break. What the proclamation desires, after all, is not just any old change, but a change in relation to which we could mark a before and an after. The change at stake is one that could not be imagined in terms of a development of what is already given. Much better is the imagination of a breakdown of the present, one in which the future rests on a destructive rather than developmental relation to given forms of the world.

When we articulate this sensibility in terms of the proclamation, we see that the death of God serves as the hinge for the creation of a future that breaks with the given. The death of God becomes the condition of possibility for the production of new possibilities. If Nietzsche's proclamation is charged with tension, with the intensifi-

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cation of dissatisfaction, hope, and the relation between them, then this is because in this way it poses quite directly the demand to make a different world, and to do so by encountering the axis around which present imagination revolves, which is the naming of God. The need to force this encounter makes perfect sense when we take into account that the proclamation wants to produce a genuine break. There can be no break with the present if the essence of the present is not directly approached.

This, however, produces an interesting juxtaposition, namely that of the demand for a break, for something new, and the discarding of the name of God as the necessary condition for such a break. I say this is interesting simply because for some, if not for all, the demand for a genuine break can only be fulfilled *by* some manner of relation to the name of God. This is certainly the case for those who adhere to a 'religious' transcendence, but it is also present in – and could be proposed as the motivation for – the recent turn, amongst various 'secular' continental philosophers, to the figure of Paul. Though such philosophers will make this Pauline turn in a way that cannot be identified simply as religious, it is no doubt the case that their appropriation of Paul is bound up with a political aim. They appropriate Pauline theology, even while secularising it, so as to articulate the possibility of another world, of a world that is other insofar as it is born of an event that does not belong to the present situation.⁶ From the vantage of the Pauline philosopher, if God is the name that secures the world as it is given, then God – or at least the act of naming God – is also that by which one might turn against the given world. The task is thus to name God otherwise, or to make the naming of God, of that which gives value to the order of the world, into a means of breaking with this order.

Simply put, the presupposition of 'religious' and 'secular' theologians – where theology is understood, quite literally, as any thought concerned with the naming of God – raises a challenge: Does not the demand for a break undermine itself when it makes the refusal of God into a condition of possibility for this break? Does not the very desire for such a break require, contrary to Nietzsche's proclamation, some affirmation of thought that finds itself invoking the name of God, if only in a secularised manner? These questions, along with the fundamental challenge they present, must be addressed by any account of Deleuze's immanence; the force of their challenge is a force that motivates this book.

Finally, we should note the significant degree to which questions

of temporality are at issue in Nietzsche's proclamation. This is the case, first of all, because it is not possible to talk about change, much less a break, without talking about structures of temporality. Such change can have no sense apart from its narration, in some way or another, in terms of a before and an after. But there are larger issues raised when we raise the question of temporality, and we can see this by focusing on the notion of the new, or on the production of the novel. When we talk about a break with the present we will likely find ourselves talking about what emerges after the break, or what is made possible by the break, in terms of the new. It would be right, in fact, to say that Nietzsche's proclamation is ultimately concerned with the production of a future that, in order truly to be a future, would have to be capable of being named as new. Yet this presses us to reflect more broadly on what is implied, or what is invoked, by a discourse of the new.

Such a discourse, it must not be forgotten, may be found at work in colonisation, where the coloniser, eager to find some point of evaluation that would be able to transcend the manifest incommensurability between the cultures of the coloniser and the colonised, will often present colonisation as a moment of modernisation and progression, as a chance to do something new. Even if the content of the coloniser's culture may be resisted – so the logic seems to go – surely the opportunity to advance into the future cannot be gainsaid? And beyond the issue of the coloniser's own appeal to a discourse of the new, there is the fact that the colonial encounter is by and large narrated in terms of novelty. Consider, for instance, how normalised it is to think of colonial encounters in terms of beginnings and of new relationships. Consider, furthermore, the very image of a 'new world', which is intrinsic to colonisation but is certainly inherited in some manner from Christianity's sense of itself as the medium of a new humanity. In fact, to attend to this developmental narrative is to discern an imaginary shared not just by Christianity and colonisation, but likewise by the secular – for the secular also presents itself as the medium by or in which difference is overcome and a better, more peaceable, and truly human future is produced.

Should we add Nietzsche's proclamation to all of these, insofar as it too invokes a discourse of the new? And if we should not, then by what means are we able to distinguish its discourse of the new from the one presented by Christianity, colonisation, and the secular? To find an answer to these questions, or at least to find a better way of framing the problem they pose, it is useful to observe the relationship

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between Christianity and the secular. This is not to leave colonisation to the side, but rather to focus on the imaginaries that have made the world in which colonisation exists.

It is my contention that the opposition between Christianity and the secular, or more broadly between religion and the secular, is epiphenomenal. In other words, despite the differences between them – and there are certainly differences – these differences are less significant than the commonalities.⁷ One key commonality, as I have just mentioned, is found in the discourse of the new. On this point, then, the task for Deleuze's immanence is to articulate a discourse of the new that would be different from both the Christian and the secular, which is also to say that there is nothing to be gained by allying such a discourse with the secular and against the Christian. In this sense, a discourse of the new that is proper to immanence should not be aligned with any project of secularisation (much less with any project of Christianisation). Furthermore, as a means of developing its separation from these, it will be important to show how Deleuze's immanence gives rise to a perspective – regarding the discourse of the new, but also, with the previous two points in mind, regarding the relationship between God and world – that is indifferent to the distinction between the Christian and the secular.

Deleuze and Philosophy of Religion

I have begun a book on Deleuze – or, more precisely, on Deleuze's account of immanence and its relation to questions treated under the heading of philosophy of religion – by reflecting on a proclamation belonging to Nietzsche. As long as we recall Deleuze's own stated affinity for Nietzsche's thought, this appears quite commonsensical. Yet the commonsensical connection between Nietzsche and Deleuze tends to include a resolutely anti-theological dimension, whereas I have used Nietzsche's proclamation as a means of stirring up – rather than discarding or overcoming – questions surrounding the naming of God, as it is conjoined with the demand for a break with the presently imagined world. My approach to Deleuze, concomitantly, is one in which such questions are at issue. In fact, these questions indicate for me the problematic field in which Deleuze's work should be read. What, then, is gained by reading it in this manner?

Above all, I believe that to read Deleuze's work in this manner is to emphasise the investment it has in change, understood in terms of a break. Deleuze's philosophy, in this sense, is an attempt to think

what it means to break with the given form of the present. To insist on the centrality of an investment in the task of a break is to insist on the fundamentally political character of Deleuze's work. Such a politics may not be recognisable insofar as we think of the political in terms of representation or the public; it will likely not be recognised as politics as long as we think of politics in terms of recognition. But Nietzsche's proclamation is useful here, for it allows us to keep in mind the essentially political character of the act of imagination. If politics involves, and even begins with, the making of the world, and if this world-making is linked to imagination, then the act of imagination is ineluctably political. Against this background, we can see that though Deleuze's philosophy is political, this is not because it thinks 'about' politics. One certainly will not find much of this sort of thinking about politics in his work – but the way to interpret this fact is not to say that the political is something distinct from Deleuze's philosophy. No, the proper interpretation is to say that Deleuze's philosophy is political through and through, because whenever it insists on immanence it is insisting on the link between, the immanence of, imagination and world. The fact that Deleuze's work has a very high degree of complexity and philosophical precision does not signal an abandonment of immanence's political character. Instead, it should be understood as an attempt to extend the more explicit, but less elaborate, politics of world-making set forth in Nietzsche's proclamation.

Yet this still does not address the issue of the naming of God. Even when we grant that Nietzsche's proclamation helps foreground the importance of change to Deleuze's philosophy, that it makes more manifest Deleuze's investment in the task of making the world, we have still not taken up the question of the theological. In order to do this, we can recall what I identified as the theopolitical nature of Nietzsche's proclamation. For better or worse, it is necessary, when charged by the demand for a break with the present, to encounter that by which the present is made possible. The present is made possible, I have said, by the imagination, but more specifically by the imagination of God, or the imagination of the otherworldly. There will be no break with this present unless there is also a break with that which conditions this present. What Nietzsche's proclamation makes clear, then, is that if Deleuze's philosophy is concerned with change, then it must likewise be concerned with God – or, again, with the otherworldly. This is also to say that it must be concerned with, or put in connection with, the task of discerning the obstacle

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to change. It is certainly the transcendent, but is it also God? And if immanence discards God, is it discarding the order of the present or is it discarding a means by which present may be discarded? None of these questions disappear when we are talking about immanence. On the contrary, to talk about immanence – especially when we talk about it in relation to the matter of understanding what it means and what it would take to make a world that differs from the one presently given – is to feel the pressure of such questions.

Feeling this pressure also makes it much more difficult to conflate immanence with the secular, given that the latter does not stage so much as defer, prophylacticise, and disavow the encounter with the name of God. Whatever Deleuzian immanence may be, it cannot be simply secular. This is a very important point, especially when viewed from the perspective of the political, as I have defined it. What is the secular, after all, if not a dominant formation of the present? Even when the secular finds itself encountering resistance, it tends to frame this resistance in secular terms. This is to say that the secular is a dominant formation at the level of the imagination, and thus a dominant formation of the given world. So if Deleuze's philosophy is concerned with a break from the present, how can it be allied with something that is essential to the imagination of the present? This problem, I think it is fair to say, is one not generally addressed in readings of Deleuze. Far more common is the easy equation of immanence with a secular sensibility. It is precisely such an equation that needs to be made not just difficult, but impermissible. If this creates a problem for the interpretation of Deleuze, if it leaves us without a way of fitting his immanence into the imagination we presently possess, then all the better, since such a problem is the kind one should want to have when one takes as one's aim the production of the new.

Although it is implicit in virtually everything I have thus far said, it should nonetheless be made explicit: to approach Deleuze's immanence in this way is to address it in its intersection with the philosophy of religion.⁸ The term 'intersection' is important. Deleuze was not a philosopher of religion, at least not in any standard sense of the appellation. There is little in his work that leads one to recognise an attempt to speak directly *about* religion, at least not in the manner one finds in certain instances of phenomenology, which in their desire to account for experience may find themselves addressing 'religious' experience, or even claiming that experience as such points to a donation that is divine in nature. The difficulty that this latter

sort of philosophy of religion encounters, in my view, is its presupposition of a certain separation between philosophy and religion. Such an approach engages religion, but it does so in a manner that seems to presume that religion is already established in terms of a bounded object or field. It is thus a virtue of Deleuze's work, when considered from this vantage, that it does not attempt to apply the philosophy it develops to a settled domain called religion. As I will argue in the course of this book, the concept of the problem is essential to Deleuze's differential immanence. A problem is not the same as an obstacle or a difficulty, for a problem refers to something that is intrinsically open or undecidable. My strategy, then, is to understand the intersection between Deleuze and the philosophy of religion as a problem, as something undecidable, to which this writing is a response. Such an approach, in seizing on this undecidability, also depends on and takes advantage of the fact that Deleuze, by refusing to apply his philosophy to something called religion, allows us to take religion itself as a problematic term.

Religion is, after all, a term deployed as if it had a certainty that it certainly does not have. Its undecidability is too often ignored – or, even worse, presumed not to exist. There is a great deal that could be said about the problems involved in the discourse of religion, far too much for us to take up in this moment. It will have to suffice to recall that when religion is discussed, it is initially and for the most part imagined in such a way that Christianity remains the primary analogate amongst religions. Or perhaps religion will be imagined, from a post-Christian, secular (but still European or neo-European) vantage, as that which is practised – and too often simply 'believed' – by those who have not achieved what those who were once Christian have achieved.⁹ The point of all this is to point out what is usually left unaddressed, and unchallenged, when philosophy of religion is practised as usual, namely the presumed equation of religion with Christianity.

My strategy, then, in addressing the *intersection* between Deleuze and the philosophy of religion, is to treat the lack of obvious relation, or the nonrelation, between these loci as a space of potentiality. This means, first of all, understanding the lack of any obvious connection between them as a potential resistance, on the part of Deleuzian immanence, to the still implicitly Christian discourse of religion. This discourse, I have already mentioned, is implicitly Christian both in the sense that religion is often linked to Christian thematics and in the sense that when it is avowedly secular it is assuming a logic that

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is more post-Christian than anti-Christian (since secularisation is here understood as participating in much of the same developmental logic that Christianity incarnates). From the perspective of my interpretation, Deleuze's relative silence on the task of philosophy of religion should be read as a mode of nonparticipation in this logic.

In order to fill out this interpretation, however, the mode of nonparticipation must become more explicit. This is also to say that such nonparticipation in Christian, or secular, logic must take on a more explicitly antagonistic modality. Putting it otherwise, this means that the intersection must itself be articulated, and in such a way that Deleuze's differential immanence converges with an expression of religion that would be indifferent to the discourse of, or between, Christianity and the secular. One way of doing this would be to argue that what appears in Deleuze's immanence resonates with religions that are not Christian. I have sympathy for this sort of project, and it is one I would not oppose, but it is nonetheless not the one that I take up. The reason I do not take up this project is that I am interested in understanding Deleuze's thought in relation to the rather explicitly Christian or secular milieu in which it emerges. While I take his philosophy to be basically antagonistic to this milieu, I simultaneously believe that the articulation of this antagonism benefits from contextualising it within the milieu being antagonised. In other words, if Deleuze's immanence is against Christianity, and is simultaneously not reducible to a post-Christian secular, then it will be quite useful to think of it in connection with both of these terms.

This is why, when I talk in this book about religion, I talk about Christianity. The point in doing so is not to presume that religion is reducible to Christianity but to take seriously the discourse of religion that shaped the milieu of Deleuze's antagonism. Furthermore, the point of talking about Christianity is not to reconcile Deleuzian immanence with Christianity but rather to understand how it is against Christianity, or what it is within Christianity that is the object of antagonism for Deleuze's immanence. In this sense, the emphasis on Christianity, or really on theology – as it is by way of the discourse of theology that Christianity establishes its religious status – has nothing to do with the investment in a future that will have 'worked through' Christianity.¹⁰ On the contrary, the emphasis on Christianity, on theology, on the naming of God, is in service of a future that will have made a break with the dominant, transcendent implications of Christianity. It is in this sense that my emphasis on Christianity, when thinking the intersection between Deleuze's

immanence and philosophy of religion, is in alliance with a dechristianisation of the discourse of religion.¹¹ To say it once again: there can be a break only where there is an encounter with what forecloses the possibility of a break.

One final remark should be made about my approach. Because it requires a reading of Deleuze in which the implications of his own reticence regarding the question of religion are made into a more explicit object of experimentation, I have at certain moments of this book made use of language – particularly language that carries religious connotations – that is more closely linked to philosophers he thought (and read and wrote) about than to his own philosophy. For example, I will make use of the term ‘God’, which appears in Spinoza and enters into Deleuze’s philosophy by way of his interpretation of Spinoza, but which might be imagined as Spinoza’s term, rather than Deleuze’s. The same predicament may be found in Deleuze’s relation to Nietzsche: the latter’s concern with the death of God, and with the notion of affirmation, may be imagined as belonging to Deleuze’s thought only by way of an ‘artificial’ graft. To mention all of this is to anticipate, and to address up front, the possible emergence of the suspicion I am now addressing.

My response, first of all, is to observe that even if such language is presumed to belong to Spinoza, or Nietzsche, rather than to Deleuze, we are still talking about philosophers whom Deleuze recognised as his own precursors, philosophers he imagined as belonging to the same trajectory to which he belonged. Any imagined differentiation would therefore fail to touch the question of a Deleuzian philosophy, broadly considered. I would, however, push even more strongly against the very notion of a hard and fast distinction between Deleuze’s precursors and Deleuze himself. After all, it seems very difficult, if not impossible, to speak of any philosophy that could be defined independently of its inheritance of other philosophies. Furthermore, the inheritance of Spinoza and Nietzsche by Deleuze is one that Deleuze has not only foregrounded, it is one that he has shaped: as is well known, he quite consciously understood his accounts of such precursors as stemming just as much from his own, strong interventions or reformulations as from the precursors themselves.¹² So while I think it can be helpful to initially observe a certain distinction between Deleuze’s own language and the language of the others – his precursors – I think this distinction is sustainable only in an ad hoc and basically fluid manner.

If my own reading has an ad hoc aspect, then the hoc is religion:

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my use of Spinozian and Nietzschean language derives from the concern to make explicit the intersection of immanence and religion. This concern, in other words, benefits insofar as we are able to think of Deleuze's philosophy as including not only his own works but also those works in which his philosophy is inseparable from his own reading practice. This is especially the case where the production of Deleuze's philosophy depends on the practice of reading language that is inseparable from religion (such as with Spinoza and Nietzsche). If philosophy is inseparable from the practice of reading – of inheriting – philosophy, then the specific decisions, the cuts or recapitulations, made by a philosopher are especially indicative of what that philosopher's philosophy is actually doing with or against inheritance's unavoidability. (In fact, we might ask whether the tendency to leave 'religion' unthought is – given religion's association with figures of tradition and thus inheritance – linked to philosophy's own anxiety about itself as a practice of reading.) Furthermore, though we may argue about whether it is best to say that religion has been with us, is still with us, or is returning to us, there can be no argument that a reading of religion is necessarily practised. The intersection at stake in this book, then, belongs to the intersection between such a practice of reading religion and the practice of reading Deleuze. Reading practices are thus understood as constitutive of, rather than extraneous to, thought – and this likewise holds for the thought that is imagined as belonging to Deleuze.

This insistence on the inseparability of a philosophy from its inheritance, and from the reading practices that enact this inheritance, is what motivates my use, in this book, of the work of John Howard Yoder and Theodor Adorno. The argument is, and remains throughout, concerned with the philosophy of Deleuze, and specifically with Deleuze's understanding of immanence. However, in order to articulate this philosophy it is necessary to address the problems that it opens up and that intersect with it. And in order to address these matters it will be necessary, at various points, to draw on thought that does not belong to Deleuze but that enables the articulation of the thought that does belong to Deleuze. Accordingly, the role here played by Yoder and Adorno is supplemental. This means that Deleuze's work is central throughout, whereas the work of Yoder and Adorno is encountered occasionally and partially, and in such a manner that these occasions and parts are selected in virtue of their ability to help articulate Deleuze's work. In this sense, my approach takes Yoder and Adorno to be allies of Deleuze's thought – allies that

make possible a practice of reading Deleuze in which the possibilities of Deleuze's own thought become better understood.

Surveying the Argument

My reading of Deleuze begins from an attempt to understand his philosophy in terms of differential immanence. Such a reading obviously insists on the centrality of immanence to Deleuze's thought – in doing so, however, it says not only that this thought is an articulation of immanence, but also that it is a thought that takes immanence as a constant problem. In other words, we should understand immanence not only as the effect of Deleuze's work, but also as the problem that motivates it. Furthermore, as the term 'differential immanence' implies, the immanence that is central to Deleuze is determined by its differential character. What does it mean to speak of an immanence that is differential? In essence, it means that immanence is without object. When we speak of Deleuzian immanence, we are not speaking of immanence to some object or thing, nor are we speaking of an immanence between two things. Immanence, because it is differential, can never be thought in terms of relations to or between things, because before there are things there are differences. In fact, it is even imprecise to speak of immanence itself as an object or thing – after all, difference is prior to things, and so wherever there is a thing, it is a thing that has been constituted by difference.

The concern of Chapters 1 and 2 is to explore how differential immanence is articulated. Because the more explicitly constructive moves that I will be making require a deployment of differential immanence, both as such and in terms of several of its conceptual elements, it is necessary to first devote relatively substantial space to the task of carefully detailing its character and function. These chapters provide this space, and so they tend to hew more closely to a traditional model of philosophical exposition than do the later four chapters. Through what concepts is differential immanence expressed, and how do these concepts interact? How does differential immanence depart from philosophical approaches that pursue the transcendent or leave in abeyance the force of difference? These are the kind of questions that direct Chapters 1 and 2.

The exposition of Deleuze's own philosophy takes place in Chapter 2, whereas Chapter 1 is concerned with something like a very short prehistory of Deleuze's differential immanence. I speak of a 'prehistory' so as to observe that the convergence of the two central

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themes of difference and immanence had already taken place prior to Deleuze's work. It is Deleuze who innovated these themes, who brought them together with the sort of creativity that allows us to say that differential immanence remained unthought until it was signed by him. Nonetheless, it is important to briefly look at the way these two themes first came together – in the work of Martin Heidegger – in order to understand the precise moves made by Deleuze. Chapter 1 thus begins by examining how the relation between immanence and difference emerges in Heidegger. It proceeds by tracking the problems produced by Heidegger's formulation of this relation, and it concludes by looking at how Jacques Derrida's work may be seen as an attempt to respond to these problems. The chapter thus provides a prehistory, but not without offering a narration of and argument about this prehistory, which is that the convergence between difference and immanence, though incredibly potent, is beset by numerous problems and difficulties – problems that make possible, along with difficulties that are resolved by, Deleuze's own philosophy of differential immanence.

The exact manner in which Deleuze's differential immanence responds to these problems and difficulties becomes evident only in Chapter 2. Here I develop his philosophy at length – working through a variety of its conceptual elements – in order to show how immanence, precisely because it is differential, is always in need of re-expression. There is, I argue, an irresolvable intensity at the essence of immanence's differential structure. While every expression of immanence is produced by this intensity, the intensity itself does not disappear but remains with the expression, and so each expression's intensity demands the production of further expression. This aspect of differential immanence is especially relevant for the larger aims of this book, such as the question of how to conceive change, or the related question of whether it is possible to conceive this change in terms of a break if one does not have reference to the transcendent. What emerges here is the capacity to imagine change without the transcendent: if immanence is differential, and thus requires re-expression, then immanence can alter itself intrinsically, it can change without having to relate to something outside of it. I emphasise the way that this account of immanent change is furthered by Deleuze's treatment of temporality, which culminates in a discussion of creation. The future, I argue, is expressed in terms of creation – that is, as a product that is in immanence with the past and present yet simultaneously brings about something genuinely new.

This, in any case, is the position made possible by my interpretation of Deleuze's immanence. Along these lines, we could say that the production of new possibilities of existence, of possibilities that are novel precisely insofar as they break with the present order of things, emerges in terms of immanence, or without reference to the transcendent. Many questions, however, still must be pursued. Above all, we have yet to address the question of theology, or of the role to be granted to the naming of God. Thus far we have an account of how Deleuzian immanence will attempt to articulate, via re-expression, the capacity for change, for the creation of new possibilities of existence. But this is only a beginning, for at this point we lack a sense of how it encounters the challenge presented by theology, which will stake out a position from which the change articulated by Deleuzian immanence appears to fall short of a genuine break with the present. From this theological vantage, such change amounts to a mere mutation of the given that is unable to essentially get out of the given's frame. Once again, regardless of whether this challenge holds up – I will argue that it does not – it remains extremely important to encounter it, for production of the new must include an encounter with whatever is imagined as foreclosing the new. Furthermore, if we do not take up the challenge posed by the naming of God, we will find ourselves in (at least implicit) agreement with the secular tendency to quarantine and evade, rather than to explicitly struggle with, this challenge.

These and other issues surrounding the relation between Deleuze's differential immanence and the naming of God are taken up in Chapters 3 and 4. Roughly speaking, my argument attempts to draw a line within theology, which allows me to argue that Deleuzian immanence responds not to theology as such but to two different modalities of theology. The purpose of such line-drawing, then, is to distinguish these two different modalities. The first modality of theology is the subject of Chapter 3, which attends to the rivalry that emerges between Deleuzian immanence and Christian theology's analogy of being (where analogy refers to a symbiotic relation between the world, or the immanent, and the divine, or the transcendent). Specifically, I look at this theological modality as it appears in its preeminent contemporary exponents, David Bentley Hart and John Milbank. Their account of analogy is of interest precisely because it is developed by means of a critique of the themes of difference and immanence that are so central to Deleuze's work. In fact, they contend that the political aim I locate in Deleuze cannot be

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accomplished from within his differential immanence. I argue that their critique of Deleuzian immanence does not succeed, and in doing so I find the opportunity to further articulate the significant contribution that themes of suffering and disaccord make to an account of immanent creation.

While Chapter 3 discusses the modality of theology in relation to which Deleuzian immanence adopts an antagonistic relation, Chapter 4 introduces an alternative theological modality – one that immanence is able to affirm. My aim in introducing this affirmative (or at least non-exclusive) relation between differential immanence and the naming of God is to show how the former's object of antagonism must be strictly understood as the transcendent. At times the naming of God belongs to the transcendent (as is the case with analogy), but this is not always the case. The subject of Chapter 4 is Yoder's theology, and I attend especially to his account of a politics of Jesus, which expresses God not in terms of a transcendent relation to the world, but on the contrary as the name of the world's resistance to domination and as the capacity to produce a world that departs from such domination. I argue that Yoder's theology – on this theme and others, including the theory of time and the notion of the minoritarian – resonates with Deleuze's differential immanence. Additionally, I show how in Yoder's thought the distinction between secular and Christian continually breaks down, such that what comes to matter is not this distinction but instead the act of immanent, differential construction. To ally Deleuze's philosophy with Yoder's theology is to push even further this breakdown and construction.

Chapters 3 and 4 thus establish the relation between Deleuze's differential immanence and the role of theology, but in doing so they bring to the fore another, and final, set of issues – this time surrounding the question of mediation. As long as one remains focused on the naming of God, the role of mediation remains quite clear: it concerns the relation between the divine and the world. Mediation thus refers to the task of bringing together the possibilities of existence set forth by the name of God and the conditions set forth by the given character of the world. This is an especially clear cut matter where the name of God indicates the transcendent, where mediation brings together the givenness of the thisworldly and the exteriority of the otherworldly. Yet, as I argue, such recourse to the transcendent must be excluded. How, then, might we understand mediation within immanence?

Such a question is too often left to the side, and this is because

of the strong link that is presumed between mediation and the transcendent. If we affirm immanence rather than transcendence, then why would we even need to speak of mediation? I argue that while there is evidently no need to mediate the transcendent and the world, it is still necessary to provide an account of mediation. Specifically, this would be a mediation between differential immanence's given expression and its re-expression. Such mediation, it should be noted, is a matter of the political character of immanence: if the concern is to break with the present, then this will happen by way of the re-expression of the present. Although my account of re-expression, in Chapter 2, developed the conceptual lineaments of the immanent creation that is here at stake, it left somewhat undefined what would need to be attended to in order to make sure that the re-expression actually breaks with the given expression. That account ensured only that there must be a re-expression, and that such re-expression is the place where new possibilities of existence could be created. What it did not do, however, is articulate what matters for the actual making of these possibilities. All of these issues, revolving around the theme of mediation, are the concern of Chapters 5 and 6.

Chapter 5 takes up this theme under the heading of the relation between the unconditioned and the conditioned. Deleuze's immanence is essentially unconditioned, for its differential intensity enables the production of new possibilities of existence, yet it must not be forgotten that such possibilities are produced only amidst determinate historical conditions. Where this is forgotten, immanence actually functions as a form of the transcendent – that is, it starts to be imagined as distinct from, or as above and beyond, the conditions of the present. Immanence, even as it opposes otherworldliness, must avoid being treated in an otherworldly manner, as if it existed apart from the conditions of its production. All this is to say that while Deleuzian immanence is never limited to the present, it will be able to break with the present only insofar as it becomes affected by the present. I argue, in fact, that Deleuze's own work, at certain points, falls short in this regard. In this chapter I contend, specifically, that Deleuze's thought is ultimately unable to conceive the relationship between the unconditioned nature of the future and the conditioned nature of the present. In order to resolve this problem I draw on the work of Adorno (as well as certain elements in Deleuze) so as to develop my own notion of metaphilosophy: the task of philosophically conceiving the ways in which philosophy has failed. I develop this notion by working on themes not often associated with

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the relatively affirmative connotations of creation, such as shame, animal suffering, depression, wretchedness, and senselessness. My argument, however, is that these conditions are not at odds with the demand for creation. Only if we think from such conditions will we be able to resist the present's tendency to continue into the future. There can, after all, be no break with the present unless there is also resistance to the present.

This problematic is further developed in Chapter 6, which begins with an account of immanent belief. Such a belief may be usefully distinguished from belief in the transcendent, which draws one's attention away from the world. Immanent belief is a means of insisting on the reality of the affection of dissatisfaction that metaphilosophy conceives. The political aim remains one of creating new possibilities of existence, but such possibilities belong to this world, the one that, as it is presently given, gives rise to a dissatisfaction that precludes any reconciliation with the given. It is exigent, then, to mediate – and thus precisely *not* to moderate – this dissonant affection, or sense of impossibility, with the creation of possibilities that would break with what is given. If immanent belief supplies this link, then the fabulation of icons – another concept that I develop in the wake of Deleuze's differential immanence – names the process by which the new is created. The future, or at least the future that would genuinely break with the past, must be produced. In order to be produced, it must have, or give to itself, a place – and it is exactly such a place that is produced by icons of immanence. Such icons, I argue, should be understood as real beings, beings that are produced by the re-expression of differential intensity. Re-expression, having now passed through a dissatisfaction that is utopic – that has no place of satisfaction and that remains senseless – is put in service of the production of new, iconic places. Immanence is thus differentially re-expressed as a polytopic future, given place through the imagination of icons, and in this way made real.

Notes

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974), p. 181.
2. My dependence, here and throughout, on terms such as 'matter', 'attention', 'evaluation', and the 'value of values', is influenced by the work of Philip Goodchild, especially *Capitalism and Religion: the Price of Piety* (New York: Routledge, 2002), and *Theology of Money* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

3. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1975), p. 13.
4. Out of a concern for simplicity and continuity of citation and exegesis, I do not distinguish between the works authored solely by Gilles Deleuze and those works co-authored with Félix Guattari. This is, I confess, a rather problematic erasure, given my belief that Guattari's influence on Deleuze is substantial. In fact, my account of Deleuze relies heavily on their co-authored *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). For an account of Guattari's work that helps counterbalance the common sublation of 'Guattari' into 'Deleuze', see Janell Watson, *Guattari's Diagrammatic Thought: Writing Between Lacan and Deleuze* (London: Continuum, 2009).
5. 'Transcendence', as I use the term here, and as I intend it throughout the book, refers to that which is made possible by, or which is descriptive of, the 'transcendent'. In other words, I intend transcendence to be understood as interchangeable with the transcendent, where the transcendent refers to any mode of being that belongs to a register or plane that goes beyond the register or plane of the world. Otherwise put, whenever we have more than one plane of being, we have the transcendent. I mention that I mean transcendence to be interchangeable with the transcendent simply because it might be possible to imagine a transcendence that does not come from the transcendent. For instance, if a given mode of existence were to become something else, something other than it is or was, then we might want to say that such a mode of existence has enacted a sort of transcendence. Such enactment, I believe, could be imagined as taking place within immanence, where there is no reference to the transcendent. It is therefore in order to avoid any ensuing terminological confusion that transcendence, in this text, is understood to refer not to the imagination of transcendence within immanence, but always to a transcendence made possible by *the* transcendent. Regarding these distinctions, I am deeply indebted to discussions with and the influence of Ken Surin.
6. Although the literature on this Pauline turn is rapidly growing, the foundational (trinity of) texts can be delineated as including: Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute: Or, Why Is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (London: Verso, 2000); and Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005). This focus on the Pauline turn should be thought in connection with the Schmittian and Benjaminian trajectories that are usually categorised in terms of 'political theology', as well as with the more deconstructive approach to reli-

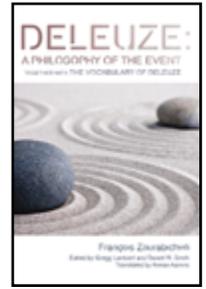
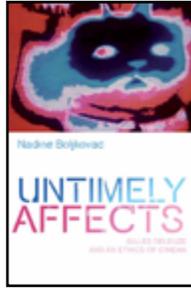
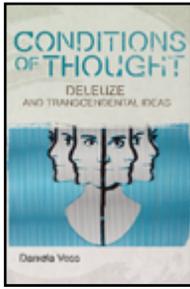
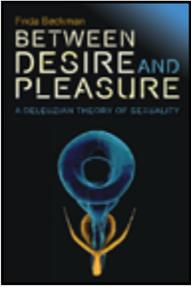
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gion evident in the work of Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy. Nor should we overlook the deployment of religious themes in the writings of Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt.

7. The argument behind this contention may be found in Daniel Colucciello Barber, *On Diaspora: Christianity, Religion, and Secularity* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011).
8. For other treatments of Deleuze and the philosophy of religion that resonate with this ‘intersectional’ approach, see the work of Goodchild, whose pathbreaking approach is on display in *Capitalism and Religion* as well as in *Gilles Deleuze and the Question of Philosophy* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996). See also: Joshua Ramey, *The Hermetic Deleuze: Philosophy and Spiritual Ordeal* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Paul A. Harris and Joshua Ramey (eds), *Spiritual Politics After Deleuze*, *Substance* 39.1 (2010).
9. Though these points have emerged in various ways and from various perspectives, see especially the following texts: Talal Asad’s *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), and *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Saba Mahmood’s *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), and, ‘Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation’, *Public Culture* 18.2 (2006), pp. 323–47; Gil Anidjar’s *The Jew, the Arab: A History of the Enemy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), and *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008). For my own approach to these issues, and specifically for a genealogy of religion as it emerges through the inventions of Christianity and the secular, see Barber, *On Diaspora*, pp. 88–114.
10. Instances of such investment are legion (and are often marked by some kind of relation to Hegelian developmentalism). It will have to suffice to note one especially succinct account of this working through, found in Santiago Zabala’s ‘Introduction’ to Richard Rorty and Gianni Vattimo, *The Future of Religion*, ed. Zabala (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 2. According to Zabala, the motivation for the ‘rebirth of religion in the third millennium’ is to be located in ‘the secularization of the sacred that has been at the center of the process by which the civilization of the western world developed’. Zabala affirms this ‘rebirth’, at least insofar as it is allied with secularisation, which itself is to be allied with themes of western civilisation and its development. In other words, ‘secularization is the appropriate way of bearing witness to the attachment of modern European civilization

to its own religious past, a relationship consisting not of surpassing and emancipation alone, but conservation, too'. Secularisation – on Zabala's account, which unfortunately is the rule rather than the exception – thus becomes a way of inheriting or working through Christianity, where this working through is the very process of 'western civilization's' development. Such a process is precisely what I wish to oppose in my problematic of Deleuzian immanence and the question of religion.

11. Or, if we presume that the link between religion and Christianity is inescapable, what will be necessary here is not just a dechristianisation of the discourse of religion, but also an antagonistic undoing of religion as such. For more on dechristianisation, see Gil Anidjar, 'The Meaning of Life', *Critical Inquiry* 37.4 (2011), p. 720, where he foregrounds 'the persistence of the Christian question', remarking that, 'the critique of Christianity ... its decolonization, is still ahead of us'.
12. Here we might recall his well-known comment that he approached '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.' See Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 6.



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