**Research Article**

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# G. Deleuze's *Untimely* [*non-*]: The Inverter of Platonic Nihilism to Ethics of Creation

**Abstract:** In F. Nietzsche's philosophical thought, there is a profound link between European Nihilism and the task of modern philosophy to produce new Platos. The current article demonstrates how G. Deleuze uses the Nietzschean term *Unzeitgemäβ* – (Untimely – Unfashionable) in his attempt to overturn nihilistic Platonism. Deleuze enriches the Stoic paradox of [*non-*] when seeking *an image of thought without image* for the sake of what he calls the "untimely creative intensity," an affirmative power in immanence. I argue that Deleuze reads the Stoic [*non-*] using the lens of the Nietzschean *untimely* to construct the technique of *reversibility* in his philosophical plane. Following the cartography of Deleuze's philosophical route, I first examine two problems caused by Platonic nihilism: the destruction of the form in anonymity and the noiseless transmutation of copies into simulacra. Second, I discuss Deleuze's two types of nihilism: (i) the cruciform structure of the Platonic and (ii) the use of the paradox of the [*non-*] upon the surface by Stoics. Finally, I comment on Deleuzian nihilism as the birthplace of creation.

**Keywords:** Deleuze, untimely, Stoics, [*non-*], reversibility, intensity, Plato, simulacra

The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze admires two thinkers who played a decisive role in developing his thought and whose work is connected directly with the platonic corpus from opposite directions: Friedrich Nietzsche, who denounces Plato,[1] and Alfred Whitehead, who praises him.[2] The fragrance of the platonic spirit, either in a Nietzschean or a Whiteheadian manner, is present in all the phases of Deleuze's philosophical adventure, even after his unexpected death. On 7th November 1995, just three days after Deleuze passed away, *Liberation* published *A Letter to Gilles* by Alan Badiou (July 1994). In this text, Alan Badiou is "discovering," among others, an elective affinity between Deleuze and Heidegger in their response to Plato. He asks both "a decisive question: how to give meaning to affirmation?" and goes on to argue that "because Plato extenuates active (or immanent) force in the (transcendent) separation of the Idea," Deleuze is mistaken in his "hostility to Plato."[3] Gregory Flaxman not only disagrees with Badiou about Deleuze's hostility to Plato but also names Plato an "uncanny ally"[4] of Deleuze in his *fabulation of*

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**1** "The struggle against Plato … has created a magnificent tension of the spirit in Europe, such as never existed on earth." Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 2.
**2** "The safest general characterisation of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato." Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 39.
**3** For the so-called Deleuze's Platonism see, Badiou, *Deleuze*; Bergen, "A Propos de la Formule de Badiou," 19–30; and Gil, "Quatres Méchantes Notes Sur un Livre Méchant," 71–84.
**4** Flaxman, "Plato," 8.

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*philosophy.*[5] Taking one step further, Michael James Bennett claims that "in that dialogue [of the *Sophist*] Plato's own surpassing of Platonism occurs on the basis of a consideration of difference (*to heteron*)," that is the philosophical *song* of the Deleuzian thought, which is neither eternal nor historical, but untimely and not of the present.[6]

In this article, I discuss how Deleuze constructs *the principle of reversibility* of Platonism as his philosophical war machine. Deleuze synthesises the Stoic affirmative [*non-*] with the Nietzschean *untimely* in the construction of reversibility. By understanding how Deleuze manufactures the principle of reversibility, we can follow its application, function, and production throughout the first phase of the Deleuzian philosophical thought (1953–1968).

The article is composed of five sections. In the opening section, I map the place of the [*non-*] in the initial phase of the Deleuzian oeuvre. In Section 2, I expose the Platonic problem through a synaptic scan of Nietzsche's six aphorisms on how the world became a Fable World. In Section 3, through the Nietzschean lens of the *untimely*, I comment on two paradigms familiar to the Deleuzian oeuvre: the paradigm of anonymity and the paradigm of silence combining the discussions of Homeric Ulysses and Melville's Bartleby, with the two nihilisms that Deleuze presents in the first version of the Plato and the Simulacrum essay. I aim to show how, in the processual extraction of the identity, the language of the same and the Fable World, another type of nihilism, takes shape. The formulation of two types of "*non-being,*" the platonic and the Stoic, corresponds to the two types of nihilism; one that is privative, the Platonic and the Stoic, that affirms the powers of creation. In Section 4, I analyse how Deleuze deals with *the problem of myth* in Platonism via Artaud's plan. To depict Deleuze, I look at how the shift Nietzsche traces from the True World to the Fable anticipates Artaud's plan against Platonism, sketching an analytic cartography of the three-part organisation of the World by Plato: the celestial, the earthly, and the subterranean. In Section 5, I present how the Stoic comprehension of the [non-] being as "*the difference in itself*" leads Deleuze to an affirmative affection of [non-]. For Deleuze, the new perception of [non-] is a body free from the likeness of any prototype; it is a body without image. By grasping this position, it becomes clear that all the terms used throughout the Deleuzian philosophy imply [non-] affirmatively. Thus, the *untimely* [*non-*] is the becoming ungrounded and the immanent milieu of the Deleuzian Ethics of Creation.

# 1 The Place of [non-] in Deleuze's Corpus

In the monograph devoted to Nietzsche with the title *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962), Deleuze points out *the paradox of* [*non-*] as a positive quality in Zarathustra.[7] This [*non-*] transforms the negative element in values in order to convert the power of reaction, that is "the power of the slaves," into the power of action, "the power of the masters." Because the former is the reversal of the latter, there is the need for "the reversal of a reversal."[8] As Deleuze explains,

> Zarathustra speaks of something else: transmuting values, converting negation into affirmation. But reaction will never become action without this deeper conversion: negation must become a power of affirming.[9]

Thus, in the will to power, the active negation is a quality of affirmation that vanquishes nihilism. In Nietzsche's words, "Affirmation of decline *and destruction*, [is] the decisive thing in a Dionysian philosophy, saying Yes to opposition and war, *becoming*, with a radical rejection of the very idea of 'being'."[10]

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**5** Flaxman, *Gilles Deleuze and the Fabulation of Philosophy*, 115–80.

**6** Bennett, *Deleuze and Ancient Greek Physics*, 13. For Deleuze's distinction between *philosophical cries* and *philosophical songs*, see his lecture on 30 October 1984.

**7** Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*.

**8** Ibid., 71.

**9** Ibid., 170.

**10** Nietzsche, *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche* (vol. 9), 259.

Taking the baton from Nietzsche in his magnum opus, *Difference and Repetition* (1968), Deleuze relates the [*non-*] to the problem of being, the problem of ontology, speaking about a "non-being without negation."[11]

In the first chapter, Deleuze exposes the position of the concept of "difference" in the history of philosophy. He seeks a difference that does not remain in representation, but becomes, according to the title of the chapter, a "Difference in Itself." Starting his analysis in Aristotle, who organises the difference in the representation of genus and species, Deleuze juxtaposes another philosophical lineage that struggles to redefine the concept of difference, containing Dun Scotus, Spinoza, and Nietzsche, while on the other side, he explains the reasons for the failure of F. Hegel and G. W. Leibniz to liberate difference from representation even while going beyond Aristotelian representation. Paradoxically, the chapter concludes with Plato, Aristotle's mentor, whom Deleuze considers not only as the founder of the problem of nihilism but also as the philosopher who gives the means for a potential to overcome it.[12] According to Nietzsche's definition of nihilism, "If one shifts life's main emphasis not into life but into the 'beyond' – into nothingness – then one has removed life's main emphasis"; its centre of gravity.[13] So, Plato establishes his nihilism, shifting life's centre of gravity from immanence to the world of Ideas.

Art, science, or political theory that longs to orient its plane either towards the messianic horizon of the future or the authenticity of the origins in the past devaluates life, reproducing nihilism. That is why some political thinkers or philosophers misunderstand Deleuze's philosophy, arguing for its supposed incompatibility with politics or aesthetics.[14] They mistake Deleuzian philosophy for only those thinkers who want to re-contextualise the politics of representation. The following analysis aims to show the mode of the *untimely* [*non-*] *and* inform Deleuze's readers of its function in the total of Deleuze's oeuvre. For instance, for the operation of [*Anti-*] in *Anti-Oedipus*, where this war machine affirms a schizo-Oedipus of desire which becomes a creator abandoning the paranoic-Oedipus of fascism that constitutes the domination of capitalism.

One may wonder why Deleuze does not use the "hetero" (*non*)- *or ?-* instead of [*Anti-*], which Deleuze with Guattari preferred. This choice happens because the (*non*)- *or ?-* is related to the ontological discourse, while the [*Anti-*] deals with the ethics of desire. However, because these two modes of war machines function similarly, I choose the term *untimely* [*non-*], which can involve the whole of Deleuzian philosophical war machines. The [*non-*] also explains Deleuze's use of paradigms from the literature to define philosophical or political problems. Because his war machines of analysis run on the exact same software of *untimely* [*non-*], it is fully compatible for him, as I will show later, to contrast a politician's theory as, i.e. Churchill, and the poetic intensities of Rimbaud. In Deleuzian epistemology, the problem inheres, subsists, or persists in the question–answer form of "what is it?" and blends with the {*untimely* [*non-*]}, opposing by this way to any mode of dialectics... This {untimely [non-]}, as it is referred to again in the *Logic of Sense*, "is the being of problematic."[15] The *untimely* [*non-*] is the inverter that causes the "organs [to be] reversed,"[16] allowing the genesis of the subject and the creation of the "new people."[17]

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11  Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 39.
12  On the one hand, according to Deleuze, "Ideas Inaugurate or Ground the World of Representation," but on the other hand, there is "anti-platonism in the heart of platonism." Ibid., 242 and 128.
13  Nietzsche, *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche* (vol. 9), 175.
14  See Hallward, *Out of this World. Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation*, 162; Badiou, "Le Fascism de la Pomme de Terre;" and Garo, *Foucault, Deleuze, Altusser & Marx*, 262. In aesthetics see Ranciére, "Existe-t-il une Esthétique Deleuzienne?," 525–36. See also Rancière, "Deleuze, Bartleby et la Formule Littéraire."
15  Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 123.
16  Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues II*, 36.
17  I use the term "inverter" according to its mechanical comprehension as the element of the transformation of solar energy to electricity.

## 2 The Fable World

By untimely, Nietzsche means "out of keeping with the nature of time and being unpopular."[18] According to Deleuze, "in the untimely, there are truths that are more durable than all historical and eternal truths put together: truths to come."[19] In this perspective, Deleuze shows that even the Untimely's extraction from the past, the emergence of simulacra, is a truth to come. In the Deleuzian use of untimely, I argue that unlearning nihilism means learning (*non*)-*being* as difference, not as the opposite of being, but as the opposite to identity and identity's conception of difference, which are given by historical or eternal authenticities. It refers to the askesis of analysing the unpredictable nature of the *difference in becoming* instead of the stable ontology of being that presupposes the negation of its opposite, non-being. For Deleuze, there is the creative experience of an event in the emergence of difference. As he states, the event is happening, it has already happened, and it has yet to happen – it belongs to no time. The untimely nature of the event means that no images or concepts exist as the agencies of an original pattern that the event emulates or copies. So, nihilism in untimely is related to the quest to overcome the replacement of events by representations and how to manage the powers that struggle to prevent events in Life.

In the famous sketch of the first chapter of his book, *The Will to Power*, from the Spring of 1888, Nietzsche presents six aphorisms called *How the "True World" Finally Became a Fable*, wherein he describes the shift of the world to nihilism. Deleuze explains the nature of Nietzschean aphorisms in the preface to the American edition of his book dedicated to Nietzsche, saying that "an 'aphorism' in Nietzsche's hands is not a simple fragment, a snippet of thought: it is a proposition which makes sense only in relation to the state of forces which it expresses, and whose sense changes – whose sense must change – according to the new forces which it is 'able' (has the power) to elicit."[20] Through the use of aphorisms, Nietzsche wrests thought from the platonic dipole question "what is the truth?" – "what is the falsehood?," asking for their dramatisation in the questions of *in what case? who? how? how much?*[21] So, "the aphorism has a role to play, with its variable speeds and its projectile-like movement" in the interpretation of forces and the evaluation of power.[22] The six aphorisms that penetrate the Nietzschean concept of nihilism are:

1. The true world, attainable for one who is wise, devout, virtuous – he lives in it, *he is it*.

   (Oldest form of the idea, relatively clever, simple, convincing. Paraphrase of the proposition, "I, Plato, *am* the truth.")

2. The true world, unattainable for now, but promised to one who is wise, devout, virtuous ("to the sinner who does penance.")

   (Progress of the idea: it becomes more refined, trickier, more incomprehensible – *it becomes woman*, it becomes Christian[...])

3. The true world, unattainable, unproved, unpromised, but the mere thought of it a consolation, an obligation, an imperative.

   (Basically the same old sun, but through fog and scepticism; the idea becomes sublime, pale, northern, Königsbergian.)

4. The true world – unattainable? In any case, unattained. And, as unattained, also *unknown*. Consequently, not a consolation, redemption, obligation: How could something unknown be obligatory?[...]

   (Gray morning. First yawn of reason. Cock-crow of positivism.)

5. The "true world" – an idea that is no longer of any use, no longer even obligatory – a useless idea that has become superfluous, *consequently*, a refuted idea: let's get rid of it!

   (Broad daylight; breakfast; return to *bon sens* and cheerfulness; Plato's blush of the shame; devilish noise from all free spirits.)

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**18** Nietzsche, *Unfashionable Observations: Volume 2*, 396–7.

**19** Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 107.

**20** Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, 208.

**21** See the analyses of "The Method of Dramatization" in Deleuze, *Desert Islands*, 94–103.
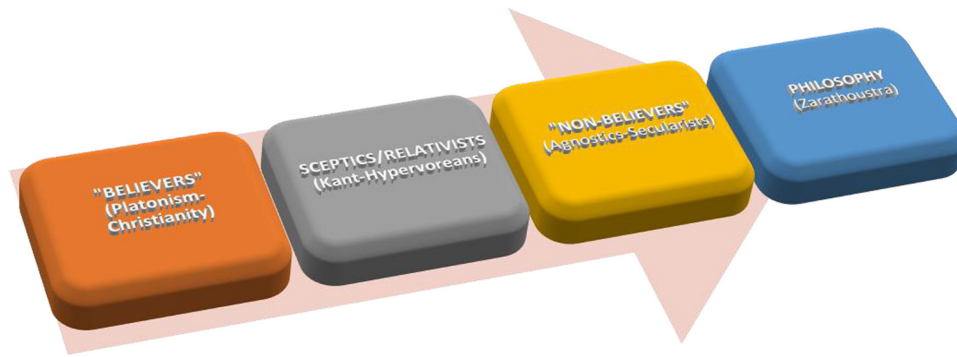
**22** Ibid., 209.

**Figure 1:** From the Fable world to philosophy.

6. We have abolished the true world: which world was left? Perhaps the apparent one?... But no! *along with the true world we have also abolished the apparent one!*

   (Midday: moment of the shortest shadow; end of the longest error; high point of humanity; INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA.)[23]

If we try briefly to chart the six aphorisms of the "History of an Error," then we can see across four of them the emergence of two major antithetical groups, the "believers" in the *true world* (1, 2) and the "non-believers" (4, 5), while the other two aphorisms function as connecting hubs. (3) can be identified with scepticism/relativism, which Kant embodies (Kant lived and died in Königsberg), while the (6) evoking Zarathustra, who, on the one hand, signals the end of the "worst, longest lasting and most dangerous of all errors ... namely Plato's invention of pure spirit and good in itself," and, on the other hand, the Beginning of Philosophy (Figure 1).[24]

The history of how the real world became a myth, as sketched out in the six aphorisms, is interwoven with the value of truth; we can see that it is the history of the will for truth. Following Deleuze, we can note that Nietzsche "does not criticize false claims to truth but truth in itself and as an ideal"[25] because "it is higher values [as *truth*] that are related to a will to deny, to annihilate life."[26] The desire to possess *truth* is grounded upon the will of the *logos of truth*, which is *the* truth, its essence, not its appearance. For this reason, the will to have *the* truth constitutes the negativity in thought and the world. Negativity is the world's atmosphere because the world is only an appearance of *the true world*. In Platonism (first aphorism), the *true world* exists in the past before the real world, while in Christianity (second aphorism) – "the Platonism for the people"[27] – the coming future of eschaton, the Kingdom of God, is the place of the *true world*. The life of the real world takes the value of nil because "Nihil in '*nihilism' means negation as quality of the will to power*."[28] In *negative nihilism*, the will to truth is a form of the will to power as a will to deny, the lowest degree of power. This quality of will characterises the belief in *another* world, either in the version of idealism or in confessionalism.

Arriving at the intersection of the opposing groups, "believers" and "non-believers," Nietzsche encounters another type of nihilism, the Hyperborean Kantian that "*stinks* of theology."[29] Nietzsche finds that in Kant's practical reason, "a secret path to the old ideal stood open, the concept *true world*, the concept of morality as *essence* of the world ... were once again, thanks to a craftily clever scepticism, if not provable,

**23** Nietzsche, *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche* (vol. 9), 62–3.

**24** Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 2.

**25** Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 95.

**26** Ibid., 147.

**27** Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 2.

**28** Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 147.

**29** Nietzsche, *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche* (vol. 9), 515.

then at least no longer refutable … Reality had been turned into an 'appearance'."[30] It is for this reason that he names "protestant" this type of nihilism, the "half-sided paralysis of Christianity – *and* of reason"[31] that preserves the distinction between the sensible world and the supersensible true world "secur[ing] *the unity of the personal* in the two worlds."[32] Kant's faculties of reason coexist with the established values in the relativistic mode of "true value" or "true morality."

After Kant's failed attempt to reconcile man and reason with the real world emerges what Deleuze calls *reactive nihilism*.[33] This type of nihilism, which contains *agnosticism* (fourth aphorism) and *secularism* (fifth aphorism), denies the existence of the *true world*, the supersensible, and the higher values devaluating life in a different manner. "Thus, the nihilist [*non-believer* to a *true world*] denies God, good and even truth," abolishing the existence of any form of will upon the earth.[34] Deleuze sees these types as extensions of the previous *negative nihilism* since they continue to devaluate life "which now [continuing] in a world without values" in the loss of its essence remains a naked appearance.[35] The real world and its life are forms without essence, the lowest degree of form. The reactivity of *agnosticism* and *secularism* leads to what Nietzsche calls *passive nihilism*, which is the first taste of the sixth aphorism, "nihilism as decline and recession of the power of the spirit:[is] *passive* nihilism."[36] In this state, according to Deleuze, "triumphant reactive forces take the place of the power of denying [the will to power as will to deny], which led them to their triumph," prolonging the *negative* nihilism.[37] From one point of view, it is evident that the Platonic artefact of the power of values in the first aphorism, which constitutes *identities* and *Being*, collapses in the *sameness*, the unity of the world on the foundations of pessimism in the fifth aphorism. Still, from another point of view, that of the sixth aphorism, there is the need for a re-evaluation of values and a philosophy of "*becoming*, with a radical rejection of the very idea of 'being'."[38] The modern fact is that we no longer believe in this world. As Deleuze put it, "whether we are Christians or atheists, in our universal schizophrenia, *we need reasons to believe in this world*. It is a whole transformation of belief. … belief [that] replaces knowledge only when it becomes belief in this world, as it is."[39]

Deleuze undertakes the project to create the war machine of the *untimely* [*non*] to overturn *negativity* and *reactivity*, the double branches of the platonic logic. Because the former establishes *identities* while the latter ensures their stability in the unity of the *Same*, the Deleuzian war machine must transversally seep through identity and sameness; it must transform the element that must be transformed in values into the element of negation to the power of affirmation, and so then to transmute reactivity to a univocal place upon which emerges the multiplicity of differences.

In his attempt to rethink Platonism in a Nietzschean context, Deleuze is not satisfied with the classical distinction of worlds, transcendence-immanence, as philosophy had determined them in searching in a profound manner to explain the logic of reason or the rationality of the Platonic discourse. Thus, he follows Nietzsche's method of dramatising the concept of truth, the flag of nihilism, the qualifying adjective that defines the world in the first five aphorisms.[40]

Deleuze describes the method of dramatisation as a new form of pluralist question and tragic affirmation as follows:

> From this form of question there derives a method. Any given concept, feeling or belief will be treated as symptoms of a will that wills something. What does the one that says this, that thinks or feels that, will? It is a matter of showing that he could

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**30**  Ibid., 141.

**31**  Ibid.

**32**  Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 93.

**33**  Ibid., 148.

**34**  Ibid.

**35**  Ibid.

**36**  Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 17.

**37**  Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 149.

**38**  Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 259.

**39**  Deleuze, *Cinema*, 172.

**40**  "According to Nietzsche's method the concept of truth must be dramatized." Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 95.

not say, think or feel this particular thing if he did not have a particular will, particular forces, a particular way of being... This method corresponds to the tragic question. It is itself the tragic method. Or, more precisely, if we remove from the word "drama" all the Christian and dialectical pathos which taints it, it is the method of dramatization.[41]

As I will present later in the Platonic topology, Deleuze replaces a *logos* with a *drama* "setting up the drama of this logos"[42] or, in other words, he overturns the *logos tomeus* by the *drama tomeus* in order to release in the place of latter the *zero* that is equal to creative intensities, the "free spirits" in the fifth aphorism that marks the end of Platonism.[43] Using the method of dramatisation, Deleuze re-evaluates the values such as the value of truth: "Take the concept of truth; it is not enough to ask the question: 'what is the true?' As soon as we ask *who wants the true, when and where, how and how much?*"[44]

Thus, for Nietzsche, the starting point for the philosophical work must be the challenge of Platonism, with the aim of overturning it. Deleuze takes up Nietzsche's challenge. Taking up the challenge includes, on the one hand, the writing and publication of his book on Nietzsche and, on the other hand, the hole he experienced in his personal life, which is linked with the taste of nihilism. Deleuze was 28 years old in 1953 when his first book appeared, and then, he waited eight years before publishing his next book. In his interview with *Magazine Litteraire* in September 1988, he mentions that,

> It's like a hole in my life, an eight-year hole. ... Maybe it's in these holes that the movement takes place. Because the real question is how to make a move, how to get through the wall.[45]

In the adventure to return to Ithaca, that is the world as it is, I will interweave in my paper the paradigms of *Bartleby*, who is a paradoxical type of the nomadic Ulysses, who travels standstill, with Artaud, who is "a man who has lost his life and is searching by all means possible to make it regain its place."[46]

# 3 Deleuze's Two Types of Nihilism and Untimely Anonymity-Silence

Deleuze uses two examples from the literature to explain how he envisages the [non]-being as the only path to pass through the wall of Platonic nihilism. Deleuze uses two examples from the literature to explain how he envisages the [non]-being as the only path to pass through the wall of Platonic nihilism: a) the pradigm of "Noman" in Homer's *Ulysses* and b) the paradigm of *Bartleby* in Herman Melville's novel. These two examples present the collision of Deleuze's [non]-being with two essential characteristics of Platonic nihilism; first, the notion of "identity" in the collapse of Ulysses' famous name to "Noman" and second with the notion of "same," in the emancipation of a copyist from the normative representation. The following paradigms trace two necessary instances of destruction in the transversal penetration of the Platonic world, a world full of myths and "holes," to the Nietzschean "True World."

## 3.1 The Paradigm of Anonymity

According to the Homeric Epics, the island of Phaeacians is the last stop in the journey of Ulysses after many adventures, shipwrecks, and the repeated loss of the form of his previous life. Troy's hero also lost on the island of the Cyclopes, the last form of identity of every human, that of his name. When the Cyclops Polyphemus asks him for his name, the answer is,

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**41** Ibid., 78.

**42** Ibid., 95.

**43** Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 62.

**44** Deleuze, *Desert Islands*, 98.

**45** Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972-1990*, 138.

**46** Deleuze, *Cinema*, 173.

*Οὖτις* ἐμοί γ᾽ ὄνομα· *Οὖτιν* δέ με κικλήσκουσι

μήτηρ ἠδέ πατήρ ἠδ᾽ ἄλλοι πάντες ἑταῖροι. (365–366)[47]

**Noman** is my name. **Noman** is

what my mother and father and all my friends call me.[48]

Eustathius of Thessalonica in the twelfth century, in his commentaries to Odyssey, noticed a comical phenomenon in Ulysses' answer.[49] In the Greek language, there is no grammatical type of *Οὖτις* in the simple form of a name but only the form of two words: *Οὒ τίς*. The Homeric Ulysses transforms the pronoun into a first name in the accusative case, *Οὖτιν*, instead of the correct pattern in the accusative case of the pronoun: *Οὖ τινά*. When later Ulysses blinds the Polyphemus, and the latter asks for help from the other Cyclops, he calls them by these words:

ὁ *Οὖτις* με κτείνει μετά δόλου, οὐ μήν ἐν ἰσχύϊ

The other Cyclops are not aware that "*Οὖτις*" is the first name of a person, and they understand the meaning of Polyphemus's words as:

**No-one** can kill me by a trick and also by strength.

Instead of the correct:

The **Noman** kills me by the trick and not by his strength.

The formula of the name *Οὖτις* is an agrammatical combination of two words that points towards the function of a name without providing an identity. So, when *Οὖτις* arrived exhausted at the Phaeacians' island, he was an unnameable stranger. Ulysses, styling himself "*No-One*," became the subject of a self-desubjectification that, on the one side, lost his given identity but, on the other side, resisted and evaded the control of any supernatural power. Ulysses' great escape leads us to the next step, the mode of life without the representations of supernatural powers and their copies. Deleuze defines this mode of life in Melville's *Bartleby, The Scrivener: A Story of Wall-Street*.

## 3.2 The Paradigm of Silence

In Melville's story, a Wall Street lawyer hires a new clerk who, after an initial bout of hard work, refuses to make copies or do any other task required of him, with the words "I would prefer not to." Bartleby performs fewer and fewer duties and eventually nothing. Instead, he spends long periods of time staring at a brick wall out of one of the office's windows. In his essay, "Bartleby; or, The Formula" in 1993, Deleuze characterises Melville's tale as a "violently comic text" commenting on the famous motto.

> 'I WOULD PREFER NOT TO' is Bartleby's chemical or alchemical formula, but one can read inversely I AM NOT PARTI-CULAR as its indispensable complement. The entire nineteenth century will go through this search for the man without name, regicide and parricide, the modern-day Ulysses ("I am No-One").[50]

There are two elements of the Homeric epic found also in Deleuze's reading of Bartelby's formula: first, the presence of the Odyssean (non)-"I," the No-One, and second, the repetition of the phenomenon of ungrammaticality even if it is related to the rules of morphology and syntax. Deleuze adds to Ulysses the parameter of particularity. If someone is particular, then she/he is a copy of a pattern or model. In the case of Bartleby, he is Ulysses in the state of No-One's anonymity; he is "not particular" because he became an unrecognisable Platonic simulacrum which means that he is not a copy, even if a distant one, of God or Form or

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**47** Homer, *Homeri Opera*, 160.

**48** Homer, *The Odyssey*, 99–112.

**49** Eustathius, *Commentarii Ad Homeri Odysseam*, 349.

**50** Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 74.

Essence anymore. He became a new prototype in the abyssal silence, excommunicated outside the borders of the pre-established rules of language and the laws governing society.

In the Untimely framework, the non-particular "I" experiences the event of *anonymity* and *silence* as realities that do not originate either in history or eternity. The untimely empiricism delineates what Deleuze calls the "[non]-being" that he discovers in the attempt of Stoic philosophy to overturn Platonism. For the Deleuzian thought, the distinction between the Platonic non-being and the Stoic "[non]-being" depicts two distinct types of nihilism, identifying the former with totalitarian authorities and the latter with creativity.

In the first edition of the text "Plato and the Simulacrum," Deleuze quotes a passage from Henry Miller's book on Rimbaud, in which Miller identifies the mode of two nihilisms.[51] The first nihilism sustains and institutes "a chaos which negates," while the other "affirms chaos itself." Deleuze gives the two examples to clarify the difference between them and to underline the importance of the concept of simulacra. The former nihilism is related to Rimbaud, where "there is some destruction necessary ... that is the destruction incidental to creation," a breakthrough. The latter is referred to as "the destruction which [Hitler, Stalin Mussolini, Churchill, and Roosevelt] visited the world, a breakdown."[52] These two illustrations portray the discussion in France after World War II about the reasons that led humanity to the war. Thus, Deleuze's problem is, "How must we deal with the past in a creative mode extracting its untimely?" I maintain that to answer this quest, Deleuze prospects for the logic of the Nietzschean untimely in the poetic drives of Antonin Artaud.

## 4 Artaud's Plan

Deleuze, in his famous interview *L' Abécédaire*, confesses that in his attempt to "seek the means to do away with the [transcendent] system of judgment and to replace it with something else," he moves towards Nietzsche and Spinoza from philosophy, and D.H. Lawrence from literature, and "finally [to] one of the latest and greatest of all: Artaud."[53] The prominent role of Artaud penetrates both the initial and mature periods of Deleuze's considerations of the Image. Artaud's text, "To Have Done with the Judgement of God," functions as the manual for Deleuze's program to identify Life with immanence and to free life in an individual.[54] As Deleuze says, "it is in man himself that we must liberate life, since the man himself is a form of imprisonment for man. Life becomes resistance to power when power takes life as its object."[55] In the same line as Nietzsche and Spinoza, Artaud points out that Platonism is the dominant theory, which "takes life as its object," screaming "for a need: that of abolishing the idea, the idea and its myth."[56] The symbol of the platonic theory is the cross with the vertical axis of transcendence and the horizontal axis of immanence, with the separation of the three levels in Life: Sky, the place for Ideas, Forms and God; Earth, the home for copies; and Hades or Hell, the place to "bury simulacra," the bad copies.[57] Plato is, in this way, the designer of the Cross (Figure 2).

Artaud's call for "THE ABOLITION OF THE CROSS" aims at "the idea and myth."[58] He wants the deposition of the idea from the transcendence and to dethrone the myth.[59] According to Deleuze's description of Platonism, the "characteristic of [platonic] division is to surmount the duality of myth and dialectic,

**51** Deleuze originally published the article, "Renverser le Platonism" in *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 71, no. 4 (October–December 1966), 426–38. The English translation in Lawlor, *Thinking Through French Philosophy*, 165–77.

**52** Ibid., 176–7.

**53** "Gilles Deleuze from A to Z," MIT Press, last modified 20 October 2022, https://mitpress.mit.edu/9781584351016/gilles-deleuze-from-a-to-z/.

**54** Artaud, *Watchfiends & Rack Screams*, 282–307.

**55** Deleuze, *Foucault*, 77.

**56** Artaud, *Watchfiends & Rack Screams*, 299.

**57** Widder, *Reflections on Time and Politics*, 100–7.

**58** Ibid., 290.
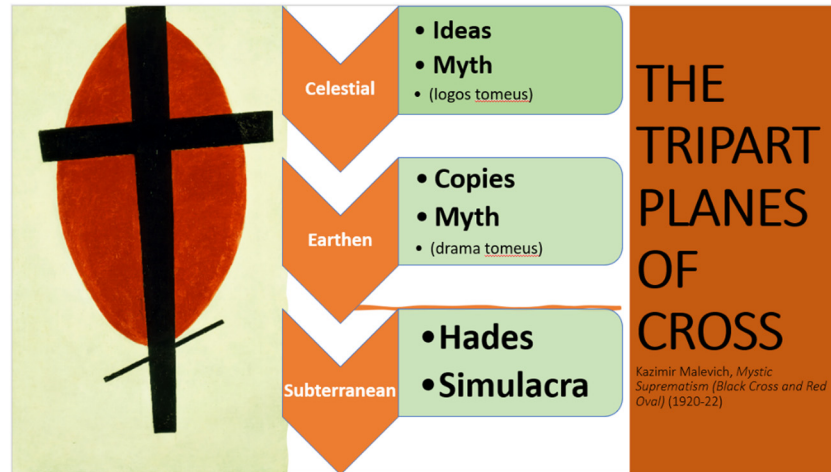
**59** Ibid., 295.

**Figure 2:** The Platonic topography.

and to reunite in itself dialectical and mythic power."[60] Myth is the agglomerate of the dialectical method of division that is apparent in constructing a model according to which the claimants must be judged. At the core of the myth, the Idea has been settled. The myth is "the appearance of the Idea, not the Idea itself."[61]

The Deleuzian presentation of the Platonic Logic shares the myth within three territories of the vertical axis: (a) from the celestial until the crossroads with the horizontal axis of the world, which Deleuze calls the *logos tomeus*; (b) from the *logos tomeus* to the surface of the earth; and (c) from the root "of the earthen crosses," which I call *drama tomeus*, to the abyss of Hades.[62] The above scheme has three parts of the cross: celestial, earthen, and subterranean (Figure 2).

Deleuze discusses the first territory in the Platonic dialogue of *Phaedrus*, where Plato uses the myth to deal with the discovery of the true lover, referring to the circulation of souls before their incarnation. Then, he discusses the second territory in *Statesman*, where Plato looks for the true statesman with the help of the myth of the archaic God who ruled the world and the men. Finally, in the third territory, the presence of the absence of myth is, for Deleuze, the incarnated mode of a counterexample in the Platonic dialogue of *Sophist*. Deleuze states that, therefore, "Plato proposes to isolate the false claimant par excellence, the one who lays claim to everything without any right: the 'sophist'."[63] While Plato in *Phaedrus* and the *Statesman* uses the method of myth, in the *Sophist*, he changes his method and tries to define the "false pretender as such" without using myth.[64]

## 5 Sophist's (non)-Being

According to Whitehead, philosophy "from the days of Plato to the present time haunted by subtle per-plexities" is better illustrated by the paradigm of the "*Sophist*, where Plato states that 'non-being' is a form of 'being'."[65] As Whitehead comments, "this statement is at once an extreme instance of the breakdown of language and the enunciation of a profound metaphysical truth."[66] Deleuze sees in Plato's *Sophist* the

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60 Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 255.

61 Somers-Hall, *Deleuze's Difference and Repetition*, 54.

62 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 62.

63 Ibid., 61.

64 Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 256.

65 Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 222.
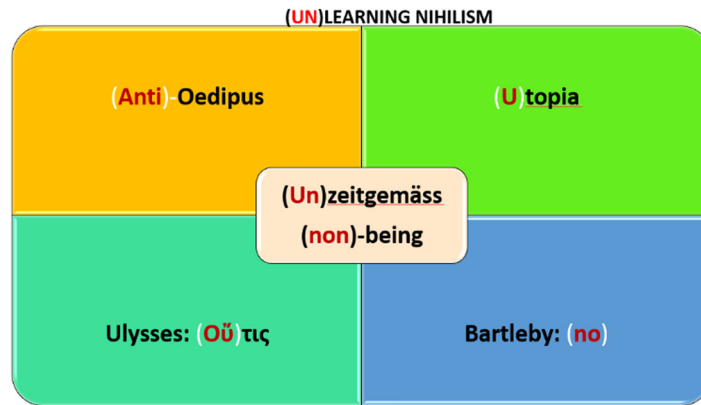
66 Ibid.

**Figure 3:** The affirmative [non-].

incarnated [non-]being of Difference (*hetero*). From this dialogue, he extracts an elusive kind of non-being. The sense of non-being that first appears in *Parmenides* is the theme of Deleuze's analyses of the Stoics and the Event in his book *The Logic of Sense*. In *Difference and Repetition*, he already identifies the sense of non-being with "difference," not as that what "is" but which does not come into existence yet or, in other words, as that what "is" an image of thought without image. So, Deleuze introduces and proposes a nihilism of Difference that he describes in the paradigm of Miller about Rimbaud. In Deleuzian nihilism, the "image of thought without image" that is the simulacra in the third part of the cross, in the abyss of Hades, is not a negation. It is an image without a prototype, an image that became a model in itself, like Bartleby in front of Wall Street. According to Plato, the image represents the Idea of the correlation between the celestial and earthly planes. According to the analysis of Plato's *Sophist* by John Malcolm, the basic structure of the meaning of the term "image" may be given as follows:

> An image is a likeness of the true thing
> The true thing really is (ὄντως ὄν)
> The image, which is not the true thing, is not
> really (οὐκ ὄντως ὄν)
> But it is, in a way (πώς)
> It is a likeness
> The image, though not really, is really
> So what is not, *is* (in a way).[67]

It is an image without the image of the Idea, which is placed in the subterranean Hades, the simulacra. The critical aspect here is that simulacra do not participate in the knowledge of the Idea; the [non-]beings have for Deleuze another knowledge, that of Difference. When Deleuze asks for a "thought without image," he seeks the thought of the [non-]beings' simulacra.[68] A thought that creates a body without the Image of the Idea. This "body without Image" is an unencodable body "which does not and will not let itself be coded … something that isn't encodable," extracted from the celestial plane to function on the plane of immanence but not as the projection of the Idea, nor as "the proof of an original nothingness, nor is it what remains of a lost totality."[69] Rather, it exists right there where it is produced, in the extraction. Even if this seems to be nihilistic destruction, a creative event emerges in the process of the extraction from the past to exhibit

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**67** Malcolm, "Plato's Analysis of τό ὄν and τό μή ὄν in the Sophist," 130–46.
**68** At this point, I want to mention the different approaches between Deleuze and Whitehead on the Platonic "non-being" in the *Sophist*. Deleuze relates the *non-being* to the simulacrum; that is, for him, a model in itself and not the more distanced copy of the original as, for instance, Baudrillard's simulacrum. For Whitehead, Plato "only applied this doctrine [of *non-being*] to his eternal forms." In Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 237.
**69** Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 8.

untimely anonymity and silence. The action of Difference appears from the depths of the abyss to the surface, upon the skin of a body, or, more accurately, the Event emerges as *a body without image* in the *drama tomeus*.

Thus, in Deleuze's reversibility of Platonism, the anonymous and silent *untimely of* [*non-*] transforms the nihilism of the Ideas, images, and bad copies through the creative energy of the *body without image* that transforms any negation into the politics of everyday Life. Deleuze's readers should apply the same lens of this [*non-*] to their readings of the [*anti-*] in Anti-Oedipus, the [*u-*] in utopia, the [*Οὔ-*] in Ulysses' "Οὔτις," the [*no*] in the Bartleby's formula, and, finally, the [*un-*] in Unlearning Nihilism. So, in the question, "How to pass through the Wall?" in the initial phase of the Deleuzian Images, the answer is through the emergence of simulacra at the surface of the wall in the type of [non-] (Figure 3).

One last point, during the later cooperation of Deleuze with Felix Guattari, this [non-] will be replaced by zero [0] in the schizoanalytic theme of Artaud's "Body without organs."[70] This zero is not the absence of a number or the subtraction of the number one, but it is the abutment of the body without organs; zero is the metastable state which designates it because *0 = intensity*.[71]

# 6 Conclusion

In conclusion, Deleuzian nihilism, in both the initial period and the mature period of Deleuze's philosophical oeuvre, is inseparable from a hole traversed by the untimely creative intensity of [non-]. The economy of the untimely is nothing but the expansion of the will-to-power beyond nihilism, leading to greater freedom; the freedom of "masters [who], according to Nietzsche, are the untimely, those who create, who destroy in order to create, not to perverse."[72] It is the freedom of the creators that Euripides, the tragic poet who most influenced by the Stoics, calls in his tragedy *Helen* the concept "[non-]God,"

> What is god, or what is *not god*, or *what is in between*, what mortal says he has found by searching the farthest limit?[73]

Deleuze describing the task of overturning Platonism emphasises that "this overturning should conserve many Platonic characteristics is not only inevitable but desirable."[74] Hence, as "the Heraclitan world still growls in Platonism," paraphrasing, we can say that Plato's cries still growl in their transmutation to philosophical songs by Deleuze's *untimely* [*non-*].[75] Deleuze releases Plato's philosophical cries from privatised nihilism to sing together the refrain of creative difference that eternally returns. The war machine of the *untimely* [*non-*] animates *the principle of reversibility* that is Deleuze's mode in his Ethics of Creation.

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**70** Artaud, *Watchfiends & Rack Screams*, 307.

**71** Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 21.

**72** Deleuze, *Desert Islands*, 130.

**73** Euripides, "Helen" verse 1137 (italics mine).

**74** Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 59.

**75** Ibid.

**Conflict of interest:** Author states no conflict of interest.

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