

Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*

Academic Study Guide

Différence et répétition, 1968

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Différence et répétition, 1968 (Deleuze’s principal doctoral thesis; English trans. Paul Patton, 1994). A structured study reference keyed to the architecture of the text and the secondary literature, pitched at graduate level.

A note on scope. Where the scholarship is settled, this guide says so. Where it is contested, it says that instead, and names the camps. Deleuze’s reception is younger and more scattered than Hegel’s, so several of the readings below are live disputes rather than consensus.

0. Orientation: what kind of book this is

The book has two enemies and one positive project. Hold all three in view from the start.

The first enemy is **representation**. Western philosophy, Deleuze argues, has never once thought *difference itself*. It has thought difference only as a relation *between* things already identified — difference made to answer to a prior **identity**. He wants the opposite: a difference that presupposes no identity, difference “in itself.”

The second enemy is **the negative**, and here his real target is Hegel. On the Hegelian route, difference is driven to the extreme of **contradiction**, and the **negative** does the

labor. Deleuze's wager turns this upside down. The negative is an *illusion*. It is a shadow thrown by a more primary, affirmed difference, and we have mistaken the shadow for a power. (This is what makes *Difference and Repetition*, in large part, an anti-Hegel book.)

The positive project is a philosophy of difference built as a “**transcendental empiricism**.” Deleuze wants the **genetic conditions of real experience** — not Kant's conditions of *possible* experience, which merely trace the conditioned and come out too wide. The conditions must be no broader than what they condition, and they must *produce* the given rather than resemble it. Three pieces of machinery do that work: the **virtual**, **intensity**, and the **Idea**.

What kind of book results? All at once a **metaphysics** of difference, an **epistemology** that dismantles the usual “image of thought,” and a **transcendental philosophy** of how experience — and even representation — gets produced.

A word on the title. *Difference* names the positive ontological element, difference freed from identity. *Repetition* names its temporal twin: not the repetition of the *same*, mechanical and dead, but the repetition that makes the new and brings back only difference. The two are one doctrine. What repeats is difference.

1. The core machinery you must hold onto

Deleuze has more moving parts than Hegel. Learn these six before any chapter summary. Nearly every misreading collapses one of these distinctions.

1.1 Univocity of being

Being is said in one and the same sense of everything that is — yet that of which it is said differs. Being is univocal; beings are different. That is the ontological backbone, and it has a lineage in three moments.

Duns Scotus thought univocity first, but neutralized it, making being *indifferent* to the finite and the infinite so as to dodge pantheism. Univocity merely conceived. **Spinoza** went further and made univocal being an object of pure affirmation, substance expressing itself through attributes and modes — but the modes still *depend on* substance, and Deleuze wants substance instead to be said *of* the modes, to turn around them. **Nietzsche** completes the doctrine. In the eternal return, being is said of becoming and identity is said of difference; univocal being finally revolves around difference itself.

Memorize the slogan: **being is univocal, but it is said of difference.** This is not a bland “all is one.” It is the claim that the *sense* of being is single while its expressions diverge.

1.2 Virtual / actual (NOT possible / real)

This is the single most abused distinction in Deleuze. Keep the two pairs rigidly apart.

	Possible → Real (rejected model)	Virtual → Actual (Deleuze)
Status	the possible is <i>opposed to</i> the real; it lacks reality	the virtual is fully real — opposed to the <i>actual</i> , not to the real
Mechanism	realization : the possible is “limited” and resembles what realizes it	actualization = differenciación , genuine creation and divergence
Resemblance	yes — the real is the image of the possible	no — the actual does not resemble the virtual it incarnates

The formulas to keep: the virtual is fully real *as* virtual; the reality of the virtual is *structure*. The virtual is the mode of the **Idea**, of the **problem** (§5). And because there is no pre-given resemblance to copy, actualization makes something genuinely new.

1.3 Intensive / extensive

Deleuze takes this distinction over from physics, faithfully, and then generalizes it. It is rigorous, and worth getting exactly right (see §8).

Extensive magnitudes are additive, and they divide without changing nature: length, volume, number. Cut a ten-centimetre rod in two and you have two rods of five. **Intensive** magnitudes are non-additive, and they cannot divide without a change of nature: temperature, pressure, density, speed. Two litres of water at ninety degrees do not make one volume at one hundred and eighty. “Divide” an intensity and you change its kind.

For Deleuze, intensity is the genetic *reason* of the sensible. Extensities and qualities — everything that appears — are produced by intensive differences, which then get covered over by the very extension and quality they generate (§7).

1.4 Differentiation vs. differenciación (the *t* / *c* distinction)

Deleuze coins a near-homophone, with two spellings in French that the English keeps.

Differentiation, with a **t**, is the determination of the **virtual** content of an Idea — its differential relations and its singularities. The Idea is differentiated. **Differenciación**, with a **c**, is the **actualization** of that virtual into species and qualities, parts and extensities. The actual is differenciated. The whole process he writes as **différent/ciation**, both halves at once.

A mnemonic: *t* for the virtual problem getting determined, *c* for its getting actualized and created.

1.5 The problematic (problems are real, and have their own positivity)

Problems are not lacks. They are not mere stepping-stones to solutions, and they are not subjective. A problem is an objective structure — an Idea — with its own truth. Solutions are *generated by* problems and *cover* them, the way actual cases incarnate a virtual structure. A problem does not exist apart from its solutions, yet it does not vanish

into them either. It insists and persists in them. This is the epistemological face of the virtual/actual distinction.

1.6 Passive synthesis

Some syntheses happen *beneath* the active, representing subject — at the level of “contemplative souls,” **larval subjects**, organic and perceptual contractions. The constituting work of time, and of the self, gets done passively, before any “I” arrives to do it. This carries the whole theory of time in §3.

2. Chapter 1 — Difference in Itself

This is the polemical heart of the book. How did the tradition shackle difference, and how do we set it free?

2.1 The four shackles (“quadruple yoke”) of representation

Difference has only ever been thought as *mediated* by four instances, each tying it back to identity: the **identity** of the concept, the **opposition** of predicates, the **analogy** of judgment, and the **resemblance** in the perceived object. To think difference in itself is to break all four — to reach a difference that is not difference *between* two prior identities, but difference as the primary, productive element.

2.2 Aristotle: difference captured by the concept

Aristotle thinks difference as **specific difference**, the difference *within* a genus that marks off species — rational from irrational within “animal.” Two things go wrong. The move subordinates difference to the identity of the concept, the genus. And it cannot think the difference of *being itself*, since being is not a genus. So the largest difference escapes, the difference between the categories, and so does the smallest, the difference of the individual. Difference is mediated, and thereby tamed.

2.3 Against Hegel: difference is not contradiction

Hegel pushes difference to its maximum as **contradiction** and lets the **negative** generate the movement. Deleuze answers on three counts. Contradiction is *less* profound than difference, not more. The negative is a secondary effect, the shadow cast by an affirmed difference and then mistaken for a force of its own. And Hegel’s “difference” is still difference in the service of the identity of the concept — the negative working toward a higher reconciliation. That is the most cunning form of representation, Deleuze thinks, not its defeat.

So the watchword is **affirmation**. Difference does not need opposition, and it does not need the negative, in order to be productive.

2.4 Leibniz: closer, through the infinitely small — but still convergent

Leibniz thinks difference as the **infinitely small**, and he proceeds by **vice-diction** — the affirmative composition of a problem out of ideal events and adjunct conditions — rather

than by contra-diction. That is nearer the mark. But Leibniz still organizes everything around **convergence** and the identity of the analytically-continued concept, and he banishes divergent series as **impossible**, exiled into other worlds. Deleuze will do the opposite. He affirms divergence and disjunction, the simulacrum and the return.

2.5 The positive thesis

Difference in itself has to be thought as **intensity** — the “unequal in itself” (§7) — and as the **disparate**. And it has to be grounded in a paradoxical **ground that is also a groundless** (*fond / sans-fond*), one that *ungrounds* rather than *founds* (*effondement*). Univocity is the ontology that lets being be said of just this difference.

3. Chapter 2 — Repetition for Itself: the three syntheses of time

This is the centerpiece, and the part most often studied on its own. Time is constituted by **three passive syntheses**. Each grounds the next, and then the next ungrounds it: present, then past, then future.

3.1 First synthesis — HABIT: the living present (Hume + Bergson)

A passive **contraction** draws independent instants together into a **living present** that holds the just-past and leans toward the just-to-come. Hume’s habit and expectation, plus Bergson’s contraction. And the one who contracts is not an “I.” It is a **contemplative soul**. We are made of contracted water and earth and light and air; we are contemplations, we are contractions. The contracting is done by **larval subjects**, beneath the level of any active mind.

But the living present *passes*. Habit constitutes time within the present, yet it cannot explain why one present gives way to the next. So we need a synthesis of the past.

3.2 Second synthesis — MEMORY: the pure past (Bergson)

This is the **ground** of time. For a present to pass, the past cannot be merely a former present. There must be a **pure past that was never present** — an *a priori* “past in general,” the element in which any present can pass at all. Bergson’s coexisting sheets of memory, the cone. The pure past *coexists* with the present it once was, and the whole of the past coexists with itself at every degree of contraction and relaxation. Reminiscence, in Proust and in Plato, gestures toward it.

And yet memory still turns inside the circle of representation, the Mnemosyne that recollects a self-identical past. It grounds time on something already given. To reach the genuinely new, time has to be *ungrounded*. So we need the third synthesis.

3.3 Third synthesis — the FUTURE / the ETERNAL RETURN: the empty form of time (Kant + Nietzsche + Hölderlin)

This is the royal repetition, and the hardest to grasp. Several threads are braided together.

Time comes “out of joint,” as Hamlet says. It stops being subordinated to movement or to a circle and becomes a pure, empty, straight **form** — an order with a **caesura** that distributes a before, a during, and an after. Then the **fractured I** (*Je fêlé*), which is Kant’s discovery pushed to its limit. Kant put time *into* the subject: the “I think,” all spontaneity, can determine only a self that is given *in time*, passive and receptive. So the I is split between the determining “I think” and the determinable self. Deleuze drives this further still, to a dissolved self and a cracked I. In the caesura the agent is at first unequal to the act, then becomes equal to it through a metamorphosis, and this projects a future — the time proper to the return.

Now the point everyone gets wrong. **The eternal return is selective, and it does not bring back the Same.** It is the being of becoming, and only difference returns. The Same, the Similar, the negative, the identical — these are *expelled* by the return; they do not come back. It is not the same that returns; returning is itself the being of that which differs. Read it cosmologically, as “everything recurs identically,” and you have a travesty. The return is an ethical and ontological *selection* that affirms difference and the new.

These are not three stages of a subject. They are three passive constitutions of time, and the third ungrounds the first two. Habit founds, memory grounds, and the groundless future overturns them both. Only there does the new become possible.

(Chapter 2 also rereads psychoanalysis. Deleuze cuts the death “instinct” loose from any “return to inanimate matter” and identifies it with the empty form of time — a neutral, desexualized energy. And the **dark precursor** (§6) first appears, as whatever puts heterogeneous series into communication.)

4. Chapter 3 — The Image of Thought

Here Deleuze attacks the “**dogmatic image of thought**”: the bundle of unstated assumptions about what thinking *is* that philosophy has smuggled in under cover of “everybody knows.” He lists **eight postulates**.

1. **The principle**, or *Cogitatio natura universalis* — the assumption that thought has a good will and an upright nature, and naturally seeks the true.
2. **Common sense** — the *concordia facultatum*, the presumption that all the faculties cooperate on one and the same object.
3. **Recognition** — thought modeled on *re-cognizing* an already-identified object across the faculties. Recognition only ever confirms the given. It never *forces* us to think.
4. **Representation** — difference subordinated again to identity, opposition, analogy, resemblance (the four shackles, §2.1), now installed as the element of thought.
5. **Error** — the assumption that the only misadventure of thought is error. Deleuze answers that **stupidity** (*bêtise*), baseness, madness, and nonsense run deeper.
6. **The proposition** — truth lodged in designation, in the proposition, while **sense** is neglected.
7. **Solutions** — truth and falsity made to bear only on solutions, with problems treated as shadows of ready-made answers. But problems have their own truth (§1.5).
8. **Knowledge**, the end — knowledge prized over **learning**, method over apprenticeship and *culture*.

4.1 The alternative: the encounter, and “transcendental empiricism”

So what does start thinking, if not good will? An **encounter** (*rencontre*) — a violent meeting with something that *forces* thought, a **sign**, an object that can only be sensed and cannot be recognized. Each faculty is then driven to its **transcendent exercise**, to its own limit, where it grasps what only it can grasp: the **sentiendum**, that which can only be sensed; the **memorandum**, only remembered; the **cogitandum**, only thought. The faculties no longer cooperate. They pass a shock from one to the next, in a discordant harmony.

This is **transcendental empiricism**: the search for the conditions of *real* experience, not merely possible experience — conditions that are genetic, that actually produce the given, and singular, no wider than what they condition. The method owes a real debt to Salomon Maimon and his demand for a *genetic* account of experience.

5. Chapter 4 — Ideas and the Synthesis of Difference

Now the positive ontology. An **Idea**, for Deleuze, is a virtual, problematic, differential **multiplicity**. Take the adjectives one at a time.

5.1 The Idea as multiplicity (Riemann, not the One/Many)

“Multiplicity” (*multiplicité*) is meant to retire the old opposition of One and Many altogether. Deleuze borrows it from **Riemann**. A multiplicity is defined *intrinsically* — by its number of dimensions and the relations among them — with no need of a unity to ground it and no outside space to embed it in. There is no One above the many, and no Many beneath a one. There are only multiplicities, of varying dimension and structure.

5.2 The three moments of the Idea (the differential structure)

An Idea is a differential structure, fixed by three moments at once. First, the **undetermined**: the differential *element*, written dx , with no prior identity or value of its own. Second, the **reciprocally determinable**: the differential *relation* $\frac{dy}{dx}$. The elements have no value alone, yet their relation is fully determinate. Identity gives way to reciprocal determination. Third, the **completely determined**: the **singularities**, the distinctive points, the *values* of the relation that lay out the shape of the problem.

Formal highlight (Deleuze’s own model, read philosophically — see §8).

Take a curve $y = f(x)$. As dx and dy individually vanish, becoming *undetermined*, the **relation** $\frac{dy}{dx}$ does **not** vanish. It stays perfectly determinate — the slope of the tangent, $f'(x)$. There is Deleuze’s image of reciprocal determination: parts with no standalone identity, whose relation is nonetheless exact. The points where $f'(x) = 0$, and the other distinctive points, are the **singularities** that organize the whole curve. For Deleuze, that is the very picture of how a *problem* is structured by its singular points, with the ordinary points strung between them.

5.3 Differentiation → differenciation; the virtual gets actualized

The Idea, the virtual, is **differentiated**: it carries determinate differential relations and a distribution of singularities. But it is not yet actual — no qualities, no extension, no individuals. **Actualization is differenciation**. The virtual relations are incarnated as qualities and species, and as extensities and parts. And here is the decisive claim: the actual does **not** resemble the virtual it incarnates. Actualization is divergence, creation, not copying. (Contrast realization of the possible, §1.2.) So the whole object is **différent/ciation** — a virtual half, problematic and never fully actual, which “insists,” and an actual half, the species and parts that incarnate it.

5.4 “Learning” and the reality of problems

To learn is to explore an Idea, a problem, not to bank a set of solutions. The famous example is swimming. You do not learn to swim by *imitating* the teacher’s movements — that would be recognition, representation. You learn by conjugating the singular points of your own body with the singular points of the “Idea” of the wave. It is an apprenticeship to signs, an encounter with the sheer heterogeneity of the water. So Chapter 4 loops back to the encounter and the problematic of the last chapter.

(Two under-cited sources sit behind all this: **Albert Lautman**, for whom Ideas are a dialectic of problems incarnated in solutions; and **Salomon Maimon**, for the differentials of consciousness and the genetic method.)

6. Chapter 5 — The Asymmetrical Synthesis of the Sensible

How does the virtual get actualized, and where does the *sensible* come from in the first place? One answer to both: **intensity**.

6.1 Intensity is the genetic reason of the given

What appears in experience — extensities and qualities — is *produced* by **intensive difference**, difference of intensity. Intensity is the sufficient reason of the phenomenon. Every phenomenon refers to an inequality that conditions it. But intensity then unfolds itself in extension and, in unfolding, *cancels* itself; it gets buried under the very quality and extension it generated. Hence a **transcendental illusion**. We take the extensive, qualitative surface for the fundamental thing, and we forget the intensive depth that made it.

6.2 The three characteristics of intensive difference

Intensity is the **unequal in itself** — it contains and affirms inequality, where “good sense” always rushes to equalize. Intensity **affirms difference** — it is the proper object of affirmation, and asks nothing of the negative. And intensity is **implicated, enveloped quantity** — it keeps an “indivisible distance,” and cannot divide without a change of nature (the rigorous intensive/extensive point, §1.3). It is folded in, implicated, until actualization unfolds it and cancels it.

6.3 Individuation precedes the individual; the *spatium*; the dark precursor

Individuation is **intensive**, and it *precedes* both differentiation and the individual. It is not the subsumption of a thing under a species. It is the dramatization by which intensities actualize an Idea. Individuation precedes differentiation; the individual is an effect, not a starting point. Beneath extension there is an intensive **depth**, a *spatium*, out of which extension and quality emerge. Deleuze reaches for embryology. The **egg** is the intensive field; the embryo undergoes forced movements an adult could never survive; the world, he says, is an egg. (The debts here are to Simondon's individuation and *disparation*, and to Ruyer.)

And heterogeneous **series** are made to resonate by a **dark precursor** (*précurseur sombre*) — itself difference relating difference, invisible, lacking any identity of its own. It is the in-itself of difference that throws disparate series into communication.

6.4 The critique of entropy (“good sense” cosmologized)

What about **entropy**, the tendency of intensive differences to cancel into uniformity? Deleuze calls it a transcendental illusion. It mistakes intensity for its extensive *cancellation* and then projects the disappearance of difference as a law of the cosmos. But difference is primary. Its apparent equalization is only intensity explicating itself in extension.

7. Conclusion — Difference and Repetition: simulacra and the overturning of Platonism

What does it mean to **overturn Platonism**? It means affirming the rights of the **simulacrum**, the phantasm. Plato's project was selection: sort the true claimant, the well-grounded copy, from the false claimant, the simulacrum that no longer resembles its model. Deleuze reverses the sorting. He affirms simulacra *as* divergent, model-less, free of resemblance — and in doing so dissolves the whole hierarchy of model and copy. (This is the same affirmation of divergence that he set against Leibnizian impossibility in §2.4.)

So repetition is the repetition of difference, and the **eternal return** is its highest form — the being of becoming, a selection that brings back only difference and expels the Same and the negative (§3.3). To repeat is the supreme affirmation.

And the whole converges on a single thought, the one we began with. Being is said in one and the same sense of all that is — and it is said *of difference*. What returns, the only thing that returns, is difference itself.

8. Note on “mathematizing” Deleuze

Be careful here, because the issue is both a strength and an exam trap. Unlike Hegel, Deleuze actively *builds* on mathematical and scientific concepts. But he does so at two very different levels of rigor, and you must keep them apart.

One use is rigorous and faithful: the **intensive/extensive** distinction. It is a genuine, well-defined distinction in thermodynamics — extensive quantities are additive and scale with the system; intensive quantities do not. Deleuze uses it correctly and then generalizes it. The highlights built on it (§1.3, §6.2) are sound.

The other use is reinterpreted, not rigorous: the **differential calculus**. Deleuze reads the differential, dx and $\frac{dy}{dx}$, as the very structure of the Idea, drawing on the pre-Weierstrassian tradition of the infinitesimal — Leibniz, and the philosophical interpreters Maimon and Lautman. But modern rigorous analysis, the ε - δ limit, *eliminated* the infinitesimal he leans on. He is not doing rigorous mathematics. He is building a philosophy of the *problematic*, with the calculus as its conceptual model. The same goes for **Riemannian multiplicity**, used for its philosophical sense — an intrinsic, unity-free manifold — and not as differential geometry.

What about the famous Sokal-Bricmont charge, that Deleuze abuses mathematical terms? The scholarly reply (Daniel Smith, Simon Duffy, Manuel DeLanda) is that he is openly doing a philosophy of the differential and the problematic, working from the *interpretive* tradition of the calculus, and claiming no mathematical results — so the charge largely misses, *if* you read him as philosophy rather than mathematics. Whether the use is nonetheless too loose remains contested.

So a defensible position: take the differential and multiplicity highlights as Deleuze's chosen philosophical models, with the non-rigorous, pre-limit reading flagged; take intensive/extensive as a rigorous distinction he uses faithfully. Do not say that *Difference and Repetition* "applies" modern mathematics. It does not.

9. The architecture at a glance

Part	Topic	Key move	Against
Introduction	Repetition vs. generality	repetition = the singular, the non-exchangeable, the new	the order of resemblance/exchange (law)
Ch. 1 — Difference in Itself	freeing difference	difference in itself; univocity ; affirmation	the four shackles; Aristotle; Hegel/contradiction
Ch. 2 — Repetition for Itself	three syntheses of time	habit → pure past → eternal return (selective)	time subordinated to the circle, to the Same
Ch. 3 — The Image of Thought	critique of the dogmatic image	the encounter ; transcendental empiricism	the eight postulates ; recognition
Ch. 4 — Ideas / Synthesis of Difference	virtual Ideas	multiplicity; differential structure; différent/ciation	possible→real; representation; ready-made problems
Ch. 5 — Asymmetrical Synthesis	intensity and individuation	intensity as genetic reason; individuation before the individual	the entropy / "good sense" illusion

Part	Topic	Key move	Against
Conclusion	difference + repetition	simulacra ; overturning Platonism; the return of difference	model/copy hierarchy; the negative

A caution worth stating plainly. Deleuze's chapters are not a deductive ladder where each entails the next. They are parallel assaults on representation from different angles — history of philosophy, time, thought, Ideas, sensibility — all converging on one ontology of difference. **Joe Hughes** reads them as a single **genesis** (a dynamic genesis from sensibility upward in Chapters 3 and 5, a static genesis from the virtual downward in Chapters 4 and 5). That is illuminating, but it is an interpretive frame, not stated doctrine.

10. Glossary of essential terms

- **Difference in itself** (*différence en elle-même*) — difference not derived from any prior identity; the primary ontological element.
- **Repetition** (*répétition*) — **bare or material**, the repetition of the Same, mechanical; versus **clothed or spiritual**, the repetition of difference, disguised, productive of the new.
- **Univocity of being** — being said in one sense of all that is, while beings differ (§1.1).
- **Virtual / actual** — the virtual is fully real but not actual; actualized by **differenci-ation**, which creates without resemblance. *Not* the possible (§1.2).
- **Intensity** (*intensité*); **intensive / extensive** — intensity is the genetic reason of the sensible; non-additive, indivisible without a change of nature (§1.3, §6).
- **Idea** (*Idée*) — a virtual, problematic, differential multiplicity (§5). Not a mental representation.
- **Multiplicity** (*multiplicité*) — a Riemann-derived structure, defined intrinsically; it replaces One/Many (§5.1).
- **Differential relation** ($\frac{dy}{dx}$); **singularities** — reciprocal determination; the distinctive points that organize a problem (§5.2).
- **Differentiation / differenci-ation** — virtual determination (*t*) versus actualization (*c*); together, **différent/ciation** (§1.4, §5.3).
- **Problematic / problem** — objective structures with their own positive truth; not lacks (§1.5).
- **The three syntheses of time** — **habit** (present), **memory** (pure past), **eternal return** (the empty form of the future) (§3).
- **Passive synthesis** — synthesis beneath the active subject; larval subjects, contemplative souls (§1.6, §3.1).
- **Eternal return** (*éternel retour*) — selective; the being of becoming; returns *only* difference, expels the Same and the negative (§3.3).
- **The fractured I** (*Je fêlé*) / **the dissolved self** — the Kantian split of the “I think” from the time-given ego, radicalized (§3.3).
- **Dogmatic image of thought** — the unstated assumptions about thinking; the **eight postulates** (§4).

- **The encounter** (*rencontre*); **sign**; **sentiendum** / **memorandum** / **cogitandum** — what *forces* thought; the transcendent exercise of each faculty (§4.1).
- **Transcendental empiricism** — the conditions of *real*, not possible, experience; genetic and singular (§0, §4.1).
- **Vice-diction** — the affirmative composition of a problem (Leibniz, Lautman), set against contra-diction (§2.4).
- **Dark precursor** (*précurseur sombre*) — difference relating heterogeneous series; the differentiator (§6.3).
- **Individuation** — intensive, and prior to the individual and to differentiation; the egg, the forced movements (§6.3).
- **Simulacrum** / **phantasm**; **overturning Platonism** — affirming model-less, resemblance-free images; reversing Plato's selection (§7).
- **Ground** / **groundless** (*fond* / *sans-fond*); **ungrounding** (*effondement*) — the paradoxical base of difference that ungrounds rather than founds (§2.5).
- **Good sense** / **common sense** (*bon sens* / *sens commun*) — the two halves of the dogmatic image: common sense unifies the faculties on an object; good sense distributes and equalizes (the target of the intensity argument, §6).

11. The interpretive landscape

The field is younger than Hegel's, and less settled. Know the camps anyway.

- **James Williams**, *Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition: A Critical Introduction and Guide* — the most reliable section-by-section walkthrough, a broadly transcendental reading. The best first companion.
- **Henry Somers-Hall**, *Deleuze's Difference and Repetition*, and *Hegel, Deleuze, and the Critique of Representation* — excellent on the anti-representational project, and especially sharp on the Deleuze-Hegel confrontation.
- **Joe Hughes**, *Deleuze's "Difference and Repetition": A Reader's Guide*, and *Deleuze and the Genesis of Representation* — reads the whole book as a genetic account of how representation is produced; systematic, Husserl-inflected.
- **Daniel W. Smith**, *Essays on Deleuze* — outstanding on univocity, the calculus, and the overturning of Platonism. The place to go for the conceptual machinery.
- **Manuel DeLanda**, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* — a realist, dynamical-systems reading of the virtual and intensity: attractors, phase space, manifolds. Influential and clarifying. Its fidelity to Deleuze, and its scientism, are contested.
- **Simon Duffy**, *The Logic of Expression* and related work — the anchor for the differential, for Lautman and Maimon, and for the reply to Sokal-Bricmont.

The names to know as background sources: **Bergson** (time, the virtual), **Nietzsche** (eternal return, affirmation), **Spinoza** and **Scotus** (univocity, expression), **Kant** (the fractured I, the faculties), **Maimon** (the genetic method), **Lautman** (the dialectic of problems), **Simondon** (individuation).

Three disputes are live. How *scientific*, how realist, should the virtual and intensity be read — DeLanda's dynamical systems, or a stricter transcendental reading? How *literally mathematical* is the differential apparatus (§8)? And is the book best read as a genesis of representation (Hughes) or as a metaphysics of difference in its own right? None of the three is settled.

12. The four “background books,” and where *D&R* sits in Deleuze’s corpus

Difference and Repetition gathers up four monographs Deleuze wrote in the 1960s. Reading even their introductions lights up the matching strands of the book.

- **Bergsonism** (1966) → the syntheses of time, the virtual, the pure past, multiplicity.
- **Nietzsche and Philosophy** (1962) → the eternal return, affirmation, the critique of the negative and of *ressentiment*.
- **Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza** (1968, his secondary thesis) → univocity, expression, immanence.
- **Kant’s Critical Philosophy** (1963) → the faculties, the fractured I, the transcendental — which Deleuze then turns against Kant.

After *D&R* comes **The Logic of Sense** (1969), its close companion, foregrounding sense, the event, and the surface — read the two together. Then the collaborations with Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), where the metaphysics of difference becomes a politics and a pragmatics: assemblages, the rhizome, the body without organs. That is a different register. Do not back-read its vocabulary into *D&R*.