

Interview:

DELEUZE, MARX, AND THE EXTENT OF THE THEOLOGICAL:

An Interview with Philip Goodchild

Neil Turnbull

NEIL TURNBULL [NT]: The first question I would like to ask, because I know that Deleuze has had a massive influence on the way in which you think about the nature of both philosophy and theology, is why *Deleuze*? What resources do you think that Deleuze brings both to the philosophical table and to the theological table?

PHILIP GOODCHILD [PG]: I think Deleuze brings very few resources to the theological table, but to the philosophical table he's brought some quite significant ones. One thing that strikes anyone who reads Deleuze is the extent to which he's influenced by other figures. Now of course, there are the main figures such as Spinoza, Bergson, Nietzsche, Leibniz, Kant, and Hume, who he's written about explicitly and they stand out. But people who study Deleuze often develop little enthusiasms and say, "Ah, if you read *Anti-Oedipus*, it's all Jacques Monod! It all comes from there." Or, "It's all Antonin Artaud" or someone else. And there are so many of these different readings that it actually shows that he is someone who is extremely open to influence: that is one thing that I find attractive. And I think it relates to his philosophical method because in some sense he is a historian of philosophy. As a historian what he wants to do is get inside another thinker and work out the systemic integrity of that particular way

of thinking. This is one of the problems people have with reading Deleuze: they treat more or less every word he writes as if it was signed by the author whereas it's very often just a historical study where he's not giving his opinions as such—he's talking about the way in which the concepts work in these thinkers. The other striking thing about it is that he has a certain acumen that is very perceptive for how a philosopher thinks rationally and consistently and to some extent his books are almost improvements, they're tidying up, they're revealing what a thinker was aspiring to that they didn't know about themselves—it's their ideal form of thought. So what you have with Deleuze is on the one hand a whole descriptive list of different ideal forms of thought; but then you also have a kind of synthesis, a kind of assemblage where, in the books written in his own name or written with Félix Guattari, there are all these influences coming in where he's managed to integrate different dimensions of these incompatible thinkers and incompatible systems. That's one of the things that strikes me about his method of immanent reading, trying to work out the internal logic of a system: it extracts the essence—the force of thinking—and then appropriates it and reuses it and makes it its own. And that's what I try to do in my reading of Deleuze.

NT: So you use Deleuze as the basis for an organon of inquiry?

PG: Yes, I do that with him. I think that there are probably three ways of reading Deleuze. The first way involves thinking, 'Who is Deleuze? How can I fit him into my scheme of intellectual history?' This is an attempt to represent Deleuze, to try and 'name' him in some way.

NT: You mean his position within the philosophical tradition?

PG: Yes, his position within a tradition. And very often this involves a preconception of where the tradition is and what it requires and it involves Deleuze giving certain answers to questions that you put to him that he is not putting to himself. To my mind that means that many people who read Deleuze who are quite competent philosophers and thinkers produce a double, a shadow that occasionally imports concepts that he never uses, and that shadow is a false image. They then reject the shadow and have a critique of the shadow and he'd be laughing at them because that is not what he does.

I'll say roughly that more or less everything written in English on him before about 1995 or 1996 was of this first kind and was very poor for actually understanding and explaining him. There were a couple of descriptive works such as that of Ronald Bogue, and Brian Massumi made a little bit of progress in his first book (his later work is a lot better). But until that time people just didn't get it. And then a wave of Deleuze scholarship started from the mid-90's onwards which constitutes the second kind of approach.

NT: Which you're part of?

PG: My book [*Gilles Deleuze and the Question of Philosophy*] was the first serious philosophical study. I think there is a lot more detailed and rigorous and better and more insightful work that has come out since. But I applied this hermeneutic principle that, in order to reconstruct Deleuze as *Deleuze*, you have to follow an immanent method which means you make the movements of thinking that he's making and then you apply them back to him. So you do a Deleuzian reading of Deleuze; that, then, produces an authentic Deleuze. One of the strange outcomes of that is that there emerges a kind of 'in group' in Deleuze studies—people who get it. I was at several Deleuze conferences years ago where *largely* there was agreement: 'this is what he thinks' and 'we're uncovering it' and there was some really good, profound exegesis. But there were one or two people on the fringe of that, like everyone hated Badiou's reading of Deleuze.

NT: I want to come to that in a minute...

PG: Or Peter Hallward was there, and Peter Hallward is a lovely, extraordinarily intelligent chap whom I admire enormously, but everyone found Peter a figure of 'offence' (let's say) because he hadn't taken the shift and was giving the other thing. So you get an exclusive 'in' crowd which leads to the problem that it largely turns into continual exegesis: 'What did Deleuze *really* mean here?' 'Which were his actual different diverse sources and how does that really shed light so we can really understand this bit?' While that has a certain scholarly value, it becomes a self-perpetuating thing.

So I think that there's a third approach which often doesn't necessarily lead to immediate, direct publications. This is people who read Deleuze, who understand him pretty well on his own terms and then *go and do their own work* having absorbed him. A figure like William Connolly, I would say, is

representative of this kind. I didn't notice him in Deleuze scholarship throughout the 90's, but he was reading Deleuze from well before then and really understanding it and it shaped him and you can see it very much on the surface of his recent publications and he really gets it very well.

NT: You're making it sound as though Deleuze gives you philosophical method...

PG: Yes.

NT: ... but there's also the question of Deleuze as the conceptual innovator...

PG: Yes.

NT: ...do you think that that is an important dimension of taking Deleuze seriously, that he's a conceptual innovator in the history of philosophy because people like Connolly or people who take Deleuze and apply Deleuze outside, there are various concepts that are now being minted and may last. There may be a longevity to Deleuze through this conceptual innovation. I wondered what you thought about that? Does he have that significance or do you think that's not really what he is about in terms of his importance?

PG: I think he would see himself that way—the way he described philosophy is as the creation of concepts.

NT: I am thinking of things like 'assemblage', 'territorialization', 'deterritorialization', 'rhizome', etc. There's a whole kind of 'lucky bag', if you like, of these concepts that are taken out and applied in social-scientific contexts and applied in literary contexts.

PG: Yes, that I have some ambivalence about. Often the concepts are not very effectively grasped and there is a kind of fringe around Deleuzian cultural studies, perhaps it's better now—I've not read any of this stuff in a decade but there used to be some annoying nonsense that was just jargonistic and impenetrable and didn't help clarity. I've always been interested in Deleuze the philosopher. I think there is no other Deleuze but Deleuze the philosopher—philosophy is about a certain intensity and clarity of thinking and his concepts do express that. That's what I think is more valuable.

Yes, there will be things that will last. Felix Guattari was the more creative of the two in the sense of generating concepts. But with Guattari it's almost too much: there's these incredible systems where you just scratch your head and think, 'these concepts will come and go.'

There will be a lasting influence but I think for me, the history of philosophy is not made up of concepts so much as different images and practices of thought. And it's the image and practice of thought that is distinctive. I would say of the broad sweep of what we would call the 'continental tradition', which actually is a quite radical tradition of continental thinkers—that the *major* figures are those that have added a dimension to thinking or noticed it's there and conceptualized it and then made it more explicit practised it. It's less a matter of saying, 'the world is like this'; it's more saying, 'thinking is like this.' In a way I think this is the key to reading Deleuze. If you turn lots of statements he made into opinions, they can be offensive. But if you start with the notion that what he's really talking about is 'what is thought?' – he's *obsessed* with the question, 'What is philosophy?', he's obsessed with trying to construct and rethink what thought is, how it's done, how it's practised—then to say these things about thought *itself* is not really offensive.

NT: No.

PG: So then in regard to the question of affirmation, if we were to think in ethical terms, 'can all life be affirmed?', then there's lots you would want to object to. But Deleuze isn't doing anything so simple. If you think affirmation is a condition of making thought an active force, then effectively you have to have a thought that is affirming itself rather than saying simply 'no' to everything else, so thought will have a much more precise determination and force and movement rather than simply saying, 'That's wrong, we need to escape that, we don't need that anymore.' People miss the negative dimension. Deleuze does have a very powerful sense of saying 'no.' Obviously, *Anti-Oedipus*. There's a very strong polemical intent in various different places. Again, it isn't always that one would want to decide, for example, in regard to his anti-Hegelianism that we should ditch Hegel and never read him again. That would be an overstatement! But, if philosophy is going to go forward in a creative way I think it has to add dimensions that enrich thought, it has to be open to a wide range of influences so that it can learn as much as it possibly can from the history of philosophy, let

alone the other practices going on around it – arts and sciences for example. It also needs to have an affirmative practice of making assemblages of thought within thought so that there's a whole complex assemblage that is thinking in us and with us. That's why I find Deleuze admirable as a thinker.

NT: Is he part of the post-structuralist tradition of deconstruction and unmasking in the way in which you've defined him? Because there's an ambiguity I think about where you've positioned him within the history of that French moment. Is he very much a part of that moment or is he something else? Is he a return to a more traditional notion of a philosopher?

PG: Well he's both. On the one hand his immanentist method requires that he should be positioned in and of his time as an engagement with the sort of thinkers and writers that people read in Paris in the 50's, 60's, 70's. He very much belongs to that and to the, as it were, structuralist generation where people were thinking about relations between terms. His work *Difference and Repetition* comes out of a little essay he wrote (it must have been translated long ago now) called 'A quoi reconnaît-on le structuralisme?'¹ There's this view of structuralism in France, a French view that structuralism and post-structuralism are the same thing, as though post-structuralism was noticing the movement, the change, the continual variation that takes place in these structures rather than saying these structures are--

NT: --a static *a priori*.

PG: Yes, exactly. On the other hand, does he return to a classical conception...?

NT: --like a Stoic, cosmological vision; which is very, very different I think from a lot of what the post-structuralist turn was about - which was very much about historical sociologisation, culturalisation of the philosophical. Is he a return to that older, classical, 'Hellenistic' version of the philosopher?

PG: I would hesitate to overemphasize Stoic or Greek elements. What I would say is that he is in some sense reacting--in spite of all the emphasis on structuralism--broadly against a cultural linguistic turn and he is returning to a notion of concepts and their relations. His understanding of a 'concept' has a

¹ Translated as "How Do We Recognize Structuralism?" in *Desert Islands and Other Texts (1953-1974)* (New York: Semiotexte, 2003).

certain set of precise intensive relations with other concepts and this is an *anti-hermeneutic*. For hermeneutics you would want to say, 'Let's look at this concept and let's look at its intertextuality and its range of possible connotations and interpretations and look at how it leaks out over here and over there and over there.' His movement is the opposite to this 'leaking out over here'; it's more—and this is why I've called it 'intensive' and why I think he uses the word 'intensive' to describe a concept—a philosophical concept that will make you think a certain thing in a certain way by means of a determinate (I'm almost getting back to a fixed structure here!) set of relations. So structuralism gets back into philosophy—a philosophy is a kind of structure—where there's this very determinate set of relations that make 'what a concept is' and how it can be thought and what it does. And then because for him all these differences are disguised and displaced, you think a concept in relation to a particular field of activity and it becomes a little force of thought: you think in a certain way, it has a certain role and a certain function, a little kind of function.

NT: What about the claim that Deleuze was probably the most important late-20th century philosopher of life? You have touched on this already - but do you see Deleuze in this way? If so, what does Deleuze tell us about the nature and significance of life?

PG: Deleuze acknowledged a vitalist inspiration in his thought in that he was perpetually trying to liberate the creative power of life in all the fields he addressed. But he never posed directly the question, 'what is life?' He can tell us nothing directly about the nature and significance of life. For to do so would have been illegitimate in terms of his philosophy—to answer the question 'what is life?' would be to replace life with a representation, to mistake the lesser, a concept, for life itself. I'd be hesitant about this claim of Deleuze being a philosopher of life because it seems to situate him back within the history of philosophy. But, for Deleuze, there would remain a vital problem: how do you bring thought to life, how do you give life to thought? It is to do with an ethos of thinking: immanence is a life. So life is only known to be such when we escape bare or mechanical repetition in the intensity of creation. When we really, actually think, and don't simply repeat: that is life. To say that Deleuze has a theory of impersonal or inorganic life, and proposes that such life really is a metaphysical plane of immanence, and to celebrate or bewail this theory—all that

sounds like elementary Deleuzianism, but it is nonsense. Yet to liberate the life of thought as an ethos—an ethos that in some respects pre-exists the person who thinks it, a life that exists, like Platonic number, inorganically in things themselves as well as in thought—that is an entirely different matter. In a way, Deleuze deploys the notion of life in a very traditional, transcendent way. I argued all this in my first book, *Gilles Deleuze and the Question of Philosophy*, although Deleuze himself didn't think I could reintroduce transcendence in the way that I did.

NT: This takes me onto the relationship between Deleuze and theology, to make that connection with Greek thought. Žižek in *On Belief* has said that Deleuze was a pagan philosopher. I wondered what you thought about that as a professor of religion. Is there something in Deleuze that takes you outside of the Christian orbit?

PG: Yes.

NT: ... or is there something that's fundamentally compatible with it?

PG: There is a kind of esoteric Deleuze which has been absolutely concealed until the work of Christian Kerslake and Joshua Delpech-Ramey. There is historical evidence for him participating as a young man in somewhat strange occultist circles having Jungian influences and—it's like he grows up. Apparently in terms of his publications all that is gone, and yet if you look at the way in which he deploys his literary sources, it's very hermetic. I can't reproduce Joshua Delpech-Ramey's distinctive arguments exactly (but there will be a book coming out very soon now through Duke University Press²). What Deleuze is doing is trying to produce a certain kind of insight or change of state of consciousness through his writing—and that stays with him even if he is not trying to refer to other things and other fields. Delpech-Ramey's argument is that there is this hermetic tradition that obviously comes out of Platonism, Neo-Platonism. It started around Hermes Trismegistus, and his recovery which came to the fore in the Renaissance. Deleuze himself does not have a major relation to these Renaissance writers in terms of citations or references but he has a huge map of intellectual history. He doesn't refer to Pico della Mirandola significantly yet he

² Joshua Ramey, *The Hermetic Deleuze: Philosophy and Spiritual Ordeal* (New Slant: Religion, Politics, Ontology) (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

does refer to Giordano Bruno. Yet you can see this process at work within him, so he's not quite a 'gnostic' Deleuze but you could call it a 'hermetic' Deleuze that is not a simple French Republican materialism. It's certainly not a French Catholicism. What it *is*, is an almost *alchemical* exploration of what kind of powers of thinking there are, what kind of power thought has, an almost a magical thinking, and that's the secret. Deleuze has this very strange style of writing. His history of philosophy books—you can get it, there's a system, there's a whole philosophical system. And then when you look at his more adventurous writing, his writing makes you think on the one hand, 'oh it's just crazy, why are you going wild with free association and "deterritorialization"?' But it's actually this almost hermetic practice where he's trying to link together these insights and make them happen. *That's there*, but it's not necessarily that I fit myself into this tradition and say I'm also a hermetic – I don't think there's a hermetic Goodchild!

NT: What then would do you make of Peter Hallward's recent critique of Deleuze, that basically—and this is coming out of the new 'Badiouian moment'—that there's something fundamentally *apolitical* about Deleuze and that there are no critical resources in terms of a critique of society, and that eventually there's either a Deleuzian world you inhabit or you don't - and that's all there is to it? I might be caricaturing a little bit there, but basically that seems to be the take-home message that people are receiving from people working in this area. What would you say about that interpretation?

PG: To be honest I haven't read *Out of this World*.³ I've heard Peter present parts of it (again, about a decade ago) and I've argued with Peter at the time. I think there are some really good insights in that Peter sees that Deleuze is not a simple materialist. Some of the, for example, Islamic thinkers that he relates Deleuze to—I don't think these provide effective ways at getting to the heart of what this dimension of Deleuze is, because these are not cultural references that Deleuze obviously knows about, and Deleuze is quite precise about where he stands in relation to the Neo-Platonic tradition and how Spinoza is different from that. On the wider issue of politics, when I wrote the 'Introduction to the Politics of

³ Peter Hallward, *Out Of This World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation* (London: Verso Books, 2006).

Desire⁴ book, I expected to uncover the political thinking that's there in Deleuze in Guattari, and I found myself really quite disappointed with how much positive analysis there is—and there are lots of good insights that a lot of people have put together. But then actually constructing the political Deleuze, I had to dip into Guattari and Negri to add anything substantial and then almost do a kind of reconstruction or further construction of it. So, I accept aspects of Hallward's case. But, I do think that the broader statement that Deleuze is trying to persuade people out of this world into a contemplative mysticism is misguided. Deleuze was out on marches in the 70s with the others. The insights are primarily generated for the sake of relating them back and using them and taking up stances in this life and this world. Deleuze is an immanent, worldly thinker.

NT: That takes me on to questions of capitalism. I know you've written about money.⁵ And I know you're interested in the contemporary crisis post-2008. In fact it has stimulated many to think theologically about this crisis. Perhaps you would like say something about your understanding of the nature of contemporary capitalism and its relationship to the current crisis. What kind of distinctive interpretation or contribution can a theologian make to an understanding of the contemporary crisis?

PG: In some ways my contribution to this has been a philosophical one in spite of the title *Theology of Money*. The conceit of that title—it's almost deliberately misleading—is that money is essentially credit, it's an institutionalized, embodied belief system, it has its theology which then gets internalized and affects and shapes the way people see the world. In order to disclose what that theology *is*, you're not practising theology in the sense of, 'I belong to the community of thinkers and practitioners and this is how we should truly believe' in that Christian sense where there's an ideal of God, of true doctrine, of articulating true doctrine correctly, of developing the articulation of that and then expanding that in terms of its relevance for the world—the equivalent of that theological practice is what the economists do. What I'm doing philosophically is a critique to actually lay bare not so much what economists are teaching so much as the

⁴ Philip Goodchild, *Deleuze and Guattari: An Introduction to the Politics of Desire* (London: Sage Publications, 1996).

⁵ Philip Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion: The Price of Piety* (London: Routledge, 2002); idem, *Theology of Money* (London: SCM Press, 2007).

nature of money as credit, and what that means for people in practice who are using this credit system in order to organize their lives, so that as a result certain belief systems are naturally evoked and constructed. So it's an immanent critique in the tradition of Marx and critical theory. There are Deleuzian elements: in fact this theory of money and its different forms can be found, in a nutshell, in *Anti-Oedipus* and a tiny bit in *A Thousand Plateaus*. They draw on a French source on a reading of *Marx on Money*: Suzanne de Brunhoff.⁶ That's one of my sources, but also *Difference and Repetition*: re-working and re-thinking that in relation to money was the major idea which then impacted on my main book *Capitalism and Religion*. And after writing *Capitalism and Religion*, I came across the British tradition of 'social credit' going back to Clifford Hugh Douglas. But there are also similar precursors to this I think in the U.S. at the end of the 19th century—I think the *Wizard of Oz* is apparently structured around these debates about money. And there was one fundamental insight that I lacked which is about the way in which money is created as debt and how that then has a systemic effect on all of the practices around money which I first got from a book called *The Grip of Death* by Michael Rowbotham. And these are people who are almost outside academia, certainly beyond the pale of heretical economists.

NT: And in a very conspiratorial mode sometimes.

PG: Yes, exactly. And it's getting increasingly prominent particularly since the crisis, people are starting to get it, because fundamentally—

NT: —the 'political significance of the Federal Reserve'—all these sorts of discourses.

PG: —Yes, fundamentally, this analysis is correct, even if it is hardly a conscious or deliberate conspiracy. I've recently come across Islamic versions of it as well and at the end of this week I'll be speaking at a little conference with a key Islamic author on this, Tarek El Diwany. I'm just reading his book and thinking, 'Why didn't I read this a *decade* ago?' It's making the same argument that I've made, not in any kind of philosophical way, but as somebody who has come out of working within the bond markets and now takes an Islamic approach, but

⁶ Suzanne de Brunhoff, *Marx on Money*, trans. Maurice J. Goldbloom (New York: Urizen Press, 1976).

only out of this different angle he's got on everything having to do with discounting—it's more of an accountancy thing.

So synthesizing these things together was important, but sometimes I'm confused as to whether I've made any contribution apart from just rearticulating a critique that's been around for a while, and to what extent I've done something more. What I bring to bear on this is a certain kind of philosophical training that leads me to ask deep and profound questions about the way in which money is linked into a system of trade and determines it; the way in which money is deeply political; money and markets are two sides of the same institution: there are institutions, but there aren't really any markets and there isn't really any money but there are certain ways in which institutions meet and organize contracts with each other, and markets and money are good short-hands for talking about them. The whole thing is deeply political—and that again is something that people without a critical theory background wouldn't necessarily get into if they are just coming at it from popular discourse. I also ask some profound ontological questions about it because for me, the kind of questions that Heidegger was asking about Being and different epochs of Being and the questions concerning technology—I'm asking them about economics and money: what does it mean to live in an era of global credit capitalism? So I'm seeing that more or less as an *epoch* in the Heideggerean sense. Instead of just considering the kind of conceptual obsessions that continental philosophers had such as Being, Difference, Repetition—all of these things are actually embodied in practice and *happening* and become much more *thinkable* when they're not in some literary text or some philosopher's head insofar as they are reconstructing 'What is difference, how does it relate to another difference?' But if you actually follow them working out in practice in *money*, money is a set of differences and repetitions, the whole system of it in fact—this is how I think one can do philosophy that's in the broad Heideggerean as well as Marxist tradition...

NT: Well that's the point: is this a turn to Marx?

PG: Yes.

NT: Is this a significant turn to Marx? Is it an attempt to combine the abstract with the concrete, the theoretical and the practical? But also to some extent you seem to be bringing ideas of *exchange* into dialogue with *Difference and Repetition*.

Do you see your contributions now as being formed by a turn back to Marx? ...When you are talking about money, that itself is something where you have to engage with the Marxist tradition, you've got to engage with ideas of commodification, fetishisation, 'magical realism', whatever you want to say depending on how you associate with those other things—that seems to make you want to gravitate towards that particular pole. Is that to some extent an important moment now, this turn back to Marx?

PG: For me personally that turn back to Marx happened before and in my *Capitalism and Religion* book. That was very much informed by questions about commodification, commodification and knowledge—those kinds of issues. In terms of the question of how you philosophically link the abstract and the concrete, I think Marx is tremendously important here. He does really pioneer this in a way with an enormous grandeur—to pick up Deleuze's phrase from a book that was never written—he does pioneer this in a truly extraordinary way. So absolutely, what I'm trying to do is quite similar to what I feel Marx was trying to do, but what I'm trying doing is not *Marx-ist*. By that I don't only mean connected to...

NT: ...to Hegel?

PG: ...a tradition of the international or a particular political position. What I mean is that my analysis of money is different from Marx's. In terms of the actual position I take up, I am critical of Marx in that I don't think money can be properly accounted for as it is at the beginning of *Capital* volume I. Now there's some very interesting material in the middle of *Capital* volume III. I think that Marx's *method* was leading in the right direction, so it's Marx just not taking up his conceptual-theoretical method in the way he tries to tease out these things; there are certain insights he didn't have time to develop. You get a glimpse of them in the *Grundrisse* in a couple of places where he makes a remark showing there's an insight there that would be really powerful—and then he moves on and never gets back to it and keeps to his *broadly* exchangeist conception. So in that sense I'm running with insights that were just beginning to be showing in Marx and then, 'What happens if you take them seriously?' My critique is essentially, money is not something to be understood in terms of exchange, but exchange is to be understood in terms of money.

NT: Right, so money is the more fundamental ontological relation. It's not based on that economic notion of social relation.

PG: Yes, exactly. It's not that money emerged from barter as a veil for an underlying exchange process.

NT: What is it then?

PG: I've been influenced a bit by the State theory and the credit theory of money. There's the idea that it was first introduced not because it was convenient for long-distance trade, but probably by the ancient Greek despots to pay their army. Why would the army want these particular blocks of coins with a stamped impress? The stamped impress means that the king will want them back in taxation from someone, sometime, so they become valuable because you can use them to pay your taxes and a circuit gets developed. That's the State theory of money, of how money was first founded and had its authority. Obviously there are theories about religious origins of money in relation to temples, there are theories emerging naturally from markets and barter, there's these State theories of money, and the reality has to be a kind of confluence, a conjunction of these different processes going on at once. But for me the question—and I suppose one has to phrase this in Marxist terminology—what is determining in the 'last instance'? You can have some long-distance barter, but you're not going to get a market, or anything we recognize as a market as such forming without something playing the role of money that's already got a value that's institutionally accepted and recognized and trusted. So, money is essentially a certain kind of institution, essentially a token of value, it has a symbolic value, and that makes its exchange possible. And nowadays that institutional value is not simply that the State is there and is going to accept it; it's more complex than that in that you don't have to ask, 'Well what is the State, what is the essence of the State's power?'

NT: It's a very *mysterious* question!

PG: It's a very mysterious question. But it's to do with the nature of human authority, human trust, and credit is involved even there. What we see in the history of economics—and this is directly from Marx—is that initially everything is confused and blurred and crude and it's not quite clear what things are, but the more that they develop, the more the essence of them is disclosed, and—I accept

Marx's point that through capitalism you can read the rest of economic history—well through credit money, contemporary fiat money after Nixon closed the gold window, this helps us to understand what was happening even in ancient Greece in terms of how much credit, how much cooperation, how much is an institution formed on that kind of basis? And because I then read institutions as founded essentially on credit and belief, we come back to a theology, we're talking about political theology.

NT: And so debt is there right from the start?

PG: Yes.

NT: Okay. Well that leads me to the final question, and it's sort of bringing the things together. A lot of what you've said suggests that your position and your views on all these big questions of the day are philosophical in nature.

PG: Yes.

NT: And this a slightly more general question about your professional identity, if you like. A lot of people would see you, from what you write, as a philosopher-*cum*-theorist, and yet you inhabit a theological world, a theological space where presumably there is a tension between those identities, those two roles. What would you say to somebody who would say you are not a theologian but you are a philosopher, and what is the significance of the 'theological' to you if it has any import. I'm sorry, it's a personal question, but it's one I think our readers will be very interested in.

PG: I've tried to give a definition of theology in my *Theology of Money* book: the central question of theology is that of the essence of the power to be used in final judgement. If theology is to judge the ways of the world by the power of truth and goodness, then it must explain truth and goodness in accordance with their own specific power. Theology, concerned with the ultimate criteria of life, is the most fundamental and radical inquiry. It attempts to discern how truth, goodness, and life come to be constituted. For me there is theology that is primarily about developing a particular tradition of revelation; but there is also theology that is asking, perhaps in a more Tillichian sense, 'what is the source of the value of values?' It's only after Nietzsche proposing the question of the revaluation of values that you start to see that the work of theology is to perform the revaluation of values. It doesn't mean to take or to change values or to invent

ones or always to continually swap them about—I don't accept that Nietzschean thing that you've got to be completely on the move. But what you *do* have to be, however conservative you are, is on the move in a particular sense in that you've got to be getting to the essence, to the heart, to the source of the value of values, and that kind of spiritual progression is a theological vocation.

Now, if your conception of philosophy is that it's to do with argumentation and it's to do with logic, then philosophy is really quite separate from that. But if you're conception of reason is that it's something to be inhabited and practised and that it relates deeply to a particular life, then that conception and practice of reason can be shaped and formed—in a way that Kant would have hardly have imagined—by your ritual practice, for example; or by—and this has been very important for me in the work I've done—by the way you distribute your attention, what you pay attention to and what you don't; by the way in which your character is formed by different virtues and the way you want to enact and practise those virtues even in your thinking. For me, philosophy is not something entirely distinct from theology, it's more or less that they come together. In some ways I see myself as an *implicit* theologian in that I don't feel that it's my vocation to talk about my formative influences and how they should be reproduced and how they can be reproduced more effectively for others; but, going forward with my formative influences, I think—and I think this goes back to what we were saying about Marx just now in terms to the abstract and the concrete—I think that theology has to be done, or it can be done in the most determinate way, when it's done in particular, concrete, immanent contexts. And this is the other side of the *Theology of Money* where it is a theology in that, for example, a notion of atonement *can* be done by talking about what the theological tradition has said about it, but perhaps it can be done effectively by trying to actualize it immanently within particular situations. Now, I don't want to comment on whether or not I've succeeded in doing that in my work on money or anywhere else, but to be an implicit theologian is to engage in a determinate field—economics, or politics, or philosophy—out of motivations and to do with questions that come from theology. Very often my work is read or I'm invited to speak in other fields such as finance, politics, and philosophy—but the kind of thinking that I do and the questions I put are *unlike* what the political theorists or the philosophers are doing. They see me as a difficult figure to name

because on the one hand I'm addressing their concerns, but I'm addressing them in a different way—it's to do with the *manner* of thinking. What I was saying about Deleuze: immanence is a way of thinking, an ethos. I bring a different ethos, and implicit theology is a certain ethos of thinking that adds a different dimension, a different angle concerned with what's ultimately the source of values here (this could be one way of thinking about it). In that sense I remain a theologian—an implicit theologian—even though the explicit fields that I engage with are primarily philosophy, politics, and finance studies.

NT: So the bringing of these theological themes and motifs into philosophical discourse that allows you to see other things that other philosophers don't see...

PG:...and pose problems...

NT: ...and pose problems and questions and maybe enrich the philosophical discourse in a way you think it might need enriching. Why do you think it needs enriching by theological motifs and concepts rather than, say, sociological motifs and concepts...

PG: ...well yes!...

NT: ...or whatever, you know, why the theological in particular?

PG: Obviously it does need enriching by sociological concepts. But, there's only so far you can go. In a way what seems to be missing from discourses that aren't theological is a certain kind of questioning, a certain kind of reflection; it's to do with orientation, which way we go, it's to do with evaluation, what's the source of our values here?; it's to do with what matters most.

NT: So, the ultimate things.

PG: Yes. In my philosophy, my concept of substance, or material, or matter, is actually *what matters!* That's what life is made up of—it's made up of what matters! And so, philosophers should start with this question: 'What matters most? Let's pay attention to what matters!' That is something that theology has a set of practices that form someone to address in a particular kind of way. What I find from the philosophers or political theorists who listen to me, or read me, or respond positively to my work, is that I'm providing something that they're really thirsty for that is missing from their discipline. I said something very facetious in my paper yesterday, that there are no nihilists and no theologians,

only maladapted natural philosophers, but what I should have been saying is that there are no physicists, only maladapted natural philosophers: there's no hard dividing line between what a physicist does mathematically and the way in which they construct models to explain the world which then of course have all sorts of implicit presuppositions—there are moral presuppositions in these models that they're unaware of. I would say the same is true for every discipline: so theology, economics, and especially, of course, politics. The theological as I've just described it is everywhere. Everyone is thirsty for it to some degree—I'm now beginning to sound like everybody has this desire for God!

NT: [Laughter] I was just going to say, 'You *are* a theologian!'

PG: [Laughter] There's a lot of bad theology. Essentially, people *do* have their theologies, and they don't realize to what extent these have been formed whether by the marketplace or the other different human institutions. I think we're largely formed—and the whole way in which we think—by our institutions. Theology is a critical discourse of institutions to do with the way in which they shape and direct human life, human attention, and select what matters. And of course there are good theologies, there are bad theologies, there are theologies that are essentially wrong but still have certain kinds of fantastic transformative effects—the whole thing is immensely complex. But, I do feel that what I have to give, and what people who are receptive to reading my work and find something in it receive, is a certain implicit or more actual attention to what people *want* to do, but their thinking does not have the resources in itself in the way it's been institutionally structured.

NT: It's too paradigmatic in that sense. So you're a 'paradigm-buster', in a way.

PG: In a sense, yes. Institutions and paradigms form. What I would say is that I could have never have formed this conception of theological and philosophical practice and could have never been able to do it without having passed through Deleuze, because it is in some ways what Deleuze is doing with thought. Immanent thinking, the virtual—it's all about how you enact the implicit dimensions of different specific fields, institutions, and practices.

NT: Thank you; thanks very much.

—*Transcribed by Eric Austin Lee*