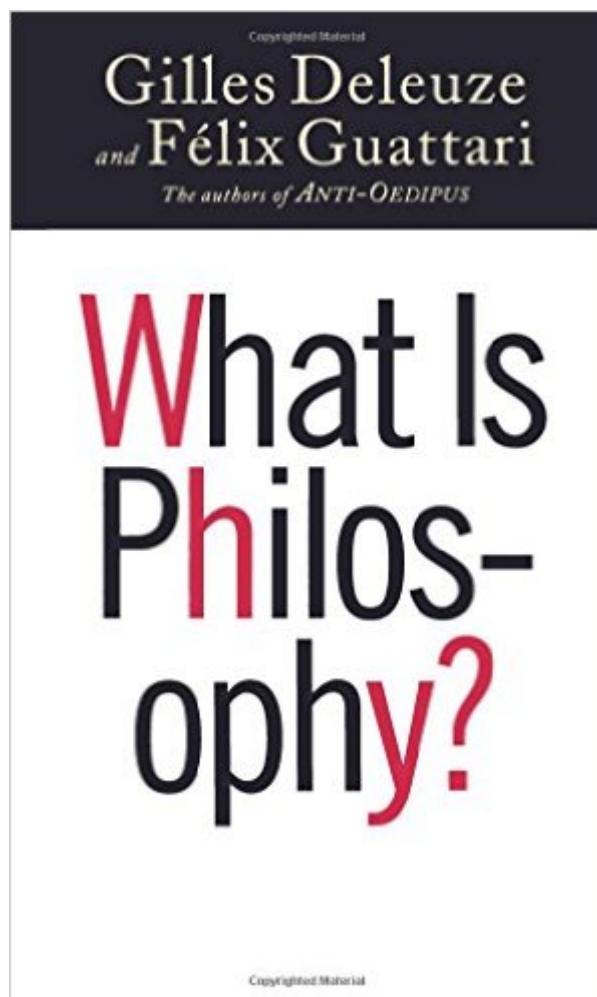


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What Is Philosophy?



Synopsis

Called by many France's foremost philosopher, Gilles Deleuze is one of the leading thinkers in the Western World. His acclaimed works and celebrated collaborations with Félix Guattari have established him as a seminal figure in the fields of literary criticism and philosophy. The long-awaited publication of *What Is Philosophy?* in English marks the culmination of Deleuze's career. Deleuze and Guattari differentiate between philosophy, science, and the arts, seeing as means of confronting chaos, and challenge the common view that philosophy is an extension of logic. The authors also discuss the similarities and distinctions between creative and philosophical writing. Fresh anecdotes from the history of philosophy illuminate the book, along with engaging discussions of composers, painters, writers, and architects. A milestone in Deleuze's collaboration with Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* brings a new perspective to Deleuze's studies of cinema, painting, and music, while setting a brilliant capstone upon his work.

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Customer Reviews

I have only read the first section of this book so far (the section on philosophy) so my review will be limited to that section. I will be reading the rest of the book soon (hopefully) and will be adding to my review after I do. Before I get into the discussion of what D&G understand by philosophy I should say a few general words that I think will help in understanding the aim of this book. Deleuze's ontology is based on a distinction between the virtual and the actual. In the simplest terms possible

the virtual is a tendency and the actual are the various actualizations of that tendency. So to take an everyday example, love is a tendency, and its various actualizations include marriage, friendship, etc.. Deleuze's philosophical method is based on tracing tendencies back to the virtual rather than trying to define them in terms of their actualizations. So rather than trying to take all the particular forms of love that exist and trying to "abstract" something common about them all and using that to define the concept of love, Deleuze attempts to get a hold of the tendency which is expressed in all the different actualizations of a tendency which will exceed those actualizations. It is necessary to understand that general ontology if you want to understand what D&G are up to in this book. They are attempting to determine what philosophy, science, and art are. What is the tendency that they express? Which also means, what can they become? Something like philosophy is not defined purely in terms of its past and present actualizations. Philosophy is creative. But D&G's decision to divide philosophy, science, and art from each other is based on their belief that they all express different tendencies (they can overlap with each other but they are essentially distinct).

For a grad class "Recent French Philosophy" I am reading Deleuze and Guattari's "What is Philosophy?". I certainly don't have a review ready for it. Nor can I claim to have concrete and clear thoughts about it yet. But I do have questions and rough ideas which I will endeavor to set down simply for the practice of articulating these thoughts. Regarding style: Many have and will complain that Deleuze obfuscates what he ought to want to make clear. The meaning of a sentence or paragraph, I will admit, is not always clear if only because Deleuze refers often to ideas outside philosophy without providing clear meaning. He alludes or make explicit reference to art works, history, his previous work, film, and political concerns without pausing to describe more completely each of these. Deleuze however is completely serious in his task; I would deny anyone who wished to claim Deleuze was trying to evoke a mind-fudge which would somehow disrupt the knowledge-seeking mind the same way knowledge-seeking has been disrupted by poststructuralist insights. He may do this in *Mille Plateau* but so far in "What is Philosophy?" he is not being artful with his style. His style is dictated not by a desire to have commensurability between "gist" and mode of expression. His style is dense and difficult because he has a lot to say, is at the end of a career with much ground work done; and feels he must talk to his schoolmates (to use a phrase of Spivak's concerning Derrida). The issues dealt with in "What is Philosophy?" exist at a high level of abstraction which Deleuze has arrived at the end of his career. Let his earlier work, a familiarity with art and culture, and a close dedicated slow reading fill in the gaps in his style.

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