

Gilles Deleuze and the redemption from interest

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Deleuze writes a redemptive philosophy. In conjunction with its mainly artistic allies, it is designed to save its readers from a situation contaminated by ‘consciousness’, ‘representation’, ‘analogy’, ‘repression’, ‘lack’, and ‘the Other [*autrui*]’. Redemption from these things, according to Deleuze, provides immediate access to a very different kind of situation – a situation defined by its radical self-sufficiency, its literal, absolute, all-inclusive immanence to itself. In a whole variety of ways, Deleuze writes the passage from our *given*, contaminated situation, to the purer, more *primordial* situation.

Just how this self-sufficiency allows itself to be so contaminated is the first question which Deleuze, like so many other redemptive writers, must confront. Like Spinoza, most obviously – but also, like the Christian St Paul or the Muslim Suhrawardî¹ – Deleuze’s work begins with the problem of an all-powerful, all-determining ontological principle somehow repressed or denied through its own power of creation. Consideration of this problem throws into question some of our most cherished assumptions about Deleuze’s work – his alleged subversions of authority and the subject, his refusal of ‘totalizing’ knowledges, and his affirmation of a radical pluralism or ‘difference’.

I will argue that Deleuze, like Spinoza, Suhrawardî or Paul, writes a relentless attack on specific, worldly knowledges and worldly differences, in favour of an other-worldly redemptive force. This force is defined by its absolute power to negate or transcend *relation* as such. If Deleuze’s radical philosophy of immanence of course entails the critique of transcendence just as it implies the refusal of negation, this very critique obtains only through a preliminary transcendence of what might be called the ‘Given’ (relative, worldly, specific, human, significant) as opposed to the ‘Real’ (absolute, other-worldly, singular, inhuman or

impersonal, asignificant).² *This* transcendence is the enabling gesture of Deleuze’s entire project. It is also, perhaps, the source of its ultimate incoherence.

For Deleuze as much as for Spinoza or Suhrawardî, Being is defined by its singularity or univocity. ‘There has only ever been one ontological proposition: Being is univocal’, and ‘the One expresses in a single meaning all of the multiple.’³ The Real is that which creates what it perceives (or *conceives*, in both senses). Here, ‘desire and its object are one and the same thing’, and ‘there is only one kind of production, the production of the real.’⁴ But we, ourselves ‘produced’, are somehow led to distinguish between ‘real’ and ‘unreal’ (either ‘imaginary’ or ‘symbolic’). We are led to *figure* the literally true. If Real is self-constituent, self-sufficient and self-expressive – originally and immediately determinant – such knowledge that *we* have of this immanent determining force is derivative, second-order, the product of an eventual mastery. The Real, in other words, is *immediate but not given*. What is first given to us is a worldly condition governed by mediation, a world ruled by plurivocal relations *between* perceptions and perceived, between subjects and objects, between transcendent and transcended forces. For Deleuze as much as for Paul and Spinoza, the great task is to overcome such relations, to overcome a worldly or interested mediation, so as to *return* to a wholly immanent immediacy.

Models of redemption

Consider briefly the more familiar models of redemption associated with Paul, Suhrawardî and Spinoza. If Spinoza’s example is the most important for Deleuze,⁵ the logic of salvation is comparable in each case. For all, it follows from the definition of an all-powerful God that, in Paul’s words, ‘all that may be known of God by men lies plain before their eyes; indeed God

himself has disclosed it to them. His invisible attributes, that is to say his everlasting power and deity, have been visible, ever since the world began, to the eye of reason, in the things he has made.' The 'Real' is immediately and primordially evident; it inheres in all creation, by definition. Necessarily, 'nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God'.⁶ But we live in the world *as if* separate from God. We live as positioned, interested, *specified* (Greek, Roman, Jew...). As worldly creatures, we try to relate to a God imagined as transcendent, to *figure* God through the law, and this effort brings only 'consciousness of sin'.⁷ The solution is simple: we must escape the world (the 'as if'), the legal organization of relations, so as to become-immediate to God, *literally* God. 'Adapt yourselves no longer to the pattern of this present world, but let your minds be remade and your whole nature thus transformed. Then you will be able to discern the will of God, and to know what is good, acceptable and perfect'. Die to the world, so as to be reborn in a spirit unlimited by the mediate specificities of the world. 'You are on the spiritual level, if *only* God's Spirit dwells within you.'⁸ Then 'there is no such thing as Jew or Greek ... for you are all one person in Christ Jesus.'⁹ Unlimited and *therefore* all-inclusive, Paul's Spirit announces the dawn of what Deleuze will call 'a world without others'¹⁰ – a world of one singularity–multiplicity, a world beyond worldly mediation or relation altogether.

Like all visions of the Islamic deity, Iranian philosopher Suhrawardî's 'Light of Lights' is radically sovereign, *autarcique*, 'that which subsists through itself'.¹¹ The purely original One is wholly unknowable (*deus absconditus*), a *blinding* light. The One is not an accessible whole but what, inaccessible, gives rise to the multiple. Deleuze will use the term 'the Unthought' (or 'non-sense') to describe much the same thing. The multiple is invariably expressive of the One, but to variable degrees. Hence a strictly vertical arrangement, determined by proximity to God. The aim of any given being is to return, to the degree possible, toward the One Light from which it springs. For Suhrawardî, since 'to turn entirely towards God is liberation', so 'everything that gets in the way of the Good is Evil. Everything which erects an obstacle on the spiritual path is human impiety.'¹² We *begin* as impious. Our 'visible world is not itself the Temple, it is the Temple's crypt', the place of an inherited 'exile' from the Temple.¹³ To gain access to the Temple of Light, from 'this dark lump that is our earth',¹⁴ the seeing subject must pull away from the world and grasp a spiritual and *only* spiritual existence. Sensual and spiritual

perception are, for Suhrawardî as for the Sufi tradition, mutually exclusive.¹⁵ When I move toward God, 'I separate myself from this world and join myself with the world above.'¹⁶ Above all, with Rûmî as with Suhrawardî, 'the goal of all ascesis is a vision in which there is no longer a difference between the knowing and the known.'¹⁷ Only God can proclaim the Being of God ('through' the speaker). Illuminated, the knowing subject 'is not a subject opposed to an object'; rather, 'through the soul which knows, the real knows itself, becomes conscious of itself. Knowledge is illumination of the real in reality itself, it is Light reflecting on light.'¹⁸ Not 'I think', but 'I am thought.'¹⁹

With Spinoza, finally, 'God acts and directs everything by the necessity of his own nature and perfection alone'; 'his decrees and volitions are eternal truths, and always involve necessity.'²⁰ God's creatures are simply modes or actualizations of God's power to various degrees. In the Given state of nature assumed by Spinoza as much as Hobbes, these modes remain ignorant of their 'Real nature', remain 'slaves' of their positioned interests, 'passions' and 'appetites'.²¹ If God is all-powerful, *we* – and it is a point Deleuze stresses in his reading of Spinoza – do not begin as God (as reasonable). We must become the reason that we are, and eventually reasonable modes are those which see themselves as actualizations of God's univocal power, as wholly and immediately identical to the one Real interest, the interest of divine reason itself. In a fully reasonable polity, then, it follows that the 'liberty of the Subject [is] consistent with the unlimited power of the sovereign'.²² By becoming immediate to reason, subjects as much as rulers become literally unlimited, redeemed from the limits of interest. In this way the 'greatest freedom' is identical to the 'greatest obedience', on the Pauline (or Ismâ'ili) model: *the two are unlimited in themselves*. 'We are bound to perform all the commands of the sovereign without exception',²³ and the 'more absolute a government', 'the more suitable for the preservation of freedom.'²⁴ 'The greater the right of the sovereign the more does the form of the state agree with the dictate of reason' – that is, the more it 'form[s] one body directed by one mind'.²⁵

Despite obvious differences in doctrine and approach, all of these thinkers assert an essentially similar redemptive sequence. The elements of much the same sequence obtain in Deleuze's philosophy: ontological univocity; a critique of its repression or misrepresentation; its restoration (redemption) declared through an escape from worldly mediation; dissolution of the subject (or equation of subject and object); a consequent insistence upon the literal and immediate.

Always, Deleuze tries to break out of a Given situation (positioned, related, specified, mediated, figured) towards a situation in which ‘everything divides, but into itself’.²⁶ Deleuze’s philosophy of difference has nothing to do with the articulation of positions or interests as such, any more than with the ‘complication’ of mediation. The mediate conflict of interests has no more place in Deleuze’s ‘world without others’ than it does in Spinoza’s ‘reasonable commonwealth’, in Suhrawardī’s luminescent ‘imaginal world’, or in Paul’s ‘one body of Christ’. The prevailing reception of Deleuze’s work renders this reading difficult on four counts.

In the first place, his mainly pluralist followers refuse or restrict the ontological univocity basic to the redemptive enterprise. With this Deleuze we discover the ‘forces of difference that compel thought to move outside a logic of identity’.²⁷ As Pierre Zaoui argues in one of the best recent studies, Deleuze provides ‘one of the most fruitful philosophies of difference’ because he so insistently dismantles ‘the identity of the One, the identity of the origin of Being in Platonism’.²⁸ As Boundas presents him through the *Deleuze Reader*, Deleuze writes the ‘interaction of differential intensities, incommensurable with respect to each other’, and disruptive of any teleological coherence.²⁹ Deleuze’s asserted ‘total opposition’ to Hegel has long been a standard point of departure for the reading of his work.³⁰ It is the basis for the distinction of a ‘pure’, ‘nondialectical’ difference from a difference which, ‘in the dialectical relation, is only thinkable in terms of the implicitly presumed Whole’.³¹ I will argue, on the contrary, that Deleuze’s redemptive philosophy always works from, within and toward the assumption of ontological univocity, the redemptive identity of the One and the multiple.

Second, our *deleuziens* generally refuse or limit the conceptual space Deleuze allots to the agent of redemption – that is, the thinker, artist or philosopher.³² Hardt’s Deleuze is especially vigorous in ‘combatting the privileges of thought’, in undermining ‘any account that in any way subordinates being to thought’.³³ With Lecercle’s Deleuze, ‘there is no Totality, and there is no Subject to grasp it’,³⁴ but rather a surging ontological delirium, the subversion of all conceivable subjective order.³⁵ According to Gros, Deleuze refuses all aspects of an ‘originary experience’,³⁶ in favour of what Janicaut describes as a radical shattering of perspectives: ‘more than ever, [with Deleuze] being articulates itself in multiple ways, on the condition that the unity of the ontological signified is hitherto declared false, and becomes

volatile [through] an irreducible pluralism of discursive figures and modes of behaviour.’³⁷

Third, while the redemptive orientation of Deleuze’s work reduces the play of relations with others to the immediacy of conversion in the Pauline sense, the published Deleuze readers generally emphasize his utility as ally in the articulation of a world of pure ‘otherness’. Massumi finds with Deleuze a ‘hyperdifferentiated’ subject, which exists only ‘in the interactions *between* people’, expressed through ‘increasingly nuanced local reactions’.³⁸ Hardt’s Deleuze provides ‘tools for the constitution of a radical democracy’, ‘open to the will of its constituent members’.³⁹ Again, Boundas’s explicit aim as editor of the *Deleuze Reader* is to promote his thought for the reinvigoration of American discussions of ‘postmodernism’ and ‘deconstruction’: ‘the ritornello of their [Deleuze and Guattari’s] minor deconstruction coordinates the manifesto of their radical pluralism.’⁴⁰ There is no room here for the redemptive coordination of interests in favour of the *one* disinterest.

The fourth and final point: redemption turns on judgement, on definitive, unequivocal (univocal) judgement – a *last* judgement. But readers of Deleuze are virtually unanimous in their assumption that to radical social pluralism corresponds a competing chaos of evaluations, the dissolution of all hierarchy. Deleuze is read as the prophet of the *equivocal*, rather than the univocal. He is said to elaborate ‘a theoretical programme



which aims to be beyond system – and consequently opposed to all doctrinaire concepts'.⁴¹ Lecerle's assessment is typical: '[Deleuze and Guattari's] main objective was a critique of all the forms of theoretical imperialism that had dominated French philosophy in the 1960s and 1970s',⁴² and the affirmation of a place 'where interpretation wavers' before the profusion of possibilities, an ongoing moment of 'hesitation'.⁴³ I will argue, on the contrary, that Deleuze's redemptive authority is absolute by definition, an authority literally and explicitly beyond discussion, beyond appeal. Rather than limit or eliminate judgement, Deleuze makes it literally unlimited; his judgement is no longer relative to a judge, a faculty, a place, a constitution or a set of criteria of judgement, but coincides with itself alone – as redemptive of all.

The constitution of the Given

Like Spinoza or Nietzsche, Deleuze takes as his critical starting point that the Real nature of things has been concealed from us by inherited human tendencies, by *ressentiment*, by vicious relations with and between others. Deleuze begins with a version of what Suhrawardî called our 'occidental exile' – an exile from the Light, from the pole of genuine *Orientation*. The Real "Whole" is never "given".⁴⁴ For us, the Real exists only as repressed or, at best, as partially expressed, and the fundamental question must be, 'how is the Real led to desire its own repression?'⁴⁵ Philosophy as Deleuze conceives it serves to struggle with this repression; philosophers and artists have, first and foremost, a 'clinical' or 'symptomalogical' function.⁴⁶

In Spinoza's all-important terms, the idea of God is the only adequate basis for the ordering of reality, but 'that one cannot begin from the idea of God, that one cannot from the outset install oneself in God, is a constant of Spinozism'.⁴⁷ Divine thought alone is authentically Real, original in both senses – but we must *become* thinkers. 'Thinking is not innate, but must be engendered in thought', for 'we are born cut off from our power of action or understanding'.⁴⁸ Spinoza's exemplary becoming-thinker takes place in three stages. First, we begin in a (Given) 'child-like' state of 'impotence and slavery', governed by 'ignorance' and 'chance encounters'.⁴⁹ Second, we create expressive common notions *through* such encounters which 'lead us to the idea of God'.⁵⁰ And third, 'as quickly as possible', we attain knowledge of God as from God's perspective, 'the knowledge of God's essence, of particular essences as they are in God, and as conceived by God'. Here 'we think

as God thinks, we experience the very feelings of God'.⁵¹

The third kind of knowledge achieves a *complete fusion of self and God, or of Given and Real*. And so the formation of 'a reasonable being may in this sense be said to reproduce and express the effort of Nature as a whole'⁵² – creation is expressive of its creator. It is not a process that separates outcome from origin, but one which *actualizes* the initial, virtual *identity of origin and outcome*. The result is original in both senses ('primordial' and 'unprecedented'). The process itself, the three steps, abolish themselves in their realization. The equation leaves no remainder. 'We do of course appear to reach the third kind of knowledge... [but] the "transition" is only an appearance; in reality we are simply finding ourselves as we are immediately and eternally in God'⁵³ – very much on the Pauline model.

In other words, the Real requires an archaeologist. Its original immediacy must be uncovered and reconstructed through its Given fragments. Hence the exemplary importance of Foucault, *archéologue par excellence*. 'Everything in [Foucault's] statements is real and all reality is manifestly present', but it is nevertheless 'not given in ... a manifest way'.⁵⁴ The statement 'is not immediately perceptible but is always covered over by phrases and propositions... We are forced to begin with [Given] words, phrases and propositions',⁵⁵ in order then to *extract* the virtual problem or statement which ('first') determines them. For example, what is *said* about sexuality in the Victorian age is Given as repressed, and it 'says' the repression of sexuality; what is *Really stated*, however, is the proliferation of determining discourses which define and manipulate the sexual, without respite.⁵⁶ Statements 'are never hidden' but, somehow, a 'statement *does* remain hidden if we do not rise to its extractive conditions; on the contrary, it is there and says everything as soon as we reach these conditions'.⁵⁷ Once extracted, the virtual statement is all-determining; this is for Deleuze 'Foucault's greatest historical principle'.⁵⁸ *To become-Real is to be extracted from the Given*. This 'extraction' of virtual from actual is the process which *eliminates a situated specificity or context*, which makes the Real independent of context or scale, on the fractal model.⁵⁹ It is achieved through annihilation, explosion, or paralysis of the Given.

If the Real is (transcendental) immanence to itself, the Given forces which literally 'cover up' or mediate the Real are necessarily *transcendent*.⁶⁰ If the Real is one and consequently immanent to itself, trans-

cendence establishes a world of plurality (as opposed to multiplicity); it relates beings *to* other beings and concepts *to* things.⁶¹ Deleuze's critical task is thus 'to hunt transcendence down in all its forms',⁶² to eliminate what he calls 'the four shackles of mediation: ... [immediate d]ifference is "mediated" to the extent that it is subjected to the fourfold root ... of identity, opposition, analogy and resemblance.'⁶³ Immanence will exist, then, as beyond identity *and* beyond opposition, as literal *and* non-resembling.

For Deleuze as for Spinoza or Paul, the great question is, how does the Real which is alone creative allow itself to be transcended by its own creations? In some mysterious way, the Real creates a world in which it weakens itself, becomes wordly, much as God creates a creature which denies Him. Real 'virtual difference tends to actualize itself in forms which cancel it',⁶⁴ and for Deleuze–Bergson, 'life as movement alienates itself in the material form that it creates; by actualizing itself, by differentiation itself, it loses "contact with the rest of itself". Every species is thus an arrest of movement'.⁶⁵ Consequently, the restoration of Real movement will require the extinction of species. If 'emergence, change, and mutation affect composing forces, not composed forms',⁶⁶ the task of philosophy is simply to explode the coherence of composed forms. In the terms of *Anti-Oedipus*, for example, the explosion of the mediate, 'molar' or specific category of the person liberates the immediate desiring-production of singular molecular machines.⁶⁷ In the terms of *Cinema 2*, dissolution of the sensory-motor schema (roughly, the subject) reveals 'time in the pure state'.⁶⁸ Deleuze's philosophy always aims to move from the composed to the composing, to restore the original dimensions of the immanent Whole – to redeem the Real from its given, worldly condition. Philosophy is both a becoming-Real of the Given and a critical account of how the Given comes to constitute itself at the heart of the Real.

For Deleuze, then, the preamble to any possible philosophy is an account of the Given. This account figures, variously, as: the constitution of the moral man or slave in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*; the constitution of representation and of merely specific difference in *Difference and Repetition*; the constitution of worldliness (*mondanité, amour*) in *Proust and Signs*; the limitation of schizophrenia to a 'clinical condition' and the castration of desire in *Anti-Oedipus*, and so on. Three accounts of the Given stand out as particularly important: (i) with Bergson, the constitution of the human in its most general form (critique of the organism); (ii) with capitalism and psychoanalysis, the constitution

of the subject of work and lack (critique of Oedipus); and (iii) with Foucault, the constitution of the subject in *modern* thought (critique of 'Man', of the 'Major'). Together, they allow us to situate Deleuze's work as a refusal of the Given on two levels, one 'cosmic' (with Bergson), the other historical (with Oedipus and Foucault). On the first level, Deleuze mixes what might be called 'prophetic fragments' of the 'death of Man' from any available source ('nomadic' pre-history or futuristic post-history; the Stoics as much as Artaud; Spinoza as much as Nietzsche). On the second level, Deleuze aligns himself with a particular moment in the development of philosophy, working towards this death, *today*, alongside Foucault, Klossowski, Lyotard, Virilio, Godard, Beckett, Artaud, Michaux, Simondon, Guattari, Badiou, and others, as allies in *this* effort to overcome the Given.

Bergson and the alienation of life

Bergson's great virtue, for Deleuze, is his effort to account for a mediate, perceiving organism within the wholly immediate, inorganic Reality of Life, 'the powerful, non-organic Life which grips the world'.⁶⁹ According to Deleuze, Bergson was the first of our contemporaries to realize that it is strictly 'impossible' to *relate* 'objective' things or movements *to* 'subjective' images of movements – this would be to posit two (equivocal) orders of being, in violation of Real univocity. 'It [is] necessary, at any cost, to overcome this duality of image and movement, of consciousness and thing'.⁷⁰ In place of images in the mind and movements in space, Bergson insists that 'IMAGE = MOVEMENT'.⁷¹ Rather like that of Suhrawardî, Bergson's 'plane of immanence is entirely made up of Light'.⁷² Within this Real coherence, the seeing *eye* is not directed *at* objects, but rather

the eye is in things, in luminous images in themselves. 'Photography, if there is photography, is already snapped, already shot, in the very interior of things and for all the points of space' [Bergson]. Things are luminous by themselves without anything illuminating them: all consciousness *is* something, it is indistinguishable from the thing ... immanent to matter.⁷³

Given consciousness, then, what Deleuze here calls 'our consciousness of fact', is 'merely the opacity without which light "is always propagated without its source ever having been revealed" [Bergson]'.⁷⁴ It is, in other words, a gap [*écart*] in the continuous Real fabric of matter-light, a separation of movement and image, maintained in the *interests* of a coordinated motor-schema of perception and action. For Deleuze,

this is mediation, the organism (or ‘Other structure’⁷⁵) at the most basic level. Organisms isolate, reflect or ‘perceive’ only that aspect of Real light which interests them (the herbivore, for example, perceives food in grass, and only food). Whereas Real perception is disinterested and concrete, Given perception is limited by interest and consequently abstract; ‘we perceive only what we are *interested* in perceiving, or rather what it is in our *interest* to perceive.’⁷⁶ Such a subjectivity is ‘subtractive’, ‘incomplete and prejudiced’, while an ‘objectively’ Real perception is ‘complete, immediate.’⁷⁷ To become adequate to the complete, impartial Real, then, is to overcome the organic interval, to restore the continuous luminous flow in all its immediacy. It is to overcome interest and thereby return to the ‘primary regime of variation, in its heat and its light, while it is still untroubled by any centre of indetermination [i.e. an organism]. How can we rid ourselves of ourselves, and demolish ourselves?’⁷⁸

In short, Bergson suggests how we might ‘attain once more *the world before man*, before our own dawn, the position where movement was ... under the regime of universal variation ..., the luminous plane of immanence’.⁷⁹ Deleuze’s persistent dream is to be thus

present at the dawn of the world. Such is the link between imperceptibility, indiscernibility, and impersonality – the three virtues. To reduce oneself to an abstract line, a trait, in order to find one’s zone of indiscernibility with other traits, and in this way enter the haecceity and impersonality of the creator. One is then like grass...⁸⁰

Deleuze equates origin and outcome, the realization of the Real in an apocalyptic dawn. The properly *eternal* or ‘untimely’ aspect of Deleuze’s work is a function of his affirmation, wherever he finds them, of means (nomadic, schizophrenic, stoic, surreal, aphasic, genetic, fractal, aesthetic...) to this wholly extra-historical end.

Oedipus and the repression of desire

‘Oedipus’ is the broadest term given to what Deleuze with Guattari analyses as the specifically subjective form of transcendence, the most ‘concentrated’ form of the organism or ‘body *with* organs’. Oedipus is that which unites transcendence and organism in a single repressive form. If ‘subjectivity appears as soon as there is a gap between a received and an executed movement’,⁸¹ it is because, according to Deleuze, the subject is *our* privileged locus of transcendence or

mediation. Subjective identity as it exists in relation *to* other identities is the privileged Given bulwark established against Real becomings-imperceptible. Deleuze’s first book, *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (1953), is an attempt to determine with Hume what permits the constitution of the transcendent subject within a Real field of immanence.⁸² His first collaborative book, *Anti-Oedipus*, provides his fullest and most celebrated answer to this question, now posed as: how is desire led to desire its own repression?⁸³

According to Deleuze and Guattari, the Oedipal subject achieves this repression by linking the two major forms of transcendence: a ‘private’ (subjective) transcendence of immanence as invoked by the philosophy of representation, and a public (subjected) transcendence as performed by the state. In the first case, the subject is led to figure the world, to *represent* the world, and, through imagination and analogy, negate the literal or immediate presence of the world. This negation is maintained by the ‘theatrical’ mediation of psychoanalysis. Specifically *subjective* desire – a subject’s desire *for* an object – detaches Real composing desire from its immediate creation of objects, in order to relate *to* ‘composed’ objects which it (now) lacks. The paradigm for this missing object is the elusive object of Oedipal desire (Artaud’s ‘mommy daddy’). To the ‘private’ transcendence of the subject corresponds, in the second case, the ‘public’ transcendence of the state as over-coding, external instance ‘beyond’ production. The state figures in *Anti-Oedipus* as a kind of primordial super-ego, detached, standing watch above the now coordinated field of social action. The subject is thus harnessed to *work*, under the supervision of the state, in its endless pursuit of the missing object (the fulfilment of desire-as-lack). According to Deleuze and Guattari, the capitalist organization of labour, the distribution of familial roles across the whole social-symbolic field, and the psychoanalytic interpretation of desire, are all aspects of a single apparatus for the repression of the Real (or consolidation of the Given, of ‘lack’). Oedipus is the mechanism which cements these two subjective–subjected poles of transcendence together. Oedipus is what establishes and *relates* a psychological interiority to external social authority,⁸⁴ the ‘person’ is doubly *subjected* through the mediate ‘castration’ of desire and the transcendent over-coding of the state.⁸⁵ A Deleuzian recovery of the Real, then, will begin with the dissolution of these two forms of subjection, and the evocation of a space without person or state.

Foucault and the death of Man

Foucault's famous thesis concerning the imminent 'death of Man' helps specify the historicity of Deleuze's project – its contemporary urgency. As Deleuze presents it, the 'Man-form' analysed by Foucault is our particular version of the Given mediate form analysed in general by Bergson, and only slightly more specifically through Oedipus. Deleuze takes from *Les Mots et les choses* three stages in the constitution and dissolution of this form: pre-Man (classical), Man (modern), and after-Man (apocalyptic). Deleuze's thought can be considered quite precisely as an attempt to equate the first and second stages in the third.

In the first stage, the Real is (correctly, in Deleuze's view) identified with the Infinite, with God as infinite power of understanding, infinite power of creation, and so on.⁸⁶ 'So long as God exists ... then man does not yet exist.'⁸⁷ But, rather than immediate to the Real, the human is here identified with a limitation placed upon such an infinity (for example, the human power of understanding as a limited form of a divinely infinite understanding⁸⁸). The objects of science include only those things which can in principle be extended to infinity, constructed in indefinite series out from *one* central 'creative' point (money or wealth in 'economics', specific differences in 'biology', and so on). The great effort of knowledge in the classical age is thus the effort to represent or *locate* itself within the infinite,⁸⁹ and to explain is here to extend to infinity, to 'unfold' the Real without losing this location.⁹⁰

In the second stage, human finitude becomes more 'positively' constituent (with Kant) than negative or limiting. Rather than construct general series referring back to one infinitely creative point, each element in a series takes on a self-constituent energy, and diverges in an ongoing 'evolution' of living beings (Lamarck, Cuvier, Cournot, Darwin); the force of work becomes constituent of wealth, and 'work itself falls back on capital (Ricardo) before the reverse takes place, in which capital falls back on the work extorted (Marx)';⁹¹ languages no longer refer back to a universal general grammar but to 'collective wills' (Bopp, Schlegel). *Specific*, comparative histories replace a general deductive order, histories in which the coordinating agent is of course 'Man' himself, specified as living, working, speaking, being. In short, 'Man' dominates the most powerful order of the Given yet produced, and the only 'critique of knowledge' is an 'ontology of the annihilation of beings', that is, the annihilation of beings specified as living, working or speaking.⁹²

Hence the third stage, Deleuze's own stage, the stage of the *superman*, involves affirming this annihilation,

the attempt to carry the forces of finitude across the limit of 'Man's' coherence. The goal is to make finitude itself the basis of an *active* or creative infinity. To 'know' is here to affirm the infinitely disjunctive forces of life, labour and language *in themselves*, as they radiate out along their separate evolutionary paths, and in this way restore the infinite of the first stage, *through* the finite, so to speak. That is, *within* a finite living organism ('Man'), to affirm an infinite power of Life; within a finite speaking organism, to affirm an infinite power of Language; and so on. 'Nietzsche said that man imprisoned life, but the superman is what frees life within man himself, to the benefit of another form.'⁹³

So although the infinite now passes through 'Man', it is no longer located; it explodes all possibility of location. In this, it surpasses the infinite of the first stage. It has become identical to the immediacy of time or being itself. Such contemporary thought runs like a '*ligne de fuite*' through the fractured 'I' of Kant's constituent cogito.⁹⁴ Such has been, for example, the task of a specifically *modern* literature as Deleuze everywhere endorses it: through and alongside the 'dissemination of languages' recognized by philological linguistics, modern literature 'took on a completely different function that consisted, on the contrary, in "regrouping" language and emphasizing a "being of language" beyond whatever it designates and signifies.'⁹⁵ In other words, through a *finite* literary mechanism, language 'turns back on itself in an *endless* reflexivity'.⁹⁶ This is very precisely how Deleuze envisages his own effort: through the finite power of the philosopher, the infinite expression of the Real.

Why can't Deleuze simply return to the first, pre-Man stage? Because classical philosophy remains *limited* and located, governed in the end by a convergence with God. The third stage, by contrast, puts Man 'in charge of the animals', 'of the very rocks', 'in charge of the being of language (that formless, "mute, unsignifying region where language can find its freedom" even from whatever it has to say)'.⁹⁷ In other words, only the third stage effects a kind of becoming-God *of* man, a becoming infinite *of* the finite, and it is this becoming which, as we shall see, enables Deleuze's redemptive paradigm. The failure of classical thought (excepting Spinoza) lies not in its affirmation of the infinite and serial, of 'God', but in its timid *humility*, its refusal to identify itself with God. In the end, it is the specifically human ability to become inhuman, to become infinite, which will redeem the whole of the finite universe. Only the

inhuman is Real, but only the human, of course, can *become* inhuman.

Art and the dissolution of the Given

Like Spinoza, Deleuze studies the Given for one and only one reason: to announce the manner of its dissolution. Tautologically, in order to regain the immediate Real we must ‘forget’ or ‘escape’ the mediate, on the model of the ‘schizophrenic escape’.⁹⁸ An ‘objective’ redemption begins with a subjective paralysis. Our ‘mistake [is to] postulate the contemporaneity of subject and object, whereas one is constituted only through the annihilation of the other’.⁹⁹ By Deleuze’s logic this is a properly (and merely) *binary* logic – either one or the other. ‘The identity of the self is lost ... to the advantage of an intense multiplicity and a power of metamorphosis.’¹⁰⁰ To overcome one’s limited, interested coherence *is*, immediately, to participate without reserve in an absolute coherence. ‘The indefinite aspects of a life lose all indetermination to the degree that they fill a plane of immanence.’¹⁰¹ To become-Real is to become perfectly automatic, automated – in Spinoza’s phrase so often cited by Deleuze, the ‘*spiritual automaton*’, the model thinker, ‘the identity of brain and world, the automaton.’¹⁰² If ‘the automaton is cut off from the outside world, *there is a more profound outside which will animate it*’.¹⁰³ The figure of the automaton equates a ‘personal’ or ‘private’ disempowerment with absolute determination by pure, pre-existent power.

On the one hand, the great spiritual automaton indicates the highest exercise of thought, the way in which thought thinks and itself thinks itself... On the other hand, the automaton ... no longer depends on the outside because he is autonomous but because he is dispossessed of his own thought.¹⁰⁴

Through our dispossession – through the dissolution of the Given – the Real reclaims its own productive auto-coincidence. The rise and fall of the Given appears as one gigantically *redundant* exercise.

Such is the basis of Deleuze’s insistent discussions of the eternal return, the eschatological identity of origin and outcome, considered as a redemptive principle, as principle of ‘ontological selection’.¹⁰⁵ Eternal return is Deleuze’s version of a Last Judgment, the determination of what qualifies for eternal life. Deleuze’s redemptive paradigm is not essentially different from the Christian or Enlightened versions – *through* sin or superstition, through worldly interest, a return to original harmony or Reason, pure disinterest. An Enlightened eventual order, become actual in history (Mercier’s *L’an 2440*), will duplicate

a natural, primordial order. A Real outcome, in each case, is attained through a loss of interested partiality. History is the remainder that disappears with the perfect realignment of calculation. For Deleuze as for d’Alembert, historian of human knowledges, history and worldly consciousness have only one purpose: to achieve their own redundancy.

This task defines the purpose of the philosopher and artist as Deleuze defines them, allies in an ongoing redemption from the Given. Like the mystic *or* the Enlightened *philosophe*, Deleuze’s philosopher is defined as the being most capable of renouncing all conceivable interest or specificity. By definition, only the most *singular* subject can renounce a worldly interest – that is, exchange a personal or specific coherence for an impersonal, cosmic coherence. The ‘embodiment of cosmic memory in creative emotions undoubtedly only takes place in privileged souls’, the vehicles of genius.¹⁰⁶ This embodiment takes place in ‘isolation’, and only occasionally, elliptically, ‘leaps from one soul to another, “every now and then”, crossing closed deserts.’¹⁰⁷ The artist or philosopher exists alone, outside history, following the path of Beckett’s characters toward pure self-exhaustion (*épuisement*), the solitude of Blanchot’s *espace littéraire*.¹⁰⁸

However, the solitude of the artist in no way implies the ‘private’ idiosyncrasy of an artistic vision, a patented ‘originality’ to be treasured by collectors; ‘a statement never refers back to a subject’.¹⁰⁹ A Real or ‘minor’ literature is defined not only by a minimum of mediation or a ‘high coefficient of deterritorialization’, but by its political, collective articulation. Everything in a minor literature ‘is political’; its ‘cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect *immediately* to politics’.¹¹⁰ ‘Kafka’s solitude’, for example, ‘opens him up to everything going on in history today’,¹¹¹ for there is literally *nothing and no-one to limit his articulation of the Real*. The solitary minor artist produces ‘intensive quantities *directly* on the social body, in the social field itself. A single, unified process. The highest desire desires to be both alone and to be connected to all the machines of desire.’¹¹²

The writer is thus defined by his or her lack of definition, positioned by the lack of position. In this sense, Deleuze is firmly positioned at the extreme limit of what Bourdieu has famously analysed as ‘*le champ littéraire*’.¹¹³ The artist is focus for the abolition of worldly values, in the name of the ‘other-worldly’; like the masochist, the genuine Artist ‘suspends’ all relations-with and between¹¹⁴ and ‘stops the world’¹¹⁵ so as to leave it absolutely, so as to grasp ‘life in its pure state’.¹¹⁶ As Spinoza is the ‘fulfillment of phil-

osophy', so 'Artaud is the fulfillment of literature, precisely because he is a schizophrenic.'¹¹⁷ Deleuze and Guattari's schizophrenic exists 'as close as possible to matter, to a burning, living center of matter', 'closest to the beating heart of reality, to an intense point identical with the production of the real'.¹¹⁸ The 'schizo' is a pure in-between without terms, an 'indivisible distance'.¹¹⁹ The artist-schizophrenic has absolutely nothing to learn *from* the world. There is nowhere the artist has not already been. The schizo is from the outset 'situated wherever there is a singularity ... because *he is himself this distance* that transforms him into a woman', a child, an 'Eskimo', and so on.¹²⁰ It is an exemplary definition of the *champ littéraire*: the writer is this distance which transforms the related, *actual* world into an immanent composition whose value is precisely that it has no worldly value.

So, in a sense, every 'great artist' always does the same thing, performs the same radical ascesis of self. The thinker is always Dionysius, or a synonym of Dionysius, a reincarnation of the Real-in-person, the Real depersonalized. Artaud's 'Heliogabalus is Spinoza, and Spinoza is Heliogabalus revived',¹²¹ and everything converges toward '*la grande identité Spinoza-Nietzsche*'.¹²² 'No art is imitative, no art can be imitative or figurative',¹²³ because art *is* Real, and vice versa. Art, in other words, follows the very movement of the Real, with a minimum of mediation, on the model of *metallurgy*.¹²⁴ The Real 'matter-flow can only be followed', and 'one writes [then] on the same level as the real of an unformed matter, at the same time as that matter traverses and extends all of nonformal language';¹²⁵ '*writing now functions on the same level as the real, and the real materially writes*'.¹²⁶ It is 'a writing that is strangely polyvocal, flush with the real',¹²⁷ and 'the only aim [in] writing is life'.¹²⁸ Real or 'living' writing is not somehow outside language (that is, equivocal, in another realm of Being) but the 'outside of language': language become immediate to things; language and things collapsed together in a single plane.¹²⁹

Among Deleuze's many artistic models, there is space to consider only three, chosen from fields as disparate as possible – Proust, Bacon, and cinema as a whole. (Certainly, Beckett, Kafka, Artaud, Michaux, Bene, Masoch, and Cézanne are no less important.) The fundamental sequence (Given to Real) is much the same in each case, driven by the immediate as both means and end – redemptive immediacy as telos and technique of art.

The choice narrated by Proust is typical of the general redemptive pattern. As Deleuze reads it, the

narrator stops loving Albertine so as to begin composing the *Recherche*. He swaps a worldly position (*mondaine, amoureuse, sensible*) for that artistic coherence that excludes our own, 'the original complication, the struggle and exchange of the primordial elements which constitute essence itself'.¹³⁰ Deleuze's Proust writes the shift from specific to singular, relative to absolute, Given to Real. Deleuze distinguishes four regimes of signs in his work, organized in relative proximity to the Real. Worldly signs are the lowest or 'last degree of essence',¹³¹ the most *related*, the most specific to a place and a group. Next, the signs of love offer insight into the true solitude or singularity of the lover, but do so only negatively, through what Spinoza would call 'bad encounters', the specificity of a positioned personality, and the perception of others as specific to a world which excludes the lover (love as jealousy). Closer still to absolute singularity, the signs of involuntary memory offer a perfect but temporary coincidence between two distinct times. They reveal *a* shared 'identical quality' beyond all specificity, but remain limited as a relation between rather than external to its terms. Artistic signs, finally, are wholly and sufficiently immediate to the Real, pure essence, beyond all forms of the specific and the relative. Art composes the 'pure and empty form of time', immediacy or *le temps retrouvé* as 'finality of the world' – 'that birth which has become the metamorphosis of objects',¹³² dawn of a world before (*or after*) the human. Proust thus composes the Real by decomposing it in the world; *he extracts the Real from the specific*.¹³³

Francis Bacon so interests Deleuze because his painting retains enough of the *figural* for Deleuze to argue that 'no art is figurative', that 'by virtue of its most profound theme, the visual image points to an innocent physical nature, to an immediate life which has no need of language'.¹³⁴ According to Deleuze, Bacon like every other Real artist produces a wholly literal art. His painting 'reveals presence, directly [*donne à voir la présence, directement*]'; with Bacon as with Cézanne, 'painting aims to extract directly the presences beneath and beyond representation ...; it puts the eye in everything', and thereby allows a wholly de-positioned, wholly objective vision, immediate to the exclusive 'intensity' of the Real, a 'pure vibration' unlimited by extension of any kind, unqualified by any adjective.¹³⁵ 'Freed' from positioned or intentional representation, painting 'acts directly upon the nervous system', and puts 'the emancipated senses into direct relation with time and thought', in a single material plane without intermediaries.¹³⁶ In short, rather than

some kind of relation *between* ‘subject and object ... it is both things at once’; ‘I become in sensation, and at the same time something happens because of it. In the last analysis, the same body gives it and receives it, and this body is both object and subject’.¹³⁷

Perhaps the most vivid and exhaustively detailed of Deleuze’s artistic examples is the becoming-immediate of modern film described in the two *Cinema* books. Deleuze aims to show that cinema duplicates the path taken by modern philosophy beginning with Kant,¹³⁸ from Given to Real – from an indirect, mediate presentation of time through relative, positioned movements, to a direct, immediate presentation of time based on an absolute movement constitutive of all possible positions. In the first phase, the ‘movement’ or ‘action-image’ of cinema is based on the coordination of perceptions and actions through an intentional subject, what Deleuze calls the ‘sensory motor schema’ which mediates time in the *interests* of action.¹³⁹ It is a cinema of the specific and related,¹⁴⁰ which orders the parts of a ‘changing open whole’ through figurative association with a referential ‘world’ of some kind, an ‘out-of-field’.¹⁴¹ In the second phase, the Given dissolves to reveal the Real in its pure immediacy, in its singular and exclusive element – ‘time in the pure state’.¹⁴² The ‘sensory-motor schema is shattered from the inside. That is, perceptions and actions cease to be linked together, and spaces are neither co-ordinated nor filled’; the actors become ‘pure seers, who no longer exist except in the interval or movement’, rendered ‘helpless’, paralysed within a ‘pure optical and sound situation’.¹⁴³ Place becomes ‘uninhabitable’, ‘any-space-whatever’, ‘waste ground’;¹⁴⁴ situations become dispersive rather than integrative;¹⁴⁵ the association of images becomes ‘elliptical’, ‘irrational’ and ‘direct’, without ‘intermediaries’;¹⁴⁶ events no longer ‘concern

the person who provokes or is subject to them’, but consist of ‘wanderings, immobilizings, petrifications and repetitions’;¹⁴⁷ finally, ‘there is no more [referential] out-of-field’ but only an ‘autonomous image’ that ‘destroys’, ‘replaces’ or ‘creates’ its object and its world.¹⁴⁸ Literal images replace figures. ‘There is no longer association through metaphor or metonymy, but relinkage on the literal image’.¹⁴⁹ There is no more an ‘in-between’ art and life; ‘it is the whole of the real, life in its entirety, which has become spectacle’, ‘life as spectacle, and yet in its spontaneity’.¹⁵⁰ In other words, the new cinema *eliminates the specific* through ‘the extraction of an any-question-whatever’.¹⁵¹ Cinema restores ‘our faith’ in the world, by moving beyond (above or beneath) it. It redeems the world, by exploding it.

According to Deleuze, we regain in the process the Reality of ‘non-organic life’, the identity of Brain and Universe, of art and ‘pure thought’ as the very ‘truth of cinema’.¹⁵² This truth puts an end to intermediaries. At the limit, through ‘contact independent of distance’, cinema becomes pure resolution of binaries, ‘co-presence or application of ... negative and positive, of place and obverse, of full and empty, of past and future, of brain and cosmos, of the inside and the outside’.¹⁵³ For Deleuze, this is always and everywhere the artistic achievement *par excellence*, a kind of supreme self-sacrifice, the transcendence of all interests in the absolutely *singular* interest of something else. Such is, precisely, the redemptive interest of *Thought*.

Thought and the redemptive choice

For Deleuze, thought creates what it thinks, as perception creates what it perceives (and therefore does not relate *to* it). ‘The philosophical concept does not refer to the lived ... but consists, through its own creation, in



setting up an event that surveys [*survole*] the whole of the lived no less than every state of affairs'.¹⁵⁴ Deleuze does not establish a relationship *between* philosophy and other disciplines, other ways of making sense, but eliminates this relationship to the advantage of a kind of 'greater philosophy'. Thought or philosophy thinks the sufficient reason of the actual. In this way,

thinking and being are ... one and the same ...; movement is not the image of thought without being also the substance of being... It is a single speed on both sides: 'the atom will traverse space with the speed of thought' (Epicurus). The plane of immanence has two facets as Thought and as Nature, as Nous and as Physis.¹⁵⁵

The power of Thought is for Deleuze very much that of an unlimited creator God, *natura naturans*, the union of spontaneity and necessity. Following Spinoza, 'purest of philosophers',¹⁵⁶ 'we have a power of knowing, understanding or thinking only to the extent that we participate in the absolute power of thinking'.¹⁵⁷ We think because we *are* ('objectively') Thought: 'the power of thinking is asserted, by nature or by participation, of all that is "objective"... *But objective being would amount to nothing did it not itself have a formal being in the attribute of Thought.*'¹⁵⁸ That is why the true thinker is 'spiritual automaton', 'thought as determined by its own laws'.¹⁵⁹ The automaton reaches that 'secret point where the anecdote of life and the aphorism of thought amount to one and the same thing'.¹⁶⁰ Thought in itself dissolves the thinker as subject.¹⁶¹ As with Suhrawardī or Paul, the redeemed subject *is* thought, immediately – on condition that he or she stops thinking *as* a subject. 'The activity of thought applies to a receptive being, to a passive subject which represents that activity to itself rather than enacts it Thought thinks only on the basis of an unconscious ... the universal ungrounding which characterizes thought as a faculty in its transcendental exercise.'¹⁶²

Thought redeems. To think requires a 'clean break', a leap altogether out of the world, an escape from all worldly opacity and particularity.¹⁶³ To think is to become transparent or insubstantial – to present *no resistance* to the impersonal movement of thought. To think is to escape the Given. With Deleuze, thought is not a transitive activity. Thought coincides with its own constitution as thought.

In other words, to think is also to *choose* to think – to choose Real over Given, to refuse the world. Deleuze, like Paul or Pascal, erects a logic of choice at the very centre of thought. According to Deleuze,

the modern *fact* is that we no longer believe in this world. We do not even believe in the events which happen to us, love, death as if they only half concerned us... The link between man and the world is broken. Henceforth this link must become an object of belief: it is the impossible which can only be restored within a faith.... [The sensory motor] reaction of which man has been dispossessed can be replaced only by belief.¹⁶⁴

It is precisely because thought paralyzes us as positioned thinking beings, that it is, in a second moment, redemptive of all positions. Thought allows us to recognize and affirm our *unjustifiable* state (as Paul's 'grace' is beyond relation, beyond merit). In the terms of Deleuze's *Cinema 2*, thought destroys the 'sensory motor schema' – that is, the 'subject' who perceives and reacts *to* situations – and this 'break makes man a seer who finds himself struck by something intolerable in the world, and confronted by something unthinkable in thought ...; we should *make use of this powerlessness* to believe in life, and to discover the identity of thought and life.'¹⁶⁵ It is only 'this belief that makes the unthought the specific power of thought, through the absurd'.¹⁶⁶ Ultimately, 'the power of thought gives way, then, to an unthought in thought, to an irrational proper to thought, a point beyond the outside world, but capable of restoring our belief in the world'.¹⁶⁷ To choose means to accept what is, to *become* what we *are*, and *nothing* more.

Again, what determines this densely argued sequence is immediate coincidence pure and simple. Deleuze's obscure account of 'the choice' *equates chooser and chosen*; it joins the supremely 'subjective' moment of decision (the moment of Pascal and Kierkegaard) and the moment of supreme, absolute automation (the moment of Spinoza and Leibniz). The Real choice is a choice 'increasingly identified with living thought'.¹⁶⁸ To choose the Real is to reach a 'spiritual space where what we choose is no longer indistinguishable from the choice itself',¹⁶⁹ a place where 'space is no longer determined, it has become the any-space-whatever which is identical to the power of the spirit, [its] "auto-affection"'.¹⁷⁰ To 'believe' is to return to the all-productive origin of immediacy; 'it is only, it is simply believing in the body. It is giving discourse to the body, and, for this purpose, reaching the body *before discourse, before words, before things are named*'.¹⁷¹ Like Hume's theory of association developed in *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, the choice is wholly external to its terms.¹⁷² Choice chooses the dissolution of *terms*. 'In short, choice as spiritual determination has no other object other than itself: I choose to choose ...[choice] in this way

confirming itself by itself, by putting the whole stake back into play each time'.¹⁷³ The choice, like the dice-throw of *Difference and Repetition* and *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, equates player and play, rules and game, stakes and 'staker'.

According to Deleuze, 'the true choice, that which consists in choosing choice, is supposed to restore everything to us. It will enable us to rediscover everything, in the spirit of sacrifice, at the moment of the sacrifice'. To be thus redeemed is to renounce the world in favour of a 'pure, immanent or spiritual light, beyond white, black and grey. As soon as this light is reached *it restores everything to us*'.¹⁷⁴ In the economical terms of Deleuze's *Foucault*, 'only forgetting (the unfolding) recovers what is folded in memory (and in the fold itself)'.¹⁷⁵

Why does Deleuze's choice restore the world? Simply because it claims to be wholly, perfectly identical to it, in its creativity, as *natura naturans*. It restores not a world *Given* for us (*naturata*), but the world as it is in itself, in its 'genitality'. In the chosen immediacy, the chooser gains access to 'the power of a constitution of bodies', and carries 'out a primordial genesis of bodies': 'constituting bodies, and in this way restoring our belief in the world, restoring our reason...'.¹⁷⁶ What Deleuze says of the German expressionists, artists of the 'dynamic sublime', applies nicely to his own redemptive paradigm:

it is intensity which is raised to such a power that it dazzles or annihilates our organic being, strikes terror into it, but arouses a thinking faculty by which we feel superior to that which annihilates us, to discover in us a supra-organic spirit which dominates the whole inorganic life of things; then we lose our fear, knowing that our spiritual 'destination' is truly invincible.¹⁷⁷

What is really 'invincible' here is the immediate equation of all the terms involved (chooser, choice, chosen). The identity of the terms ensures their perfect reversibility. Deleuze's Real chooser is, as with Nietzsche or Paul, himself chosen (*élu*): '*only he who is chosen chooses well or effectively*'.¹⁷⁸ To be chosen is to fuse with 'grace', to become, in the mystical formula of *Cinema 2*, one with 'the Spirit, he who blows where he will'.¹⁷⁹

That is why, again, Deleuze always equates the 'freedom' of Real choice with the purest form of automation. In Spinoza's exemplary 'ethical vision of the world it is always a matter of capacity and power, and never of anything else. In a sense every being, each moment, does all it can'.¹⁸⁰ With Deleuze's Leibniz, likewise, a free act is not determined by a

choice of one motive over another, but entails the absence of a specific motive as such, the absence of a subjective specificity.¹⁸¹ With Leibniz, 'everything is sealed off from the beginning and remains in a condition of closure'.¹⁸² To be 'free', in other words, can only mean, to be free *of* worldly interest as such. Freedom is here an expressive state, rather than situated action. Since 'each monad is nothing other than a passage of God', 'the voluntary act is free because the free act is what expresses the entire soul at a given moment of its duration'.¹⁸³ What a free monad *does* is include or express what inheres in it – 'inherence is the condition of liberty and not of impediment'.¹⁸⁴ For Deleuze, freedom has only a *literal* value: free equals unlimited, free of specific limits. Free is all-inclusive, or dis-interested. The properly 'ethical' or political issue for Deleuze is never what is conventionally discussed as human liberty but rather liberation *from* the human – '*la liberté devenue capacité pour l'homme de vaincre l'homme*'.¹⁸⁵ Since 'man' is itself the 'prison', 'life becomes resistance to power [only] when power takes life as its object', *to the exclusion of the merely living as such* ('man', the organism).¹⁸⁶

In other words, Deleuze's 'faith in the world' is restored, ultimately, because his chosen 'break with the world' is offset by a still more radical fusion with its 'creator' or sufficient reason.¹⁸⁷ He breaks with the Given so as to return to the Real. He restores faith in a 'world' to which he has perfectly immediate access – access beyond the mediation of a 'priest', beyond 'interpretation'¹⁸⁸ – much as the Enlightened thinkers restore their faith to a Reason they immediately incarnate (Montesquieu's *principes*, Diderot's *arbre encyclopédique*). We cannot, of course, question the validity of Deleuze's choice without transforming it into the very choice which, like Melville's Bartelby, he 'prefers not' to choose. But we can demonstrate its consistency with other logics (Pauline, Enlightened...) which equate redemption with the sacrifice of a positioned interest, and consider *for whom* Deleuze's choice is valid. Who can afford this sacrifice? Who has an interest in disinterest? Like Spinoza, like Paul, Deleuze writes for the establishment of one univocal order, 'one body directed by one mind'. His univocal excludes the equivocal; his One-multiple excludes the many; his literal excludes the figural. Deleuze's philosophy proclaims a redemptive dislocation of interests every bit as radical as that asserted, in their very different ways, by his contemporaries Lévinas and Badiou.

Whatever the virtues of Deleuze's philosophy, then, we should not mistake it for what it most emphati-

cally is not – a philosophy that complicates the realm of immediate expression, that subverts a univocal order, that disrupts a strict ontological homogeneity, that promotes a world of complex relations between distinct, specific individuals or others. If most of Deleuze’s commentators look to his work for tools in the building of a ‘radical democracy’, to advance the deconstruction of ‘Major’ narratives and hierarchies, to support the assertion of ‘Minor identities’ and differences, they seldom consider the terms upon which this apparent pluralism rests. Invariably, ‘multiplicity’ with Deleuze is the predicate of a radical, self-differing singularity. His multiple is not the plural, but the internal consequence of univocity.

Despite his own very practical engagement in political struggle, Deleuze’s political philosophy thus leaves little room for a confrontation with the equivocal as such. With Hume, Deleuze knows that ‘particular interests cannot be made identical to one another, or be naturally totalized. Nonetheless, nature demands that they be made identical’.¹⁸⁹ So with Spinoza, Deleuze looks for a way to accomplish this identity that is ‘natural’ yet not *given* as such. Only something like Spinoza’s ‘sovereign City has power enough to institute indirect conventional relations through which citizens are forced to agree and be compatible’:¹⁹⁰ Deleuze’s own political philosophy assumes comparable power. *The sovereign interest is built on the renunciation of interests, and the ‘reasonable’ citizen is precisely that ‘person’ beyond the reach of ‘any personal affections whatever’.*¹⁹¹ The multiple, always, is impersonal and ahistorical, and has nothing to do with the aggregation let alone the negotiation or mediation of personal affections or interests.¹⁹² The multiple is a function of what the One can become – as One. Deleuze’s ‘becoming-other’, in short, is precisely the tendency of a ‘world without others.’¹⁹³ ‘Becoming-other’ is the very movement of redemption, the movement away from relations *with* others. Deleuzian ‘becomings’ are not of this world.

Hence the lasting ambiguity of Deleuze’s work. Unlike Paul or Suhrawardî, of course, Deleuze is a self-declared empiricist, a radical materialist. The Deleuzian version of univocity certainly means that ‘one must find a *fully* physical usage for principles whose nature is *only* physical...’, geared to a single ‘Mechanosphere’¹⁹⁴ There is no *ontological* dualism here, of spirit and flesh, life and death, light and opacity. With Deleuze, we know that everything is Real, that all inheres on the same plane. Yet the redemptive movement remains. The enabling conclusion follows necessarily: everything is Real – but some things are more

Real than others. Univocity guarantees the integrity of a single quantitative scale of reality, a single matrix of salvation (the more or less redeemed). In a way, this matrix is more ‘damning’, more ‘inclusive’, than Paul’s dualism. Deleuze’s redemptive philosophy, coupled with his ontological univocity, ensures a hierarchy of beings every bit as dizzying as the vertical layering of Lights in Suhrawardî’s cosmology. With Deleuze, everything is physical, but our world is proclaimed minimally physical. Everything is Real, but positioned; specific actors are confined – once again – to a world of illusion. This is a world that lacks even the paltry autonomy accorded the negative term in a binary opposition: it is merely the weak, diluted aspect of the philosophy that exceeds it.

Notes

1. As Christian Jambet puts it, ‘Suhrawardî is like a Spinoza of Light’, *La Logique des Orientaux*, Seuil, Paris, 1983, p. 142; cf. pp. 108–12, 163.
2. Throughout this article, I capitalize this meaning of ‘Given’ to form an antithetical pair with ‘Real’.
3. *Difference and Repetition* (hereafter *DR*), trans. Paul Patton, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994, p. 35. ‘L’un se dit en un seul et même sens de tout le multiple’, *A Thousand Plateaus* (hereafter *TP*), trans. Brian Massumi, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1986, p. 254; ‘a single and same voice for the whole thousand-voiced multiple’, *DR*, p. 304. Cf. *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, Zone, New York, 1988, p. 29.
4. [with Félix Guattari] *Anti-Oedipus* (hereafter *AO*), trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1977, pp. 26, 32: ‘the objective being of desire is the Real in and of itself’ and ‘desire does not lack anything’ (pp. 26–7).
5. *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (hereafter *EP*), trans. Martin Joughin, Zone, New York, 1990, p. 11.
6. The Letters of Paul to the Romans 1.19–20; 8.39. I refer to the text of *The New English Bible*, Oxford and Cambridge University Presses, 1961, volume 2. I draw here, in part, on Alain Badiou, ‘Saint Paul et la fondation de l’universel’, lectures given at the Collège International de la philosophie, 1995–96.
7. Romans 3.20; cf. Romans 7.7–10.
8. Romans 12.2; 8.9.
9. The Letter of Paul to the Galatians 3.28; cf. The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians, 12.13.
10. *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale, Columbia University Press, New York, 1990, p. 306.
11. Shihâboddîn Yahya Suhrawardî (Shaykh al-Isrâq), *Le Livre de la Sagesse orientale*, translated and edited by Henri Corbin, introduction by Christian Jambet, Verdier, Lagrasse, 1986, §129–30, pp. 112–13.
12. Suhrawardî, *L’Archange empourpré, Quinze traités et récits mystiques*, translated and edited by Henri Corbin, Fayard, Paris, 1976, p. 431.
13. Henri Corbin, *Temple et contemplation*, Flammarion, Paris, 1981, p. 293; *En Islam iranien*, Gallimard, Paris, 1971, pp. i, 46; *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*,

- Gallimard, 'Folio', Paris, 1986, pp. 129, 138.
14. Suhrawardī, *Archange*, p. 57.
 15. Suhrawardī, *Le Livre des tablettes*, ch. vii, in *Archange*, p. 104.
 16. Suhrawardī, *Archange*, pp. 101–2; cf. Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, pp. ii, 22.
 17. Eva de Vitray-Meyerovitch, 'La Poétique de l'islam', in Julia Kristeva, ed., *La Traversée des signes*, Seuil, Paris, 1975, p. 216.
 18. Jambet, *Logique*, p. 38; Henri Corbin, *Philosophie iranienne et philosophie comparée* (1977), Buchet-Chastel, Paris, 1985, p. 118.
 19. Jambet, *Logique*, pp. 118, 224–5; cf. p. 231.
 20. Baruch Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, in *The Political Works*, edited by A. Wernham, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1958, p. 83.
 21. 'Human nature is such that everyone pursues his private advantage with the greatest eagerness' (Spinoza, *Tractatus Politicus*, in *The Political Works*, p. 337).
 22. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, edited by C.B. Macpherson, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1968, pp. 263–4. The deduction of sovereignty, for Spinoza as much as for Bossuet, 'requires no belief in historical narratives of any kind' (*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, p. 73) but is, rather, 'self-validating and self-evident' (p. 75). *It follows immediately from itself*.
 23. *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, p. 133.
 24. *Tractatus Politicus*, p. 367.
 25. *Tractatus Politicus*, pp. 373, 383.
 26. *AO*, p. 76; cf. *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993, p. 7; *TP*, pp. 153, 335.
 27. Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari*, Routledge, New York, 1989, p. 156.
 28. P. Zaoui, 'La grande identité Nietzsche–Spinoza, quelle identité?', *Philosophie* 47, September 1995, pp. 64–5.
 29. C. Boundas, 'Introduction', *The Deleuze Reader*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1992, p. 11.
 30. Michael Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1992, pp. 52–3; xii, 8–13, 27–8, 115; François Zourabichvili, *Deleuze: Une philosophie de l'événement*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1995, pp. 56–8; Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari*, pp. 2, 15–17, 156; Armand Guilmette, *Gilles Deleuze et la modernité*, Trois-Rivières, Les Éditions du Zéphyr, Ottawa, 1984, p. 14. It is consequently typical to assume that, rather than Spinoza, it is Nietzsche – the same radically anti-Hegelian Nietzsche of Klossowski and Foucault – who is the decisive model and ally.
 31. Zourabichvili, *Deleuze*, p. 53.
 32. Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze*, p. 38. Cf. Philippe Mengue, *Deleuze: Le système du multiple*, Kimé, Paris, 1995, pp. 10, 53, 291–3; Jean-Jacques Lecercle, *Philosophy through the Looking-Glass*, Open Court, LaSalle, 1985, pp. 40–41; Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari*, pp. 141–2.
 33. Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze*, pp. 79–85, xiii.
 34. Lecercle, *Philosophy through the Looking-Glass*, p. 163.
 35. *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 41.
 36. F. Gros, 'Le Foucault de Deleuze: une fiction métaphysique', *Philosophie* 47, September 1995, p. 56.
 37. D. Janicaut, 'France', in R. Klibanski and D. Pears, eds, *La Philosophie en Europe*, Gallimard, 'Idées', Paris, 1993, p. 161.
 38. B. Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1992, pp. 26, 69.
 39. Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze*, pp. 119–20.
 40. Boundas, 'Introduction', *Deleuze Reader*, pp. 21, 13–14.
 41. Guilmette, *Deleuze et la modernité*, p. 20. Cf. Boundas, *Deleuze Reader*, p. 2; X. Papaïs, 'Puissances de l'artifice', *Philosophie* 47, September 1995, p. 86.
 42. Lecercle, *Philosophy through the Looking-Glass*, p. 185.
 43. *Ibid.*, pp. 107, 110; Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari*, p. 161. It follows that Deleuze's concepts are supposed to be 'indefinitely variable' (Jean-Clet Martin, *Variations. La Philosophie de Gilles Deleuze*, Editions Payot et Rivages, Paris, 1993, p. 11).
 44. *Bergsonism*, p. 104.
 45. Cf. *AO*, pp. 29, 119.
 46. *Cinema 1: The Mouvement-Image* (hereafter *CI*), trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1986, p. 125; *Masochism: An Interpretation of Coldness and Cruelty* (hereafter *MC*), G. Braziller, New York, 1971, pp. 15–16; *Negotiations: Interviews 1972–1990*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1995, p. 195.
 47. *EP*, p. 137.
 48. *DR*, p. 147; *EP*, p. 307.
 49. *EP*, pp. 263, 289–90.
 50. *EP*, pp. 296, 297.
 51. *EP*, pp. 303, 308.
 52. *EP*, p. 265.
 53. *EP*, p. 308.
 54. *Foucault* (hereafter *FC*), trans. Seán Hand, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1988, pp. 3, 16, my emphasis. Again, 'cinema's concepts are not given in the cinema. And yet they are cinema's concepts, not theories about cinema' (*Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (hereafter *C2*), trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1989, p. 280, my emphasis).
 55. *FC*, pp. 16–17.
 56. *FC*, p. 53.
 57. *FC*, pp. 53, 54; cf. p. 59.
 58. *FC*, p. 54.
 59. 'The task of philosophy when it creates concepts, entities, is always to extract an event from things and beings' ([with Félix Guattari] *What is Philosophy?* (hereafter *WP*), trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994, p. 33), just as 'the essence of the cinematographic movement-image lies in extracting from vehicles or moving bodies the movement which is their common substance'.
 60. Cf. Mireille Buydens, *Sahara: L'esthétique de Gilles Deleuze*, Vrin, Paris, 1990, p. 22.
 61. *WP*, p. 47; Gilles Deleuze, 'L'immanence: une vie', *Philosophie* 47, September 1995, p. 5.
 62. *WP*, pp. 48–9.
 63. *DR*, p. 29.
 64. *DR*, p. 228.
 65. *Bergsonism*, p. 104.
 66. *FC*, p. 87.
 67. *AO*, p. 285.
 68. *C2*, pp. xi, 169.
 69. *C2*, p. 81.
 70. *CI*, p. 56.
 71. *CI*, p. 58; 'bodies in themselves are already a lan-

- guage', and 'language is always the language of bodies' (*Proust and Signs*, trans. Richard Howard, G. Braziller, New York, 1972, p. 91).
72. *CI*, p. 61.
 73. *CI*, p. 61.
 74. *CI*, p. 61.
 75. *The Logic of Sense*, p. 306.
 76. *C2*, p. 20, my emphasis. 'It is grass in general that interests the herbivore' and 'it is in this sense that the sensory-motor schema is an agent of abstraction' as opposed to Deleuze's Real 'concrete' (*C2*, p. 45).
 77. *CI*, pp. 64, 63.
 78. *CI*, p. 66.
 79. *CI*, p. 68, my emphasis.
 80. *TP*, p. 280 – 'like grass', rather than 'interested in grass'. Cf. *AO*, p. 281.
 81. *C2*, p. 47.
 82. 'The mind is not subject; it is subjected' (*Empiricism and Subjectivity*, trans. Constantin Boundas, Columbia University Press, New York, 1991, p. 31).
 83. Cf. *AO*, pp. 29, 119.
 84. *AO*, p. 79; cf. *TP*, p. 124.
 85. *AO*, pp. 54, 73, 269.
 86. *FC*, p. 88.
 87. *FC*, p. 130.
 88. *FC*, pp. 124–5.
 89. Deleuze relies here on M. Serres, *Le Système de Leibniz*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1982, pp. 648–57.
 90. *FC*, p. 126.
 91. *FC*, p. 128.
 92. *FC*, p. 130.
 93. *FC*, p. 130.
 94. *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1984, p. vii; *DR*, pp. 85–6, 194, 199.
 95. Deleuze's examples include 'Mallarmé's *Livre*, Péguy's repetitions, Artaud's breaths, the agrammaticality of Cummings, Burroughs and his cut-ups and fold-ins, as well as Roussel's proliferations, Brisset's derivations, Dada collage, and so on. And is this unlimited finity or superfold not what Nietzsche had already designated with the name of eternal return?' (*FC*, p. 131).
 96. *FC*, p. 131.
 97. *FC*, p. 132.
 98. *AO*, p. 341.
 99. *The Logic of Sense*, p. 310.
 100. *Ibid.*, p. 297.
 101. Deleuze, 'L'Immanence: une vie', p. 6; cf. *C2*, p. 245.
 102. *C2*, p. 206. 'The spiritual automaton, 'mechanical man' is ... a little time in the pure state' (*C2*, p. 169).
 103. *C2*, p. 179, my emphasis.
 104. *C2*, p. 263.
 105. *TP*, p. 508. 'Eternal return alone effects the true selection, because it eliminates the average forms and *uncovers* "the superior form of everything that is" ... the superior form is not the infinite, but rather the eternal formlessness of the eternal return itself' (*DR*, p. 55, my emphasis).
 106. *Bergsonism*, p. 111. For Deleuze as much as for Bergson, 'the great souls ... are those of artists and mystics ... The mystical soul actively plays the whole of the universe, and reproduces the opening of a Whole in which there is nothing to see or to contemplate' (*ibid.* p. 112).
 107. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
 108. Deleuze, *L'Éprouvé*, Minuit, Paris, 1992. Cf. Blanchot, *L'Entretien Infini*, Gallimard, Paris, 1969, pp. 304–5; 'The Essential Solitude', in *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, pp. 19–34; *Faux Pas*, Gallimard, Paris, 1943, pp. 10–11.
 109. [with Félix Guattari] *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1986, pp. 83–4; cf. *TP*, p. 84, *FC pas-sim*.
 110. *Kafka*, p. 17, my emphasis.
 111. *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.
 112. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
 113. P. Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l'art*, Seuil, Paris, 1992.
 114. *MC*, pp. 28, 31; *Kafka*, p. 84.
 115. *CI*, p. 85; *C2*, p. 68.
 116. *MC*, p. 63.
 117. *WP*, p. 48; *AO*, p. 135.
 118. *AO*, pp. 19, 87.
 119. *AO*, p. 76.
 120. *AO*, pp. 76–7.
 121. *TP*, p. 158.
 122. *Negotiations*, pp. 185, 199.
 123. *TP*, p. 304; *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation*, Vol. 1, Editions de la Différence, Paris, 1981, p. 14.
 124. See *TP*, p. 411.
 125. *TP*, p. 512.
 126. *TP*, p. 141, my emphasis.
 127. *AO*, p. 87.
 128. *Dialogues*, with Claire Parnet, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, Columbia University Press, New York, 1987, pp. 6, 50.
 129. *Critique et clinique*, Minuit, Paris, 1993, p. 16.
 130. *Proust and Signs*, p. 47.
 131. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
 132. *Ibid.*, pp. 49, 48.
 133. 'From every finite thing, Proust makes a being of sensation that is constantly preserved, but by vanishing on a plane of composition' (*WP*, p. 189).
 134. *Francis Bacon*, pp. 39, 13–14.
 135. *Francis Bacon*, pp. 37, 33.
 136. *Ibid.*, p. 37; *C2*, p. 17; *Francis Bacon*, p. 14.
 137. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
 138. *C2*, p. xi.
 139. *CI*, p. 152.
 140. *CI*, p. 134.
 141. *C2*, p. 179.
 142. *C2*, p. xi.
 143. *C2*, p. 41.
 144. *CI*, p. 121; *C2*, p. xi.
 145. *CI*, p. 207.
 146. *CI*, pp. 207, 168.
 147. *CI*, p. 207; *C2*, p. 103.
 148. *C2*, p. 181; *C2*, p. 251.
 149. *C2*, pp. 214, 42.
 150. *C2*, pp. 83–4, 89. 'The whole cinema becomes a free, indirect discourse, operating in reality' (*C2*, p. 155).
 151. *CI*, p. 189.
 152. *C2*, p. 214; *CI*, p. 215; *C2*, p. 151.
 153. *C2*, p. 215.
 154. *WP*, pp. 33–4.
 155. *WP*, p. 38.
 156. *Negotiations*, p. 140.
 157. *EP*, p. 142.
 158. *EP*, p. 122.

159. *EP*, pp. 158, 115, 131, 160.
 160. *The Logic of Sense*, p. 128.
 161. *DR*, p. 85; *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, p. viii.
 162. *DR*, pp. 85–6, 199, 194; *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, pp. viii–ix.
 163. 'A clean break is something you cannot come back from; that is irretrievable because it makes the past cease to exist' (*Dialogues*, p. 38).
 164. *C2*, pp. 171–2.
 165. *C2*, p. 170, my emphasis.
 166. *C2*, p. 170.
 167. *C2*, p. 181.
 168. *C2*, p. 177.
 169. *CI*, p. 117.
 170. *CI*, p. 117.
 171. *C2*, pp. 172–3, my emphasis.
 172. *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, pp. 108–9.
 173. *CI*, pp. 114–15.
 174. *CI*, p. 116, my emphasis.
 175. *FC*, p. 107.
 176. *C2*, pp. 201; 200–201.
 177. *CI*, p. 53.
 178. *C2*, p. 178.
 179. *C2*, p. 178.
 180. *EP*, p. 269. Modern cinema is likewise 'automatism become spiritual art'; through cinema, 'the moving machine becomes one with the psychological automaton pure and simple' (*C2*, p. 263).
 181. *The Fold*, p. 69.
 182. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
 183. *Ibid.*, pp. 73, 70.
 184. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
 185. Gilles Deleuze, *Périclès et Verdi: La philosophie de François Châtelet*, Minuit, Paris, 1988, p. 11; cf. *FC*, p. 90.
 186. *FC*, p. 92. Cf. *Périclès et Verdi*, p. 13.
 187. *C2*, p. 188.
 188. *AO*, p. 111, 171. Cf. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1983, p. 131.
 189. *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, p. 43.
 190. *EP*, p. 266.
 191. *EP*, p. 267.
 192. Ultimately, Deleuze's philosophy of the *choice* chooses 'the erasure of the unity of man and the world, in favour of a break which now leaves us with only a belief in this world' (*C2*, p. 188). His nomads 'do not exist in history' (*TP*, pp. 23, 393–4), his 'multiplicities are made up of becomings without history' (*Dialogues*, p. viii), and with Guattari he insists, of course, that 'no, we have never seen a schizophrenic' (*AO*, p. 380) – this is his 'favourite sentence in *Anti-Oedipus*' (*Negotiations*, p. 12).
 193. *The Logic of Sense*, pp. 306ff.
 194. *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, p. 119; *TP*, p. 514.

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