



The Wellspring of Vessels

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The wellspring of vessels is higher than the wellspring of light (Gilles Deleuze and Materialist Dia- lectics)

Abstract

This article is dedicated to clarifying the relationship between the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and the materialist dialectic. Drawing upon the texts of Louis Althusser and Markus Gabriel, this article reformulates the central question of the materialist dialectic—the question of “educating the educators”—into a question of access to a sub-semantic “set of all sets.” Such a reformulation allows two main stages in the history of the materialist dialectic to be highlighted: *materialist dialectics I*, identifying the sub-semantic as such with practice, and *materialist dialectics II*, which develops the strategies of access to

the sub-semantic as given in its non-giveness and excess. An examination of Deleuze's philosophy in the dynamics of its development allows us to consider it as a preparation for a transition towards *materialist dialectics III*, granting a non-reductionist and concrete access to the sphere of the "set of all sets."

Keywords

Deleuze, Althusser, Badiou, Gabriel, materialist dialectics

1. Materialist Dialectics and the Problem of the "Set of all Sets"

"The educator himself must be educated" (Marx 2000: 172)—this is the most concise expression of the fundamental position lying at the basis of the materialist dialectic. The "educators" themselves here have to be understood in the broadest sense possible, and in a de-anthropomorphized way. On the one hand, we are pathological creatures, "products of circumstances and upbringing" (Ibid.), determined by the conditions of our own existence; everything we can think and everything we can do is determined by social, psychological, cultural, linguistic, and whatever other circumstances. On the other hand, we have the capacity to influence these determining circumstances and hence determine that which determines us. Beginning to act and speak within the limits of the pathological and conditioned, we can implement a kind of a switch, "changing horses" (Lifschitz 2003: 107), and transfer our utterances and actions into the mode of the absolute, which is important for all possible circumstances and situations, and hence has the power to redetermine the limits of circumstance and situations in which we began to speak and act.¹ A human,

¹ In this aspect, materialist dialectics is closely connected to the idea of "autotranscendence": that regime of a capacity's function where it goes beyond the frame of the circumstances that generated it and begins to develop in accordance with its own logic, regardless of the intentions and goals of whoever initiated its use. Autotranscendence is used by Hannah Arendt and Ivan Illich (see Dupuy 2008: 7–71). It should be mentioned that according to Dupuy (and, equally, in Arendt and Illich), autotranscendence is "catastrophic" and destructive. A more positive approach can be found in Jacques Rancière's (1995) theory of political action. Although Rancière does not use the term "autotranscendence," the capacity of an action to redetermine the field in which it is carried out, including the redetermination of the subject itself, is what, for Rancière

as a nature-being, is always doomed to act within a world that determines it, to explore and embrace it, but as a species-being he also has the capacity to change this world (Marx 1988: 21–24). The second statement does not cancel the first: the peculiar character of the dialectical materialist position consists precisely in combining the acknowledgment of absolute “conditionedness” with a capacity—no less absolute—to influence this conditionedness.

Most clearly, this position and the problems related therewith were formulated by Louis Althusser through the question of the “three generalities” in his article “On the Materialist Dialectic” (1969: 161–218). In every process of knowledge production, according to Althusser’s interpretation of the Marxian method of transitioning from the general to the specific, there occurs a transformation of the already existing spontaneous and ideological “abstract” concepts (Althusser calls them “generality I”) into specific concepts, connected together through a concrete structure, forming the basis of one or another field of knowledge (“generality III”). This transformation is the essence of every scientific work, and this work is accomplished through yet another kind of generality, “generality II,” distinct both from “generality I” and “generality III.” Hegel’s main mistake, one that transforms his dialectic into an idealist one, is precisely a lack of differentiation between those three types of generality, a denial of qualitative discontinuity, which exists between the various “generalities” (Ibid.: 188–89). This is precisely the reason why the production of knowledge, for Hegel, becomes the result of the self-development and self-generation of the concept, which simultaneously turns out to be the wellspring, result, and, most importantly, moving force and means of production in the process of self-creation.

The idealist character of Hegelian dialectic lies in the fact that the mechanisms that determine the production of sense are reduced to sense itself and are indistinguishable from it.² Hence the distinction between a materialist dialectic and an idealist one consists in the fact that the former does not reduce the grounding to the grounded. Starting with Plato’s *Republic*, a dialectic is defined as the capacity to be engaged with the a-hypothetical, with the sphere that grounds ideas and axiomatic sciences, as well as their regional ontologies, drawing upon the already given. This capacity is not based on the epiphany and inspiration of the poets, nor on the authority of myth and tradition, but on the possibility of a methodological unfolding of knowledge concerning this sphere. The problem of

lies at the basis of the “political” and distinguishes it from the “police.”

² This kind of understanding of the materialist dialectic lies also at the heart of Althusser’s claim that Hegelian dialectic is a process without a subject, which cannot persist in its “subjectlessness” because it turns out to be its own subject (Althusser 2004: 270–71).

the idealist dialectic consists in that it takes the sphere of the determining as a kind of “thinking plus,” a superlogos. A dialectic will be materialist if it is able to ensure access to the instance of the extra-regional “in itself,” taken as the outside that determines thought, and yet is, in and of itself, not thought.³

The problem of the materialist dialectic is thus close to the problem of the “sub-semantic,” as formulated by Markus Gabriel (2006: 15–95). According to Gabriel, “it is an essential feature of the world to be accessible under various descriptions” (Ibid.: 15). The world consists of regional domains, irreducible to each other, such that each domain has its own rules determining what is true and false, existent and in-existent for it. This state of affairs makes a naïve “ontological monism” (Ibid.: 16), presupposing a correlation with the totality of all existents or with the absolute as a “set of all sets,” described through predicative language, impossible. Such a monism would not be able to account for its own genesis: in this case, the “set of all sets” will become a mere object domain, along with all the others, and an infinite regress would be needed to describe the totality of the world.

According to Gabriel, Hegel’s mistake lies precisely within this impossibility to hold the sphere of the absolute, in the reduction of consciousness, which produces figures, to yet another one of such figures, that is, in turning it into yet another object domain (Gabriel 2009: 45). Hegel accepts the existence of the prelogical, but claims that a logical account of it is possible. Absolutizing the concept and subjugating the “set of all sets” to it, Hegel cannot accomplish the task that he himself formulates—to ensure access to that domain that produces sense, but is itself beyond all sense.

How, in that case, would a non-reductionist approach to the sub-semantic domain be possible? It would seem that the materialist dialectic has a clear answer to this question: in practice. This is precisely Marx’s position—he claims, already in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, that the main problem of the Hegelian dialectic is the reduction of all labor to “abstract” or “spiritual” labor and all work—to the work of thought (Marx 1988: 16–17). This approach is perhaps most clearly described by Althusser: practice here is identified with what is absolutely external in relation to thought and amounts to “a process of transformation which is always subject to its own conditions of existence,” resisting any reduction to totality or to truth, expressible in speech and

³ A similar conception of the materialist dialectic as engaging with that outside, which in and of itself is not thought but determines thought, can be found in Slavoj Žižek, who calls this sphere of the determined “unconscious” (see Žižek 2004: 95–101).

amenable to capture in sight (Althusser 1990: 249).⁴ Social practice is a process without a subject and a goal, and the main feature of Marxist philosophy is an insistence on the irreducible character of this outside.

Is it the case that positing the outside in the domain of practice solves the problem of the status of the instance that “determines the determining”? Practice remains a human faculty: it determines the human no less than the faculty of thought. Here, however, we are talking about practice understood in the broadest sense—about social production as opposed to the activity of a singular subject, about an extra-human practice⁵ of sorts. But Hegelian thinking is also not a particular psychological process, unfolding within the consciousness of a singular individual, but universal and extra-human thought.⁶ In both of those cases, however, the extra-human is perceived through the lens of the “all too human” and ends up being tainted by it.⁷ From this standpoint the Hegelian “reduction to thought” is in no way better than the Marxist “reduction to practice.”

⁴ Warren Montag (2013) makes a detailed overview of the stages in the evolution of Althusser’s thought. It seems to the author of this paper, however, that the hinge uniting the various stages of Althusser’s philosophy and motivating the transition from one of them to the other is the question of the non-reductionist approach to the domain of the “determining” (see also note 6 below).

⁵ On the *inhuman*, opposed to all of the humanist, the antihumanist and the posthuman, see Negarestani (2014).

⁶ The main thesis of Mikhail Lifshitz in his polemic with Evald Ilyenkov on the nature of the ideal consists in precisely such an identification of the pathological character of practice, understood as broadly as desired. Lifshitz discerns, in Ilyenkov’s work, two different and opposite approaches to the nature of the ideal—i.e., to that absolute which is accessible to the human being despite his determinateness by circumstance: “One idea consists in that the ideal does not belong merely to the human mind, but has an objective existence, just as its broader basis—the general—objectively exists. Another idea consists in that the ideal exists not as the consciousness of an individual person, but as a social consciousness, collective and embodied in the objects of labor and culture. We can, with full conviction, say that these two ideas do not coincide and even directly contradict each other (Lifschitz 2003: 199–200). In the second case the ideal is a derivative of labor, of human practice—this kind of ideal, according to Lifshitz, is still all too human and not sufficiently objective and universal.

⁷ This kind of disappointment in practice is the reason of late Althusser’s rejection of the materialist dialectic and transition to a “philosophy of the encounter” and aleatory materialism, focused on locking the domain of the “joining in and of itself,” irreducible to logic or practice. The patterns of this joining are what determines the possible combinations of “atoms” and the “states of affairs” and “worlds” that result from them. (For more detail about this and about the similarity between the problematics of late Althusser and early Wittgenstein, see Suchting 2004).

2. Materialist Dialectics II: Vertical Cutting and Horizontal Closing

What is the materialist dialectic? This question has two possible answers. On the one hand, the materialist dialectic in the narrow sense of the word (*materialist dialectics I*) is the result of Marx's attempt to avoid identification with the logical domain of that instance which is located outside sense and determines all sense. Marx, as was said, positions this instance in the domain of praxis. But in the process of this positioning, the space of *materialist dialectics II* opens up (albeit only as the omitted and left behind our backs). *Materialist dialectics II* avoids identifying the instance of "educating the educators" with whatever human capacity, and insists that we possess knowledge, method, and protocols that allow us to engage this sphere of the "extra-human." The special character of this knowledge and the method based on it become the main question of *materialist dialectics II*. But in what way can a pathological and finite creature, that is, one determined by its capacities and faculties, overcome its own limits? The only answer lies in the splitting of the faculties themselves, which reveals a certain extra-human nucleus, lying at the core of the human (Negarestani 2014)⁸—so, transitioning the faculties into an extra-human mode of function (the mode of the absolute). I identify two key strategies of such a splitting, which can be called *vertical cutting* and *horizontal closing*.

The strategy of vertical cutting has at its core the mechanism of double transgression, whose action determines the topic of higher capacity and cardinal incapacity, or total mobilization and absolute capitulation. The goal of this mechanism is to ensure the givenness of the non-given, that is, the givenness of that which is located out of the reach of human faculties, but must be given as such, precisely as not given. This "given non-given" halts the functioning of a faculty and permits the invasion of the outside, which is registered as such because of this halting. In order to be fixated, locked in, a faculty has to first be maximally engaged, after which the initial transgression of a "maximally intensifying effort" is superseded by a second transgression, exceeding the exceedance itself, and

⁸ A broadly understood materialist dialectic, or *materialist dialectics II*, turns out to contain theoretical strategies, the authors of which do not always announce themselves to be proponents of the materialist dialectics (Reza Negarestani is one such example). This, however, should not perplex us, as such a situation is a direct consequence of the fact that materialist dialectics is normally identified with the "materialist dialectics in the narrow sense," or *materialist dialectics I*. The materialist dialectics in the broader sense turns out to be, as Husserl put it, a kind of "secret nostalgia of all modern philosophy (1983: 142)—from Descartes and Spinoza to Derrida, Foucault, and Marion.

leading to the domain of absolute powerlessness this exceedance points to, drawn as lying beyond the limits of a “supreme effort.”⁹

This strategy of the double leap is what grounds the form in which the materialist dialectic is present in contemporary thought: the dialectical materialism of Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek.¹⁰ For both of them, the pole of finitude, conditionedness and the pathological character of the human is just as important as the possibility of access to the absolute, which does not negate this finitude and is accomplished, as it were, despite it.¹¹ In both cases, the instance that determines the determined is not identified with practice. Access to it is ensured thanks to the mechanism of “exceeding the exceedance.” In Badiou’s case, this mechanism is set up as the motion from “counted as one” to the empty set as the basis of all ontology, and from there—to the ultra-one of the event (Badiou 1988). In the case of Žižek, an analogous mechanism is involved in the motion from the imaginary to the incoherent and the split symbolic, and from there to the “sinthome,” located at the other side of the split (Žižek 1989).¹²

An access to the absolute from within the framework of the strategy of *vertical cutting* is ensured as the minimal penetration of the outside,

⁹ A Hegelian dialectic lies at the heart of the strategy of *vertical cutting*. However, it has only developed and taken beyond epistemology the Kantian model of the “light dove,” who ought to stay “over” the ground of the empirical, without losing touch with it entirely, but also without renouncing flight (for further detail, see Regev 2015: 17–18). In Kantian philosophy, the initial disposition of higher capacity and higher incapacity lies in the relationship between understanding and reason or between the transcendental analytic and transcendental dialectic. This mechanism is then relaunched in various philosophies of difference, such that the second stage of motion in the double rupture appears as if folded within the first, and yet another one is constructed on top of them. The philosophy of Jacques Derrida is here most demonstrative, and this relaunch can be followed most clearly in his text on Hegelianism without borders: Hegelian negation is presented as the first stage of the rupture, as the highest effort of reason, hitching the outside into the labors of producing sense and history, and on top of it the Bataillian sovereignty is constructed—an “unemployed negativity,” giving access to the pure outside “differentiation” with its absolute powerlessness—see Derrida (2002).

¹⁰ On the dialectical materialism of Badiou and Žižek as affirming the autonomy of the ideal despite its groundedness in the material, see Johnston (2014).

¹¹ Cf. Badiou’s claim about the existence of truth “diagonally” in relation to “bodies and languages” (2006: 9–49).

¹² An application of the same mechanism to clarify the “materialist core of Christianity” can be found in Žižek (2001). The clearest presentation of this strategy of a “double leap” can be found in the “topic of discourse,” developed by Badiou in his book about Saint Paul—the discourse of the apostle lies, here, beyond the discourse of the prophet or the discourse of difference, which in turn presents the “reverse side” of the homogenizing discourse of law (see Badiou 2003).

halting the regular functioning of a faculty, thus literally throwing it off its track. This does not contradict the fact that a similar halting (and throwing off the track) can and must found the subsequent process of super-intensified unfolding of the faculty in a new situation (on a displaced track). The entire developmental history of the strategy of *vertical cutting* is a history of attempts to maintain balance between throwing off the track and intensified motion, resulting from this throwing. *Horizontal closing*, on the other hand, counterposits, against this mechanism of double exit, the strategy of resonance, grounded in a mutual referring of faculties.

The absolute here is not given as a breakthrough (or a breakthrough within a breakthrough), but as that which is located between faculties and opens in their mutual referring. Hence the holding of the absolute in the mutual referring of faculties in Lifshitz can be opposed to a reduction to practice on part of Ilyenkov: the “superideal,” a thing arriving at its own concept, is given in the “motion of the real towards thought”; consciousness finds, within practice, points “contaminated by generality,” which, however, require to be liberated from the pathological—a liberation that can only be accomplished by thought (Lifshitz 2003: 117–293). An analogous relation between practice and theory can be seen in Badiou’s early Maoist texts, where he opposes, to Deleuze and Guattari’s anarchy of desire, a process, in which the spontaneity of the masses and intellectual leadership of the party constantly refer to each other (Badiou 1977). Similarly, in the project of Reza Negarestani’s “inhumanist enlightenment” (2014), it is possible to follow the commitment one takes upon oneself—a commitment that exists in the temporality “back from the future”—due to the constant mutual correction of practice and theory, which refer to one another.

Thus each faculty develops according to its own laws, but despite that, they are as if closed upon each other, referring to each other. It is in the mutual referring of the faculties (an operation that resembles a game of ping-pong), not guaranteed by any rational means, that the absolute unfolds. It is a space of elasticity of sorts, which is irreducible to any of the faculties and opens up only as a result of the interaction between them, as “order and connection.” The latter are common to both series of the faculties’ development, but do not precede their unfolding, yet appear in its course, being given only in the space “in-between.”¹⁵

¹⁵ Such a “resonance” strategy is expressed in its fullest and most developed form, of course, in Deleuze’s texts (see below on this). Deleuze also convincingly demonstrates that the attitude towards “words and things” as divergent series, referring to one another, is precisely the central core of Michel Foucault’s thought (Deleuze and Guattari 1994). All in all, it is worth noting that the uncovering of *vertical cutting* and *horizontal closing* as the dominant strategies of materialist dialectics II is made possible to us largely because of the formalization of these strategies in Deleuze’s thought.

The history of the relationship between those two types of transition, both putting faculties into the state of “changing horses,” and of the various modes and epochs of *vertical cutting* and *horizontal closing* must still be written. In essence, it would be the history of all modern European philosophy. This history, in many ways, will be a history of mutual blindness: the conflict of *vertical cutting* and *horizontal closing* takes place all throughout, but does not even once become the object of reflection in its pure and immediate form, does not become its content “in itself.” We, however, are interested in the moment of this history’s conclusion—a moment thanks to which its outlines and the essence of the conflict lying at its heart first become retroactively distinguishable. The philosophy of Gilles Deleuze corresponds to this moment. However, as will be demonstrated later, blindness is cured only partially here as well.

3. Deleuze: The Experience of a Materialist Demonology

The relationship between *double transgression* and *resonance* is what moves Deleuzian philosophy, but this motor force is practically never the topic of this philosophy and its objective content. The only exception is Deleuze’s book on Sacher-Masoch: here resonance and transgression become the subject under consideration, as the organizing principles of two perversions—the sadist and the masochist (Deleuze 1991). The affirmation of the masochist strategy in its autonomy expresses the “art of fantasy” as a mutual referencing of two incompatible worlds. Along with the sadist strategy of a “double rupture,” which urges Sade’s hero to always add another crime to the one he has already committed, the masochist resonance is described by Deleuze as a method to reveal the split in the field of the transcendental (1991: 112–113), as a means to ensure the givenness of “the beyond” of the pleasure principle—hence as a means to make the impossible given and actualized, without it losing its impossibility.¹⁴

Transgression and resonance become objects of Deleuzian philosophy “for themselves,” but this takes place descriptively—it describes the artistic differences between the worlds of Sade and Masoch or symptomatological distinctions between two types of perversion. The importance of complementing double transgression with resonance is explained by

¹⁴ In the first case, the “possibility of the impossible” is ensured as the “givenness of the non-given” that is given—but precisely as that which is constantly withdrawing, as a “moment of divine anarchy,” “chaotic nature,” possible only in the transition from one order to another. In the second—it is ensured as the combination of two incompatible worlds in an impossible fetishist object (for more detail, see Regev 2016: 57–73).

the necessity to render justice unto Masoch. (Ibid.: 13) Thus, Deleuze points to something available which has nevertheless escaped the attention of, on one hand, the theoreticians who write about Sade but ignore Masoch (Georges Bataille, Jean-Paul Sartre, Pierre Klossowski and Maurice Blanchot) and on the other hand, psychoanalysts who treat sadism and masochism as different forms of the same phenomenon (above all, Sigmund Freud).

As Deleuze will later put it, the question here is that of a “natural history” of perversions (1986: 1).¹⁵ We have but one reason to distrust this claim—unmotivated and compulsive repetition: the algorithm *transgression/resonance* is precisely the scheme of Deleuzian thought. In different developmental stages of his philosophy, Deleuze repeats the same gesture, as if compulsively. He constructs a mechanism of double transgression, ensuring a hold on the outside as rupture, and then connects to it the mechanism of resonance, of relationless relations between the series. For Deleuze, various conceptual fields (belonging to ontology, psychoanalytic theory, history of cinema) act as testing grounds, on which the same sequence of mechanisms unfolds time after time.¹⁶ The “ur-gesture” itself—that of *transgression/resonance* — is, however, never explained nor reflected upon: Deleuze does not warn us about what he does, does not even announce the traveled path post factum, but travels it time after time, and having completed it, begins the travels again.

Deleuze’s philosophy is as if possessed by some demon (although this is true for every philosophy, starting with Socrates): convulsions and spasms shake its surface constantly. Such a regular spasm constitutes the surface it disturbs, that is, the content of concepts and the order of their unfolding. The name of this demon who makes Deleuze’s thought move and determines the sequence of his steps is not mentioned and stays unknown, and it is precisely in this anonymity that his power lies.

Our goal here is holding a ritual of materialist exorcism. We are to turn to face the demon, learn his name and his essence. This demonology is materialist insofar as, upon learning the essence of the demon, all anthropomorphic knickknacks like will, intentions, and goals get cast aside.

¹⁵ A fair criticism of this claim and a presentation of the “messianic” character of Deleuze’s cinema theory can be found in Rancière (2001: 150)

¹⁶ Badiou rightly points to the “monotonous” character of Deleuze’s thought, and to the fact that various semantic fields serve for him as spaces for the launching of one and the same conceptual mechanism (Badiou 1999: 14–20). Badiou’s book remains the most consistent attempt to expose the system of Deleuzian thought, but the “masochist” component of this system remains almost indistinguishable to Badiou. Thus, his book gives rise to an entire series of investigations, which discover, in Deleuze’s philosophy, the mechanism of a double leap (double transgression), and criticize him for an insufficiently radical character of this leap, as its second stage can still turn into the first (see, e.g., Žižek 2012; Culp 2016).

Every demon is a dynamic-plastic sequence of gestures, schemes that precede teleology and sense.¹⁷ To know how to handle demons is to be able to recognize this power of imposing—only thus can one turn an interaction with them from a passive subjection to an unknown power into an active interrogation of this power, in the course of which it could be split and redirected.¹⁸

In the dance of the demon, for now still unnamed, we can find three stages, or three logical bars. The inner core of the corpus of Deleuzian philosophy consists of three cycles, each of which in turn consists of two books (curiously, the thematic division of these cycles corresponds to the distinction between the Kantian *Critiques*): *Difference and Repetition* (1994) and *Logic of Sense* (1990) (onto-epistemological cycle); with Félix Guattari *Anti-Oedipus* (1977) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) (ethico-political cycle); *The Movement-Image* (1986) and *The Time-Image* (1989) (aesthetic cycle). The first book in each cycle is organized according to a sadist-transgressive logic, and the second according to a masochist-resonance logic. With every iteration of the cycle, the realization that both books are part of one mechanism grows: *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense* are formally completely different; *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* form the series *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, and *The Movement-Image* and *The Time-Image* are two parts of one book on cinema united by the chronological sequence of cinematographic development.

If we highlight, in the abovementioned corpus, the sadist line (*Difference and Repetition*, *Anti-Oedipus*, *The Movement-Image*) and the masochist line (*Logic of Sense*, *A Thousand Plateaus*, *The Time-Image*), it is not difficult to see what connects these texts and identify their key moments. This connection, however, has rather more to do with quasi-causality¹⁹ and not structure, since those key moments do not merely appear in various conceptual contexts, but the very connection between them differs: their appearance is motivated variously in various cases. The repeated sequence does not cancel the conceptual links between the books, but un-

¹⁷ The source of such an understanding of gesture as the sphere of the “sub-semantic,” a sphere where sense is formed and which is thus primary in relation to any set and given sense, is the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (see, e.g., 2005: 171–76). On a similar understanding of gesture in Russian formalists, see Sirotkina (2004: 16–17).

¹⁸ Somewhat like Quentin Meillassoux, who proposes to treat Deleuze as a pre-Socratic philosopher, of whom we now have merely two fragments (Meillassoux 2007: 65), I propose to treat Deleuze’s texts as describing and documenting an esoteric ritual; esoteric at least because not only is its essence not discussed, but the sheer fact of its existence is also carefully hidden.

¹⁹ On the concept of quasi-cause (see Deleuze 1990: 94–99). Without claiming it openly, Deleuze develops the Althusserian notion of over-determination, grounding it logically and ontologically.

folds over and above them, so that the fact of this sequence's repetition itself shows that these links are not sufficient to explain this repetition.

For the "sadist" series we can point to three such super-causal repeating moments: 1) a story of the fall; 2) a threefold arrangement mechanism of the blocked world; 3) a double leap toward redemption. All three books of the "sadist series" begin with a quasi-gnostic myth of sorts: a story about how reality falls out of itself and gets entangled in itself. The world as it is given to us is given as the result of this self-entanglement and lies under the power of an "evil demiurge" of sorts—an instance which blocks all breakthrough towards the primordial²⁰ (or, rather, takes the place of this primordial, whereby calling it "primordial" is not fully correct, because this primordial had never existed for the world with which we usually deal). The power of this instance acquires a threefold structure, determining the main features of the fallen reality. It is important that the blocking instance appropriates and redirects every breakthrough and every attempt at liberation (and might even encourage it in every way possible): all attempts to go "beyond" will lead back to it and it alone. Hence, for a real insurrection against the powers of the blockage, a double breakthrough is needed. Knowing the conditions of enslavement is a necessary condition of liberation: the gnosis of the books in the "sadist series" unfolds the history of reality's collapse only to thereafter point to the means and conditions of construing the mechanism of double transgression, ensuring access to a beginning that has never been (however, at the moment when it is finally reached, it is retroactively discovered that there has never been anything but it).

The similarity of structural moments is most obvious in *Anti-Oedipus* and *The Movement-Image* (which is consistent with the previously noted increase in the clarity of the demon's presence in the course of chronological development of Deleuze's thought). Here the "history of the fall" is reproduced twice, almost literally, but with a different cast of characters. In *Anti-Oedipus* it is a story about desiring-machines, the function of which, in the mode of "connective" synthesis (where what produces is also simultaneously produced, and an interruption of the flow turns out to also be its restoration), is interrupted by the appearance of a catatonic "body without organs" (Deleuze and Guattari 1977: 9–74). In *The Movement-Image*, the same story is told in a Bergsonian fashion: it becomes a story about the plane of immanence of light-matter, a universe in which everything influences everything else with all its facets, but whose uni-

²⁰ On the philosophy of Deleuze as a "spiritualism of redemption," directed at destroying all that is concrete and material for the sake of fleeing towards the "out-of-this-world" intensity of art (see Hallward 2006). It must be noted, however, that here, as in many other cases (see note 12), such a critique takes into account only one component of the Deleuzian philosophical mechanism—the sadist one, completely ignoring the second.

versal fluidity is blocked by a “black screen” of consciousness of a living being, who selects images in accordance with its vital requirements (Deleuze 1997: 56–62). *Difference and Repetition* presents a protohistory of the collapse, the actors in which are concepts: there, Deleuze writes of subjugating the univocal and virtual “eternal return of that which differs” to identity (Deleuze 1994: 28–69).

But the difference in the actors is not sufficient to hide the common narrative: Deleuze writes of a world that, using the terms of Lurianic Kabbalah²¹ can be designated as the “world of light without limits,” a world of infinite fluidity, making impossible the setting of boundaries that separate the actor and the recipient of the action, the cause and the effect, and which install a hierarchy of beings.²² In this world, a “spark of darkness” appears, object=x, freezing and inhibiting—but not settling at that.

The appearing of the blocking instance has, as its consequence in all these cases, a *folding appropriation* of sorts: the power of blocking resubjects to itself the initial “world of fluidity,” turning itself into its creator and affirming itself as the ultimate wellspring, sanctioning everything that exists as to its being. Body without organs does not only displace the desiring-machines, but also “suspends” them onto itself, imagining itself as that which generates them. Similarly, the “black screen” of consciousness presents itself as the source of those images that it in reality “subtracts” from the universe of light-matter: henceforth they exist only as given to the consciousness, in one way or another generated by it. (This claim has some merit, since, as frozen and cut frames, these images really are a production of the “subtractive” activity of consciousness. Desires, similarly registered and distributed across various intensity-carriers are the result of the inhibiting effect of the body without organs, and it is precisely in this way, as registered and distributed, that they turn out to be consequent on the body without organs, hence generated by it.) In much the same way, identity appears to be the necessary condition of difference and repetition, preceding and determining them.

²¹ See, for instance, Vital (1974: 5–9).

²² Cf.: “The productive synthesis, the production of production, is inherently connective in nature: ‘and...’ ‘and then...’ This is because there is always a flow-producing machine, and another machine connected to it that interrupts or draws off part of this flow (the breast—the mouth). And because the first machine is in turn connected to another whose flow it interrupts or partially drains off, the binary series is linear in every direction. [...] Desire causes the current to flow, itself flows in turn, and breaks the flows” (Deleuze and Guattari 1977: 5). And: “There is no moving body [mobile] which is distinct from executed movement. There is nothing moved which is distinct from the received movement. Every thing, that is to say every image, is indistinguishable from its actions and reactions: this is universal variation. [...] Every image acts on others and reacts to others, on ‘all their facets at once’ and ‘by all their elements’” (Deleuze 1986: 58).

The mode of existence of the subjugated intensity, as well as the shape of the flows of desire and flows of light-matter, all filtered and subject to the demiurge who is blocking them, are determined by three types of images, namely, perception-image, affection-image, and action-image (Deleuze 1986: 61–66), and three types of historically existent means of codifying the flows of desire and the “full body of the socius,” namely, barbarian, despotic and capitalist (Deleuze 1977: 139–216). The description of the relationship and parallelism, existing between those mechanisms that guarantee the stability of the self-entangled world is to be taken as a separate task. It can be claimed that in both cases they present a “history of the fall” told from the point of view of the enslavers, that is, of the “body without organs” and the “black screen.” Each of the above kind of full body of the socius and each of the above type of image corresponds to one of the stages of this history (world before the fall—demiurge—the enslaved world), but as seen in the “sidelong glance” of the demiurge. In *Difference and Repetition* the three syntheses of time constitute the protoform of the triadic organization of the “world of the fall,” subjugating the “simulacrum” to the identical and the one.

The inverting demiurge blocks all attempts to undermine his power first and foremost with the help of falsehood and counterfeit. In the inverted universe, all attempts to break through will hit a fake outside as if it were a cardboard fireplace, painted on the wall and hiding behind itself the true exit. In a situation where the displaced is substituted by its representation—an abstract notion of lack and emptiness—protest is no threat to the dominant forces of displacement; they could even approve of such a protest or support it, as it orders and affirms their power.

An antidote to such a double lockdown lies in the last bar, common to the texts of the “sadist series.” In order to resist the blockage of the inverted demiurge, it is required to leap “further than the longest leap” (Deleuze 1994: 37). A double transgression is precisely such a strategy of exiting the boundaries of exit: in order to transcend the fake outside, it is always necessary to add an extra leap to the one that leads to the pseudo-outside—this second leap will burst through the cardboard veneer.

This two-phased movement unfolds in each book in the “sadist series” according to several different trajectories:²⁵ the power of the sadist transgression is accomplished through transforming the double transgression into a “deep structure,” according to which the concepts in the book are distributed. Compulsive repetition functions within each separate text as well: the double transgression becomes something like an at-

²⁵ The most complete inventory of forms of two-phased motion in Deleuze’s work can be found in Badiou, who calls this movement a “double ascesis,” leading from coherence and connection to their lack, and from that in turn—to a new kind of coherence (Badiou 1999: 95–102).

tractor, the tending towards, which leads to the reproduction, time after time, of the two-phase motion leading “further than the furthest leap,” such that this motion traces through itself the space of each book. Nevertheless, for each book, a dominant figure can be discerned—one around which all others are positioned, forming its train.

In *Anti-Oedipus*, the dominant figure is the double movement from the codification of “flows” in the full body of the socius to their capitalist de-codification (this movement forms the conceptual space of the book). It, however, is accompanied by an axiomatization (classical “oedipal” psychoanalysis acts as the dominant ideology of this “interrupted revolution,” which liberates desire from partial investments or, to put it in the words of Deleuze and Guattari, from “cathexes,” only in order to all the better tie desire to castration and lack). The second movement leads from this capitalist half-measure to a full liberation of flows in schizoanalysis. In *The Motion-Image*, the function of “liberating reality” from self-entanglement is realized by cinema as “world inside out”: the mechanism of “self-confinement” of the plan of immanence is launched in reverse through a double movement from frozen cuts to the plane and from the plane to the non-closed whole of montage (Deleuze 1986: 29–32).²⁴ In *Difference and Repetition* the virtual is set free via a movement from the metaphysical image of thought, based on identity and recognition, toward difference and from it in turn towards the “eternal return of that which differs” (Deleuze 1997: 301), taking place thanks to distinguishing between *differentiation* and *différenciation*.

The movement of all three texts forming the “sadist” part of the Deleuzian corpus ends with this triumphant breaking-open of the demiurge’s power. However, it is precisely in this moment of triumph over the demiurge that something unexpected happens: a fourth element gets added to the three already present ones, and this fourth element causes a complete confusion, cutting the ground from under the reader’s feet. This dislocating function is implemented by the mechanism of the double resonance.

In its most completed form, this pulling the rug from under the reader takes place in the series on cinema. After the first volume ends with describing the self-disentanglement of reality and returns the reader to the plane of immanence, it turns out that this immanence has already been falling from the very beginning. The movement of the light-matter

²⁴ The return to the “plane of immanence” is first and foremost accomplished thanks to the fact that, in the reverse of the “ontological” reduction of motion to frozen cuts, singular frames become motion in the “plane of montage,” i.e., into segments of film between two cuts. The plane amounts to a “unity of movement, and it embraces a correlative multiplicity which does not contradict it.” (Deleuze 1986: 27). Film, however, is a “whole,” formed through combining similar segments of reproduced motion in montage.

in its dual ascent is merely a cut of time, its indirect and abstract representation. The key mechanism, ensuring the givenness of time in its pure and unreduced form is the heautonomy²⁵ of the acoustic and visual: time is given here as “always-yet,” as the ground and moving force for the next step, as “order and connection” common to sounds and to images, but not preceding them, but rather unfolding only in resonance and their mutual reference, but unfolding as that which constitutes them and puts them together (Deleuze 1989: 241–61).

In much the same way, the rollercoaster of rises and falls in *Anti-Oedipus* is followed by the rhizomatic and flat universe of *A Thousand Plateaus*, in which the plane of consistency is given as a “system of strata” such that every stratum is constituted by a mutual reference of the plane of expression and the plane of content, not connected with each other (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 39–74). The abstract machine of the plane of consistency is given in resonance between content and expression, and their relation is characterized not as correspondence, but as “isomorphism with reciprocal presupposition” (Ibid.: 44). Such a machine is constituted through resonance between series as constituting and generating them, as an “abstract Machine,” which “exists simultaneously developed on the destratified plane it draws, and enveloped in each stratum whose unity of composition it defines, and even half-erected in certain strata whose form of prehension it defines” (Ibid.: 70).²⁶

In *Logic of Sense*, a machine of resonance is installed outwardly for the first time along the machine of double ejection. The tactic of this book is, perhaps, most similar to that of the Kantian transcendental project, such that the roles of empiricism and rationalism are here played by analytic philosophy and phenomenology. While Kant rejects both the rationalist attempt to reduce sensibility to ideas and the empiricist reduction of ideas to sense-impressions, seeking to reveal transcendental micro-mechanisms that exist in resonance between the series of sensibility and of understanding, Deleuze similarly rejects both the analytic attempt to reduce sense to logic and refuses to strive towards uncovering the abyss of

²⁵ Deleuze uses this Kantian term in order to designate a special type of film in which the acoustic and the visual develop according to their own logic, without illustrating or representing each other. A “connectionless connection” exists between them, preventing the disintegration of the moving and its transformation into a chaotic flow of images (Deleuze 1989: 241–61).

²⁶ Deleuze criticizes Marxism and structuralism as attempts to short-circuit the resonance, stop the movement in which the paradoxical generating-generated instance is given, reduce it to a dependence of one series on another, reducing content to expression or expression to content. The dictate of the signifier is not any less problematic than the dictate of the content (basis and infrastructure), because the abstract machine is given only as a diagram, existing in the mutual referencing of the series. This critique can already be found in *Logic of Sense* (see Deleuze 1990: 48–49).

corporeality's chaotic becoming as what lies at the heart of all sense. The mechanisms of the surface are primary both in relation to analytic heights and to phenomenological depths. The paradoxical object sense/event exists between language and things as the expressed of the proposition, attributed to things (Deleuze 1990: 12–27), or as that which can be held only as surface, given in resonance between depth and height, simultaneously generated and generating (Ibid.: 94–99).

4. Light and Vessels: *Materialist Dialectics III*

To return the fallen reality to the initial point from which it fell and which has never existed, to hold this reality in its exceeding of all exceedance, and then push it aside, positing, next to this manic-depressive ride, a second, springily throwing us from one wall to another: this is how, according to the ritual, one is to serve the demon possessing Deleuzian philosophy. What is the name of this demon? By combining the two previous sections, we can now answer this question without much difficulty. Deleuzian philosophy is possessed by *materialist dialectics*. The two main strategies of splintering finite human faculties and capacities and their transfer into the mode of the absolute form those poles, in movement between which the “Deleuzian ritual” is formed.

What is the secret of this compulsion, the power that forces Deleuze time after time to make the trip from transgression to resonance and position them next to one another? We could approach the answer if we note the fact that the two main strategies of *materialist dialectics II* do not fully reach their goal. *Materialist dialectics II* is based on a dual presupposition that, first, upon a certain usage of every faculty, one can find, within it, more than it is, and second, that upon liberating this “inhuman core of the human” we can arrive at the sphere of “educating the educators” and discover a method of manipulating that instance which determines us. Both points of this program, however, are realized only partially within the framework of *materialist dialectics II*. Faculties are retained whole and untouched. This wholeness, however, is subject to certain operations: it is put either into a mode of blinking interruption or into contact with another faculty, no less whole. Such a difference in the regime of the faculties' functioning opens access to the absolute, but always as to something which can be given only through being omitted. Both under sadist transgression and under masochist resonance, the absolute is held only as something “skipped” (i.e., as that which is always either still ahead or already behind), as an interval or a casting-off, but never as an area in which one can stay and position oneself.

A striving towards such a pause is, then, the power that forces Deleuzian philosophy to go down one and the same route. A constant

lingering in the field of the determining turns out to be an unattainable limit that can only be given indirectly: the impossibility of a stop is compensated by a constantly renewing movement. And this movement does not turn into a tautological repetition of the same, precisely because of the presence, within it, of two poles, irreducible to each other: that of sadist transgression and of masochist resonance. On one hand, the whole formed by both books in every Deleuzian cycle can be described as metasadism: the book of the “masochist series” would then represent a second, ultimate state of movement, leading “further than the furthest leap” accomplished in the first. On the other hand, that very same whole can be described as metamasochism: the sadist and masochist transgressions, in that case, become two divergent series, the resonance between which represents the entire cycle. This description of interaction between the strategies is, already, that unattainable limit towards which they both tend—a limit that allows one to stop in the field of the determining. However, Deleuzian philosophy never reaches this limit, as it never expresses the truth of its own movement, does not turn it from a truth-in-itself to a truth-for-itself.

However, even in the reasoning given above, simultaneity is the result of a merely speculative consideration. In order to accomplish the stop, double transgression and resonance need to be given space into which they could unfold at the same time. We must answer the question: What are sadism and masochism, besides an architectonic form of the movement of thought and construction of books?

An answer to this question returns us to the first item on the program of *materialist dialectics II*—to the question of splintering faculties. Reflection contains nothing but reflection, but at the same time, it contains something that exceeds it. Similarly, in practice there is nothing but practice, but at the same time it has something that exceeds it: the entirety of the materialist dialectic (or maybe the entire postcritical philosophy) is nothing but an attempt to reveal this “exceeding,” without simultaneously annulling the first half of the claim. Both *vertical cutting* and *horizontal closing* are two methods of taking into account this excessive character of the faculties in relation to themselves. The excess is locked in place, but it does not reveal what it is (hence the need to lock it precisely as an *excess*, that is, as given in its non-giveness—that which always withdraws and is omitted).

What, in this case, do the strategies used for locking the excess represent? If we do not possess anything except for our faculties, which faculty do we use in order to put the rest into the mode of being connected to the absolute and producing excess? The analytic of excess gives a clear answer to this question: the production of excess is founded by a typology

of *minimal contact*.²⁷ In order for the non-given to be given and yet retain its non-giveness, it must *come into contact* with the field of the given and belong to it, but this belonging itself must be minimal. Sadism and masochism schematize the means through which a *minimal contact* can be accomplished—the method of *minimal penetration* and the method of *maximal contiguity*.

But it is precisely in this quality that sadism and masochism also form that component of each faculty which exceeds the faculty, and yet is nevertheless nothing but that faculty itself. Both *reflection* and *practice* are, first and foremost, connection or binding: the binding of sense and ideas or the binding of habits. They contain nothing but this binding, nothing but this connection. Sadism and masochism serve as schemas of this connection in itself, through schematizing the holding-together of the separate which can be accomplished either as *minimal penetration* or as *maximal contiguity*.

The wellspring of the vessels is higher than the wellspring of light: the realization of this kabbalistic principle²⁸ allows the truth of Deleuze's philosophy to be in-itself uttered so that it is free from possession. Transgression and resonance within the framework of *materialist dialectics II* function as a means to reach the absolute, as a path that leads to the goal. In truth, they are their own goal: that "inner facet" of the faculty that exceeds itself as a particular mode of holding-together the separate and that the faculty itself is, being the holding-together of the separate as such. It is precisely the discovery of *minimal penetration* and *maximal contiguity* as the two methods which can accomplish any holding-together, which allows to codify the sphere of the "set of all sets."²⁹ The dynamic schemes of *entering/exiting* and of *coupling/decoupling* in which, as limit points, these types of minimal contact unfold, must serve as a foundation for a quaternary code, which makes possible a clear and distinct knowledge of this sphere of the sub-semantic without reducing it to one or another regional ontology, a figure of consciousness or sense.³⁰ Knowledge of this

²⁷ For more details, see Regev (2016: 72–73).

²⁸ Cf. Schneersohn (2017: 153–54).

²⁹ In Badiou's ontology (1988), based on set theory, inclusion and belonging are treated as basic ontological operators, primary in relation to all kinds of "counting as one" and hence primary in relation to all possible senses. On the primary character of contemporary mathematical axiomatic in relation to all semantic, see Meillassoux (2014). This approach still remains all too abstract: it is important to also ask the question of how inclusion and belonging may take place. Only a typology of minimal contact, pointing to minimal penetration and maximal contiguity as the two basic methods of inclusion can make Badiou's ontology truly materialist.

³⁰ A further clarification of the question about the sphere of the "sub-semantic" requires revealing that super-capacity or (in)-capacity, thanks to which we can "tease out" types of holding-together of the separate, cutting it from the specific unfolding of

kind, in turn, makes possible a materialist and immanent setting of the question about transferring faculties into the mode of “autotranscendence,” and not leave it in the hands of inspiration, event, or some other expression of a “divine gift” that we, the mortals, can only humbly await. A true “educating the educators” can be accomplished only through moderating types of possession—overpowering demons who have power over us. The procedure of materialist exorcism, undertaken here in relation to Deleuzian philosophy is an ur-image of the quaternary code, based on protocols pertaining to the procedures of moderating and splitting, and the procedures of that which imposes itself become accessible thanks to the codification of the sub-semantic.

To paraphrase Jorge Luis Borges, the fall is our inability to realize that we are in Paradise (1998: 505). Thus, beginning with the Hegelian phenomenology of spirit, the task of the dialectic is determined precisely as delivering the sinner (of modern spirit) of “metaphysical superstition” (the tendency to find his essence in substance), which hinders him from realizing that he is not excluded from the true and the real but, on the contrary, possesses absolute knowledge (Hegel 2018: 1–49). Deleuze’s philosophy is already almost a paradise regained: in its entirety, it represents a relationship between *minimal penetration* and *maximal contiguity* as attributes of holding-together the separate. However, it is separated from the paradise it itself unfolds and has no knowledge of it—for it, paradise can only be given as a constantly repeating demonic spasm. Much like in the case of Hegel, only a modified understanding of truth, knowledge and the real can serve as medicine against the unraveled disruption of the “modern spirit.” It is precisely this kind of ontonomic redistribution of reality, revealing the space in which the relationship between *minimal penetration* and *maximal contiguity*, that serves as the main task on the agenda of *materialist dialectics III*.

the logical and the practical. Here it is necessary to once again look at Kant’s theory of transcendental imagination, especially in the form in which it takes in the Transcendental Deduction in the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (Martin Heidegger [1990] correctly identifies this theory of transcendental imagination in the first edition as the main “breakthrough” of Kantian philosophy, one from which it itself later withdraws). This “dissection” of Kantian philosophy from within also makes possible the answer to two questions, posited by late Deleuzian philosophy: the question of the possibility of “neoleibnizianism,” making the choice of all possible worlds at once (Deleuze 2006: 117–18), and the question of a third type of image, primary in relation to time (Deleuze 1986: 86–87): *minimal penetration* and *maximal contiguity* as main schemas of the transcendental imagination allow to theorize the governed syntheses of temporal series, which implement the cutting and putting-together of optimal segments from every possible world.

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