



Comedy and Negativity

Gregor Moder

University of Ljubljana

Comedy and Negativity

Abstract

This paper's point of departure is the idea that the negativity of contemporary philosophy corresponds to the negativity of comedy. After a brief review of the metaphysical hierarchy of being and of poetic genres, three competing contemporary concepts of negativity are proposed and discussed with examples from theory and comedy: torsion, lacuna, and contraction.

Torsion refers to any concept of decline that constitutes being and is demonstrated in Althusser's use of the Epicurean *clinamen*. In comedy, torsion refers to comic uses of the fluidity of sexuality.

Furthermore, lacuna refers to an ontological gap or hiatus, and can be seen at work in the Lacanian concept of the phallus. Accordingly, the comedy of the lacuna is a comedy of detachable phallic objects. Finally, contraction is a concept from the Deleuzian ontology of the virtual and is exemplified by the elasticity of language.

Keywords

comedy, contraction, lacuna, negativity, torsion.

Comedy is a practice of the negative. Something crooked, something falling, something suddenly exploding or bouncing: these things have always been considered funny and laughable. The privileged comic example of someone suddenly stumbling while walking can be found in renowned considerations of the comical, for instance, in Bergson's famous essay (Bergson, 2005: 4); as well as in contemporary practices: Jos Houben from the Lecoq school, for instance, gives special attention to this example in his brilliant performance *The Art of Laughter*. To use Houben's terminology, it seems that in stumbling, comedy inhabits the gap between human dignity and the comic character's failing attempts to maintain that dignity. And since Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* inhabits the gap between truth and failing attempts to grasp it in knowledge, it has been rightfully described as the most comical of all philosophical works (Brecht, 2000). The point of departure of these considerations is precisely the idea that philosophy's negativity somehow corresponds to the negativity of comedy.

Historically, comedy has been considered a low genre, especially vis-à-vis tragedy. From the Ancient Greek tradition onwards, the two are viewed as opposing extremes. Based on Aristotle's arguments in the *Poetics*, an entire hierarchy of forms has been developed in which tragedy is the most accomplished, while comedy drags along at the bottom. This hierarchy seeks confirmation in the choice of artistic material used and transformed by the genres in question. Aristotle writes, "Comedy aims at representing men as worse, Tragedy as better than in actual life" (Aristotle 1902: 1448a 16–18). Tragedy is intimately connected to sacred rituals and religion, while comedy, with its power of laughter, apparently forms an opposition to, and mockery of, these normative practices. Comedy works with foolish mistakes rather than fateful ones. While tragic personae like Antigone carry on their shoulders the great burden of humanity, comic characters are more often than not involved in matters of no actual importance.

In Plato's *Republic*, the hierarchy between comedy and tragedy is perhaps represented, to an extent, in the division of the soul into guiding and guided parts, and in the corresponding division of the Republic into classes. We can recognize this in the distinctions between day laborers, on the one hand, and philosophers (as night workers?), on the other; between basic needs, on the one hand, and true virtues, on the other; between mockery of ideals and the gods, on the one hand, and praising the gods and virtue, on the other. Only art that praises the gods and virtue is admitted to the Ideal Republic. Now, it is true that Plato in fact makes no distinction between tragedy and comedy on this point: just as tragedy produces too much wailing, comedy produces too much laughter (Plato 2008: 606b–c). However, I think it follows from Plato's premise that comedy is practically unsalvageable as an artistic form, because it can hardly be understood as praising the gods and virtue. And perhaps Aristotle's hierarchical separation of comedy and tragedy is nothing but a response

to his teacher's general rejection of art, arguing that at least one kind of poetry, tragic poetry, does in fact live up to being an ideal for men (precisely inasmuch as it portrays them "better than in actual life").

I refer to the distinction between higher and lower genres because we can see it at work in our modern cultures as well. Today, comedy is arguably the dominant genre, at least if we accept that the paradigm of *entertainment*, with its enormous television, film, and news production industry, falls within the general framework of comedy. If I may be permitted to speak for an instant from my personal experience working in the theater, I must report that even today, actors and critics sometimes feel they need to justify their involvement with comedy. "Yes, I am playing in a comedy, but listen, it is a very subtle critique of the modern fetishistic economy," or, "Yes, I watched a comedy last night, but wait, it was very intimate, and the characters were really well-rounded and thought-provoking." They speak as if there were an immediate need to distance oneself from the apparent shallowness of comedy. There is no such need for justification when people play in tragedies. And it seems easier to be deemed credible and noteworthy with a mediocre drama than with a mediocre comedy. In general, we need to take a stand in favor of comic "shallowness." Robert Pfaller points out that comedy assumes a *materialist* position (Pfaller 2008). This does not imply a mere inversion of priority, as if instead of posing the soul above the body one should put the body above the soul. Rather, it means that the soul is not a depth, hidden behind the body's shallow surface, but one function of the body itself. Insofar as comedy reduces relations between humans to relations between mechanical objects, insofar as it favors mechanisms over character development, and situations over dilemmas, insofar as it objectifies, solidifies, and renders opaque, it is a materialist practice.

To sum up, the traditional metaphysical perspective seems to suggest a parallel between ontological hierarchy and the hierarchy of genres; in this context, comedy is a practice of the negative in the sense that it produces and works with "lower," "degraded" or "deformed" material. This perspective still raises important questions, for instance, questions about comedy as a practice of subversive negativity¹. But this is not our primary interest here. In fact, there are many different concepts of negativity floating around: different authors use different concepts, and some-

¹ For an insightful analysis of comedy as a subversive practice, I must refer the reader to Alenka Zupančič's *The Odd One In*, where she distinguishes between "subversive" and "conservative" comedy. The principle criterion for her is whether the comedy in question subscribes to the same symbolic or ideological constellation as the authorities it mocks from below, or truly subverts this very constellation by pointing out how the authority figure in fact already mocks itself precisely by performing its functions as an authority (Zupančič, 2008).

times they equivocally use more than just one. This is why we should distinguish among the most fundamental conceptions of negativity in contemporary philosophy or, perhaps, in contemporary theory in general. The thorough and vast analysis required to produce such distinctions, to trace their historical lineage and their contemporary impact, is a work that still needs to be done and cannot possibly be accomplished in the length of a paper. All we can do is propose, very cautiously, and with the historical perspective of comedy as a practice of the negative in the background, *a tentative typology of negativity*, one that can only hope to entertain the status of a hypothesis and must still be tested thoroughly by further research. This, then, is the principal task of the present paper: to formulate, in broad strokes, a typology of negativity that underlies much of the contemporary debate—between Lacan and Deleuze, Althusser and Hegel—and at the same time offers a pathway to understanding at least partly the mechanism of comic production.

The typology I propose focuses on three instances of the negative: I call them torsion, lacuna, and contraction. They are three ways in which “that which is not” can be said to nevertheless determine being in some way. What they have in common is that they must be strictly understood as determinations of being, as transformations that operate on the level of being itself. Their primordial character is in radical opposition to traditional metaphysics, which considered negativity merely as a secondary degradation or deformation of being. *Torsion* here refers to any idea of an ontological curve or fold, of twisting or bending, of the Möbius strip or other such concepts. *Lacuna* refers to concepts of lack and surplus, gap, rupture, hiatus, absolute end, radical break or cut, ontological explosion, death, finality, etc. And, finally, *contraction* denotes something that is ontologically unfinished or unrealized, something “not yet fully there,” but at the same time something that functions precisely as if this unfinished state with its necessary effects were its only possible state. Concepts of virtuality and habit are good examples of contraction².

But let me present concrete cases of conflict among philosophical concepts that can be explained with the help of the distinctions among torsion, lacuna, and contraction as divergent understandings of negativity. I chose the concept of *clinamen* as employed in Althusser’s theory of the materialism of the encounter, the Hegelian-Lacanian concept of subjectivity as negativity, and Deleuze’s concept of the virtual.

For Althusser, ideology has a material existence insofar as every action of the subject is always already inscribed in a practice governed by an

² The tentative typology rather laconically introduced here is in part a byproduct of an analysis of the reverberations of Spinoza and Hegel’s philosophical systems in contemporary debates, especially in Deleuze, Žižek, Althusser, and Malabou (Moder 2012).

ideological apparatus. There is no subject save the subject of ideology. Althusser's critics have argued that what he proposes is a functionalist theory: a theory that reduces all relations to relations of domination, where there is no practice of emancipation that is not already a practice of domination (Rancière 2011). His Lacanian critics have raised a similar objection, claiming that his theory can account only for a "successful interpellation." If the subject is always already an ideological subject, it is impossible, within the Althusserian framework, to think beyond ideological interpellation (Dolar 1993; Žižek 2000). In this criticism of Althusser we can hear the echo of the criticism that Hegel addressed to Spinoza. Hegel's objection was that Spinoza failed to comprehend the absolute as both substance *and* subjectivity, and thus his absolute substance remained rigid and indifferent⁵. To put it differently, Spinoza supposedly assumes a *post festum* position from which, looking back at what happened, we can mechanically explain relations of power but cannot account for accidents or genuine surprises, since there is no perspective of an ongoing struggle. Just as Spinoza is criticized for proposing a blind determinism, so Althusser is criticized for proposing a mere functionalism. Hence, the challenge that Althusser addressed in his later thought is this: how do we think surprise or chance *within* the Spinozist framework of relations of power? His answer came in the reference to the obscure Epicurean concept of *clinamen* (Althusser 2006: 169). Atoms are falling down parallel to one other: one of them swerves in an act of pure chance, colliding with another, and the world is thus formed. Althusser's materialism of the encounter or aleatory materialism is a way to think such an original swerve, the original decline of being. Or rather, an original decline *within* being itself, for this *clinamen*, this chance decline, is precisely what constitutes being in the first place. It is important to note here that torsion does not come over a being that was initially erect, undistorted, not contorted, but that torsion is constitutive of the being itself.

As far as the example of *lacuna* is concerned, we can extract it from Lacanian critiques of Althusser's theory of ideology. As the Hegelian-Lacanian Mladen Dolar and Slavoj Žižek argue, the Lacanian subject is precisely the impossibility of becoming the Althusserian subject, the successfully hailed ideological subject. They point out that, as the Althusserian subject emerges along with its symbolic order, there also emerges a necessary remainder that cannot be successfully and fully integrated, a remainder foreign to the very order to which it nevertheless belongs (Dolar 1993: 195; Žižek 2000: 115). To understand this correctly, we must

⁵ In *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel writes, in a vague reference to Spinoza, "Everything hangs on apprehending and expressing the truth not merely as *substance* but also equally as *subject*" (Hegel 1979: § 17). For a more detailed criticism of Spinoza, see Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (Hegel 1986).

think of this remainder as something produced by this initiation, just as it is, at the same time, its necessary condition. On the one hand, the remainder is a surplus. It is, however, an addition that, vis-à-vis the symbolic order (to borrow the words of Shakespeare) is “one thing to my purpose nothing” (Shakespeare 1999: 20). It is an addition that haunts the whole to which it is added. This is why the remainder is not only a surplus but also a lack, a crack that tears apart the structure of the symbolic order. It is no wonder, then, that Lacanians often describe the subject as a lack, hiatus, gap—or as a lacuna. The term lacuna denotes negativity in the sense of this duality of surplus and lack, this protruding gap in the structure of the symbolic order.

Finally, let me give an example of what I mean by negativity as *contraction*. This is perhaps the most controversial point, because I will refer to Gilles Deleuze, who made it very clear he rejected the philosophy of negativity in favor of the philosophy of affirmation and (non-Hegelian) difference. Nevertheless, some of his concepts can be considered as concepts of negativity at least from the perspective of traditional metaphysics. His concept of virtuality, for instance, is a very productive transformation of Aristotle’s pair of actuality and potentiality. Aristotle’s theory of actual and potential is very complex and tackles its subject matter from many perspectives. For the purposes of this paper, I will radically reduce this complexity to a simple distinction wherein actuality refers to things that exist, while potentiality refers to things that have only the potential to exist. Before we can say that the latter really are, they have to be actualized⁴. But Deleuze pointed out that there is a certain *actuality of potentiality itself*. There are objects that do not have to be actualized before they can have actual effects. When we consider the actual effects of something that exists only as potentiality, which means that it has no actualized manifestation, we identify that something as virtual. Deleuze develops this concept in his discussion on the psychoanalytic concept of partial objects; specifically, he refers to Lacan’s seminar on Edgar Allan Poe’s de-

⁴ When it comes to the question of movement or change, a fully actual being cannot be changed or moved, but can by all means change or move other beings. This is why the Prime Mover is perfectly still: because it has no potentiality. On the other hand, beings that can be changed or moved are beings that incorporate potentiality. A typical earthly (sublunary) being, which moves and changes quite a lot, can itself change very little, while beings above the lunar level do not themselves change much or move only in perfect, circular movements. For Aristotle, pure being is pure actuality: it does not move or change, nor does it need or desire to move or change. This suggests that beings that incorporate potentiality—that is, beings that *do* move or change—are not pure beings, that they are imperfect. In a specific reading, these not-fully-actual beings can be understood as degradations from being: this is basically the position of Plotinus.

tective story *The Purloined Letter*, where a clever thief hides a stolen letter in plain sight. An object masked by its obviousness, an object missing from the very place where it is, is precisely the idea of the virtual object (Deleuze 2005: 134–139).

Now, Deleuze himself would certainly not speak of his concept of virtuality as negativity. But while he proposed this concept precisely to *counter* the Aristotelian distinction between actual and potential, between perfect being and not-yet-perfect being, precisely to *counter* Aristotle's idea that being is equivocal⁵, we can still consider it a form of negativity, if by negativity we do not mean a *degradation* of being, but rather a *transformation* of it. In fact, all three proposed concepts—torsion, lacuna, and contraction—discard the traditional metaphysics of hierarchical being, of the hierarchy of genres, etc. To give three very naïve but explicit images: an object can be bent or twisted, it can be cut or broken, or it can be mashed like potatoes to produce a puree or putty-like substance. In the eyes of traditional metaphysics, all these negativities are negative in the sense that they are secondary, since the being was initially perfect, and negativity only came afterwards, but also in the sense that they are a deformation or degradation of being. But I think we can say that modern philosophy as a whole rests on the idea of negativity's primacy—on the idea that negativity did not come after being as a form of violence against it, but rather that being itself is only constituted through and by such negativity. The three conceptions of negativity are three ways to think being's capacity for transforming itself.

In her reading of Hegel, Catherine Malabou introduces the very productive concept of plasticity (Malabou 2005). Her theoretical focus is on what she calls negative or destructive plasticity, to differentiate it from productive or positive plasticity. She evokes the image of plastic explosives and argues for a radical, sudden, and absolute transformation, one that can neither be expected nor be traced back to its constitutive parts (Malabou 2009). This destructive plasticity is perhaps the most radical form of what I call lacuna, one that is not really Hegelian anymore, even though Malabou developed it through her reading of Hegel. What she calls creative plasticity, however, is a substance's faculty both to transform and be transformed, and we can file it in the folder marked "contraction."

Let me now address the question of how exactly comedy comes to play with these three modern and quite philosophical concepts of negativity. First, there is what we could call the comedy of torsion. Comedy offers countless examples of perversions, distortions, ironies, mirror-acts, slips of the body and tongue, and, above all, mistaken identities and mis-

⁵ Book VII of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* begins famously by stating, "There are several senses in which a thing may be said to 'be'" (Aristotle 2009: 1028a10).

taken sexual identities. An example of a classical comedy is Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night; or, What You Will*. The story revolves around twins, brother and sister Sebastian and Viola, who are separated during a shipwreck. The girl Viola decides to dress as a boy and serve as the page of Count Orsino, whom she secretly loves, but is then sent on a mission to court Lady Olivia in her beloved count's name. But alas, Olivia falls in love with this young and beautiful boy who is really a girl, and to complicate things further, she later mistakes her for Sebastian, Viola's twin brother, who looks exactly like her in her boyish garments, and marries him. Olivia marries a woman who turns out to be a man, and Orsino is betrothed to a man who turns out to be a woman. Since in Shakespeare's time the convention demanded that male actors play female roles, the mechanism and comic success of cross-dressing were in fact redoubled. A more contemporary example is Billy Wilder's classic film comedy *Some Like It Hot*, especially Jack Lemmon's performance of Jerry/Daphne. Two musicians on the run from the mafia dress as women to join an all-girl band, but Jerry's disguise gradually takes over and he gets a marriage proposal from a millionaire. When, in the end, Jerry, dressed as Daphne, finally takes his costume off and admits he is a man, the millionaire only shrugs and delivers the final punch line: "Nobody's perfect." Both of these are really comedies of fortuitous and less fortuitous plot twists and twists in sexual position. The sexuality itself is completely fluid: the object of sexual attraction keeps transforming into the subject of sexual identity, and back again. But why are they examples specifically of torsion in comedy, rather than of lacuna? The key element is the fact that transformation from one state to the other is gradual and continuous. It is almost impossible to say exactly when Jerry not only wears Daphne's outfit but also *becomes* Daphne. The amorous relationship to the twins is completely fluid and passes from Viola to Sebastian and back without any bumps, and yet suddenly the lover faces a completely new person. We see a Möbius strip of love and sexuality, where the twist occurs by walking in a straight line: this strip is the comedy of torsion's home.

And what is specific to the comedy of lacuna? All sorts of sudden explosions come into consideration here, abrupt changes, as well as lacks and surpluses, but especially detachable phallic items, for instance, a scepter or a fake beard. In Ancient Greek comedy, such phallic items were quite often phalli themselves. But I think one of the best examples is offered by another classic film comedy, Ernst Lubitsch's *To Be or Not To Be*. The story takes place in Nazi-occupied Warsaw. There is a fairly lengthy sequence where a Polish actor puts on a fake beard to pose as Gestapo informant Professor Siletsky. But the Gestapo has already found the real Siletsky's dead body, and the commanding general only pretends to believe that our Polish actor is the informant. He leaves our actor alone with the dead body with the real beard, wishing to play with him like mouse with a cat. But our hero with the fake beard shaves the dead body

and attaches *another* fake beard to the dead man's chin! When the Gestapo general returns, our hero simply pulls off the fake beard he put on the dead body, and proclaims that the body is that of the fake. The general apologizes dramatically, and the hero becomes cocky, even proposing in jest to the general to also pull off his own (fake) beard. Meanwhile, his fellow actors from the theater dress up as high officials from Berlin and intervene to save our hero. They burst into Gestapo headquarters just at the moment when our hero has already proven he was the real informant—and they pull off his beard, arrest him, and hastily depart. There are many comedic principles at work here, which really make this entire comedy, and this sequence in particular, brilliant. But let us focus on the comedy of lacuna, which is centered on the fake beard, on the detachable phallic object. The mystery of the Lacanian concept of the phallus has to do with the fact that it does not designate an organ but an object, which is precisely beyond the organ. This is why castration is in fact the true designation of the phallus. This lack that is, at the same time, a surplus is the paradigmatic example of what I call lacuna. It seems that in comedy, the lacuna functions precisely by exploiting the object's detachability to the maximum.

But how do we distinguish the comedy of lacuna from the comedy of contraction? Isn't the phallus the virtual object par excellence and shouldn't it therefore fall into the proposed category of contraction? The key element of the comedy of lacuna is the oscillation between lack and surplus; one moment it is there, the next moment it is already gone and it was never there in the first place. The comic pleasure arises from this abrupt alternation between presence and absence, attachment and detachment. This is not the case in the comedy of contraction. The virtual does not alternate between actual and potential; rather, it is suspended in their in-between.

Where can we find the comedy of contraction? Let us make an initial assumption and claim that the comedy of contraction is the comedy of the body. There is a large tradition centered on the organic, biological humor of bodily fluids and functions. The tradition of the carnival, especially, explores a plethora of comic actions that the human body can perform in endless repetition: gorging, vomiting, contracting, squirting, drinking, and most importantly, farting. On the one hand, it seems these processes are comic only because of their contrast with the assumed dignity of the comic character or his office: the king who vomits, the bishop who drinks, the beauty queen who farts. This kind of comedy can be regarded as somewhat problematic, as it does not really put the office of king, bishop or Miss World into question.⁶ When Mikhail Bakhtin famously described a wide range of folk rites and festivals in the Middle Ages as part of his

⁶ See Footnote 1.

study of carnivalesque traditions in the works of François Rabelais, he pointed out that there was a certain complicity between the sublime earnestness of official church festivals and the obscene playfulness of folk festivals. He went so far as to claim that folk festivals could only have come to have such weight in society because the church had so thoroughly imprinted in it the idea of the importance of being earnest. The obscene comedy of folk festivals is perhaps nothing more than a quite controlled and clearly defined outburst of frustration by the dominated classes and slaves towards their rulers and masters. The obscenity of the carnival is allowed, but also made necessary in the first place, by the seriousness of formal, official culture (Bakhtin 2009).

This argument is certainly an important point that many scholars have raised. And yet, it leaves the question whether the body is comical in itself unanswered. To claim that the apparent materialism of the carnival is naïve, one has to suppose that the culture is dominated by an austere idealism. But what can we say about a body that does not need an ideal “soul” in order to be considered material? This is precisely what is at stake in modern “affirmationist” philosophy, for instance, in the works of Deleuze, Negri, and other “Neo-Spinozists.” The ontology of twentieth-century French materialism is materialist in this precise sense. It relies on an ontological “virtuality,” on some sort of elasticity, plasticity or expansion of being. The material texture of reality can be contracted or expanded. It is this elasticity of being that we propose to call *contraction*. Hence, the question is: can we consider the exaggerated contractions of the body as comic even without the immediate cultural context of an austere idealism, which in fact allows, requires, and produces them?

The answer is: yes, we can. The classic example of the comedy of the body is Rabelais’ *Gargantua*. But our interest here is not so much in its carnivalesque and folk elements, which obviously depend on the culture of an austere religion, but rather in the elasticity of Rabelais’ *language and style*, whether they are carnivalesque or not. It is the *language* that stretches and bounces from the most obscene genres to the most sublime ones; compiles endless lists of ad lib toilet accessories, insults, names, etc.; joyfully playing all the time with its capacity to repeatedly produce new series of elements simply by “devouring” and reincorporating old ones. Perhaps a better (or, at the very least, not misleading) example of what is at stake here is the work of Raymond Queneau, especially *Exercises in Style* and *Blue Flowers* (massively inspired by Rabelais in terms of neologisms, explicit and implicit quotations from the old master, and metonymic, noncommittal, even grotesque storytelling), since it is quite clear that the comic effects produced in these works are not related in any way to carnivalesque motifs, to motifs of the exaggerated body and bodily functions.

Our initial assumption that the comedy of contraction was a comedy of the body should be revised: it is primarily a comedy of language, of the capacity of language to reproduce itself through itself. As *Exercises in Style*

demonstrates, this capacity of language can also simply be called style. And why not? Style is in fact an essential capacity of language. Style is precisely the excess of form in language. It is what is virtual in language, its unactualizable potentiality. Every text has a style; even a neutral, factual account is a specific style of telling a story. And yet every particular word is just a word among other words. In a sense, style is therefore “hiding in plain sight,” it is “missing from its place.” It is rhetorical eloquence that makes language not only a means of communication but also a means of production. This productive capacity of language, this excess of language over the language itself is what we primarily call *contraction*. Looking back on Gargantua, we can say that the giant’s excessive corporality is not comic because of the carnivalesque motifs (at least not in the sense I wish to attribute to the concept of comic contraction), but rather because this excess of corporality demonstrates the excess of language itself. The perspective of contraction is not that the language describes fascinating contractions of the body, but the other way around: it is the body itself that speaks out the contractions of language.

If we are to provide a conclusion to what can only hope to be a brief outline of a typology of negativity, we must, first of all, underline the rupture between the metaphysical concept of negativity as secondary to, and a degradation of, pure being, on the one hand, and the contemporary thesis of negativity as constitutive of being itself, on the other hand. There seems to be a correspondence between the ontological hierarchy of traditional metaphysics and its classification of artistic practices into higher and lower genres. But if it is true that in contemporary thought some radically different concepts of negativity have emerged—those I propose to label torsion, lacuna, and contraction—what is the conclusion we can make with regard to contemporary artistic practice? And what is the relationship between the three? Do they form a dialectical triad? Can we demonstrate that they form a necessary complex? At this point, all we can say is that what we have described as the procedure of contraction in comedy pertains to the productive capacity of language in general, to its faculty of producing itself from itself. To that extent, it is perhaps safe to assume that the procedures of lacuna and torsion can be regarded as special cases of contraction. But if comedy as a practice of the negative indeed exhibits this priority of contraction over lacuna and torsion, what are the consequences of this for the “theory of the negative,” that is to say, for the philosophical concepts of negativity?

References

- Althusser, Louis (2006). *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978–1987*. Trans. G.M. Goshgarian. London & New York: Verso.
- Aristotle (2009). *Metaphysics*. Trans. W.D. Ross. Sioux Falls, S.D.: NuVision Publications.

Comedy and Negativity

- Aristotle (1902). *The Poetics of Aristotle*. Trans. S.H. Butcher. London: Macmillan.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail (2009). *Rabelais and His World* [1965]. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Bergson, Henri (2005). *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* [1900]. Trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell. New York: Dover Publications.
- Brecht, Bertolt (2000). *Flüchtlingsgespräche*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Butler, Judith, Ernest Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek (2000). *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*. London & New York: Verso.
- Deleuze, Gilles (2005). *Différence et répétition* [1968]. Paris: PUF.
- Dolar, Mladen (1993). "Beyond Interpellation." *Qui Parle* 6, N 2: 75–96.
- Hegel, G.W.F. (1986). *Werke in 20 Bänden mit Registerband*, Vol. 20: *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie III*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Hegel, G.W.F. (1979). *Phenomenology of Spirit* [1807]. Trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Malabou, Catherine (2005). *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality, and Dialectic*. Trans. Lisabeth During. London & New York: Routledge.
- Malabou, Catherine (2009). *Ontologie de l'accident*. Paris: Léo Scheer.
- Moder, Gregor (2012). *Hegel und Spinoza. Negativität in der gegenwärtigen Philosophie*. Vienna & Berlin: Turia + Kant.
- Plato (2008). *Republic*. Trans. Robin Waterfield. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pfaller, Robert (2008). "The Order of Appearance: Materialism's Comedy." *Bedeutung* 1, N 1: 22–29.
- Rancière, Jacques (2011). *Althusser's Lesson*. Trans. Emiliano Battista. London: Continuum.
- Shakespeare, William (1999). *Sonnets*. London: Penguin Classics.
- Žižek, Slavoj (2000). "Class Struggle or Postmodernism? Yes, Please!" In Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, 114–120. London & New York: Verso.
- Zupančič, Alenka (2008). *The Odd One In: On Comedy*. Cambridge, Mass. & London: MIT Press.