

Platonism, Spinoza and the History of Deconstruction
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“It is still evening, it is always nightfall along the ‘ramparts,’ on the battlements of an old
Europe at War. With the other and with itself.”
- Derrida¹

“A book is a little cog in much more complicated textual machinery”
- Deleuze²

1. Introduction

In a late interview, Derrida suggests that deconstruction is “not about destroying anything: only, and out of fidelity, trying to think how it came about, how something not natural is made: a culture, an institution, or a tradition.”³ He then adds that such an analysis should be applied to deconstruction itself:

And then you must also do the history of analysis itself and the notion of critique – and even of deconstructions. Because there is also a tradition of deconstruction, from Luther to Heidegger (Luther was already speaking of *Destruktion* to refer to a sort of critique of institutional theology in the name of the original authenticity of the evangelical message). The ‘deconstruction’ I attempt is not that deconstruction, it’s definitely more ‘political’ too, differently political; but it would take too many words to explain this. And some people might judge what I said to be hermetic (PM 115).

The answer runs against the limits of the interview format, but we are left with at least two clues and a caution. The clues are, first, that enough thinkers have engaged in a sufficiently similar and self-referential task of “deconstruction” that one can speak of a “tradition” in this regard; and second, that Derrida’s practice of deconstruction differs from that of this tradition; one marker of its difference is that it is more “political.” The caution is that an adequate elaboration of these clues into such a history runs the risk of being considered too difficult to

understand. One might suggest: given that Derrida repeatedly interrogates the tendency of history to lapse into teleology, an adequate history of deconstruction would violate the usual narrative practices of history enough that some would declare it incomprehensible.⁴

Nonetheless, fidelity to deconstruction itself seems to demand that we speak of this history; in another late interview, speaking of the “commitment of deconstruction,” of Derrida suggests that it would “be possible ... to treat again this question of difference as a question of inheritance” (PM 95).

In the moments after Derrida, then, it is appropriate to revisit the history of deconstruction. At the same time, such revisitation needs also to proceed in fidelity to difference, which is to say that it needs to proceed by way of resisting the sorts of totalizations by which historical narratives are always tempted. As Derrida says of a possible history of his own work, there is “no historical metalanguage to bear witness to it in the transparent element of some absolute knowledge” (PM 181). More politically, to borrow a trope from another thinker to whom Derrida often returns, “in every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it.”⁵ Here I will consider one moment in the history of deconstruction, in order to attempt to complicate the narrative usually told about deconstruction more generally. That moment is 1968, and the aspect I will examine is the near simultaneous appearance of texts by both Derrida and Deleuze against “Platonism.”⁶

The specific point I want to make is limited: what tends to evaporate from discussions of both Deleuze and Derrida is the degree to which both are political and materialist. Orthodox Marxism, one may readily concede, is dead, either on arrival or certainly after Stalin.⁷ But French post-structuralism developed precisely in the context of this death of

orthodox Marxism, with and through the vicissitudes of the politics of the academic left and the PCF. As Derrida himself points out, “one can understand nothing of this period of deconstruction, notably in France, unless one takes this historical entanglement into account” (*Specters*, 15).⁸ Elsewhere, he adds that such a “political dimension” was “decipherable in all my texts, even the oldest ones” (PM 152). In order to recover something of this political and materialist thought, I want to look at how Derrida and Deleuze characterize the need to overcome Platonism, with primary attention to Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*, and Derrida’s “Plato’s Pharmacy.”⁹ I will argue that there is a remarkable congruence of their thought, such that we can and should meaningfully speak of a constellation in the sense articulated by Walter Benjamin:

Thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well. Where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions, it gives that configuration a shock, by which it crystallizes into a monad. A historical materialist approaches a historical subject only where he encounters it as a monad. In this structure he recognizes the sign of a Messianic cessation of happening, or, put differently, a revolutionary change in the fight for the oppressed past. He takes cognizance of it in order to blast a specific era out of the homogenous course of history – blasting a specific life out of the era or a specific work out of the lifework. As a result of this method the lifework is preserved in this work and at the same time canceled” (“Theses,” 263).

In the next two sections, I will present a reading of Derrida and Deleuze on Platonism. In the final section, I will return to the question of the history of deconstruction.

2. Winning the War on Drugs

For both Derrida and Deleuze, Platonism names a police function that intends the stability of an order of eidetic repetitions that at the same time neutralizes anything which

might not conform to that order. Conformity is defined genetically, as conforming concepts are those which repeat the structure of the governing *eidos*; successive instantiations of the *eidos* thus conform to it as tokens.¹⁰ It turns out that what does not conform is material singularity and affect, and so these and claims based on them must go.¹¹ The motivation for this police function is not philosophical but moral and political; or, if one prefers, the motive to Platonic philosophy is a political one. Conversely, to move against Platonism is to perform a political act, if not *the* political act, the act which constitutes politics outside the perfectly stabilized Platonic city. Indeed, it is no accident that the *Phaedrus*, in which the Platonic critique of writing and *pharmakoi* is articulated, takes place outside the city: it is a dialogue that deals with the necessary conditions for the constitution of the *polis* itself. As a rereading of Platonism, then, such an act is motivated not just by theoretical concerns about Plato, but by events excessive to the Platonic texts. Specifically, actual events have exposed the violence of Platonic schema. In this violence lies both the necessary structure of Platonism and the possibility of overcoming it. In short, the claim is that because Platonism requires constituting its own outside, the police function is both essentially unstable and extremely violent.

To develop these points, it is best to begin elliptically. In a 1990 interview, Antonio Negri asks Deleuze about a “tragic note” he detects in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Deleuze’s response needs to be read at length:

You say there’s a certain tragic or melancholic tone in all this. I think I can see why. I was very struck by all the passages in Primo Levi where he explains that Nazi camps have given us ‘a shame at being human.’ Not, he says, that we’re all responsible for Nazism, as some would have us believe, but that we’ve all been tainted by it: even the survivors of the camps had to make compromises with it, if only to survive. There’s the shame of there being men who became Nazis; the shame of being unable, not seeing how, to stop it; the shame of having compromised with it, if only to survive; there’s the whole of

what Primo Levi calls this ‘gray area.’ And we can feel shame at being human in utterly trivial situations, too: in the face of too great a vulgarization of thinking, in the face of TV entertainment, of a ministerial speech, of ‘jolly people’ gossiping. This is one of the most powerful incentives toward philosophy, and it’s what makes all philosophy political There’s no democratic state that’s not compromised to the very core by its part in generating human misery. What’s so shameful is that we’ve no sure way of maintaining becomings, or still more of arousing them, even within ourselves. How any group will turn out, how it will fall back into history, presents a constant ‘concern.’ There’s no longer any image of proletarians around of which it’s just a matter of becoming conscious (N 172-3).

In this passage, I think, lies the fundamental tension which animates Deleuze’s engagement with Platonism. On the one hand, we are compelled to philosophize, *i.e.*, to form subjectivities, based on collective images and projections. On the other hand, those images function according to a representational model of thought which, when stabilized, necessarily generates human misery. For its part, Platonism is the move when enables representative thought to function, by grounding the distinction between original and image/copy. This grounding performs the political function of authentication:

The true Platonic distinction ... [is] not between the original and the image but between two kinds of images, of which copies are only the first kind, the other being simulacra. The model-copy distinction is there only in order to found and apply the copy-simulacra distinction The function of the notion of the model is not to oppose the world of images in its entirety but to select the good images, the icons which resemble from within, and eliminate the bad images or simulacra (DR, 127).¹²

From this vantage point, Deleuze’s response to Negri is: the shame is that Platonism is no longer a valid option *for us*.¹³ There is no longer an uncontaminated *eidōs* (*e.g.*, “proletariat”) available for us to resemble. The ascent of any group toward its *eidōs* is always already tainted by the “constant concern” of its subsequent descent. At such a historical juncture, the effort to execute the fundamental move of Platonism becomes an act not just of violence, but

of a violence which experience has rendered impossible to occlude. The problem is not that one cannot imitate; it is that the models for imitation have been shown to be false. In such a context, copies are no longer distinguishable from simulacra, which is to say that the ideas no longer have any particular purchase: “in the infinite movement of degraded likeness from copy to copy, we reach a point at which everything changes nature, at which copies themselves flip over into simulacra and at which, finally, resemblance or spiritual imitation gives way to repetition.” (DR 128). For this reason, “the task of modern philosophy has been defined: to overturn Platonism” (DR 59).

Deleuze emphasizes repeatedly that Platonism instantiates an ethico-political decision. It is the decision to “repress” (LS 259) simulacra, to “impose a limit” on becoming, “to order it according to the same, to render it similar – and, for that part which remains rebellious, to repress it as deeply as possible, to shut it up in a cavern at the bottom of the Ocean” (LS 258-9). Simulacra are “rebellious images which lack resemblance” and which are “eliminated, rejected and denounced” (DR 272). In other words, in Plato’s case, “a moral motivation in all its purity is avowed: the will to eliminate simulacra or phantasms has no motivation apart from the moral. What is condemned in the figure of simulacra is the state of free, oceanic differences, of nomadic distributions and crowned anarchy, along with that malice which challenges both the notion of the model and the copy” (DR 265).

Derrida speaks of Platonism in similar terms. The *pharmakon*, either embodied in the character of *pharmakos* or in the textual act of writing, is denounced for its inability to represent correctly the authorial voice behind it. In the terms of the *Phaedrus*, the essence of writing is its inability to copy correctly the words of its father figure. Rather than attempt to reduce the ambiguities associated with the materiality of language (“the essential ambiguity of

the *pharmakon*”), writing exacerbates them. Hence, worse than even representational painting:

Writing thus more seriously denatures what it claims to imitate. It does not even substitute an image for its model. It inscribes in the space of silence and in the silence of space the living time of voice. It displaces its model, provides no image of it, violently wrests out of its element the animate interiority of speech. In so doing writing estranges itself immensely from the truth of the thing itself, from the truth of speech, from the truth that is open to speech (PP 137).

Writing turns the ambiguity of the *pharmakon* and the *polis* into ungovernability, so Platonism makes a moral decision, and “bad ambiguity is thus opposed to good ambiguity, a deceitful intention to a mere appearance” (PP 103). Platonism will bring both the tactics of immigration control and those of counter-insurgency against the former. “The element of the *pharmakon* is the combat zone between philosophy and its other” (PP 138); writing, “this signifier of little,” behaves “like someone who has lost his rights, an outlaw, a pervert, a bad seed, a vagrant, an adventurer, a bum” (PP 143). For Socrates to discipline this *pharmakon* into the Platonic city requires the “death of the body” and the renunciation of the benefits of the *pharmakon*, of “knowledge as power, passion, pleasure” (*ibid.*). Plato will thus establish the *eidos*/copy distinction in order to execute this police function: “it is precisely this ambiguity that Plato, through the mouth of the King, attempts to master, to dominate by inserting its definition into simple, clear-cut oppositions: good and evil, inside and outside, true and false, essence and appearance” (PP 103).

This repression of the body, Derrida reminds us, carries contextual overtones of extreme violence: “in general, the *pharmakoi* were put to death. But that, it seems, was not the essential end of the operation. Death occurred most often as a secondary effect of an

energetic fustigation. Aimed first at the genital organs The blows were designed to chase away or draw out the evil from their bodies” (PP 132). As Deleuze puts it, “it is a dangerous trial without thread and without net, for according to the ancient custom of myth and epic, false claimants must die” (DR 60). Such violent dismemberment allows one to underscore that there are two kinds of violence here: there is violence within the representational order, and there is the violence of insisting on the representational order itself.¹⁴ The latter violence is, in a sense, necessary, insofar as one is not to affirm an impossible anarchism. What is not necessary, however, is the Platonic move to closure, the announcement that there is no outside. This announcement “is myth as such, the *mythology* for example of a logos recounting its origin” (PP 128) in terms which fundamentally occlude that origin. Hence, the effort to overcome Platonism will be figured by the effort to speak of a necessary supplementarity, of difference, of “ground rising to the surface without ceasing to be ground” (DR 28).¹⁵

Platonism thus enacts, for both Deleuze and Derrida, an essential police function. The *pharmakoi* and simulacra are to be denounced, violently repressed. Importantly, these *pharmakoi* and simulacra are simultaneously the condition of the possibility of the police function which represses them. That is, since the police function involves not just separating inside from outside, but establishing the grounds for that separation, the police function creates that which it represses. For Derrida, “the representative of the outside is nonetheless *constituted*, regularly granted its place by the community, chosen, kept, fed, etc., in the very heart of the inside” (PP 133), which is to say that “the purity of the inside can then only be restored if the *charges are brought home* against exteriority as a supplement, inessential yet harmful to the essence, a surplus that *ought* never to have come to be added to the untouched

plenitude of the inside” (PP 128, emphasis in original). In Deleuzian terms, “the world of the ground is undermined by what it tries to exclude, by the simulacrum which draws it in only to fragment it” (DR 274).

3. Counter-memorial

The “tragic note” Negri detects in *Thousand Plateaus* accentuates the urgency of overcoming Platonism, a move that Deleuze declared to be the task of philosophy as early as *Logic of Sense*, citing Nietzsche (LS 253). However, in neither Derrida’s nor Deleuze’s case is the point simply to reverse Platonism in a pure affirmation. In Derrida’s case, the initial point is clear enough: the recognition of *différance* is the possibility of mourning, *i.e.*, the recognition that presence can never be full. In his later works, the “positive” aspect is more clear, as when he speaks of the necessity of an impossible, unconditional affirmation, especially with regard to hospitality. The affirmation is always political, and never without awareness of its own risk and the need to attend to its own contextual circumstances. Hence, an “intellectual” justifies his or her “assumed intelligence ... in the transaction that suspends the safe horizons and criteria ... yet without ever leaving the space empty, in other words open to the straightforward return of *any* power, investment, language, and so on” (PM 38-9). In Deleuze, the description of the gesture that overturns Platonism is more controversial, though the tendency is to read Deleuze as a purely “affirmative” thinker whose affirmation precisely leaves the space empty for “any return.” He writes, in evident support of this proposition, that “overturning Platonism, then, means denying the primacy of original over copy, of model over image, of glorifying the reign of simulacra and reflections” (DR 66). However, even in the opening lines of the *Logic of Sense* essay, he is clear that matters are not

so simple, as “reversal” is a misguided formula: “this formula of reversal has the disadvantage of being abstract. It leaves the motivation of Platonism in the shadows” (LS 253). “Reversal” may *represent* what happens to Platonism, but since the order of representation itself is in question, one must proceed very carefully.¹⁶ Not only that, original and copy are not pure categories, and copies do not fully distinguish themselves from simulacra.

Thus the overturn of Platonism does not entail glorifying *all* simulacra and reflections.¹⁷ The “tragic note” is Deleuze’s warning against such misreading, and refers precisely to the irreducibility of material singularities to representations. Simulacra should neither be banished nor celebrated as such; those moves are mirror images of each other and both belong to the world of representation. What the tragic note emphasizes is the necessity of counter-memorial, of a memorial to that which exceeds Platonism, as opposed to a monument which re-presents Platonic mythology.¹⁸ This is because Platonism as a moral force tries most of all to occlude its own operation; “the world of representation will more or less forget its moral origin and presuppositions” (DR 265).¹⁹ It will then efface itself; of Hegel, Deleuze writes: “to ground ... is to represent the present – in other words, to make the present arrive and pass within representation (finite or infinite). The ground then appears as an immemorial Memory or pure past, a past which itself was never present” (DR 273-4).²⁰ For the function of representative memory in general, “in order to be represented, the former present must resemble the present one;” such a decision necessarily involves a decision about what is appropriately remembered and what is to be forgotten (DR 80). Plato offers us several demonstrations of this operation, from the myth of the horses in the *Phaedrus* to that of Er in the last book of *The Republic*.²¹

To overturn Platonism is thus an effort at counter-memory, at writing the material singularities – the body that has died – back into the history that occludes them, as excesses that cannot be recuperated. Hence Deleuze’s gesture in the Negri interview not just to Auschwitz, but also to Primo Levi, whose death by suicide preceded the appearance of the interview by three years.²² Such a messy memorialization recalls Derrida’s discussion of Platonism’s effort to render memory immaterial. For Plato, this is the problematic of writing; “live memory repeats the presence of the *eidos*” (PP 111), and “what Plato *dreams* of is a memory with no sign” (PP 109). Such radical absence of the graphic marks of memory renders memorable only that which can be subsumed under the order of the *eidos*. Memory itself is to be regulated according to the order of the pure inside: Plato’s problem with sophistic recourse to memory is “the substitution of mnemonic device for live memory, of the prosthesis for the organ; the perversion that consists of replacing a limb by a thing” (PP 108), *i.e.*, of opening the possibility of a cyborg, if not quite a body without organs.

As *purely* representational, memory is also not supposed to be carried in an object, and Plato thinks the sophists are guilty of “substituting the passive, mechanical ‘by heart’ for the active reanimation of knowledge, for its reproduction in the present” (PP 108). But the Platonic move gets things backwards: because the order of truth is representative, only aspects of the past whose form allows their representation in it can appear at all. Not just the interpretations of events in the past, but the events themselves as interpretable are constituted by the eidetic structure that represents them. Hence, when Plato attempts to distinguish between “memory as an unveiling (re-)producing a presence from re-memoration as the mere repetition of a monument” (PP 108-9), Derrida suggests that it is the favored Platonic relation of memory that ends up being a mere repetition: representation can only represent itself, as

the same. Memory becomes an effort at monumentalization, of inscribing the present onto the past. Because they embody traces which betray the monumentalizing process, the artifacts of memory are denounced: “the sophist thus sells the signs and insignia of science: not memory itself, only monuments, inventories, archives, citations, copies, accounts, tales, lists, notes, duplicates, chronicles, genealogies, references. Not memory, but memorials” (PP 107). As such a citation, “Auschwitz” signifies the our awareness of the impossibility and the violence of applying a universal eidetic schema to the past and insisting on its transparency, which means that, in the opposition of memory and memorials, memorials will be all that we have. A memory will turn out to be a strangely self-effacing form of memorial, one that denies its own status as memorial and as event by insisting on its essential resemblance to an immaterial *eidōs*. Memory:memorial thus mirrors copy:simulacra.

Overturing Platonism is this effort at counter-memorial, and it is a task for us.

Derrida inserts a remarkable passage between parentheses:

It could be shown ... that the problematic that today, and in this very spot, links writing with the (putting in) question of truth – and of thought and speech, which are informed by it – must necessarily exhume, without remaining at that, the conceptual monuments, the vestiges of the battlefield, the signposts marking out the battle lines between sophistic and philosophy, and, more generally, all the buttresses erected by Platonism. In many ways, and from a viewpoint that does not cover the entire field, we are today on the eve of Platonism. Which can also, naturally, be thought of as the morning after Hegelianism (PP 107-8).

The gesture to Hegel is significant. In his lecture course on the *Philosophy of History*, Hegel announces: “history begins with China and Mongolia, the kingdoms of theocratic rule.”²³

Thus begins the familiar Hegelian story of the development of rationality, as figured in a movement of history from East to West. That story has been discounted since Marx and Nietzsche, who pointed to the peculiar inversion at work in insisting that an abstract idea was

the bearer of history. Hence Deleuze will say to his “harsh critic” that “what I most detested was Hegelianism and dialectics.”²⁴

What our position, in the morning after Hegelianism, allows us to see is Hegel’s other, nearly silent move. In the paragraph before the announcement of history’s beginning, Hegel quietly asserts that “we have already left several parts of Asia as unhistorical; upper Asia, insofar and so long as the nomads themselves have not stepped up to the historical base [*Boden*], and Siberia.”²⁵ This “already” is precisely the already of a mythology: we are at the beginning of Hegel’s lecture, and the dismissal of the nomads is authorized only by the proposition that “insofar as prehistory is that which leads up to life in a state [*Staatsleben*], it lies beyond [*jenseits*] self-conscious life.”²⁶ The effort against this gesture began with Marx, and Marx began writing what, from the point of view being developed here, one might call a counter-memorial. One aspect of this work was of course to tell history from the point of view of labor.²⁷ Another aspect, less well-known but vital to his early development, was to retell the history of philosophy by emphasizing the materialist excesses to the Hegelian system. Marx wrote a PhD dissertation on Epicurus, fronted it with an epigraph from Hume, shortly afterward kept extensive notebooks on Spinoza, and closed the preface to the first version of *Capital* with a favorable reference to “the great Florentine [*Machiavelli*].”²⁸ In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze – whose list of favored thinkers reads like Marx’s, but with the addition of Marx and Nietzsche – writes that “dialectic loses its peculiar power when it remains content to trace problems from propositions” (DR 157), and complains that the “dialectical ox leave[s] a moral aftertaste, as though one could affirm only by expiating It is as though Difference were evil and already negative, so that it could produce affirmation only by expiation” (DR 53).

In Hegel, the nomads have been radically silenced. It is not just that their position on the “slaughterbench of history” is determined by the Hegelian concept; it is that they are denied a position in the first place. Like the Homeric poets in Plato’s *Republic*, they will be driven from the city altogether. After Hegel, “nomad” becomes the trope for the forms of subjectivity and thought which are to be recovered. In *Difference and Repetition*, “the agrarian question” of the cultivation of ordered plots and properties – of the enclosure movement – is essential within representation. But outside representation, there is a “nomad *nomos*, without property, enclosure or measure.” In such a space, “even when it concerns the serious business of life, it is more like a space of play, or a rule of play, by contrast with the sedentary space and *nomos*.” Instead of the order of property, the distribution is to “cover the largest possible space” (DR 36). Derrida speaks in similar terms about the nomad and vagrant *pharmakoi*, cast out of the city, and of Socratic irony as that which “alternately and/or all at once ... petrifies and vivifies, anesthetizes and sensitizes, appeases and anguishes” (PP 119n 52), which “reverses the *pharmakon*’s powers and turns *its* surface over” (PP 119) by reducing it to silence. One’s options are agrarian domestication or banishment: settle down, get a life!²⁹

To overturn Platonism will be to allow these nomads and corpses to speak without yoking them to the representative scheme of the Platonic system; an event that Deleuze says would be “as if the ground rose to the surface, without ceasing to be ground,” a state where “determination takes the form of unilateral distinction” (DR 28). As Derrida says much later in *Specters of Marx*, it will be a matter of spectrality and haunting, to treat the specters no longer as memories to be exorcised, but “as arrivants to whom a hospitable memory or promise must offer welcome – without certainty, ever, that they present themselves as such”

(175). In Derrida's later work, the problematic becomes quite concrete, and the gesture of welcome to specters becomes the impossible affirmation of absolute hospitality. The *pharmakoi* return in the figure of stateless people and the *sans papiers*. In particular, the "paper machine" today solves the problem of writing by sacralizing not just the authorized voice, but the authorized paper. It is necessary to trace this operation, for "the history of politics is a history of paper" (PM 61). Today, "the 'paperless' person is an outlaw, a nonsubject legally, a noncitizen or the citizen of a foreign country refused the right conferred, *on paper*, by a temporary or permanent visa, a rubber stamp" (PM 60). The political function of Platonism is intact, even as the surface level features of a critique of writing are transformed into the demand for writing.³⁰ Today, "the words *refugee*, *exile*, *deportee*, *displaced person*, and even *foreigner*, have changed their meanings; they call for another discourse and another kind of practical response" (PM 132). The task is one of "finding the best 'legislative' transaction, the best 'juridical' conditions to bring it about that in a given situation the ethics of hospitality are not in principle violated – and are as far as possible respected. For that, you have to change laws, habits, fantasies – a whole 'culture.'" (PM 131).

Speaking out against this contemporary Platonism remains the task of philosophy. The intellectual is to be engaged in "the invention or proposal of new conceptual, normative, or criteriological figures, according to new singularities" (PM 39). An interviewer asks: "looking particularly at the global situation, what might be the contribution of philosophy?" In answer, Derrida, referring again to *Specters of Marx*, suggests that this "New International" "shouts about what is so little spoken of both in political rhetoric and in the discourse of 'engaged intellectuals,' even among card-carrying champions of human rights." He enumerates:

To give a few examples of the form of the macrostatistics we so easily forget about, I am thinking of the millions of children who die every year because of water; of the nearly 50 percent of women who are beaten, or victims of violence that sometimes leads to murder (60 million women dead, 30 million women maimed); of the 33 million AIDS sufferers (of whom 90 percent are in Africa, although only 5 percent of the AIDS research budget is allocated to them and drug therapy remains inaccessible outside small Western milieux); I am thinking of the selective infanticides of girls in India and the monstrous working conditions of children in numerous countries; I am thinking of the fact that there are, I believe, a billion illiterate people and 140 million children who have no formal education; I am thinking of the death sentence and the conditions of its application in the United States (PM 125-6).³¹

Those who belong to this “New International” are “all those who, whatever civic or national groups they belong to, are determined to turn politics, law, and ethics in their direction” (PM 126).

4. Deconstruction without Organs

Derrida says in one of his *Paper Machine* interviews that “what interests me more and more is to make out the specificity of a deconstruction that wouldn’t necessarily be reducible to th[e] Lutheran-Heideggerian tradition” (138). On the one hand, the constellated proximity between Derrida’s and Deleuze’s early treatments of Platonism allows one to gesture to precisely such a specificity. On the other hand, the act of noticing this proximity is itself a gesture against the tendency to Platonize the history of deconstruction. Both aspects of this gesture point specifically to occlusions operative within the canonical history of deconstruction (at least, as it is adumbrated within philosophical circles), in particular occlusions of its non-phenomenological elements. To put matters more provocatively: what is the subject of the history of deconstruction? As Derrida says in another interview, “there has never been The Subject for anyone The subject is a fable ... but to concentrate on the elements of speech and *conventional* fiction that such a fable presupposes is not to stop taking

it seriously (it is the serious itself).”³² Since the constitutive fable of Husserlian phenomenology is the “intuitive given of originary presence” (EW 264), and since the complexity of the relationship between deconstruction and phenomenology perhaps cannot be overstated, one must be especially careful in writing the history of deconstruction not to re-enact the mythology of intuitive givenness.³³ In other words, one must try not to reify the “who” that represents the subject of that history. Derrida notes that this “who” is “a singularity that dislocates or divides itself in gathering itself together to answer to the other” and that “here, no doubt, begins the link with the longer questions of ethical, juridical, and political responsibility around which the metaphysics of subjectivity was constituted” (EW 261-2). One needs, in short, genealogies of deconstruction.

In his eulogy to Deleuze, Derrida says that in Deleuze’s books, he felt “not only ... strong provocations to think but each time the flustering, really flustering experience of a closeness or of a nearly total affinity concerning the ‘theses,’ if we can use this word.”³⁴ Subsequent commentators have tended not to accept this judgment. Rather, they find a “fundamental difference” between the two, usually according to a negativity in Derrida and a positivity in Deleuze.³⁵ Leonard Lawlor’s contribution to *Between Deleuze and Derrida* is exemplary. Lawlor’s discussion of language positions both Deleuze and Derrida as writing in response to Husserl, with references beginning in their 1968 Plato essays, and proceeding (in Derrida’s case) to *Sense and Phenomena* and (in Deleuze’s) to other sections of *Logic of Sense*. Hence, Lawlor will argue that Derrida is taking up “indication” in Husserl, and Deleuze “expression.” It is true that “expression” is a major term for Deleuze, but it is striking that Lawlor nowhere mentions Deleuze’s 1968 *Spinoza et le problème de l’expression*. There, Deleuze explicitly grounds his usage of expression in Spinoza and

Leibniz, and he adduces stoic and medieval nominalist sources for the term. At one point, citing Stoic paradoxes about expression, he even emphasizes that “these paradoxes of expression play a major role in modern logic (Meinong, Frege, Husserl), but their source is ancient.”³⁶

The sort of genealogy presented by Lawlor is not wrong – Derrida himself avers that “nothing I do would be possible without the discipline of phenomenology” (PM 143) – but the occlusion of Spinoza is operative in the case of Derrida, too, though less obviously (and perhaps with Derrida’s complicity). In responding to a question from Jean Luc Nancy about the “*history* both of the thinking of the subject and of its deconstruction,” Derrida makes one of his (few) references to Spinoza, which needs to be quoted at length:

I have always been a little troubled by the Heideggerian delimitation of the epoch of subjectivity. His questions about the ontological inadequacy of the Cartesian view of subjectivity seem to me no doubt necessary but inadequate, notably in regard to what would link subjectivity to *representation*, and the subject-object couple to the presuppositions of the principle of reason in its Leibnizian formulation The foreclosure of Spinoza seems to me to be significant. Here is a great rationalism that does not rest on the principle of reason (inasmuch as in Leibniz this principle privileges both the final cause and representation). Spinoza’s substantialist rationalism is a radical critique of both finalism and the (Cartesian) representative determination of the idea; it is not a metaphysics of the cogito or of absolute subjectivity. The import of this foreclosure is all the greater and more significant in that the epoch of subjectivity determined by Heidegger is also the epoch of the rationality or the techno-scientific rationalism of modern metaphysics... (EW 265).

Derrida then immediately insists that Spinoza is not the point after all (“it’s not Spinoza’s case that is most important to me”). The point instead is that if Heidegger’s “delimitation is effected through an unjustified foreclosure, it is the interpretation of the epoch that risks becoming problematic” (*ibid.*).

No doubt more needs to be said than I can here – in particular, if we are concerned with singularities, then why is Spinoza’s singularity not at issue? Why does he appear for Derrida only as a token of the type “substantialist rationalism?”³⁷ One specificity to which one should attend – particularly as one reflects on the fact that any adequate accounting of the historicity of deconstruction will have to speak of the recurrently violent responses to it (not just in the so-called Heidegger and De Man affairs, but also in the post-9/11 declarations that, finally, deconstruction is no longer “relevant”) – is that Spinoza analyzes this sort of violence in an account of the affects and a critique of teleology.³⁸ That is (and what follows can only be synechdochal), Spinoza has something to say about the issues at stake here, directly in the case of the reception of deconstruction, and more obliquely in the case of the narration of its history, both topics which fall well within the range of the critique of Platonism presented in “Plato’s Pharmacy.”

First, as Derrida says, Spinoza presents a “radical critique of finalism.” In the Appendix to part I of his *Ethics*, he goes further than this, however, offering a genetic outline of why this critique encounters a hostile reception. Ignorance of actual causes, he suggests, leads people to seek refuge in teleological explanations that are projected from the phenomenology of their own experiences. Since they experience themselves as purposive and free, such explanations tend to ascribe purpose to nature and to arrive at the belief in a free, lawgiving God who presides transcendentally over it. What I would note here is that Spinoza immediately underlines the material, political questions involved: someone who attempts to “understand the works of Nature as a scholar, and not just to gape at them like a fool is universally considered an impious heretic and denounced by those to whom the vulgar adore as interpreters of Nature and of the gods.” He then explains that such declarations of heresy

are politically useful “for these people know that the destruction of ignorance would destroy that stupor which is the one and only support for their argument and the means for the safeguarding of their authority.”³⁹ Second, Spinoza’s *Theologico-Political Treatise* analyzes the contingencies of human processes which enable the canonized Biblical text to appear as a unity. Hence, working immanently from within the text as it presents itself, Spinoza shows how features internal to the narrative strongly suggest that it is not of univocal origin. Again, he points to a material, political basis for the persistence in the belief of a univocal textual authority. “The supreme mystery of despotism,” he writes, “is to keep men in a state of deception, and with the specious title of religion to cloak the fear by which they must be held in check so they will fight for their servitude as if for salvation.”⁴⁰

Thus, what I would underline here, on Spinozist grounds, is the extent to which writing Deleuze and Derrida into a post-Kantian phenomenological problematic occludes both the explicitly political intentions animating their works, as well as evidence of materialist bases for those works, Marxist and otherwise.⁴¹ In other words, it is not just that Deleuze is less “affirmative” and Derrida less “negative” than such representative schema suggest. By policing materiality out of their thought, the binary succumbs to the temptation to ratchet Derrida and Deleuze to negative and positive lineages. Derrida remarks of the centrality of “family metaphors” to Platonism: “it is all about fathers and sons, about bastards unaided by any public assistance, about glorious, legitimate sons, about inheritance, sperm, sterility” (PP 143). In short: “*logos* issues from a father” (*ibid.*) and “mastery of the *pharmaka* that should be handed down from legitimate father to well-born son is constantly put into question by a family scene that constitutes and undermines at once the passage between the pharmacy and the house” (PP 167). Platonism, as “both the general *rehearsal* of this family scene and the

most powerful effort to master it” stands for the effort to ensure the legitimacy of patriarchal succession, of the definition of well-marked lines of inheritance in discourse.⁴²

What, then, is at stake in the disciplining of Derrida to negativity and Deleuze to positivity, if not the very repetition of the Platonic gesture? Following Derrida on this point, if what is sacrificed in Platonism is the materiality which exceeds representation, in this case, it is the materiality of textual events that exceed the family history to which they are assigned. Deleuze comments to his harsh critic that “the history of philosophy plays a patently repressive role in philosophy, it’s philosophy’s own version of the Oedipus complex” (N 5). One should read history with a capital “H,” a history of the univocal development of a concept. Elsewhere, he writes with Guattari: “Oedipus is always and solely an aggregate of destination fabricated to meet the requirements of an aggregate of departure constituted by a social formation” (*Anti-Oedipus*, 101).

In Deleuze, the outside of Hegelianism and Platonism is found in “a secret link between Lucretius, Hume, Spinoza and Nietzsche, constituted by their critique of negativity, their cultivation of joy, the hatred of interiority, the externality of forces, the denunciation of power ... and so on” (N 6; ellipses in original). As early as the *Expressionism* book, he says that “a philosophy’s power is measured by the concepts it creates” (321), and credits Spinoza with creating a new concept of “expression.” He adds that “Spinoza accepts the truly philosophical ‘danger’ of immanence and pantheism implicit in the notion” (333). Whatever one thinks of Derrida’s limited engagement with Spinoza, Derrida too constantly points to the externality of forces at work in texts which cannot ever mark their own outside, and names as Platonic the effort to pretend that such demarcation can ever be complete. On this point, the affinity between Deleuze and Derrida needs to be emphasized and retained, precisely as we

constitute our own subjectivities in the “and so on” of Deleuze’s list, and figure the names Derrida and Deleuze in the assemblage of “the history of deconstruction.”

¹ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), 14.

² Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972-1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia UP, 1996), 8 [= N].

³ “What Does It Mean to be a French Philosopher Today?” in *Paper Machine*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005), 115 [= PM].

⁴ “Hermetic” in this context refers to an earlier question: “You are also rather hermetic. That’s what is most often held against you.” Derrida responds: “Hermetic? Definitely not. People who say that have obviously not tried to read other philosophers, such as the ‘classics.’ They’re much more difficult. You have to work around thought and language. I do everything I can, as a duty initially, to be intelligible and widely accessible. But at the same time without betraying what in fact isn’t simple in the things themselves” (PM 113).

⁵ Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt and trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 255. For examples of Derrida’s reflections on Benjamin, see the “Fichus” address (PM 164-181); and (especially), “Force of Law: The ‘Mystical Foundation of Authority,’” *Cardozo Law Review* 11 (1990), 921-1039. The interpretation of Benjamin’s “Theses” has supported its own cottage industry. I read him as resolutely materialist: see my “Reduced to a Zero-Point: Benjamin’s Critique of Kantian Historical Experience,” *Philosophical Forum* 31 (2000), 163-186. My own reading is broadly consonant with, and indebted to that found in: Rebecca Comay, “Benjamin’s Endgame,” in *Walter Benjamin’s Philosophy*, ed. Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne (London: Routledge, 1994), 251-291; Rolf Tiedemann, “Historical Materialism or Political

Messianism? An Interpretation of the Theses ‘On the Concept of History,’” *Philosophical Forum* 15 (1983), 71-104; and Raimar Zons and Horst Nitschack, “Walter Benjamins ‘Thesen Über den Begriff der Geschichte,’” *Zeitschrift für Philosophische Forschung* 34 (1980), 361-383.

⁶ There has been considerable recent interest in comparing the two, most notably the collection of essays in Paul Patton and John Protevi, eds., *Between Deleuze and Derrida* (New York: Continuum, 2003). But see also: Gordon C. F. Bearn, “Differentiating Derrida and Deleuze,” *Continental Philosophy Review* 33 (2000), 441-65 and Charles J. Stivale, “The Folds of Friendship: Derrida-Deleuze-Foucault,” *Angelaki* 5 (2000), 3-15.

⁷ Orthodox Marxism being defined here as the thought that economics determines social conditions “in the last instance.” The theoretical eclipse of orthodox Marxism in France began with Althusser’s development of “overdetermination:” see especially Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 1996) and Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 1970). Of the untranslated parts of the original *Lire le Capital*, of particular importance is Jacques Rancière, *Le concept de critique et la critique de l’économie politique des ‘Manuscrits de 1844’ au ‘Capital.’ Lire le Capital III* (Paris: François Maspero, 1973). Althusser’s work, often characterized as “structuralist,” suffered from the urge to produce a “scientific communist” knowledge. For overcoming these limitations, see also the important but now completely neglected commentary of Gerard Granél on Rancière: “L’ontologie marxiste de 1844 et la question de la ‘coupure,’” in *Traditionis traditio* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), 179-230. Other explicitly Marxian and materialist works which read Marx against orthodox Marxism include Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*, trans. Mark Poster (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1975);

Antonio Callari, Stephen Cullenberg and Carole Biewener, “Marxism in the New World Order: Crises and Possibilities,” in *Marxism in the Postmodern Age: Confronting the New World Order*, ed. Antonio Callari, Stephen Cullenberg and Carole Biewener (New York: Guilford Press, 1995), 1-10; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 2000); Douglas Kellner, “The End of Orthodox Marxism,” in *Marxism in the Postmodern Age*, 33-41; Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985); Antonio Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse*, trans. Harry Cleaver, Michael Ryan and Maurizio Viano (New York: Autonomedia, 1991); and Stephen A. Resnick and Richard D. Wolff, *Knowledge and Class: A Marxian Critique of Political Economy* (Chicago: U. Chicago Press, 1987).

⁸ On these topics from a slightly different angle, see Danielle Marx-Scouras, *The Cultural Politics of Tel Quel: Literature and the Left in the Wake of Engagement* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State U. Press, 1996). See also Andrew Wernick, “The Rhizomatic Genealogy of Deconstruction: Some Features of ‘The French,’” *Angelaki* 5 (2000), 137-49, discussing the complexities of the break with “humanism.”

⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia UP), 1994 [= DR]; Gilles Deleuze, *the Logic of Sense*, trans. Marc Lester with Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia UP), 1990 [= LS]; Jacques Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy,” in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: U. Chicago Press), 1981 [= PP].

¹⁰ Whether this is a “correct” reading of Plato is not the point here. I will use both “Plato” and “Platonism” to name the structure of thought articulated by Deleuze and Derrida, rather than to the texts of the historical Plato.

¹¹ One way of casting this in Deleuzian terms is as the loss of event; another is to characterize Deleuze as the philosopher of “intensity.” For “event,” see Michel Foucault, “Theatrum Philosophicum,” in *Language, Countermemory, Practice* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1977), esp. 172ff; for “intensity,” see Constantine Boundas, “An Ontology of Intensities,” *Epoché* 7 (2002), 15-38.

¹² Deleuze emphasizes the authenticating function as prior to the classifying one. For example, “our mistake lies in trying to understand Platonic division on the basis of Aristotelian requirements There is nothing in common [in Plato] with the concerns of Aristotle: it is not a question of identifying but of authenticating. The one problem which recurs throughout Plato’s philosophy is the problem of measuring rivals and selecting claimants” (DR 59-60). Cf. “Platonism thus founds the entire domain that philosophy will later recognize as its own: the domain of representation filled by copies-icons, and defined not by an extrinsic relation to an object, but by an intrinsic relation to the model or foundation” (LS 259).

¹³ The echo of Kafka is precise: there is hope, but not for us. It is also hard not to hear Adorno behind this thought: “the mutual indifference of temporality and eternal ideas is no longer tenable Our metaphysical faculty is paralyzed because actual events have shattered the basis on which speculative metaphysical thought could be reconciled with experience.” Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973), 361-2.

¹⁴ A full treatment of these issues would thus attend more closely to the figure of law, in particular as Derrida develops it, following Benjamin, in his “Force of Law.” Derrida writes there: “the word ‘enforceability’ reminds us that there is no such thing as law that doesn’t

imply *in itself, a priori, in the analytic structure of its concept*, the possibility of being ‘enforced,’ applied by force” (925); one should also note the ambiguous treatment of law in “Plato’s Pharmacy:” law functions as an ideal form of writing (113). Again, the point is not that writing is *per se* bad, but to distinguish good from bad writing.

¹⁵ See also Foucault, on the world of phantasmata: “we must articulate a philosophy of the phantasm that cannot be reduced to a primordial fact through the intermediary of perception or an image, but that arises between surfaces, where it assumes meaning Phantasms do not extend organisms into an imaginary domain; they topologize the materiality of the body” (“Theatrum,” 169-70).

¹⁶ The caution with which one should read Deleuze’s reversal of Platonism should perhaps be read in the context of the many vulgar efforts to read Marx as “reversing” Hegel, as when he remarks that “the mystification which dialectic suffers in Hegel’s hands by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general forms ... With him it is standing on its head. It must be inverted, in order to discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell It is in its essence critical and revolutionary” (*Capital*, Vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin, 1976), 103).

¹⁷ Deleuze is not such an anarchist, despite his usage of terms like “body without organs” and “crowned anarchies.” In lieu of a detailed demonstration, it will suffice to recall the following elliptical remark in the ek-static *Thousand Plateaus*, in which Deleuze and Guattari underscore that their point is theoretic: “There is, in fact, a joy that is immanent to desire as though desire were filled by itself and its contemplations, a joy that implies no lack of impossibility and is not measured by pleasure since it is what distributes intensities of pleasure and prevents them from being suffused by anxiety, shame, and guilt. In short, the

masochist uses suffering as a way of constituting a body without organs and bringing forth a plane of consistency of desire. That there are other ways, other procedures than masochism, and certainly better ones, is beside the point: it is enough that some find this procedure suitable for them” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Athlone, 1987), 155). One might also recall Nietzsche’s dictum: when you say yes to one joy, you say yes to all sorrow as well.

¹⁸ My usage of memorial and counter-memorial is indebted to James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1994). To transpose: a memorial is a “good copy” of memory, one that aspires to represent the official eidetic historical narrative and to disappear into that representation. A counter-memorial perverts this process. Thus, memorial: counter-memorial, as I use them here, map the Platonic memory: memorial.

¹⁹ Cf. also: “nor is it certain that it is only the sleep of reason which gives rise to monsters: it is also the vigil, the insomnia of thought, since thought is that moment in which determination makes itself one, by virtue of maintaining a unilateral and precise relation to the indeterminate. Thought ‘makes’ difference, but difference is monstrous. We should not be surprised that difference should appear accursed, that it should be error, sin or the figure of evil for which there must be expiation. There is no sin other than raising the ground and dissolving the form” (DR 29).

²⁰ In Marx’s terms, the ground is a “manufactured originary state [*erdichtete Urzustand*]” which “sets out in the form of a fact, the events it should deduce” (“*Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*,” MEGA² I/2, 364).

²¹ On this, see Claudia Barrachi, *Of Myth, Life and War in Plato's Republic* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2002).

²² Levi died April 11, 1987; the interview appeared in *Futur Antérieur* 1 (Spring 1990).

²³ “Mit *China* und den *Mongolen*, dem Reiche der theokratischen Herrschaft, beginnt die Geschichte.” *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte. Werke* 12 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1986), 143.

²⁴ *Negotiations*, 6. Derrida favorably cites him on this, declaring a particular affinity regarding their shared “thesis” “concerning an irreducible difference in opposition to dialectical opposition” (*Work of Mourning*, 192-3).

²⁵ “Von den einzelnen Teilen Asiens haben wir schon als ungeschichtliche ausgeschieden: Hochasien, soweit und solange die Nomaden desselben nicht auf den geschichtlichen Boden heraustreten, und Siberien” (143). In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari return this problematic to that of writing: “it is the despot who establishes the practice of writing ... it is the imperial formation that makes graphism into a system of writing in the proper sense of the term. Legislation, bureaucracy, accounting, the collection of taxes, the State monopoly, imperial justice, the functionaries’ activity, historiography: everything is written in the despot’s procession” (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone, 1983), 202).

²⁶ “Indem das Vorgeschichtliche das ist, was dem Staatsleben vorangeht, liegt es jenseits des selbstbewußten Lebens” (142).

²⁷ Whether or not Marx reifies labor and constructs thereby another transcendental history is too complicated of a topic to develop here. For the argument that he does not, and that the category of labor is to be interpreted as immanent to capitalism, see Moishe Postone, *Time*,

labor and social domination: A reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory (Cambridge: CUP, 1993).

²⁸ *Capital*, 21. For the Epicurus dissertation, see *Differenz der demokritischen und epikureischen Naturphilosophie nebst einem Anhang*, *Marx-Engels Werke I Supp.* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1968), 257-373. The Spinoza notebooks are at MEGA² IV/1, 233-276. For dating and notes on the manuscript, see MEGA² IV/1, 773ff; for discussion, see my "Marx's Anomalous Reading of Spinoza," *Interpretation* 28:1 (Fall 2000), 17-31.

²⁹ Hence, e.g., Spinoza is incorporated into Hegel's system as a moment, no longer Spinoza but Hegel's Spinoza. For the radical incompatibility of Spinoza and Hegel, see Pierre Macherey, *Hegel ou Spinoza* (Paris: François Maspero, 1979). Macherey precisely emphasizes Spinoza's resistance to incorporation as a subordinate element: Spinoza "élimine de sa conception du réel, de la substance, toute idée d'une subordination hiérarchique entre de éléments: la pensée, comme attribut de la substance, est identique à tout, et n'a donc rien au-dessus d'elle Cette subordination [of matter to thought in Hegel], qui installe dans le mouvement rationnel une hiérarchie de formes, est la clé de la téléologie hégélienne: c'est cette téléologie qu'élimine Spinoza" (93).

³⁰ See also the interview earlier in *Paper Machine* (PM 30-1), where Derrida wonders aloud whether Plato would have had to rethink his ontology had he been exposed to the word processor. If what I am saying about the political structure of Platonism is correct, the answer is "no:" he would only have to change "the rhetoric of his teaching," or perhaps, the technology which he favors.

³¹ An affirmation of nomadism occurs in a very different vein in Hardt and Negri, *Empire*. Hardt and Negri's thought is that all social relations and work are now capitalist, so social

antagonism can only express itself in those who refuse work altogether, or who nomadically refuse to have their movements governed by capital (393-413).

³² “Eating Well,” in *Points... Interviews, 1974-1994*, ed. Elisabeth Weber and trans. Peggy Kamuf, *et. al.* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995), 255-287: 264 [= EW].

³³ Note that Derrida emphasizes, even here, in “Eating Well,” that Husserl himself moved beyond this myth: “how can one forget that even in the most marked transcendental idealism, that of Husserl, even where the origin of the world is described, after the phenomenological reduction, as originary consciousness in the form of the ego, even in a phenomenology that determines the Being of beings as an object in general for a subject in general, even in this great philosophy of the transcendental subject, the interminable genetic (so-called passive) analyses of the ego, of time and of the alter ego lead back to a pre-egological and pre-subjectivist zone. There is, therefore, at the heart of what passes for and presents itself as a transcendental idealism, a horizon of questioning that is no longer dictated by the egological form of subjectivity or intersubjectivity” (263).

³⁴ Jacques Derrida, “I’m Going to Have to Wander all Alone,” in *The Work of Mourning*, ed. Pascal-Anne Brault and Michel Naas (Chicago: U. Chicago Press, 2001), 192. Originally in English in *Philosophy Today* 42 (1998), 3-5. For thoughts on the “friendship” between Derrida and Deleuze, via Blanchot, see Stivale, “Folds of Friendship.”

³⁵ The most extreme version of the thesis I have found is in Bearn, according to whom “the difference between Derrida and Deleuze is simple and deep: it is the difference between No and Yes ... the difference between Derrida’s No, which reeks of the thick smell of Schopenhauer ... and Deleuze’s Yes, blowing in, fresh and salty, off Nietzsche’s new seas” (441).

³⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans., Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1992). Original text: *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1968). One should thus note both that the Spinoza book is contemporaneous with the writing on Platonism in *Difference and Repetition*, and that the Spinoza text treats expression precisely as a problem.

³⁷ For an extended discussion of this passage and its infelicities as a presentation of Spinoza, see Julie R. Klein, "Nature's Metabolism: On Eating in Derrida, Agamben, and Spinoza," *Research in Phenomenology* 33 (2003), 186-217.

³⁸ Derrida's long involvement in these polemics need not be catalogued here. He points out on a number of occasions that Heidegger's detractors (as well as his own) have, by and large, not read that which they dismiss, an observation that surely applied to Spinoza as well. For an extremely lucid critique of the "postmodernism is always bad" argument, defending Derrida in particular, see Keith Jenkins, "A Postmodern Reply to Perez Zagorin," *History and Theory* 39 (2000), 181-200. Examples could of course be multiplied.

³⁹ Spinoza, *The Ethics*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), I Appx, trans. modified. Original text: Benedictus de Spinoza, *Opera*, ed. Carl Gebhardt (Heidelberg, 1925). Apropos of the current situation, William E. Connolly writes that "Spinoza draws attention to how the results of the struggle between the positive and negative passions that always circulate in a society infuse the state, economy, and religious dispositions" ("The Evangelical Capitalist Resonance Machine," *Political Theory* 33 (2005), 869-886: 877).

⁴⁰ Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), Preface, 3.

⁴¹ Derrida: “the truth of writing, that is, as we shall see, (the) nontruth, cannot be discovered in ourselves by ourselves. And it is not the object of a science, only of a history that is recited, a fable that is repeated” (PP 74). Cf. Deleuze’s remarks on creating concepts; the point to emphasize is the fabular nature of historical writing, because this fabular nature entails, as a consequence, the political nature of historical writing. As a piece of historical writing, then, the present essay’s political intention is precisely to politicize continental philosophy. From such a point of view, Platonism might be viewed as the dream that thought could efface its political character through the pure presence of memory and the ideas.

⁴² One is immediately reminded of Marx’s “Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte:” “During the June days [of 1848] all classes and parties that had united as the *party of order* were against the proletarian class as the *party of anarchy* ... They had ‘saved’ society from ‘the enemies of society.’ They had made the catchphrases of the old society, ‘*property, family, religion, order*’ into military passwords” (*Later Political Writings*, ed. Terrell Carver (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), 39-40, emphasis in original).