The Reality of the Virtual: Bergson and Deleuze

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For Henri Bergson, individuated matter, what he calls a living center of action or zone of indetermination, develops in terms of a virtual-actual circuit. in other words, the individuated and living body is the site of the condition of possibility of the virtual. Pearson focuses attention on the subject of the virtual as readers encountered it in Bergson.

[Reference]

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MM Matter and Memory. Trans. N. M. Paul & W. Scott Palmer. New York: Zone Books, 199
O Oeuvres. Paris: PUF, 1959.

Gilles Deleuze

B Le bergsonisme. Paris: PUF, 1966; Bergsonism. Trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam. New York: Zone Books, 1991.
CTI Cinema 2: L'Image-Temps. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1985; Cinema 2: The Time Image. Trans. H. Tomlinson & R. Galeta. London: Continuum Press, 1989.
DR Différence et répétition. Paris: PUF, 1968; Difference and Repetition. Trans. P. Patton. London: Continuum Press, 1994.
PS Proust et les signes. Paris: PUF, 1998; Proust and Signs. Trans. R. Howard. London: Continuum Press, 2000.

Marcel Proust

RTP À la recherche du temps perdu. Bibliotheque de la Pleiade: Gallimard, 1954, in three volumes.
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Questions relating to subject and object, to their distinction and their union, should be put in terms of time rather than of space.

Henri Bergson, Matter and Memory
Time is not the interior in us, but just the opposite, the interiority in which we are, in which we move, live and change . . . Subjectivity is never ours, it is time, that is, the soul or the spirit, the virtual.

Gilles Deleuze, Cinema 2: The Time-Image

Bergson: Understanding the Virtual

In his 1966 text Bergsonism, Gilles Deleuze wrote that, "A philosophy such as this assumes that the notion of the virtual stops being vague and indeterminate" (B 96; 94). Today, however, the notion is widely treated in imprecise and ill-defined terms, namely, as all the other stuff that is not actual, something like the universe in its totality and unfathomable complexity. Such a view of the virtual, however, distorts the crucial insights Henri Bergson is forging in Matter and Memory (henceforth abbreviated to MM). For Bergson it is the part that is virtual and the whole that is real. He strips matter of virtuality in order to show that, strictly speaking, a virtual life belongs only to subjectivity (we have virtual perception, virtual action, and virtual memory). For Bergson, individuated matter, what he calls a living center of action or zone of indetermination, develops in terms of a virtual-actual circuit (O 249; MM 104). In other words, the individuated and living body is the site of the condition of possibility of the virtual. In Bergson and Deleuze, the notion of the virtual works in the context of specific problems and operates on a number of different planes. In this respect it requires a pluralist ontology since one can speak of diverse modalities of the virtual, even though one is, in fact, speaking of a being of the virtual: for example, one can speak of the virtual or partial object, of the virtual image, virtual memory, and so on. In the first section of the essay I shall focus attention on the subject of the virtual as we encounter it in Bergson; in the second section I shall turn my attention to Deleuze's treatment of subjectivity in the case of virtual memory.
Of prime importance to Bergson in MM is "the progress of living matter," which is said to consist in a differentiation of function that leads to the production of a nervous system and its increasing complexification, involving the canalization of excitations and the organization of action. At the end of MM, Bergson configures his argument concerning the difference between matter and memory in relation to the duality of freedom and necessity. He maintains that although it is erroneous to construe freedom in nature as an "impmum in impmo," nature itself can be regarded as a neutralized and latent consciousness (O 377; MM 248). When the first gleams of an individual consciousness are thrown upon it they are said not to do so in terms of an unheralded light. This is because such a consciousness simply removes

an obstacle by extracting from the real whole a part that is virtual. The more that living matter complexifies, the more it transforms this virtual into spontaneous action and unforeseen movements. As the higher centers of the nervous system develop, there takes place a significant increase in the number of motor paths among which the same excitations allow a living system to choose or select. This results, on the one hand, in increasing latitude to movement in space and, on the other, a growing and accompanying tension of consciousness in time. A complex system is one that lives with an intense life since it contracts an expanding number of external moments in its present duration. It thus becomes capable of creating free acts-acts of inner determination-which are spread out over a multiplicity of moments of matter and that pass through the meshes of necessity.

Freedom, then, has to be seen as intimately organized with necessity, and memory is bound up with matter. For Bergson, while a more complex organization of the nervous system assures a greater independence of a living system in relation to matter, it is itself only to be regarded as the material symbol of this independence. Between brute matter and the reflective mind there are all possible intensities of memory and degrees of freedom. The nervous system is the "material symbol" of the inner energy that constitutes memory for Bergson. It is the energy of memory which allows the living being to free itself from the rhythm of the flow of things and, in this way, to retain in an increasingly higher degree the past in order to influence the future. In other words, the development of the sensori-motor system is the external manifestation of the growing intensity of life which consists in higher tensions of duration.

It is in terms of the difference between matter and memory that we can best appreciate the "sense" of the virtual. For the purposes of demonstrating the specific invention of memory, matter will be stripped of virtuality-it is what it is and as it is perceived, it contains no hidden powers-while the virtual is said to be the existence that is "proper to things of l'esprit" (O 371; MM 242). In order to make better sense of this, it is necessary to examine in some detail the duality of matter and the living at work in Matter and Memory.

Bergson asks: how do we carve out the continuity of material extensity into bodies which have their own substance and individuality? This is a continuity which, in its aspects, changes from moment to moment. If this is the case, then why not simply say that it is the whole that is changing, like the turning of a kaleidoscope? The material universe is a moving whole, given to us through a primary perception, and yet we also speak of bodies with clearly defined outlines and that move in terms of their relations with each other. The problem that concerns Bergson is not the nature of this division-a division between the moving continuity of the whole and the movement of individuated parts-but rather how the intellect, as a faculty of abstraction, generates the illusion of bodies changing in homogeneous space, which

is then extended to time itself. He insists that this is not a teaching of immediate intuition. Moreover, science provides insight into this universal continuity through its demonstration of a reciprocal action of all the material points and zones upon each other, thus rediscovering the natural articulations of a universe which has been carved out only artificially. Bergson then turns his attention to life. It is necessary, he argues, to deal with tendencies that are to be explained by the necessity of living. By 'living' Bergson means the formation of distinct material zones, in short, bodies. It is my own body and that of others that I have the most right to distinguish in the continuity of the universe. A body is led by its various needs-the need for food, or the need for self-preservation, for example-to distinguish and constitute other bodies. It is the life of living bodies, therefore, that establishes a primary discontinuity within matter: "To establish these special relations among portions thus carved out from sensible reality is just what we call living" (O 334; MM 198).

The natural illusion is generated, however, that the image of the universe formed by a distinct material zone corresponds to the real nature of things (for example, our penchant for conceiving matter in terms of atoms and movement in terms of discrete points or instants of time). Bergson is doing two things. On the one hand, he is trying to give an evolutionary account of the formation of bodies and to show how discontinuity is a real feature of matter; on the other hand, he is also seeking to practise philosophy beyond the human condition, that is, beyond our evolved habits of representation. It is these habits, which can be explained and understood as necessary features of the vital activity of a living center of indétermination, that block insight into the moving continuity of the whole. This is why, then, Bergson holds that "every philosophy of nature ends by finding it [discontinuity] incompatible with the general properties of matter" (O 337; MM 201). Discontinuity is both real and relative to the needs of our body. A theory of matter will thus seek to locate the "reality hidden beneath" our customary images of the universe which are relative to our diagrammatic designs upon reality. This theory will show us matter as concrete extensity and an extended continuum pervaded by "modifications, perturbations, changes of tension or of energy and nothing else" (ibid.). We will be led to contest the idea of an extension modeled along the lines of an abstract space, which is nothing more than a mental diagram of infinite divisibility, as well as our construction of an imaginary homogeneous time which is a fiction and idol of language: ". . . it is possible to imagine many different rhythms which, slower or faster, measure the degree of tension or relaxation of different kinds of consciousness . . ." (O 342; MM 207). The action of my body upon things is constituted by a particular rhythm of duration. If this is removed the material universe continues to subsist exactly as it was. Once our vision of matter is freed from the exigencies of life we discover that it resolves itself into numberless vibrations that are linked together in an

uninterrupted continuity. The philosophy of nature shows us that the separation between a thing and its environment is neither definite nor clear-cut: "the close solidarity which binds all the objects of the material universe, the perpetuality of their reciprocal actions and reactions, is sufficient to prove that they have not the precise limits which we attribute to them" (O 344; MM 209). The conclusion is inescapable: homogeneous space and homogeneous time are neither properties of things themselves nor essential conditions of our faculty of knowledge. They express the work of solidification and division that a body effects on the moving continuity of the real in order to assure for itself a fulcrum for action and to introduce into it real changes (O 345; MM 211).

It is with this account of material bodies that Bergson believes he can steer a course between metaphysical dogmatism on the one hand (the view that homogeneous space and time are real properties of things), and Kant's critical philosophy on the other (the view that they are merely forms of our sensibility), since both err in attributing to space and time an interest that is purely speculative (an interest of knowledge rather than action). This construal of perception in terms of a theory of action is able to explain the division of matter into independent objects in terms of a living body's construction of a network beneath concrete extensity, one that enables it to alter the meshes to fit various shapes that correspond to the needs of action. On the one hand, this leads to an ideal diagram of arbitrary and infinite divisibility and, on the other, to the solidification of the continuous flow of things into contracted sensible qualities, which is the work of memory: "It prolongs the past into the present, because our action will dispose of the future in the exact proportion in whichour perception, enlarged by memory, has contracted the past" (O 344-45; MM 210). Free or indeterminate actions are ones that delay re-action, meaning that action is no longer restricted to a present and one that is always beginning again.

Bergson's aim in the book is to expose the impasse of "ordinary dualism"-a dualism that, in short, places matter in space and unextended sensations in consciousness-and to unfold the correct dualism between matter and memory. The movement from matter to memory is necessary to account for the mode of existence tliat is peculiar to individual consciousness. The material universe, conceived as the totality of images, can be treated as a kind of consciousness, one in which everything neutralizes everything else, and in which all the potential parts reciprocally hinder each other from standing out. It is through the retention of the past in the present that consciousness escapes the law of necessity (a law of bare, material repetition).

If matter has no mysterious virtue, then the virtual cannot denote some nebulous property or abstract feature of it (O 218; MM 71). Bergson illustrates this point himself with the example of the nervous system conceived as a material mass with

qualities of color, resistance, and cohesion. Now, although the nervous system may possess unperceived physical properties, this is all it possesses. It serves to receive and to inhibit or transmit movement. The virtual has to be situated elsewhere as an emergent property of living systems. A clue is found in Bergson's claim that perception "bears to its physiological counterpart the relation of a virtual action to an action begun . . ." (O 366; MM 235). It is owing to the fact that neither perception nor memory is reducible to the movements of the cerebral mass-they are bound up with the components of the material universe-that the virtual requires a specific determination. Bergson explains its emergence as follows:

... if we suppose an extended continuum, and, in this continuum, the center of real action which is represented by our body, its activity will appear to illuminate all those parts of matter with which at each successive moment it can deal. The same needs, the same power of action, which have delimited our body in matter will also carve out distinct bodies in the surrounding medium. Everything will happen as if we allowed to filter through us that action of external things which is real, in order to arrest and retain that which is virtual: this virtual action of things upon our body and of our body upon things is our perception itself. (O 363; MM 232)

The mapping of such a body needs complicating by taking into account extensity and duration, as well their corresponding subjective aspects, which are affectivity and memory. No living body exists as a mathematical point in space and no perception takes place in a mathematical instant in time. The point has been established, however, that virtual action and perception require the existence of individuated bodies that delay their re-actions and that perceive a distance between themselves. Perception measures the possible action of a body upon things, and vice versa. The greater its power of action, which is owing essentially to a higher degree of complexity in the nervous system, then the wider the field becomes that is open to perception. Memory operates in terms of a similar virtuality, beginning with a virtual state and leading step by step up to the point where it gets materialized in an actual perception. Pure memory consists, and can only subsist, in this virtual state. Now, between the plane of action and the plane of this pure memory there exist, Bergson suggests, "thousands of different planes of consciousness" (O 371; MM 241). These planes are diverse repetitions of the whole of a lived experience, which are not simply given as ready-made things superposed upon one another, but exist only virtually.

Bergson introduces a complex notion of representation to highlight the difference between an actual present and the virtual that exceeds presence. The objective reality of a present image consists in the fact that it acts "through every one of its points upon all the points of all other images"; in short, it transmits "the whole of what it receives ... in every direction, the modifications propagated throughout the immensity of the universe" (O 186; MM 36). Bergson's key argument is to point out

that in order to pass from matter to perception or from the objective to the subjective, it is not necessary to add anything but, on the contrary, only that something be subtracted. In other words, consciousness functions not by throwing more light on an object but by obscuring some of its aspects. This is why he argues that representation "is always there, but always virtual." It is neutralized, "at the very moment when it might become actual, by the obligation to continue itself and to lose itself in something else" (ibid.). The virtual in this context, then, is doing quite specific work, and it is bound up intimately with the activity of a living centre of indétermination. It does not name some vague, ill-defined amorphous stuff, such as that which is said to impact upon our bodies from the outside. When Bergson argues that the virtual becomes actual at that moment when a living centre suppresses those parts of an object that do not interest its functions, what we have is a virtual-actual circuit that defines the becoming peculiar to individuated forms of matter. It is for this reason that the virtual has its own determinations. Perception can now be compared to a virtual image. In a crucial passage, Bergson writes:

When a ray of light passes from one medium into another, it usually traverses it with a change of direction. But the respective densities of the two media may be such that, for a given angle of incidence, refraction is no longer possible. Then we have total reflection. The luminous point gives rise to a virtual image which symbolizes, so to speak, the fact that the luminous rays cannot pursue their way. Perception is just a phenomenon of the same kind. That which is given is the totality of the images of the material world, with the totality of their internal elements. But, if we suppose centers of real, that is to say of spontaneous activity, the rays which reach it, and which interest that activity, instead of passing through those centers, will appear to be reflected and this to indicate the outlines of the object which emits them. There is nothing positive here, nothing added to the image, nothing new. The objects merely abandon something of their real action in order to manifest their virtual influence of the living being upon them ... (O 187; MM 37)

In short, then, our representation of matter is an invention in the specific sense that it is the measure of our possible action among bodies. Although impoverished in certain respects-namely, in the fact that it only attains to certain aspects of objects-conscious perception contains something positive, it "foretells spirit: it is, in the etymological sense of the word, discernment" (O 188; MM 38).

I have suggested that there are different modes of being regarding the virtual, and I now wish to address the virtual character of memory, which concerns the pure past. It is on this plane of virtuality that Deleuze will make his key innovations with regard to time and subjectivity. On this virtual memory Bergson argues: "Whenever we are trying to recover a recollection, to call up some period of our history, we become conscious of an act sui generis by which we detach ourselves from the present in

order to replace ourselves, first, in the past in general, then, in a certain region of the past-a work of adjustment like the focusing of a camera. But our recollection still remains virtual . . ." (O 276-77; MM 133-34).

It is in the essay of 1908 on die "Memory of the Present and False Recognition" that the innovative character of Bergson's conception of a pure past is perhaps best displayed. Bergson is keen to revise our prevailing idea about how recollections are formed and how memory operates. In short, his innovation is to suggest that a recollection is created alongside an actual perception: "Either the present leaves no trace in memory, or it is twofold at every moment, its very up-rush being in two jets exactly symmetrical, one of which falls back towards the past whilst the other springs forward towards the future" (O 914; ME 160). The illusion that memory comes after perception arises from the nature of practical consciousness, namely, the fact that it is only the forward-springing jet that interests it. Memory becomes superfluous and devoid of actual interest. But it is precisely because of this lack of interest and suspension of need that it can reveal itself as a disruptive and creative power and in spite of its demotion by consciousness to a more feeble form of perception. In insisting that memory is not a simple duplication of an unrolling actual existence, in which it would be possible to live twice through one and the same moment of a history, Bergson is granting the virtual an autonomous power. The disruptive and creative power of memory works contra the law of consciousness, suggesting that for Bergson there is something "illegal" or unlawful about its virtuality: "In a general way, or by right, the past only reappears to consciousness in the measure in which it can aid us to understand the present and to foresee the future. It is the forerunner of action" (O 923-24; ME 175). Because consciousness is bound up with an "attentiveness" to the life of praxis, it "only admits, legally," those recollections which provide a resistance to the present action (O 925; ME 177). This explains Bergson's interest in the anomalies of the life of "spirit," one that will come to inform Deleuze's analyses in the two Cinema books, such as deliriums, dreams, hallucinations, etc., which, Bergson insists, are "positive facts" that consist in the presence, and not in the absence, of something: "They seem to introduce into the mind certain new ways of feeling and thinking" (O 909; ME 151).

For Deleuze it is pure recollection that is the plane of pure virtuality. This is what distinguishes the virtual image peculiar to memory. Although recollection-images and dreams are variants of virtual images they exist as actualized in the psychological states of consciousness. Furthermore, while "they are necessarily actualized in relation to a new present, in relation to a different present from the one that they have been," and proceed in terms of a chronological succession, the virtual image in its pure state (pure recollection) cannot be defined simply in accordance with a new present in relation to which it would be past (CTI 79-80).

Deleuze seeks to transform our image of time from an organic one to a crystal one.

Such an image is modeled on Bergson's notion of jets of time and serves to capture the "bursting forth of life" in which time splits and divides into two flows, the presents that pass and the pasts that are preserved. The crystal-image serves to complicate the evolution of a living centre of indétermination, removing it from the realm of presence and complexifying the levels of the virtual into sheets and strata. It is true that Deleuze is keen to develop the theory of the virtual in the direction of ontology. This is because he wants to show that there is a being of the virtual which, although peculiar to a complex, individuated form of life such as us, is not reducible to a psychological consciousness. The virtual image for him is essentially pure recollection (the being of memory), and it is this image that constitutes the virtual-actual circuit, as opposed to an actualization of the virtual in accordance with a shifting actual. In short, this is for Deleuze the being of time, and it is we who exist and become in time, not time that exists in us, and even though time is subjectivity. Hence Deleuze's curious claim that "Subjectivity is never ours, it is time, that is, the soul, or the spirit, the virtual" (CTI 110; 82-83).

Deleuze: Conquering the Virtual

Deleuze is widely taken to be a philosopher of the virtual. According to one reader, for example, Deleuze is a classical philosopher committed to an ontology of the One and for whom the virtual is the name of Being (Badiou 2000, 46). However, it is also the case that in Deleuze the virtual is subjected to a critical treatment. An encounter with the virtual in Deleuze cannot be carried out independently of appreciating the specific work to which it is put in his thinking. I wish to demonstrate this point by looking at his treatment of the virtual power of memory in his book on Proust, especially its expanded second edition.

The reflective treatment in Proust's À la recherche du temps perdu of the shock of the past emerging in a resplendent and brilliant way takes place in the context of the narrator's realization that the sensations afforded by sensuous signs, such as the uneven pavingstones, the stiffness of the napkin, and the taste of the madeleine, have no connection with what he had attempted to recall, with the aid of an undifferentiated memory, of the places attached to them, such as Venice, Balbec, and Combray. He comes to understand the reason why life is judged to be trivial although at certain moments or singular points it appears to us as beautiful. The reason is that we judge ordinarily "on the evidence not of life itself but of those quite different images which preserve nothing of life-and therefore we judge it disparagingly" (RTP 3, 869; SLT 3, 902). The narrator is struck by the fact that life is not truly lived in the moments of its passing where we find ourselves too immersed in immediate enjoyments and social rituals and activities. The unanticipated experiences afforded by involuntary memory go beyond the realm of egotistical pleasures and actually cause us to doubt the reality and existence of our normal self. The contemplation of these "fragments of existence withdrawn from

Time," although fugitive, provides the narrator with the only genuine pleasures he has known and which is deemed by him to be far superior to social pleasures or the pleasures of friendship. The narrator speaks of immobilizing time, of liberating fragments of time from their implication in a ceaseless flow, so as to have this comprehension of "eternity" and the "essence of things" (RTP 3, 876; SLT 3, 909). The fortuitous fashion of our encounter with the images that are brought into being by the sensations of involuntary memory vouchsafes for him their authenticity. The "trueness of the past" that is brought back to life will not be found through either conscious perception or conscious recollection. The book of reality will be made up of impressions and will devote itself to the task of extracting the "truth" of each impression, "however trivial its material, however faint its traces." Through this process the mind will be led to "a state of greater perfection and given a pure joy" (RTP 880; SLT 914). The impression serves the writer in the same way the experiment serves the scientist. The difference between the writer and the scientist, however, is that whereas intelligence always precedes the experiment, for the writer intelligence always comes after the impression. For the narrator this means that the "ideas formed by the pure intelligence have no more than a logical, a possible truth, they are arbitrarily chosen. The book whose hieroglyphs are patterns not traced by us is the only book that really belongs to us" (ibid.).

The presentation in the novel of a fragment of the past takes place at almost the midway-point in the final part of the novel, "Time Regained." The narrator probes the nature of this moment of the past, asking whether it was not perhaps something much more, "common both to the past and the present" and more essential than either of them. The experience is one in which the "harsh law" of reality in which we can only imagine what is absent and in which imagination is seen as a failure is neutralized. This law is temporarily annulled,

> by a marvellous expedient of nature which had caused a sensation-the noise made both by the spoon and by the hammer, for instance-to be mirrored [miroiter] at one and the same time in the past, so that my imagination was permitted to savour it, and in the present, where the actual shock to my senses of the noise, the touch of the linen napkin, or whatever it might be, had added to the dreams of the imagination the concept of "existence" which they usually lack, and through this subterfuge [et grâce à ce subterfuge] had made it possible for my being to secure, to isolate, to immobilise for the duration of a lightning flash [la durée d'un éclair]-what it normally never apprehends: a fragment of time in the pure state [un peu de temps à l'état pur]. (RTP 3, 872-73; SLT 3, 905-06, translation slightly modified)

The narrator stresses that this experience is impossible except under specific conditions. We need to have suspended our ordinary, intellectual relation to the world, in which time is essentially calculative and in which we preserve bits of the

past only for some narrow utilitarian purpose.

But let a noise or a scent, once heard or smelt, be heard or smelt again in the present and at the same time in the past, real without being actual, ideal without being abstract, and immediately the permanent and habitually concealed essence of things is liberated and our true self which seemed-had perhaps for long years seemed-to be dead but was not altogether dead, is awakened and reanimated as it receives the celestial nourishment that is brought to it. A minute freed from the order of time has re-created in us, to feel it, the man freed from the order of time. And one can understand that this man should have confidence in his joy, even if the simple taste of a madeleine does not seem logically to contain within it the reasons for this joy, one can understand that the word "death" should have no meaning for him; situated outside time, why should he fear the future?

But this species of optical illusion [ce trompe-l'oeil], which placed beside me a moment of the past that was incompatible with the present, could not last for long. . . . (RTP 3, 872-73; SLT 905-06, translation slightly modified; my double emphasis)1

The discovery of lost time enables the artist to give a new truth to the times of life, including time past, and to find for every sign embedded in materiality a "spiritual equivalent" (RTP 878; SLT 912). However, we need to determine the nature of the experience that is being described in the passage and that is said to be neither simply of the past nor of the present. There is also the encounter with the virtual, that which is said to be "real without being actual, ideal without being abstract." The virtual has to be comprehended as a complex and ambiguous sign of life since, as Deleuze will show, it is implicated in a "forced movement." The order of time the narrator refers to is clearly what we take to be normal empirical time, time that is linear and successive. For Deleuze this order conceals a more complicated transcendental form of time (the splitting of time in two directions), which, in turn, must also give way to a pure, empty form of time. The transcendental form of time is not ordinarily visible to us, which is why Deleuze comes up with an image of time to make it thinkable: "What constitutes the crystal-image is the most fundamental operation of time: since the past is constituted not after the present that it was but at the same time, time has to split itself in two at each moment as present and past, which differ from each other in nature, or, what amounts to the same thing, it has to split the present in two heterogeneous directions, one of which is launched towards the future while the other falls into the past" (CTI 108-09; 81). Deleuze goes on to note that it is Bergson who shows us that this splitting of time never goes right to the end, which accounts for the strange and bewildering exchange that takes place in the "crystal" between the virtual and the actual (the virtual image of the past and the actual image of the present). The key Bergsonian insight for Deleuze is that time is not the interior in us but rather the opposite; it is the interiority in which we move, live, and change (on time that is neither empirical

nor metaphysical but transcendental see Deleuze, CTI 355; 271).
Deleuze poses a set of questions. First, what is the source of the extraordinary joy that we feel in the present sensation (of the past coming back to life)? This is a joy so powerful that it makes us indifferent to death. The episode in the novel of the grandmother's death is so important because here we have an experience of involuntary memory that does not bring joy-the joy of time lost or wasted being regained-but of terrible anguish and paralysis. second, how do we explain the lack of resemblance between the two sensations that are past and present? That is, how can we account for the fact that Combray rises up in this experience not as it was experienced in contiguity with a past sensation (the madeleine), but in a splendor and with a "truth" that has no equivalent in empirical reality? This is what Deleuze calls Combray created as an event.'2 The reason why Combray rises up in a new form is because it is a past that is not relative to either the present that it once was or to a present in relation to which it is now held to be past. Deleuze calls this an experience of Combray "not in its reality, but in its truth" and in its "internalized difference" (it is a Combray made to appear not simply in terms of its external or contingent relations) (PS 72; 57).
What escapes voluntary memory is "the past's being as past" (ibid.). The problem with this as a model of time is that it cannot explain its object, namely, time. Over and over and again, Deleuze insists that if the present was not past at the same time as present, if the same moment did not coexist with itself as present and past, then it would never pass and a new present would never arrive to replace this one. In short, the past is formed at the same time as the present, in a virtual co-existence of the two. This, of course, is Bergson's essential insight into the formation of time. On one level, therefore, the demands of conscious perception and voluntary memory establish a real succession; on another level, however, there is virtual coexistence. The past is experienced on more than one level, as both the passing of time and as that which is outside normal successive time, a little piece of time in its pure state. But this "pure state" is also a complicated sign of life; it enjoys a double existence, half outside of time (neither of the past nor of the present) and also in death.
But what are we to make of the fact of death in an experience of involuntary memory, as in the painful realization of the full force of the grandmother's being-dead that gives rise to an encounter with the Idea of death? This death seems to haunt life, to highlight the contingent nature of our affections and attachments, and to rob life of any enduring meaning or sense. How can thought work the Idea of death, supposing it can? There is no doubt that this episode presents the narrator of Proust's novel with a serious challenge:
. . . I was determined not merely to suffer, but to respect the original form of my suffering as it had suddenly come upon me unawares, and I wanted to continue to

feel it, following its own laws, whatever that contradiction of survival and annihilation, so strangely intertwined within me, returned. I did not know whether I should one day distil a grain of truth from this painful and for the moment incomprehensible impression, but I knew that if I ever did extract some truth from life, it could only be from such an impression and from none other, an impression at once so particular and so spontaneous, which had neither been traced by my intelligence nor attenuated by my pusillanimity, but which death itself, the sudden revelation of death, striking like a thunderbolt, had carved within me, along a supernatural and inhuman graph, in a double and mysterious furrow. (As for the state of forgetfulness of my grandmother in which I had been living until that moment, I could not even think of clinging to it to find some truth; since in itself it was nothing but a negation, a weakening of the faculty of thought incapable of recreating a real moment of life and obliged to substitute for it conventional and neutral images.) (RTP 2, 75960; SLT 2, 786-87)

For Deleuze the key to producing an adequate reading of this experience is to refer back to the phrase "a little piece of time in its pure state." Deleuze seeks to show that the idea of death consists of a certain effect of time. The idea of death must lead to a truth of time being disclosed. What is the specific effect of time that produces the idea of death? Deleuze argues as follows: with two given states of the same person-the earlier that we remember, the present that we experience-the impression of aging from one to the other has the effect of pushing the earlier moment into a remote, improbable past. It feels as if geological periods have intervened. The movement of time, from past to present, is "doubled by a forced movement of greater amplitude," it sweeps away the two moments, stresses the gap between them, and pushes the past far back in time. It is quite different from the echo of resonance produced in the madeleine experience, because in this experience we are presented with an infinite dilation of time and not a contraction of it to a maximum degree, as is the case with the former experience. This leads Deleuze to propose that the idea of death be treated "less as a severance than an effect of mixture or confusion" in which the "amplitude of the forced movement is as much taken up by the living as by the dead; all are dying, half dead, or racing to the grave" (PS 191; 159). This halfdeath, however, is also of significance in an unexpected way, a way that the narrator cannot see at the time of the experience of the involuntary memory of the grandmother and the shocking confrontation with the fact of her death: ". . . at the heart of the excessive amplitude of the movement, we can describe men as monstrous beings," that is, as those who occupy in time a much more considerable place than the one reserved for them in space (ibid.).

How is it possible to surmount the objection or contradiction of death? Deleuze argues that death ceases to be an objection to the extent that it can be integrated

into an "order of production, thus giving it its place in the work of art" (PS 192; 160). More specifically, he writes: "The forced movement of great amplitude is a machine that produces the effect of withdrawal or the idea of death" (ibid.). The encounter with death is another way in which the force and sensation of time are disclosed and experienced. The idea of death, therefore, necessarily relies upon an optics and a perspectivism. Like the virtual, it occupies a place within life. It is not, therefore, so much that the dead become distant from us as time goes by, but rather that we become distant from them: the dead die for us through our occupying a place within the forced movement of time. The essential insight, then, is that the idea of death is produced as an effect of time, in which death belongs to life (in truth it can belong nowhere else).

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[Footnote]

NOTES

1 Roger Shattuck translates the verb miroiter as "flashes back and forth" and notes that it also means "to glisten" and "to shimmer." He describes this passage as the most important one on memory in the novel, and explains the experience the narrator is describing, which i akin, Shattuck says, to a "trick" or "subterfuge," as like having "two probes in time the way we have two feet on the ground and two eyes watching space." Moreover, what "would otherwise be a meticulous analytic explanation is suddenly set in motion and brought to life by the verb miroiter," so that the sensation of time "becomes iridescent, like a soap bubble like the plumage of certain birds, like an oil film on water. This enlarged double vision of th world projected in time embodies a parallax view: it provides a sense of depth resulting fror a displacement of the observer" (Shattuck 124).

2 On the event in Deleuze see What is Philosophy?: "The event is immaterial, incorporeal, unlivable: pure reserve... it is the event that is a meanwhile [un entretemp]: the meanwhile not part of the eternal, but neither is it part of time–it belongs to becoming. The meanwhile the event, is always a dead time; it is there where nothing takes place, an infinite awaiting that is already infinitely past, awaiting and reserve" (Deleuze and Guattari 1991, 148, 149; 1994, 156, 158).