



## Negativity and Difference: On Gilles Deleuze's Criticism of Dialectics

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# Negativity and Difference: On Gilles Deleuze's Criticism of Dialectics



Lutz Ellrich

In the late sixties, the positions in Paris are clear: the theory of difference and the theory of identity fall into two clearly distinguishable and irreconcilable camps. The analysis of linguistic meaning, the self, and social processes takes a turn that runs counter to the almost simultaneous paradigm shift from the philosophy of consciousness to the philosophy of language in the wake of Wittgenstein. Theoretical motifs of difference, which have time and again appeared and disappeared in the course of the history of science, are brought together in the work of Deleuze and Derrida in a way that is not just rhetorically, but also conceptually impressive. That productive heterological, or identity-critical approaches like Rickert's, Cassirer's, and Adorno's are not taken into consideration does not at all lessen the importance of this work. Yet, even though Deleuze and Derrida undermine the central metaphysical and positivist dichotomies, they also draw a line that makes it easy to distinguish between friend and foe. Thought that remains directed toward the priority of the identical is charged with having fallen prey to an illusion, be it necessary (Derrida)<sup>1</sup> or an avoidable one (Deleuze),<sup>2</sup> that obscures and falsifies the originary as well as

<sup>1</sup> Because of this assumed necessity, the illusion cannot be destroyed through aesthetic masquerades as Derrida argues, but only de-constructed, i.e., enacted as illusion.

<sup>2</sup> Although Deleuze considers this possible, he also regards the mask as a means of expression that is indispensable to every new force: "A force would not survive if it did not

originless play of difference, its traces (Derrida) and identityless couplings (Deleuze).

Among the diverse views that, according to Derrida and Deleuze, have fallen prey to this illusion, two particularly influential and unsailable positions stand out: namely, affirmative and negative dialectics. Affirmative dialectics (under this rubric, Hegel and his direct followers are named), conceives of the genesis of linguistic meaning, self-consciousness, the morally responsible subject, and the totality of social relations as a process that ultimately leads to a unified formation (via figures of limitation, opposition and contradiction). Negative dialectics (here Sartre, Adorno, and Lacan are given as examples) turns lack, conflict, and non-reconciliation into anthropological or social signatures whose sublation is either completely unthinkable or, at best, possible in the distant future. In the first case, difference is a function of an always attainable identity; in the second, difference is only the negative image of an identity that remains the withdrawn and heavily veiled anchorage of all conceptualizations. From this perspective, even variations on a negative dialectics turn out to be theories that have yet to break loose from the reigns of identity-logical thinking.

At the beginning of the eighties, the German social scientist Niklas Luhmann reinforces the clear division between the camps. Under the programmatic formula "difference of identity and difference,"<sup>3</sup> his theory of social systems assumes a position forcefully opposed to the concepts of every imaginable reconciliatory philosophy (whether of Hegelian, Marxist, consensus-theoretical, or communitarian descent).

In the meantime, however, this famous-infamous formula of demarcation seems to have lost its efficacy as a legible boundary. On the one hand, recent interpretations of Hegel lay claim to the discovery of a difference-theoretical and almost pre-deconstructive potential in the *Science of Logic*,<sup>4</sup> especially its second part. On the other, Luhmann's theory itself has suddenly come under fire, been boiled down to its al-

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first of all borrow the feature of the preceding forces with which it struggles." Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, tr. Hugh Tomlinson, New York 1983, p. 5 (translation modified).

<sup>3</sup> Niklas Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme*, Frankfurt/Main 1984, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. A. Schubert, *Der Strukturgedanke in Hegels 'Wissenschaft der Logik'*, Königstein 1985; C. Iber, *Metaphysik absoluter Relationalität*, Berlin 1990; T. Collmer, *Aktuelle Perspektiven einer immanenten Hegel-Kritik*, Gießen 1992. My own essays are also indebted to a difference-theoretical view: "Hegels Kritik des Vertragrechts," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 2 (1987), pp. 183-201; "Schein und Depotenziierung: Zur Interpretation des Anfangs der 'Wesenslogik,'" *Hegel-Studien* 25 (1990), pp. 65-84.

legedly identity-logical foundations, and panned along with a very conventionally read Hegel.<sup>5</sup> According to such interpretations, Luhmann's concept of "world" constitutes a pre-reflexive unity. Likewise, the difference fundamental to systems theory between system and environment is reduced to an oppositional construction that furtively avails itself of some third, unifying element.

Does neo-structuralism need to revise its views on the dialectical figure of negation?<sup>6</sup> Can systems-theoretical sociology continue to set out with a programmatic differentiation that, at first, tones down its own paradoxicality only to reincorporate it when the time seems right (i.e., when enough complexity has been built up)? Has the hour of confusion come for adherents and detractors of difference theory alike?

In this complex situation, it is advisable to scrutinize the criteria according to which sheep and goats are separated into hostile camps and to ask how the relation of identity and difference ought to be construed in theories that conceive of themselves as elements of the processes they observe. The first hints of an answer to this question emerge when we consider the function of negation in the construction of the differentiations we depend on in both cognition and action. For it is by no means certain whether differences owe their determining function to acts of negation or whether negations can only be executed against the foil of decisions already made. Existing constructivist and systems-theoretical analyses concerning this problematic have not yet sufficiently underlined the fact that what dialectical concepts of self-reference offer has become obsolete. Thus, it is not surprising that the large-scale project Deleuze lays out in *Différence et répétition*<sup>7</sup> is currently the object of much attention.<sup>8</sup> With a critical examination of dialectics at its center, it raises the expectation that here the weapons are being forged with which a decision in the conflict is to be achieved. In the pages that follow, I would like to examine the force of Deleuze's arguments. In the current debate on the relation-

<sup>5</sup> Cf. G. Wagner, "Am Ende der systemtheoretischen Soziologie," *Zeitschrift für Soziologie (ZfS)* 4 (1994), pp. 275-91; further G. Wagner and H. Zippran "Identität oder Differenz," *ZfS* 6 (1992), pp. 394-405; cf. Luhmann's responses in *ZfS* 2 (1993), pp. 141-46 and *ZfS* 6 (1994), pp. 477-81.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Derrida's position, which coincides with that of Deleuze. J. Derrida, *Dissemination*, Chicago 1981, pp. 6-7.

<sup>7</sup> G. Deleuze, *Différence et répétition*, Paris 1968. English translation: *Difference and Repetition*, tr. Paul Patton, New York 1994. (All subsequent references will be indicated as *DR* plus page number.)

<sup>8</sup> Cf., for example, D. Baecker, "Was leistet die Negation?" unpublished manuscript.

ship between identity and difference, negation and affirmation, operation and observation, do these arguments ultimately support the side of the debate that calls upon such distinctions?

The analyses of *Difference and Repetition* prove to be crucial (not only to a theory of differentiation inspired by systems theory) for the following four reasons:

1. Deleuze argues that the construction of distinctions without negation is not just possible, but absolutely necessary, if we wish to break the spell of representational thought and dialectics. Here, however, he does not aim at multiplying representations and perspectives. He is not interested in the construction of a polycontextu(r)al world, like Gotthard Günther's model or other forms of constructivist possibilities, but instead argues for the deformation and diversion of representations.

2. What Luhmann, from a paradox-conscious metaperspective, identifies as the *unity* that, in each respective act of differentiation, eludes designation (and that, in identifying, he of course also designates) is comprehended by Deleuze as a manifest illusion produced by the praxis of differentiation. For Deleuze this unity is not the blind spot of differentiation, which is eliminated in every further differentiation only to give way to another blind spot. This unity is by no means displaced with each new differentiation; it is not simultaneously present and absent, something never to be reached, but constantly attested to in the work of differentiation itself. It is a produced illusion, always subject to the destruction of radical criticism.

3. Deleuze wishes to clarify the operative status of difference as such by showing that the self-referentiality of the process of differentiation results from a purely positive event, which need resort neither to negation nor claims of identity.

4. Deleuze sets himself the task of fathoming and defining the particular type of difference that prevails between methodologically positive and negative procedures in theory.

## I. Hegel's Figure of Negation

Deleuze subjects Hegel's conception of the relation between identity and difference to harsh criticism, and swiftly subsumes dialectics in general beneath the rubric of the philosophy of identity. Here, however, Deleuze neglects to consider that Hegel transforms the metaphysics of substance into a theory of relations and thus, on the thresh-

old of modernity and long before Cassirer,<sup>9</sup> has, in fact, already conceptualized the reorientation of thought. Not entirely unlike Luhmann, Deleuze understands the notorious formula “identity of identity and difference” as a univocal statement about the priority of identity over difference and not as a figure that posits the co-originality of both.<sup>10</sup> He overlooks the fact, however, that Hegel’s analysis of identity as the determination of reflection results in an “in-itself-absolute non-identity” (“an ihr selbst absolute Nicht-Identität”) (LII, 41). Had he not overlooked this, he could have culled difference-theoretical profits from Hegel’s line of argumentation in his representation of the constitution of identity. According to this reasoning, identity can only reach its proper destination, “simple sameness with itself” (“einfache Gleichheit mit sich”), when it differs with “absolute difference” (“absoluter Unterschied”), i.e., when it sets itself in “opposition” to something with which, precisely, it is not identical. The demand to be determinate also coerces identity, indeed, especially identity, into a relationship of difference. Only an identity removed from all predication could be imagined as something pre- or superdifferential. Such an identity would be unspeakable, would elude designation. At most, it would be an assumed quasi-fact of which one could speak only in words that cross themselves out. An identity that means more than the self-sameness of *pure being* (which, as absolute indetermination, devoid of meaning, is no longer distinguishable from *nothing*) is dependent on difference—even if it should be that difference in which it confronts itself as its own other.

Deleuze has not closely analyzed Hegel’s presentation of the determinations of reflection in its entirety (identity, difference, differentiation, opposition, contradiction, ground). Instead, he takes aim at the basic methodological operation performed by Hegel in the *Science of Logic* so that he can sequentialize the categories in question. Hegel instantiated the movement of difference through a figure that itself appears in a differential form: namely, as the so-called first, and the redoubled second, negation. Already the *first negation* is anything but a

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Ernst Cassirer, *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff*, Berlin 1910.

<sup>10</sup> Hegel writes of the “so-to-speak infelicitous word ‘unity’” and recommends the use of the “better” expression “non-separation and inseparability” in order to point out the relationship between differing and yet interdependent components. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, Frankfurt/M. 1969, vol. I, p. 94. (Subsequent references by volume LI or LII and page number.)

simple operation. Here, the distinguishable designations of determining differentiation (as opposition) and sublation (via deletion or fade-out) enter into a complex relationship. The *second negation* exhibits at least four different but correlated significations. In the first place, it designates the procedure by which a second negation is referred to a first in such a way that *self-referentiality* comes into play. This can happen in two ways: (a) as a movement that restores a once achieved but now lost position by eliminating anew the negative relation into which this position fell, or (b) as the production of a hitherto nonexistent and thus completely novel constellation. Double negation, then, names a procedure that *fails* to produce self-referentiality. This, as well, can adopt one of two courses: (a) either the application of the negation to itself collapses into the first negation or (b) the doubling leads to a mere iteration of negations, to an empty alternation of positing and annihilation.

As has often been noted with an air of criticism, Hegel did not provide us with the kind of explicit reflections on the methodology of negation that might significantly ease the task of understanding his procedure. The method reveals itself to the reader only in the process of material analysis. Only in this process is it evident that the ambiguities of the operation of negation constitute meaningful connections not reducible to arbitrary combinations. For, at first glance, it seems altogether occult that the act of *determination* (signification) should go hand in hand with sublation and that the doubling of this double-sided operation should then generate self-referentiality. The following summary, however, will perhaps illuminate some important aspects of the figure of negation.

When something is determined, it is not just referred to itself but, above all, to something Other, even if this reference is disavowed or cut out (this disavowal is the theme of the Hegelian existential logic). In the determining reference to something Other, the autonomy of the determined Something is necessarily and operationally *sublated*, even if this fact remains cut out of the picture (or, in the terminology of second-order cybernetics, even if it cannot be observed, i.e., differentially designated; for, in first-order observation, the indifference toward the referred-to Other is only present as a blind spot). The denegation of autonomy is accomplished in the operation of determination, but remains hidden from the understanding, or first-order observation. What is determined is thereby transformed into a moment within a complex web of relations (a second- to *n*-order observation complex) that includes what is determined itself as well as the

referred-to Other. The negation of negation (at least in one of its aspects) is thus precisely the reflection, or the observation, of this complex: the Other, cut yet required in the process of determination, becomes manifest as a constitutive element of what is determined through the sublation of this cutting. The Other of the Something becomes discernible as *its* Other, as Other within itself. Subject to observation, the *self-referentiality* of what is determined thus presupposes the production of a non-thematic relation in the initial step and, in the subsequent, the loss of this non-thematization.

Of course, the second negation as an operation of determination, i.e., as an operation that determines or thematizes the exclusion of the first negation, also participates in an exclusion (and this seems to be the hitch in the theory of negation). Otherwise, it would be unable to carry out the task of determining, which rests on the dismissive rapport to the Other. If this is true, then an infinite chain of inclusive exclusions would presumably ensue—like those figures of iteration, or equally, oscillation, laid out in deconstructive theories of signification and systems-theoretical theories of observation. Hegel's belief that he can avoid regress and speak of a self-referentiality that is not only operationally produced, but also decisively deduced from observation rests on the following fundamental assumptions (assumptions systems theory as well will ultimately need to make if it is to support its assertion of a relationship of reciprocal conditioning between self-referentiality and hetero-referentiality). To begin with, the second negation, inasmuch as it constitutes the determining operation with respect to the first, does not treat the first any differently than the latter treats this Something in its determination of it. Thus, the second negation distinguishes itself insofar as what it thematizes—namely, the exclusion, or cutting out, produced in the first negation—coincides with what it elides: precisely its own cut-out. This means that the exclusion of the first negation is determined insofar as the act of excluding, which the second negation also performs as an operation of determination, becomes the Other of the now determined first negation. If, however, negation determines itself as an exclusion in reference to its other, which itself is nothing but the exclusion occurring in all determination, then exclusion joins exclusion. Self-referentiality is generated without the necessity of having to presuppose the prior unity of the self. Hegel himself has impaired the understanding of the genesis of self-referentiality with negation-logical means. Despite his emphasis on the creative character of double negation, he constantly avails himself of the romantic figure of *return*



to elucidate his conceptual operations. Hegel practices something other than what he (intermittently) says. The self-representation of his doings is not infrequently constituted along the lines of an existential logic. It calls appearance by its name and thus, objectively ironic, once again tears apart the operation and observation spliced together in the negation of negation.

Deleuze reduces this filigree structure to a simple model,<sup>11</sup> which he then rejects. He rejects it on the grounds that, through the polarization of elements in binary relationships, it locates all differences on a single level and, consequently, flattens out their real depth (*DR*, 50). Hegel's method appears as the ideal type of a forgery the practical implications and moral presuppositions of which have to be revealed. For his method strengthens the spirit of conservatism whose dominion keeps us—as Deleuze believes—from our ultimate task: that of determining the relevant problems and of investing them with our powers of decision and creativity (*DR*, 268). With these statements, the territories of the conflicting parties are not only politically but also epistemologically staked out. Whereas *negation-like difference* inscribes all differences into the figure of opposition so as to determine them further as contradictions and, finally, through the sublation of the latter, to reconcile all that is different in the construct of an always already governing and all-determining unity, *negationless difference* aims at the diversity of non-representable singularities that constitute series without center or convergence (*DR*, 56).

This sharp contrast, however, supplies only a few criteria for determining the exact genealogical and typological relation between negationless differences and dialectical relations of opposition. What, for the moment, is nevertheless certain is that the relationship between the two must be understood as asymmetrical. For only on the basis of this minimal condition can the negationless difference effectively escape a dialectical meta-reflection that would integrate it into its system as an appearance of mediated immediacy. However, it is not enough to construct an *asymmetrical structure* alone. The act of construction is a necessary step, certainly; yet it is insufficient. The asymmetry between the two forms of difference has to be described in such a way that it yields the varied accounts of unequal relations in Hegel's *Logic*. For, in the theory of *the determinations of reflection*, even contradiction

<sup>11</sup> Already in his book on Nietzsche, Deleuze asserts that the true essence of the negative lies in opposition. Of the entire artful architecture of the *Logik* Deleuze retains only one of the several supporting pillars (*NP*, 211).

still appears in the guise of an asymmetrical constellation. It is true that the contradiction of the positive as well as that of the negative end in self-exclusion, but they arrive at this result in different ways. Likewise, they assume (as Deleuze surely knows, cf. *DR*, 45) a different logical status: the first is (latent) contradiction-in-itself; the second, posited (manifest) contradiction (LII, 65-66). In Hegel's presentation, it is only on the level of conceptual logic (so-called "subjective logic") that a symmetrical relationship between reference and referent, between reflection and immediacy, is attained. Here, the duality of *objective logic* (existential logic: something and something Other; reflexive: self-sameness and the fact of being posited) passes over into the tripartition of the concept (generality, particularity, singularity).

## II. Difference as Such

Like Hegel, Deleuze takes great pains to examine higher forms of reference, i.e., relations<sup>12</sup> that cause relations to relate to each other. His program consists, ultimately, in reinscribing all symmetrical constellations emerging in the course of the analysis into asymmetrical differences that resist dialectical processes of decomposition and transformation. Such a figure of difference immune to dialectics is not, of course, won in a single stroke. For this reason, Deleuze—pedagogically very adept—opens his project with the outline of a difference that indicates from the outset what will become crucial in the final analysis. Yet it is a difference still eminently susceptible of being recruited by an identificatory (and thus also dialectical) thought. Taking this problem into consideration, the introductory passages of *Difference and Repetition* (under the heading "Difference in itself," *DR*, 28) assume an almost theatrical form. Because of the timing and force of their presentation, they function like the introit of a play rich in action but wanting in characters.

The first to appear upon the stage is the figure of indifference. Its range and power is such that it penetrates even the most familiar of all differences, namely, that between the indeterminate and the determinate. The relationship between the free-floating determinations

<sup>12</sup> I employ the concept of relation here in a neutral, i.e., not yet dialectically impregnated, sense. The terms employed by Deleuze acquire meaning only in the context of their specific application.

(which make their appearance in the plural)<sup>13</sup> portrays itself as indifferent like the indeterminate (which, to generate a sharp contrast, makes its appearance in the singular). Spinoza sends his regards. But the (ironical?) allusions to Hegel's discourse on the "indeterminate immediacy" of pure being in the starting-blocks of logical evolution are not to be neglected. Next, *difference*, altogether unexpected, enters the scene. According to the stage directions, it finds itself, without further ado, in that much talked of state known as *the* determination.<sup>14</sup> Eventually, the author himself takes the stage, enjoining the audience to participate in his experiments in reflection. This is what he requests: a representation of something different from something else, without the latter being, in turn, different from that from which it differs. The exercise sounds more difficult than it actually is. An example is quick at hand. A bolt of lightning differs from the black of the sky of which it cannot rid itself. The differential, or what generates the difference—thus the sleek arrangement—sets itself apart from what refuses to relinquish the unifying indifference toward the differential. However, we are not dealing with one type of difference-formation among other possible and perhaps even equal-ranking types, as Deleuze stresses, but with the form of difference as such: "Difference is this state in which determination takes the form of unilateral distinction. We must therefore say that difference is made, or makes itself, as in the expression 'make the difference'" (*DR*, 28).

What Deleuze describes here is not a difference whose dynamic can be attributed alone to its reference to differentiation,<sup>15</sup> but rather the difference between unity (qua indifference) and difference (as an active execution of differentiation). This determination, however, should not warrant simply opposing, on a categorical level, the dialectical figure of difference (identity of identity and difference) with the variant of a general concept, or an alternative view on methods of differentiation. Instead, Deleuze wants to unfold difference itself in such a way that the theory of negation appears as a failed understanding of what constitutes the structural nucleus of difference. Like a form differing from its ground, a ground that foregoes every correspondent or retroactive formation,<sup>16</sup> difference operates in a field that

<sup>13</sup> "The indeterminate is completely indifferent, but such floating determinations are no less indifferent to each other" (*DR*, 28).

<sup>14</sup> "Difference is the state in which one can speak of determination *as such*" (*DR*, 28).

<sup>15</sup> Presently, I shall discuss the role this important concept plays.

<sup>16</sup> This relation is reminiscent of Fritz Heider's medium/form distinction. Luh-

does not respond to differentiation with differentiation. Still, this relationship is everything but uninhibited. Between difference and a differentiated field (which nevertheless remains indifferent), between form and ground, a remarkable battle ensues. The ground rises, dissolves the forms that have left their imprints, and so loses its *indetermination*.<sup>17</sup> In this way, both (form and ground) assume autonomy: “an autonomous existence” (*DR*, 28).

Deleuze indicates two possibilities for dealing with this agonal occurrence that takes place between the autonomous parties. The first consists in the attempt to diagnose, with the techniques of thinking in and through representation, the feud between indetermination and determination and to suspend it. This thinking is founded on the following fundamental elements: “identity, in the form of the *undetermined* concept; analogy, in the relation between ultimate *determinable* concepts; opposition, in the relation between *determinations* within concepts; resemblance, in the *determined* object of the concept itself. These forms are like the four heads or the four shackles of mediation” (*DR*, 29). The other possibility consists in tracing the conflict incited by difference itself up to those points of intersection where conflict evolves into *problems*. And if, in regard to such problems, an affirmative attitude is assumed—one that does not issue automatically from, but that is nevertheless bolstered by, them—then the problematization can lead to a destruction and insurrection next to which the notoriously painful transformation of the negative is little more than an innocuous imposture.

To recapitulate, Deleuze’s first step consisted in describing an asymmetrical difference that would defy the seemingly symmetrical constellation of opposition and contradiction inherent in the dialectic. His next consisted in attempting to present this at first glance specific pattern of difference as the form of difference *per se* and then to

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mann integrated it into systems theory, linking it with Spencer Brown’s conception of form.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *DR*, 352-53, where Deleuze treats the problem of determining the indeterminate and once more returns to his initial explication of how the rise of the ground to the surface fuses both the indeterminate and the determinations to a single determination “that makes the difference” (*DR*, 28). In retrospect, the pair form/material appears to be infected with representational thought, such that, accordingly, the asymmetrical Platonic polarization of form, on the one hand, and ground, or material, on the other, (“form distinguishes itself from matter or from the ground” *DR*, 28) becomes rather tricky. Contrary to this, however, recourse to the complementarity of force (*force*) and ground (*fond*) as the sufficient foundation of form (*forme*), material (*matière*), and their union (*union*) would represent progress (*DR*, 275-76).

demonstrate the dynamic constitution of this structure. Finally, however, he also made clear that this fundamental difference is constantly exposed to strategies of representation that weaken it in its originary effects. Whether the still prevailing representational thought can be overcome or, if need be, marginalized by problem-oriented thought depends, according to Deleuze's diagnosis, on which side of the asymmetrical relation the *affirmative* or *negative* forces deploy themselves—forces, it might be added, that apparently dispose of genuine sources, i.e., not of those whose roots are hidden in difference itself. But are there compelling criteria for producing favorable or unfavorable combinations? In principle, the affirmation could opt for the self-detaching determinate side just as well as it could for the, in its non-differentiation, self-emancipating indeterminate side. The same applies to negation. In any event, a complete victory in this conflict is unthinkable, since this would result in the dissolution of the interior double-structure of difference itself. The victory of one of the two sides in this asymmetrical balance between the poles of determinacy and indeterminacy would amount to the devastation of difference as such.

Of course, Deleuze would like to offer more than a formal model of the various combinatory possibilities of the independent elements—which, if all else failed, could simply be written off in a table of compounds. He makes it his task to represent, in a single breath, the genesis of affirmation together with the genesis of the appearance of negation. Only in this way can the criticism of the negative, i.e., of the dialectical figures of thought, be both radical and well-founded (*DR*, 206). But it is not enough, on the one hand, merely to point out the fatal possibility, inherent in language, of negating propositions and/or judgments, nor, on the other, to champion imperative questions as acts of affirmation.<sup>18</sup> Once again, this is merely evidence of potentialities available for seizure or neglect. Deleuze can cash in on his anti-dialectical program only once he has succeeded in tying the two strands of difference-theory into a single knot. One of these strands deals with the differential constitution of determinations and attempts to make clear why the forms of determination unique to the idea can

<sup>18</sup> Here, of course, one could draw upon the achievements of analytic philosophy, which Deleuze does not even deem worthy of addressing. Assuming that the yes/no position, structurally anchored in language, is indeed threatened by a pathological dialecticalization, then would not the cure Ernst Tugendhat, with particular attention to the patient's well-being, recommends in his *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die sprachanalytische Philosophie*, Frankfurt a.M. 1976, pp. 66-68, 75-77) be of greater assistance than that of Deleuze's therapy?

account for the singular way in which phenomena exist, while the forms of determination unique to the concept cannot. The other covers assertions concerning the practical constellations of attitudes towards affirmation and negation in the social field. Here, various roles of self-determination are available by means of which persons can achieve or deform their individuality. Only the combination of both strands would furnish a theory capable of establishing a connection between what the analysis of difference itself yields and the judgments on the assumption of positive or negative perspectives—a connection that (according to the theory's own standards) would not merely be *hypothetical* and *conceptual*, but also *ideal* and *problematic* (DR, 203).

### III. The Difference between Negative and Positive Difference

In a study published six years before *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze had already elaborated the central elements of his later theory and had even tested them out on an interpretation of Nietzsche.<sup>19</sup> It is of particular importance here that affirmation and negation are each coupled with two specific forms of differentiation: affirmation, with difference; negation, with opposition. Both of these forms correspond uniquely to the two clashing sides of "difference in itself": the side with an affinity, and the side with an aversion, to differentiation. Suggestively, Deleuze overwrites the Hegelian dialectic of master and slave (in which the working and thereby self-forming consciousness is eventually victorious against the merely self-indulgent consciousness) by reconstructing Nietzsche's sketch of the relationship between master and slave in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Whereas the term "master" designates an active force that foregoes the negation of what it is not and relishes in its proper difference, the word "slave" designates a reactive force that hastens to involve itself in oppositional relationships with everything that is not itself. The active force affirms difference, without so much as touching what is different. The reactive force comprehends what is different as a potential of negation and counters this presumed attack with a reciprocal negation.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> In DR, 53-54, Deleuze summarizes the outcome of his earlier work on *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (NP).

<sup>20</sup> Of course, the negation of active through reactive force entails a negation of the relationship of both forces. To the affirmation of difference by the active force corresponds the negation of opposition by the reactive force, since, though the master wishes to preserve difference as difference, the slave aspires to drive opposition to the point of manifest contradiction and to thereby sublate it.

Recruiting figures from Hegel's logic of reflection, one could describe this constellation as follows: the active force (of the master) indeed posits the difference, or relation, but through this posited relation, it merely succeeds in referring to itself as correlate. Thus it arrogates the entire responsibility of the relation to one correlate, which it itself is, and thereby confronts itself even as it remains completely with itself. The total being-with-itself of one side corresponds, however, to a total exclusion of the other. The so-called reactive force, the slave, has disappeared. Of course, we are dealing here with the form of an exclusion that remains latent. It is executed, but not posited, or made manifest.<sup>21</sup> The difference the active force enjoys, and in enjoying affirms, asserts itself thus as the internal doubling of this force. Sameness with itself amounts to the duplicity of the same. The other held at bay in the slave returns internally as the otherness of the master. Such a structure, according to Hegel's theory, is not tenable. It must of necessity succumb to a counter-force that posits the latent exclusion as one that is manifest. The active force cannot become immune to the reactive force. Rather than being-with-itself in the other, i.e., rather than finding itself in difference, the active force discovers difference in itself, encounters itself as its own Other. Difference enjoyed turns out to be nothing more than identity differentiated in itself.<sup>22</sup> Seen dialectically, however, this is a forceless form of identity since it is mediated, not through the Other, but alone through itself and is thus helplessly caught up in the rift through which the Other draws it into opposition with itself.

Although Deleuze would reject this dialectical chain of argumentation as a distortion and reversal of difference as such, he nonetheless stresses (as does Nietzsche) that affirmation is by no means fundamentally immune to negation. On the contrary: "Man's essence is the becoming-reactive of forces" (*NP*, 169). But this weakness arises from the *mere* affirmation of being, which is tantamount to the assumption of a burden, the acceptance of reality as it is: "affirming is nothing but bearing, taking upon oneself" (*NP*, 181). In such circumstances, active forces turn reactively against themselves (*NP*, 169-70). Yet precisely this figure—the figure that, according to Hegel's theory, is subject to the logic of decomposition just sketched, the figure, that is to say, of the

<sup>21</sup> In Luhmann's terms, this would read: the exclusion is carried out as an *operation* without the *observation* of the system that executes it of what happens.

<sup>22</sup> That is, as precisely the identity that Hegel treats as the first determination of reflection and that he adjudges and untenable construct.

internal doubling of a thoroughly self-involved affirmation—is the figure Deleuze celebrates as the operation responsible for restoring the active forces. When affirmation becomes reflexive and takes only itself and nothing else as object,<sup>23</sup> when it thus self-reflexively affirms itself, then difference is at the peak of its power (*NP*, 188-89).

The internal affirmative self-reference (which should not consist in self-representation or narcissistic specularity) seems to be impervious to the negative.<sup>24</sup> Still, the thrust that pushes affirmation to share, reflect, and double itself comes from without. It proceeds from the peculiar relationship that difference (as the mode of being of active force) enters into with opposition (as mode of being of reactive force).<sup>25</sup> On the one hand, difference relates to opposition (as described at the beginning of *Difference and Repetition*) just as indifference relates to difference (qua determination): it does not answer each attempt at secession, each effort to achieve distinction, and each attack with exactly the same weapons. On the other hand, however, the difference of the active force differs significantly from indifference: it is not the bedrock of opposition, does not rise to the surface and reabsorb the opposition-seeking definition with all its might. Rather it persists in sovereign self-enjoyment, notices only the banal deviation constitutive of the opposition and thus refuses to recognize it as opposition. In the play of difference, the opposition can only take part, therefore, behind the mask of what differs.<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, it appears only as a moment of the three varieties in which the simple (not yet doubled!) affirmation of pleasure savors itself. “Affirmation is posited for the first time as multiplicity, becoming and chance. For multiplicity is the difference of one thing from another, becoming is difference from self and chance is difference ‘between all’ or distributive difference” (*NP*, 189). The negative, or negation, whose movement is not that of play but of the suffering and labor of opposition, has thus vanished. Still, the reference of difference leads to opposition, to an opposition that makes opposition into a mere facet of the manifold, into

<sup>23</sup> “Affirmation has no object other than itself” (*NP*, 186).

<sup>24</sup> Following Lacan (Deleuze’s great, clandestine nemesis), this self-relationship of affirmation would have to be diagnosed as a form of imaginary misrecognition.

<sup>25</sup> “If we understand affirmation and negation as qualities of the will to power, we see that they do not have a univocal relation. Negation is *opposed* to affirmation, but affirmation *differs* from negation. We cannot think of affirmation as ‘being opposed’ to negation: this would be to place the negative within it” (*NP*, 188).

<sup>26</sup> Formulated systems-theoretically: opposition is recoded in the semantics of the autopoietical system’s “play of difference,” in whose environment the dialectical system of the “work of the negative” is just one system among others.



a processual and arbitrary phenomenon, into a mere variation on simple affirmation. For: "Affirmation is then divided in two, difference is reflected in the affirmation of affirmation: the moment of reflection where a second affirmation takes the first as its object. But in this way, affirmation is redoubled: as object of the second affirmation, it is affirmation itself affirmed, redoubled affirmation, difference raised to its highest power" (*NP*, 189).

What triggers the self-duplication of affirmation seems to lie in the transcription of opposition into a mere difference. Deleuze, however, passed over this important point. He maintains, in an almost lapidary style: "It is thus in the nature of affirmation to return or of difference to reproduce itself" (*NP*, 189). Far more important than explaining the passage from simple to double affirmation, for Deleuze, is the suggestion that, through the repetition of difference in difference, what is reproduced is not the same but something different. This is nothing less than the principle theme of *Difference and Repetition*. Beyond this, however, Deleuze wishes to make clear that repetition is precisely the source from which affirmation draws its potency. In repetition, affirmation overcomes its weakness, becomes immune to reactive forces. Return is a purgatorial operation by means of which affirmation literally purges itself of the poisons of negativity and identity. Negativity and identity never return. This is the message that Deleuze lifts from Nietzsche's obscure thoughts on the "eternal return of the same" (*NP*, 69-70; 189-90; *DR*, 298-99). The iterative process of double affirmation, which filters out the negative and yet as eternal recurrence is evidently unable to rid itself of it, is unquestionably a counter-model to Hegel's figure of double negation and one that brings forth an affirmative result. Whereas Hegel, however, illustrates the transition from simple to double negation by means of numerous exemplary operations in the logical material, Deleuze merely points to the cpr-maneuver for rescuing the affirmation susceptible of negation without developing it in any detail.

Had he set himself this task, he would certainly have noticed that the process by which affirmation becomes reflexive and thus turns itself to itself as object can only be deciphered once the structure of the partly symmetrical/partially asymmetrical relationship between master and slave, affirmation and negation, difference and opposition, has been thoroughly analyzed. Deleuze pays far too little attention to the fact that the modes of thinking unique to the master and/or slave (as determined since Nietzsche) must both be blind to the standpoint of

the other side.<sup>27</sup> The master's (aesthetic) differential thought is only capable of apprehending difference and cannot, therefore, so much as grasp the fundamental difference between opposition and difference. For its part, the (moral) oppositional thinking characteristic of the slave is not in a position to see what is proper to difference (i.e., difference *as* difference); and, hence, it also fails to comprehend the difference between difference and opposition.<sup>28</sup> In the final analysis, both master and slave—aesthete and moralist—are condemned to identify difference and opposition from their respective points of view. The differential thought of the master, consequently, cannot be the cardinal model of a theory like the one Deleuze proposes in *Difference and Repetition*. The theory must conceptualize the figure of a differentiating difference in a state of constant repetition that comprehends the asymmetrical relationship between difference and opposition (however undialectical it may be). Otherwise, the genesis of oppositional thought (*DR*, 206), the thought that distorts the fundamental difference via the appearance of the negative, will never succeed in becoming patent. With the claim of reconstructing the genesis of appearance, the theory of difference doubtlessly submits to the kind of constructive constraints that make it impossible to continue to understand difference as such merely in terms of the difference of identity and difference. Because it comprises both forms (the true relationship and its distortion), difference must also achieve representation as identity of difference (exactly that identity emerging from oppositional constellations).<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> In this regard, compare also Vincent Descombes' criticism of Deleuze in *Le même et l'autre*, Paris 1979.

<sup>28</sup> From Hegel's perspective, only the differential thinking of the master could be smitten with blindness or one-sidedness. For a dialectical and, among others, an opposition-seeking thought toils away at a material that at first suggests that it is a question either of something identical (what remains entirely with itself) or something merely different. Dialectics, then, contests the pretended purity of the identity, or difference, of what appears and transforms it into so many positions within a conflict.

<sup>29</sup> Still, this constraint does not *per se* indicate the failure of the difference-theoretical approach, which seems to have sworn itself to the contrary formula of difference of difference and identity; a formula that Hegel, by the way, analysed as the "in-itself determined difference" that is the "unity of identity and of its identity" (LII, 47). In a study that interprets Hegel's logic of reflexion as a precursor to deconstructive theories, A. Schubert rightly points out that it is precisely the figure of "identity of identity and non-identity" that revolutionized thought and exploded identificatory logic. For this formula challenges the notion according to which the identical and the non-identical can be cleanly separated in a traditionally metaphysical manner. In the movement of inclusion,

#### IV. Nomadic Distribution

Even if Deleuze never himself posed the problem, he experiments with a number of figures that can easily be seen as attempts to fulfill precisely this requirement.

Two of these figures are of particular importance: the first conceptualizes a correlation generated in a purely differential manner; the second revolves around the problem of symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships in which difference achieves structure. Since there cannot be a definite conceptualization of difference as such, Deleuze would not recognize the fact that several highly diverging figures can be drafted for what he calls "difference in itself" and what in his sense of the term has become a *problem*, i.e., a valid objection to his theory. It is not an absolutely fixed form.<sup>30</sup> Rather, it is dynamic and grants a certain margin of free play to different possibilities. Otherwise, it would fall under the jurisdiction of representation (*DR*, 262). It ex-

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identity encloses itself and difference and thus admits that difference had always already nested itself in its interior. A. Schubert, *Der Strukturgedanke in Hegels 'Wissenschaft der Logik'*, p. 87. In his marvelous interpretation of Mallarmé, "The Double Session," even Derrida takes such a possibility into consideration. He draws attention to the deconstructive performance of the word "hymen" and maintains: "It is not only the difference (between desire and fulfillment) that is abolished, but also the difference between difference and nondifference" (J.D., *Dissemination*, p. 209). Thus it comes down to a question of understanding that the formula "difference of identity and difference" (even Luhmann's version) is essentially banal and that the task consists in thinking the connection between identity and difference, without, at the same time, forgetting the difference.

<sup>30</sup> Deleuze cautiously remarks: "In any case, difference in itself appears to exclude any relation between different and different and different which would allow it to be thought" (*DR*, 262). This sounds almost as though difference is nothing more than a question of pure reflection, what Hegel called the "movement from nothing to nothing and, hence, back to itself" (LII, 24). How this pure reference without referent is nevertheless susceptible of being subjected to what seem to be "set and infinitely fixed categories" is illustrated in Hegel's deduction of the so-called determinations of reflection, understood in rational or representational thought as "essences freely floating in the void without attraction or repulsion" (LII, 34). Here, Hegel represents the genesis of an appearance of the substantiality of intellectual determinations that Deleuze, to the benefit of his own theory of the genesis of illusion, ought to have considered. In this context, it is interesting that Deleuze explicitly emphasizes that "*repetition*" is not a "concept of reflection" (*DR*, 91-92). As an erotic happening (*DR*, 85), it escapes all attempt at conceptual fixation. Perhaps Luhmann's brilliant book *Liebe als Passion* (Frankfurt a.M. 1982), which deals with the social coding of intimacy, could teach him a thing or two. Deleuze constantly mobilizes sensuality, the differences of intensities (*DR*, 57) against the fixating power of concepts and, unlike Hegel, not against the dialectical dynamization of all linguistic instruments of signification and determination. Hegel chooses this path because, not unlike his later critic Adorno, he holds the encounter with immediacy in conceptless intuition for a romantic illusion.

cludes alone the rigidification of difference to opposition as a patently false, backward image.

In sketching a difference that is itself a link and bond, a splicing of heterogeneous series and a gathering of differences (*DR*, 117-18), Deleuze orients himself according to Heidegger's directive not to think difference in terms of relation.<sup>31</sup> For as soon as one is overcome by this seductive interpretation, the victory of the Hegelian concept is inevitable. If the question of difference is one of relation, then the procedure that wishes to splice together what belongs together must constantly avail itself of mediation. In order, however, to wrest this difference from mediation, for whose description dialectical logic offers a copious store of instruments, a subrepresentative layer remains to be uncovered where all figures of relation slide off, however complex or hair-splitting they may be. However, Deleuze does not find Heidegger's concrete suggestion of putting this concept to work to be at all convincing. Here, the originary unity of the *same* (*Selben*) is merely played out against *uniformity* (*Gleiche*) as the empty monotony of the identical: whereas the *same* gathers what differs without robbing it of its difference, *uniformity* disperses it in its unity.<sup>32</sup> While Heidegger indeed points to the central problem of difference, his tidy juxtaposition (*DR*, 65) of the *same* and the *identical* offers much too great a contact surface to the work of dialectical espionage. Besides, both the *same* and the *identical* are principles of representation whose polarization, at best, provokes a clash between infinite and finite representation, without, however, being able to abandon the sphere of representation in general (*DR*, 301).

As an alternative, Deleuze has two ideas on hand. The first follows the threads of free association back to Duns Scotus and Spinoza and very subtly rectifies the notion that what belongs together can be simply gathered together in an originary unity. If one thinks the round-up of differences mandated by "difference in itself" in terms of nomadic distribution, then a form of communal references emerges in which gathering assumes the form of originary pastoral distribution. "Here there is no longer a division of that which is distributed but rather a division among those who distribute *themselves*, in an open

<sup>31</sup> M. Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz*, Pfullingen 1957, p. 53. In this text, Heidegger maintains that the "belonging together of identity and difference" (*Zusammengehörigkeit von Identität und Differenz*, p. 8) can only be elucidated if one succeeds in thinking "difference as difference" (*Differenz als Differenz*), p. 37).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. M. Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, Pfullingen 1954, p. 193.

space—a space which is unlimited, or at least without precise limits” (*DR*, 36). While representation goes hand-in-hand with the form of sedentary distribution (*DR*, 303), difference generates an anarchy of the manifold in the univocal (*DR*, 304).<sup>33</sup>

However, this scenario raises a crucial question. It is one that arises in reference to the tricky counter-concept of representation to which Deleuze has recourse in his elucidation of the status of nomadic distribution (*distributions nomades*). Deleuze finds himself confronted with precisely that difficulty he cleverly uncovers in Heidegger’s polarization of the same and the identical. Impartial and evidently not particularly impressed by Derrida’s critique of the metaphysics of presence, he challenges<sup>34</sup> the classification carried out in accordance with the criteria of representation with distribution, distribution as it would take place in the total unity of pure presence (“the univocity of simple presence” *DR*, 37). That this formulation is not a detached account designed to sweep the summoned presence into the movement of deconstruction is demonstrated by a passage in which Deleuze points to the derivative status of negation: “the negative is always derived and represented, never original or present: the process of difference and of differentiation is primary in relation to that of the negative and opposition” (*DR*, 207). Unlike Derrida, Deleuze does not understand the thesis that difference is the only origin (*Ursprung*) as the representation of an originary springing forth (*Ur-Sprung*), of a fundamental rift that breaks up presence. Rather, he evidently assumes that difference as such is a present happening. This happening surrounds and bears us, even though we conceal and disavow it the moment we employ propositional modes of expression and thought (*DR*, 178). Yet, in imperative questions or originary ontological affirmation (*DR*, 206), we find linguistic forms of participation, Deleuze maintains, in the self-movement of difference that subverts the identity-logical devices of the concept. According to Deleuze, language wields a positive syntactic and semantic power capable of rendering the textual formations possible in which disparate series of words set something into motion that does not rest upon any pre-existing identity and that is, in principle, unidentifiable (*DR*, 121).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. also *DR*, 270, 278, 284; further cf. Heidegger’s distinction between the controllable and calculable “Zeug” that has “seinen Platz,” and the “Zeug” that just simply “herum liegt.” M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Tübingen 1979, p. 102.

<sup>34</sup> And this, even though he quotes a passage from *Writing and Difference*, in which the myth of an originary presence is criticized (*DR*, 125).

## V. Difference in the Second Degree

This potential becomes clearer once we have examined the second concept. Deleuze introduces it with the hopes of elucidating a difference that is also a *connection* (*DR*, 118), without, however, repeating Heidegger's error. At the center of the concept stands a problem addressed in the word "intensity." Incidentally, this term also sheds some light on Deleuze's motivations for not simply denouncing the concept of presence as a metaphysical relic on a par with identity-oriented thought. As an intense happening, that is to say, presence absolves itself from identity and disseminates itself in the movement of difference. What is proper to "intensity" resides for Deleuze in the fact that it is constituted by a difference itself distinguished by the peculiar property of addressing itself to other differences.<sup>35</sup> In addition, it possesses a capacity that finds a deceptive echo in the dialectical negation: namely, negationless difference as such can be deployed against itself. It does not merely refer to an other different, but generates in the self-reference, which refers the different to the different, a kind of second-degree difference: "It is the in-itself of difference or the 'differently different'—in other words, difference in the second degree, the self-different which relates different to different by itself" (*DR*, 119).

But what guarantees that through this movement it is difference that refers the different to the different and that, through this movement and without any other mediation, it is difference that makes reference to itself? Reminiscent of the figures of thought in Hegel's logic of reflection, this question takes Deleuze to the core of his theory. To answer it, he deploys (just as in the opening passages on difference as such [*DR*, 281]) anew the phenomenon of lightening. Now, however, it no longer stands for one of the two sides in that battle carried out between difference and indifference. Rather, it is understood as something that discharges itself between two different intensities. Difference has found a partner of equal rank. It has entered into a peculiar relationship of reciprocity.

The communication between different intensities, in which inten-

<sup>35</sup> "... the peculiarity of intensities being to be constituted by a difference which itself refers to other differences" (*DR*, 117). Intensity, then, is the form of difference as the ground of sensuality ("raison du sensible"); and further, it is always a *coupling* ("couplage") in which each element of the couple refers to other elementary couples (*DR*, 222-23); beyond this, it is the *affirmation* of difference (*DR*, 234); and, finally, intensity is the encounter with the powers of rupture, of the interval, the *blink of an eye*, or instant, that fills difference only with what differs (*DR*, 144-46).

sity as such has always already disseminated itself, can be guaranteed because the intensively different reference (Deleuze argues almost in the terms of a Kantian transcendental analysis) has been performed in advance. Just as the lightening bolt can only discharge itself because an imperceptible and “dark precursor” (*DR*, 119) has preceded it, the different must, even in difference, always already have been referred to the different by way of itself (*DR*, 119). Just like the affirmation discussed above, difference must have already become reflexive in order to correlate (for example, in the form of heterogeneous or disparate series) the different. Here, however, Deleuze is producing a circle of difference: what guarantees that in the reference of the different to the different only difference governs is nothing other than an always already accomplished self-encounter or self-doubling of difference. Difference can exclude identity from its referential figures only if it identifies the different, to which it connectively refers, as precisely what it itself is. It is precisely through the elimination of identity from the play of difference with difference that identity forces its way in. Or, in other terms: if difference had only to do with difference, then the distinction between identity and difference would fall on its face. It is only the identical that remains. Differential play generates sameness-with-itself and thus reverts to exactly that from which it attempted to distance itself: identity.

Deleuze refuses to acknowledge this dialectic. All the same, he cannot deny that identity emerges from difference. It is for this reason that he divests it of the status of the real. On the *operative* level of coupling, the correlation of difference with difference does not yield identity. Identity is merely *appearance born of observation*. For Deleuze, the dialectical judgment according to which the play of difference leads one way or another to identity (either it is *posited* precisely in the moment of its exclusion or *presupposed*, which guarantees that what is different encounters, and couples with, nothing but itself) is nothing but a retrospective interpretation, which generates a fundamental substructure out of static effects. On the operative level of coupling, Deleuze recognizes only positive differences. On the level of observation, however, he must admit identity, albeit merely as an altogether probable, though thoroughly false model of interpretation. From the fact that the dark precursor functions, that the gathering of series succeeds, traditional thinking falsely infers an originary unity. Therefore, Deleuze understands identity only as the condition of the representation that denatures being and thought, not as the condition of the play of differences. The sum total: identity is equal to an optical effect

“which disturbs the true, in-itself status of the condition” (*DR*, 120).

How does this astonishingly continuous discourse on a *true* status and condition as it is in itself accord with the affirmative conception of the simulacrum that Deleuze so vigorously defends? Deleuze has a complicated answer: on the one hand, the difference between truth and appearance, between what is actually there and what has come to be through forgery, denaturation, etc., is not surrendered; yet, on the other, it is undermined insofar as this difference also does not exist between independent correlates, but only emerges in the self-reference of difference. This arrangement gives way to the pretension that both truth and illusion can be unveiled with a single stroke and figure. In this way, Deleuze believes himself capable of deriving truth from the very system that produces appearance, or illusion. For precisely that which sets difference into a rapport with itself is causally responsible for the advent and the force of appearance: repetition. In the process of repetition, the negative is not only filtered out (*DR*, 298-99), but an illusion, an image of identity, is simultaneously also generated in the course of these revolutions (*DR*, 300). This double aspect, no doubt, is not yet enough to get Deleuze's concept into trouble. On the contrary, the former allows him to demonstrate the finesse of the latter. It is in the functional determination of the illusion that the fatal consequences become evident. They are not to be remedied with the artifice of unmasking the illusion as a simulacrum that, in truth, dissimulates and disseminates identity by constantly summoning it.

The course of the argumentation that leads Deleuze to this critical situation is introduced with steps intended to shed light on the genesis and force of appearance. Foremost in the series of terms designed to make the system of the simulacrum describable (*DR*, 277), Deleuze includes the “dark precursor,” which up to now had played a central role in the solution of problems caused by “difference in the second degree” (*DR*, 119-22). In light of these terms, it becomes clear that the simulacrum exhibits the same structure possessed by difference in the second degree. It is a system in which what is different refers to what is different by means of difference (*DR*, 277). By virtue of this structural property, the simulacrum is in a position to simulate the identical, the similar, and the negative and thus to fulfill its essential task (*DR*, 301). Now, insofar as simulated identity (from a specific observational perspective) is taken to be genuine and projected onto the actually prevailing divergences and decentralizations, the conception that Being is determined by identity and by a negativity directed at the



identical can ensue. Differences thus *appear* as differences that can only take effect in a prior sameness.

Only against the background of this sketch does Deleuze's thesis become plausible that repetition not only filters out the actually negative, but also simultaneously generates the simulated negative. As Deleuze could already ascertain in his discussion of Plato (*DR*, 126), repetition only permits the return of the differential system as disparate series existing only in their resonance, as dark foreboding and coerced movements: it only permits the return, that is, of simulacra. However (and this is a glitch in the text Paul de Man would, no doubt, have relished), repetition avails itself of its own self-generated simulacral illusion in order to double its affirmation of that which differs ("... which it employs in order to double its affirmation of that which differs" *DR*, 301). With this, however, a negative element and/or an internally and reflexively constituted identical element smuggles itself into self-referential difference, indeed, as an agency of mediation. Evidently, affirmation is capable of doubling itself only by virtue of negativity and/or identity obtained from self-referential negativity.<sup>36</sup> Why, however, can affirmation not content itself with the simple being-with-itself of the affirmative. Why must it duplicate itself in such a precarious manner? Because—thus reads the already discussed reply—only through duplication can it be ascertained with certainty that difference relates to what differs (*DR*, 119). In view of the dilemma into which Deleuze has maneuvered himself, all attempts to trivialize the admission of a productive function of illusion in the reinforcement of affirmation are worthless. What does it help to maintain that repetition generates a threefold appearance: a semblance of identity as the goal of what differs, a semblance of similarity as an effect of the disparate, and a semblance of negativity as a consequence of its own affirmation (*DR*, 301)? If these three semblances, or images, are mediators employed by repetition to double the affirmation, then the talk of the merely simulated triad (identity, similarity, and negativity) is itself illusory. Repetition, then, avails itself ("which it employs . . ." *DR*, 301) of simulated products not only (as Deleuze maintains) to decenter identity, distort similarity, and lead consequences astray. Rather, it needs the categories it gleans from the Platonic and Hegelian dialectic in order to place different relationships to itself in relationship to

<sup>36</sup> For Deleuze, both are the same, since he is willing to distinguish neither a negative dialectics nor a dialectics that balances identity and difference from a dialectics that privileges identity.

one another. In the final analysis, the inevitable band that joins what differs to what differs has no other alternative but to rely on precisely those mediating instances that anti-representational thought condemns. If difference produces an illusory image of itself in order to affirm and mediate itself with itself, then the thesis that the negative is secondary and derivative because it crops up on the surface of problems like a shadow play (*DR*, 50, 205-7, 235) is a strictly falsified and not merely simulative (i.e., merely impersonating the force of the negative) theoretical account. With the role of medium, or catalyst, of affirmative self-bonding, negativity abides, uninvited but unavoidable, in the interior of difference.

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