

“November 4, 1995: Deleuze’s death as an event”

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I know – do I know it? – that the one
the Germans were already aiming at,
while waiting only for the final command,
experienced then a feeling of extraordinary
lightness, a sort of beatitude (nothing to
do with happiness however), – a sovereign
rejoicing? The meeting of death with death?

M. Blanchot, *L’Instant de ma mort*, 10.¹

Deleuze’s suicide was first announced on French TV during the late evening news. Yitzhak Rabin’s assassination was announced shortly before. In spite of their great differences, both deaths appeared with an immediate and simultaneous power on two levels: as an event on the historical level as well as an incorporeal event in thought. After each historical event had occurred, everything was the same but everything had changed: two parallel events had also taken place in thought. As Deleuze demonstrated in *Logique du sens*, events are always double-sided, on each side of the constantly moving fissure separating states of affairs and propositions.

At two different levels, of course, it becomes clear that through these two deaths, each one a bi-faceted event in H/history and in thought, what becomes victorious in spite of everything are positive forces of assertion: in one case, “peace” and, in the other, the thought of the multiple. In Deleuze’s case also, in line with his thought and, as this essay will try to demonstrate, death always comes from the outside. What returns, eternally, are the intensive forces and the becomings of what Rimbaud called “Life itself.”²

Considering the historical importance of Rabin’s death, little attention was paid to Deleuze’s death on French TV. Only the cultural Franco-German TV channel, Arte, had a special broadcasting a few days later of a selection of Deleuze’s interviews for the weekly artistic TV magazine *Métropolis* (Nov. 9, 11:00 p.m.). The broadcasting of these interviews had already started a few weeks before Deleuze’s suicide, even though he had originally asked

that they be broadcast only after his death. However, in 1994, Deleuze finally agreed to the public airing of his interviews with Claire Parnet after declaring to the director Pierre-André Boutang: “Considering my actual state, it is a little bit as if I were already gone” (Boutang 58). As I will try to show, these words now give a certain Spinozist meaning to Deleuze’s suicide. Few French newspapers or magazines gave significant space to the substantial reactions of various intellectuals, philosophers and friends to Deleuze’s death. Considering Deleuze’s repeated and violent criticism of the French media, popular French literary TV shows and the rather negative role of journalists in modern thought in general, such a limited reaction was not surprising.³

The first significant series of articles was published in *Libération* (November 6), in the now bankrupt *Info Matin* (November 6), and in *Le Monde* (November 7). Some of these first reactions try to explain Deleuze’s suicide philosophically (A. de G.). They recall Foucault’s deep and reciprocal admiration for Deleuze (“The most philosophical of the philosophers”, “Le plus philosophe des philosophes,” “One day maybe our century will be Deleuzean” “Un jour peut-être le siècle sera deleuzien,” etc.). Most of all, just as Spinoza’s work was praised by Deleuze⁴, Deleuze’s own work, style and teaching are praised because they force readers and students to think. Deleuze’s “style” acts like a strong wind pushing you in the back. Reading Deleuze is like climbing on a witch’s broom (Maggiori, Lefort, Droit, Memo).⁵ Deleuze’s work is praised also for analyzing a large variety of works and subjects with an attention that is always renewed, totally open and free of preconceived notions (Ganville, interview with Daney). Of course several articles summarize Deleuze’s work according to its successive orientations or to the different possible portraits of Deleuze as a professor, a Nietzschean of the post-sixties, a historian of philosophy, a creative philosopher, etc. (Lefort, Droit, Memo, Maggiori).

The second significant series of articles was written mostly by friends, some of whom were colleagues, who knew Deleuze and admired his work, including Derrida and Lyotard (*Libération*, November 7; *Info Matin*, November 7; *Le Monde*, November 10). These articles contain more grief and sometimes a profound sense of loss both on the personal and intellectual level (Nancy, Lyotard, Derrida, Veyne, Agamben, Faye). However, to temper this sorrow, they all recall and praise Deleuze’s characteristic sense of humor, irony and sarcasm, the assertive forces of his teaching and writing, the charm of his smile and of his raspy voice. *Le Monde* published two very informative articles as well on the “considerable influence” of Deleuze’s work in the United States (Kritzman) and its lack of influence in Japan (Uno). One has to wonder however why this newspaper concentrated only on these two countries it is as if, for *Le Monde*, Deleuze’s work had to be evaluated mainly

in relation to the post-Reagan new world order that Deleuze's work ignores all together. In this respect, the series of articles in *La Quinzaine Littéraire* (# 686) about Deleuze's influence, or lack thereof, in England, Germany and Brazil seems indeed more exact. It is, however, surprising that none of these articles analyzed or even mentioned (except Mabin Chenneviere) the influence of Deleuzian thought in Italy, Australia, Canada, Spain and other countries where the news of his suicide often made it to the front pages of national newspapers.

The articles written by Deleuze's friends and colleagues not only mourn his death but praise his work as well as a gust of fresh air, an intensive and positive force constantly opening new paths for thought (Lyotard). Deleuze was also characterized as a Nietzschean physician for our civilization and arts, a physician who had no preconceived notions, who was attentive to every sign and symptom (Dagen). Deleuze was also a friend, a generous professor and colleague, an inventor always avoiding the traps of his time (Colombel, Veyne), a creator of concepts (Badiou), a pure philosopher from the end of high school to his death (Faye, Tournier). Derrida's article recalls his rare encounters and rather distant relationship with Deleuze in a vague tribute to the philosopher's "manner," "strategy," "innocence," "gaiety" and "gesture." At the same time, Derrida expresses his strong reservations about a major part of Deleuze's original thought: the *Anti-Oedipus*, the intent to "create" concepts, his work on Artaud, the concept of the Body Without Organ. In the end, Derrida appears almost to reject Deleuze's fundamental collaboration with Guattari while, on the other hand, paying little attention to Deleuze's own work except for repeating Foucault's praise characterizing Deleuze's work as a thought of the event. If Deleuze and Foucault often expressed their reciprocal admiration for each other's works, Derrida and Deleuze's works often seem to ignore one another while Derrida's altercations with Foucault are notorious (Dosse II, 38–40); Derrida and Deleuze very seldom even started to bring their theories into confrontation.⁶

In *Le Nouvel Observateur*, Eribon, one of Foucault's most famous biographers, offered a series of short paragraphs based on never published interviews with Deleuze. Each paragraph develops a specific notion and each includes several "revelations" about Deleuze's life and career but there is no analysis or comment from Eribon. Nor does he mention that Deleuze agreed to the publication of this actual text. As Deleuze always paid extreme attention to the interviews he was giving, often publishing "fake" or carefully rewritten texts, this kind of article "by" Deleuze raises the question of the actual status of such texts in the philosopher's work. Such texts could be only the first of a long series to come, and they present many of the threats from which Deleuze himself always tried to protect his work: threats personified by the

journalist, the friend or the biographer who, intentionally or not, often replace and obliterate the philosopher's work itself.

More revelations or rumors about the actual event of Deleuze's death included stories claiming that Deleuze underwent a tracheotomy and was breathing through a respirator just before he killed himself. A Spanish journalist also insisted that **Deleuze "died of the lesions provoked by his fall" from the window of his third floor apartment on the Avenue Niel (Marti)**. Other, more prudent, writers published short definitions of some of Deleuze's concepts based on his published work (Marongiu and Ragon).

The third and last series of articles appeared much later, in various magazines having a direct link (*Cahiers du cinéma*) or no direct link (*L'Express*) to Deleuze's work and career. In *La Quinzaine Littéraire* (# 681) Descamps praised mostly the unceasing creativity and independence of the Deleuzian thought as well as the style of both the individual and his writing. In another issue partly dedicated to Deleuze's work, *La Quinzaine Littéraire* (# 686) gathered a series of articles that portrays Deleuze as a most generous and inspiring professor, friend and minoritarian thinker. Again, Deleuze is characterized as a pure philosopher and by his "exemplary philosophical life entirely dedicated to philosophy as an act of thought, as a multi-sensitive diagnostic of our actual becomings: a life of thought 'in actu'" (Alliez 21). In *L'Express*, Thierry Jousse praised Deleuze's invention of a "rhizomatic" or "transversal history of cinema." A short text by Boutang explains the history of the "Abécédaire" filmed for Arte. A famous text quoted from Tournier remembers Deleuze as a brilliant, revered and inspirational high-school student at the center of a passionate and somewhat dogmatic gang of budding philosophers. Here again Deleuze is widely praised for renewing all the problems he dealt with and for renewing even thought itself.

Finally, the *Cahiers du cinéma* recall the history of the friendship that linked Deleuze to this review since 1976, mostly through Deleuze's admiration for Godard's work and his interest in Serge Daney's film criticism.⁷ For Narboni and Jousse, cinema itself is already Deleuzian because it is mainly made out of Deleuzian haecceities (Jousse 26). **Narboni explains how Deleuze's thought influenced, in a subterranean way,** all his work as it influenced many others. Narboni, like many others, praises Deleuze's "sober charm that gave him the affection and the attachment of all, but also [his] great art of distancing himself, an inalterable way of keeping people and things at a distance" (Narboni 25). Most of all, the *Cahiers* praises Deleuze for his invention and classification of concepts for cinematographic studies in such a way and with such a style that it opens up new paths for thought. In this respect, according to Jousse, the TV interviews of the "Abécédaire" remain exemplary of Deleuze's redefinitions of the image.

All the articles in these series insist on three main recurring themes. First, Deleuze is praised as an open and attentive reader, spectator, observer, friend and analyst. He was extremely sensitive to **what makes up the very specificity of a thought**, a work or a type of sign. He never gave the impression of deriving his analysis from a preconceived system of thought, quite the contrary. A total **openness to a different world of signs would have been his only "method."** Second, Deleuze is praised as an inventor and creator of concepts with an incredible ability to classify and articulate those concepts in a systematic but open system of thought. Third, Deleuze is praised for his "style," and "charm," as an individual, a professor, and a philosopher as well. This notion of "style" is somewhat confusing. In this case it refers directly to Deleuze's sober, calm, never aggressive, sometimes sarcastic, humorous, always extremely expressive gestures, postures and voice. This characteristic "charm" of a person or of a text through their "style" was partly analyzed by Deleuze talking about Foucault in the "Abécédaire" and during his seminar on Foucault.⁸ "Charm" should not be ignored or considered with disdain as it can play a major role in philosophical affinities or studies. In the case of a philosopher, it seems to open up new paths for possible analyses of a pre-conceptual, pre-philosophical or intensive relationship to philosophy and thought itself that Deleuze and Guattari explored throughout their works and more particularly in *What is philosophy?*

The articles insist on the genius of Deleuze to demystify thought, to combine heterogeneous systems of thought, to redefine problems in order to create new concepts and new paths for thought. However not one of these articles is dedicated to Deleuze's work with Guattari or to the great innovation and turmoil that characterized the publication of the *Anti-Oedipus* in 1972 and Deleuze's subsequent work with Guattari. Some articles briefly refer to May 68 and to this important collaboration, but it appears too often as just an episode in the Deleuzean work. None of them analyze even briefly *A Thousand Plateaus*, a book Deleuze often presented as his most innovative and best work. Again, for the French press, the importance of Deleuze's work in collaboration with Guattari seems to be played down or largely reduced to just one episode in the philosopher's career.

Overall, according to these different series of articles, the aspect that best characterizes Deleuze's work, life and thought in general is the comparison to a wind that pushes us in the back. All Deleuze's students, friends, readers, and colleagues insist on this very intensely felt reaction to their first reading of Deleuze's work. Deleuze himself characterized the thought of Spinoza in the same manner and the fundamentally Spinozist inspiration of his work seems to renew and push forward the same kind of energy. In *Proust et les signes*, Deleuze himself had already insisted on the fact that, **more important than**

thought, there is that which pushes us, which forces us to think (PS 117). It is indeed the great power of Deleuze's thought not to create a closed system of thought but to open up new paths for thinking through its extreme attention to signs, through its precise classifications and analyses, through its aphorisms, its concepts, and its style. Deleuze's thought could then be described by its most attentive generosity towards "Life itself" and in all its aspects. It is in light of these general characteristics that we can venture an analysis of the possible interpretations of Deleuze's actual suicide.

On the other hand, Deleuze's suicide immediately provoked several attempts of interpretation in the French press. As Deleuze was "the most philosophical of the philosophers,"⁹ his death, which he had voluntarily chosen, had to have a philosophical meaning. For Paul Veyne "his voluntary and 'reasonable' death, in the sense that the Stoics (these materialists that he understood so well) gave to this word, achieves a truly philosophical destiny." Eric Alliez also presented this suicide as "the last act of an exemplary philosophical life." At least since the *Phaedo*, the confrontation with death often appears as the ultimate criterion for evaluating the powers of a philosophy or system of thought. As part of his or her cultural tradition, every French high-school student learns, through Montaigne's own Stoicism, that "to philosophize is to learn to die" (Montaigne 90–94). Deleuze's work itself is not foreign to this tradition that took a new turn in contemporary French thought with the work of Maurice Blanchot and his essay on "The Work and the space of death" (*L'Espace littéraire* 103–209).¹⁰

Deleuze's philosophy was characterized both by Foucault and by Derrida as a thought of the event. The Deleuzian concept of event is directly inherited from Emile Bréhier's essay *La Théorie des incorporels dans l'ancien stoïcisme*. Even though Deleuze's theory of the event refers to the work of Chrysippus, Zeno of Citium and early Stoicism while Montaigne's Stoicism refers to that of Seneca and later Stoics, it also makes of death the Event par excellence (DR 148, LS 174–179). We might think, therefore, that as a philosophy of the event, Deleuze's work and perhaps his suicide would provide us with a new point of view on death itself directly related to the work of Maurice Blanchot. However Deleuze's philosophy is not centered on the concept of death. On the contrary, he has often characterized his thought, as well as Foucault's work, as the product of a vitalism of the force (Buydens 5, 32; Foucault 102).

For Deleuze as for Blanchot there are two kinds of deaths: "Any death is double, by the cancellation of the great difference that it represents in extension, by the swarming and the liberation of small differences that it implies in intensities" (DR 333). The ego is confronted with the "first" death. This death is the end of everything, of every form or "shape" of life. It is a more

“personal” death. It is the actual death I wrongly think “I” experience when “I kill myself”. However, this death is impossible to realize since, through this extreme voluntary act, **“I” am asserting myself as an individual**. Or, as Blanchot put it: “when I kill myself, maybe it is ‘I’ that actually commits the killing but it is not ‘I’ that dies and it is not ‘my death’ either – the death I provoked – that I experience, but the death I rejected, neglected, and that is this negligence itself, a perpetual escape and unaccomplishment” (*L’Espace littéraire* 134). Then **there is also another death, impersonal and beyond the ego**. A death that is always ahead of me. It is the extreme form of my power to become other or something else. An absolute and dynamic fissure that does not define the “possible” but that which will never end, the virtual that never gets accomplished, the unending and unceasing through which “I” lose the power to die because through it “we” (the impersonal French “on”, one/we, used by Blanchot) are dying, that is to say **“we never cease and we never finish to die”** (Blanchot, quoted by Deleuze, DR 149. See also AO 393–395). It is a death that according to Xavier Bichat, is coextensive with life.¹¹ In this respect, living is inseparable from the partial deaths that it goes through, up until the disintegration, in “the other” death, of its individualized living shape.¹²

This unreachable, impersonal death at work in all our partial deaths is not for Deleuze another expression of the Hegelian negative. In this respect, both Blanchot and Deleuze criticize the work of Mallarmé and its nihilism, thereby going beyond an Hegelian reading of these kinds of death. Blanchot used for that purpose the work of Rilke and Heidegger (*L’Espace littéraire* 151–209) and Deleuze the work of Nietzsche (NP 36–39). Death can no longer be seen either as a failure of life to support and maintain itself, or as an accusation of life’s weaknesses and impotence (NP 38).


For Deleuze, this line of death represents the empty shape of time, the perpetuum mobile that is the being of the problematic itself (DR 148). Death is an event actualized in a present (the time of Chronos – LS 190–191) but every present is infinitely divided by its becoming a past event and its becoming a future (the time of Ao – in, LS 192–197). In this second perspective, death, or rather **“to die”, is the Event par excellence, an incorporeal, an infinitive impossible to actualize, real but not possible, always virtual. If, as Deleuze and many others claim, life asserts itself through the proliferation of intensive differences, the pre- individual power of an intensive differentiation, then:**

It pertains to the essence of affirmation to be in itself multiple, and to assert difference itself. As for the negative, it is only the shadow of the problem projected on the affirmations produced. Next to the affirmation, the negation stands just like an impotent double, but it is the witness of another power, that of the persistent and efficient problem. (DR 343)¹³

Death and life, as forces and intensities, always come from what Deleuze and Foucault after Blanchot called the Outside (F 101–130). The Outside is a pre-individual intensive universe of forces and unshaped matters that is “more distant than any external world.” The notions of exterior/interior apply only to a world of forms or shaped matters. It is a concept close to Rilke’s, Heidegger’s, and Bergson’s different definitions of the Open (personal notes from Deleuze’s Seminar on Foucault, 25 February 1986). In this respect, both Foucault’s and Deleuze’s philosophies can be characterized as two different “vitalisms of the force.” On the other end, life as an intensity is inseparable from shapes of life that appear in the folds or as the folds of the line of the Outside (F 128). Then as such, the act of creation is necessarily threatened by death and the forces of the Outside from which dynamic shapes of life can proliferate. **In fact, artistic creation is often presented by Deleuze as a counter-effectuation of a line of death** (see LS 188–189).

Then, this death that is always present in life as a dynamic and intensive phenomenon no longer corresponds to an inanimate and indifferent state of the matter to which a body would return. **It can be represented as an empty shape freed from any matter. It is the “empty shape of time”** (DR 148) also characterized as a “perpetuum mobile” or an “aleatory point” in *Logique du sens* (49, 83; 195–196). **At this point, “death is rather the ultimate shape of the problematic, the source of all problems and questions, the mark of their permanency above every answer, the “Where?” and “When?” that designate this (non)-being whereby every affirmation finds its energy”** (DR 148). Death as an event in “history” is only a point where two kinds of death meet. But it also reveals that death or “to die,” as a pure Event, as an incorporeal, is essential to the creation and proliferation of life and thought. As Deleuze and Guattari stated in *What Is Philosophy?*:

In a great book of philosophy, Péguy explained that there are two ways to consider the event, one that consists in passing along the event, to gather its effectuation in history, its conditioning and its decay (“pourrissement”) within history, **but the other consists in going upstream in the event, to settle in it as in a becoming**, to become younger and older in it at the same time, to go through all its components and singularities. It is possible that nothing changes in history that way but **everything changes in the event**: ‘Nothing happened. And a problem with no solution, with no exit. . . . all of a sudden has disappeared and we even ask ourselves what we were talking about’, it passed into other problems; ‘Nothing happened and we are dealing with another people, with a new world, with a new man’. This has nothing to do with the historical or the everlasting (“éternel”), says Péguy, it is the “Innerlasting”. (“Internal”) (QP 107)



post-individual intensities

Consequently, and this might be Deleuze's main difference on this theme with Blanchot, "to die" is nothing but an event among others, even though it reveals and carries the necessary empty shape of time. It might be the event that allows us to understand better what is an Event in thought, as an incorporeal, but it is only one event among many others:

If the infinitives 'to die,' 'to love,' 'to move,' 'to smile,' etc. are as many events it is because there is a part of them that their actualization does not suffice to accomplish, a becoming in itself that never ceases at the same time to wait for us and to precede us like a third person of the infinitive, a fourth person of the singular. (*Dialogues* 79)¹⁴

For a contributor to *Libération* (A. de G.), Deleuze's suicide, throwing himself through the third floor window of his Parisian apartment, was comparable to that of Empedocles throwing himself in the Aetna. Indeed Deleuze himself quoted and analyzed this death in *Logique du sens*. Deleuze opposed Empedocles's exploration in the depths of Nature and matter to Plato's idealistic elevation and purification towards the outside of the Platonic cave: "to the wing strokes of the Platonic soul one can oppose Empedocles' sandal, that proves that he was from the earth, a native from under the earth" (LS 153).

Following his own interpretation of Diogenes Laertius (Diogenes of Sinope), Deleuze's suicide would then be what he called a "philosophical gesture," one of many possible "vital Aphorisms that would be at the same time Anecdotes of thought" (LS 153, ML 23). The gesture of giving death to himself would then be a powerful, concrete and yet always mysterious contraction, a "vital Aphorism", of a thought that is inseparable from our world of the Event, an "Anecdote of thought". This interpretation stresses many important aspects of Deleuze's thought but it doesn't take into account the fact that Empedocles, for Deleuze, represents only the second "image of the philosopher," after Plato, but before Chrysippus the Stoic. If Empedocles's thought of the depths, of the Platonic cave, is necessary to fight Plato's idealism, Deleuze's transcendental empiricism recreates a Stoic thought of the surfaces, of the incorporeal events.

Death is not what takes us back to the amorphous depth of matter (Blanchot's "first" kind of death). It is inseparable from a becoming imperceptible, inseparable from our intensive becomings (MP 285–380), Deleuze's own interpretation of Nietzsche's Eternal Return (NP 213– 222): "The philosopher is no longer the being of the caves, nor Plato's soul or bird, but the flat animal of the surfaces, the tic, the flea. The philosophical symbol is no longer Plato's wing, nor Empedocles' lead sandal, but the double coat of Antisthenes and Diogenes" (LS 158). It is also in this direction that Deleuze's death will have to be interpreted.

In the same article of *Libération*, Deleuze's death was also put in connection with his text on Beckett entitled "L'épuisé," the exhausted. Everybody who had met him once at least in the past twenty five years¹⁵ knew the difficulties Deleuze had breathing and, consequently, talking for a long period of time. Many journalists and philosophers made a symbolic parallel between this shortness of breath and Deleuze and Guattari's recurring denunciation of the conservative reaction that had put an end to most of the political, social and artistic experimentations derived from May 68 in France.¹⁶ Deleuze's voice was rasping and his tone was sometimes sarcastic as if it were linking each of his words, each of his thoughts to his own body and mortality. Jean-Pierre Faye and others remind us that the greek "sarkazein" means in Greek "to bite in the flesh." Deleuze's voice and shortness of breath would then offer us even more "anecdotes of thought" that are as many "vital aphorisms". Then, **Deleuze would have killed himself also because, like Beckett, he was "exhausted,"** because he had philosophically exhausted the possible but most of all because physically he could no longer breathe and was **tired of suffering**. In this respect, Deleuze's death also becomes, as Faye suggested, "the terrible moment during which the ironical philosopher **can no longer breathe and wants to join the air by diving towards death**, from the height of a window."

As Deleuze's thought was in part based on a **criticism of the concept of the possible in favor of an exploration of the virtual**, only the second, more medical and Spinozist part of this interpretation seems valid. The possible does not play a fully affirmative role in Deleuze's thought while the virtual always does.¹⁷ The Exhausted is a conceptual character that indeed, in Beckett's work exhausts the possible; his work, however, does not lead towards depression or death but rather towards a necessary renewal of thought. In Tournier's world without the Other as a structure, the possible is also exhausted but then it gives room to a purely intensive life that is both real and virtual. **Deleuze, however, killed himself at a time when his body was inflicting on him too much pain to allow him to keep on "living."** This very concrete situation takes us directly to the work of Spinoza, Deleuze's main ally in philosophy, even beyond Nietzsche, Bergson and Leibniz, and Deleuze's own short writing on Spinoza and suicide.

In *Spinoza. Philosophie Pratique*, Deleuze explains that according to Spinoza: "there is a fitting together of relationships for each body, and from one body to another, that constitutes the 'shape'" (47). And then: "Death appears when the dominating or characteristic relationship of the body is itself induced to be destroyed" (47). It is in this context that Deleuze, after Spinoza, envisions suicide as an extreme option when "the modification [is] such that **the modified part or oneself is acting like a poison that dissolves the other parts and turns against them** (certain diseases, and, in the extreme,

suicide).”¹⁸ **In such cases, the individual can be dead before his or her body actually dies.** As Spinoza asserted: “There is no reason to force me to admit that the body dies only when it turns into a cadaver; in truth, experience itself seems to demonstrate otherwise. It happens indeed sometimes that a man is the victim of such changes, that I could hardly say he is the same” (quoted by Deleuze 50). Deleuze also uses this statement to support Dr. Schwartzberg’s “courageous statements” in support of euthanasia that make of death not only a biological problem but most of all a “metaphysical or ethical problem” (49, note 5). Those remarks also give full meaning to Deleuze’s 1994 statement, referred to at the beginning of this essay, which authorized the broadcasting of his TV interviews with Claire Parnet: **“Considering my state, it is a little bit as if I were already gone.”** Still in the same book on Spinoza, Deleuze will quote again these short statements on the modifications of the relationships that characterize a living shape and can lead to suicide. But this time it will be **to insist on the fact that death always comes from the outside:**

If death is unavoidable, it is not at all because it would be interior to the existing world; it is on the contrary because the existing world is necessarily opened towards the outside, because it necessarily experiences passions, because it necessarily encounters other existing modes capable of hurting one of its vital relationships, because the extensive parts that belong to it under its complex relationship never cease to be determined and affected from the outside. (SPP 137–138)

Throughout his work, with or without Guattari, Deleuze will develop this thesis: death comes from the Outside. For Deleuze, **the idea that death comes from inside of us is a life degrading idea created by the priest,** the Hegelian philosopher, and the psychoanalyst. For Deleuze, as for Claude Bernard, life is constituted by all the forces that resist death.¹⁹ Death seems to come from inside us because of its necessity (SPP 60) but, on the contrary, it happens because the act of living is necessarily opened to the outside, on new becomings and metamorphoses. **Suicide itself can be, in this specific context, a very positive, concrete and philosophical act of assertion,** a “vital aphorism” and an “anecdote of thought”. **At the moment of death, the individual rejoins the “empty shape of time”,** the “perpetuum mobile”, the “aleatory point” that makes Deleuze’s suicide also similar to a Nietzschean throw of the dice (from “alea” the dice player). The unique and tragic throw that does not oppose chance and necessity but asserts necessity in the assertion of chaos itself, thus uniting chance and destiny (NP 29–31, 36–39). In this respect, for Deleuze’s suicide also: **“The rule of the game is: to give birth to a dancing star from the chaos that we carry in us”** (NP 34). It is also in this context that one can understand Lyotard’s statement after Deleuze’s suicide: “In this nihilistic

fin de siècle, he was assertion itself. **Even in sickness and in death. Why did I speak about him in the past? He would laugh, he laughs, he is here. That's your stupid sorrow, says he."**

Abbreviations

AO – *L'Anti-Oedipe*, PP – *Pourparlers*, DR – *Différence et répétition*, PS – *Proust et les signes*, F – *Foucault*, QP – *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie*, ML – *Magazine Littéraire*, LS – *Logique du sens*, MP – *Mille Plateaux*, SPP – *Spinoza. Philosophie Pratique*, NP – *Nietzsche et la philosophie*

Notes

1. (All translations are mine.) This quote reminds us of many perceptions that link Deleuze's thought with Blanchot's work. It also brings to mind the memory of the death of Deleuze's older brother. Deleuze's brother was studying for the entrance exam to the prestigious military school Saint Cyr when he was arrested by the Germans as a young "résistant". He died in the train that deported him to Auschwitz. (see Mengue 293).
2. On the connection between Rimbaud's work and Deleuze's thought, see my articles "Le Voyant et les 'enragés': Deleuze et Mai 68" and "Le philosophe critique et poète: Deleuze, Foucault et l'oeuvre d'Henri Michaux".
3. On Deleuze's criticism of the media, the popular literary shows on TV and the world of communications in general, see PP 175–176 and QP 15–16.
4. "Many commentators liked Spinoza enough to refer to a Wind when they talked about him. And, indeed, there is no other comparison than the wind." Deleuze *Spinoza: Philosophie Pratique* 174–175. See also the entire text quoted, p.7 of this same book. But are we talking about the great and calm wind Delbos talks about as a philosopher or rather the sudden gust of wind, the wind of the witch that the "Man of Kiev" talks about?
5. This comparison also used by Deleuze writing on Spinoza comes from Malamud's text *L'Homme de Kiev*, quoted on page 7 of *Spinoza: Philosophie Pratique*.
6. On this point, see the example of the failed exchange between Derrida and Deleuze analyzed in my book p. 258–261. This short exchange is quoted from *Nietzsche aujourd'hui* 111–114. It took place during the Nietzsche colloquium held in Cerisy in 1972.
7. See Deleuze's preface to Daney's book *Ciné-journal* reproduced in PP 97–112.
8. In one of his televised interviews on *Métropolis* (for his "Abécédaire"), while talking about Foucault's charm, Deleuze declared: "There is a perception of charm" (letter "F" part I) and then: "people have charm only through their madness. . . . the point of insanity of someone is the source of his very own charm" (*Métropolis*, letter "F" for "Fidelity", Part II).
9. Foucault, quoted by *Libération*, November 6.
10. Deleuze was himself deeply moved by the death of several of his philosopher friends. He read the eulogy at Châtelet's and Foucault's funerals. He sometimes presented two of his books (*Périclès et Verdi* and *Foucault*) as written tributes to dead friends or, poetically, what is called in French literature a "tombeau" (a tombstone), a poem written in honor of a deceased friend, relative or love (see ML 24).
11. X. Bichat, quoted by Deleuze during his seminar on Foucault, Université de Vincennes, Paris VII, February 13 and 20, 1986. See also Foucault 102.
12. These partial deaths, as Deleuze stressed, are also fundamental to the work of Proust (PS 27).

13. On the problem and the problematical see LS 67–73.
14. Deleuze often refers to the work of Emile Bréhier to explain his understanding of the infinitive of a verb as an incorporeal event. He quotes Bréhier's *La Théorie des incorporels dans l'ancien stoïcisme in Logique du sens*: "When the scalpel cuts through the flesh, the first body does not produce on the second a new property, but a new attribute, the attribute of being cut. The attribute does not designate any real quality . . . , (it) is always expressed on the contrary by a verb, which means that it is not a being, but a way of being [. . .] (The Stoics make the distinction) in a radical manner, what nobody had done before them, between two different planes for being: On the one hand the real and deep being, the force; on the other hand, the plane of the facts that happen at the surface of the being, and that constitute a multiplicity of the incorporeals without end" (Bréhier 11–13, quoted by Deleuze, 14).
15. Jean-Pierre Faye wrote about Deleuze's voice that was already "out of breath" in the early seventies. Deleuze had a lung operation in 1969. He started having pulmonary problems in 1968 (Mengue 296).
16. See Félix Guattari *Les Années d'Hiver*.
17. On this point see Deleuze's various texts on Bergson and also his essay on Tournier's "World without Other", LS 357–358.
18. In a note, Deleuze refers to the *Ethics* IV, sc. 20 and sc. 39.
19. Statement quoted from memory by Deleuze during his seminar on Foucault. Université de Vincennes in St. Denis, Fall 1985.

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