

## To survive da'ath

change words

In the 'Western Kabbalah' – that version of the Judaic oral tradition which underlies large portions of the work of Western Hermetic magicians – one of the central concepts is that of 'da'ath', a non-existent 'sephiroth' encountered in the experience known as 'Crossing the Abyss'. This experience forms one of the central initiatory experiences of the various traditions of Western Hermetic magic. It can be understood as the point at which the practitioner succeeds in their aim but in doing so find themselves caught within a paranoid machine. The 'abyss' is the point at which everything in the universe is to be understood as directly speaking to the individual – it is an exercise in constituting a paranoid machine of intense and immense over-determination. It threatens insanity and death. It is warned against by those that have crossed it and those that approach it. One of its major elements is the encounter with Choronzon, the arch-demon of deceit or dispersion that destroys those who approach. Like an evil boss within a playstation game, Choronzon is to be met only when one is skillfully prepared and even then – unlike the playstation game boss - the meeting will prove to traumatise the aspirant beyond anything they might conceive possible. Choronzon is not defeated but encountered and the aspirant either survives or dies in the encounter.

This peculiarly melodramatic scenario is most commonly associated in modern western sorcery with the name of Aleister Crowley. His own experience of 'crossing the abyss', primarily contained in the work 'The vision and the voice'<sup>1</sup>, is highly idiosyncratic, though this characteristic is welcomed and encouraged within the magical community rather than seen as a weakness. Choronzon itself is a name apparently derived from the work of John Dee and Edward Kelly which goes under the name of 'Enochian magic' and is a name for a figure either identical to or akin to Satan. 'Satan' originally indicated an adversary rather than a specific entity and it is not until Milton's Paradise Lost that we encounter the adjectival form 'satanic' and perhaps a century or more later when 'satanic' and 'diabolical' become identified<sup>2</sup>. The notion of an adversary, however, is perhaps the most crucial and central aspect of this concept of Choronzon and of 'crossing the abyss'.

The gothic darkness, death and destruction that arises from Crowley's account is merely one way in which this adversarial situation is encountered. Benjamin Rowe, a well-respected magician even though he is not known much outside particular occult circles, characterises the experience in the

1 Much of Aleister Crowley's work is available online and in various and varied editions. 'The vision and the voice', otherwise known as 'Liber 418', can be found at <http://www.hermetic.com/crowley/418/418.htm> (accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> sept 2007). It is also available in The Equinox: Vision and Voice - With Commentary and Other Papers Vol 4, No. 2, Weiser 1999.

2 <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=Satan> (accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> sept 2007).

following way. "It might require something *as catastrophic as the complete destruction of the "self", as in the typical Abyss myth; but it could equally be as subtle and gentle as a breath of air slipping out through an open window, leaving the self completely intact.*"<sup>3</sup> It is not necessary to conceive of this encounter with the adversary as somehow all fire and brimstone but rather to engage with the *alteration* that arises from the adversarial encounter. In this sense 'crossing the abyss' is a particular and articulated form of something we could call *adversarial alteration*.

The characteristics of an adversarial alteration are such as to be distinct from a voluntarism or *subject-centred alteration*. In the adversarial alteration no author is to be found. No subject or agent takes a decision on goals and means of achieving them. The most that can be achieved by an agent is to, as it were, decide that the goal is in some sense 'beyond them' by virtue of the fact that it is beyond the abyss. In the case of 'crossing the abyss' the goal is a spiritual one – a state of enlightenment, the initial grade of which is named 'Magister Templi'.

Now this type of encounter or event is conceptualised, within magic, along the lines of what Ricoeur called a 'hermeneutics of suspicion'. Ricoeur famously distinguishes between two forms of interpretation, the hermeneutics of faith which seeks to restore the meaning of a text and the hermeneutics of suspicion which seeks to problematise a text<sup>4</sup>. The encounter with the abyss derives specifically from the Kabbalistic model which is primarily an oral tradition but which has at its centre a glyph called the 'Tree of Life'. This glyph consists of ten 'sephirah' (deriving from the Hebrew for 'sapphire') which are arranged in a particular form of three columns with varying numbers of paths interconnecting them<sup>5</sup>. Daath is a peculiar object within this glyph since it is conceived as an 11<sup>th</sup> sephirah but one which doesn't exist since one of the primary injunctions regarding the Tree of Life is that it consists of only ten sephirah and no more. Daath, the 11<sup>th</sup> 'sephirah that is not a sephirah', is a concept that occurs, according to Donald Tyson, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century as a "*mediator between the influences of Chesed and Binah and is regarded as the manifest aspect of Kether. Located on the Middle Pillar between, and slightly below, Chokmah and Binah, it has the same balancing qualities as the other middle pillar sephiroth*" (Tyson, p754)<sup>6</sup>. If we take

add in ~~it~~ on p 4.

3 Benjamin Rowe. 'The illusion of the abyss', 1997 – online at <http://www.hermetic.com/browe-archive/abyss2.htm> (accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> sept 2007)

4 For an account of these two modes of hermeneutics see Ruthellen Josselson: 'The hermeneutics of faith and the hermeneutics of suspicion' in *Narrative Inquiry*, Vol 14, #1, 2004 pp1-28.

5 Note that the tree itself is a developing glyph. The Porta Lucis tree of 1516, for example, has only 16 paths between the 10 sephira and it is not until the image produced by Athanasius Kircher in 1652 that we find 22 paths between the ten sephirah, producing the contemporary image - See Tyson, Appendix VI to Agrippa, p754.

6 The associations with each sephirah and path evolve and change, perhaps the most notable recent change being

the practice of studying and practising Kabbalah (and the two things are distinguished, the former identified in the Hebrew as Berashit and the latter as Merkabah) as the gradual process of reading the world by means of the tree then we might conceive of the initial stages as being governed by the hermeneutics of faith. As the kabbalist progresses they find they can increasingly integrate everything in the world via the emanative processes modelled by the glyph. This process then approaches a crisis or threshold point, a problematic field being gradually built until it seems that everything can be integrated via the glyph and its associations, the limit of which would be a kind of omniscience. This limit or the encounter with this limit triggers a re-reading that is now governed by something like the hermeneutics of suspicion. At this point the kabbalist encounters the demons of the abyss, for which they should have been preparing all along. This occurs as the kabbalist gradually integrates this non-existent 11<sup>th</sup> sephirah via the process of 'crossing the abyss'. The adversarial alteration might thus be said to arise from a tension between suspicion and faith but one which arises in response to a particular past, that of the practice the kabbalistic magician has been engaged in.

This is not quite adequate however. This tension between suspicion and faith looks a lot like the process of ~~a~~ developing a mature self-critical intelligence. In certain texts this is indeed how it appears to be conceived. One particular magical text (or 'Liber') that offers a route-map for crossing the abyss appears in many respects like something from a slightly idiosyncratic philosophy course. The text offers a series of books to read and understand, amongst which Kant's antinomies, Hegel's Logic and Hume's problematising of causality within the Enquiries are central features<sup>7</sup>. If we take the activity of the kabbalist as one of integrating the glyph and the world then we might also want to say that kabbalism offers a fourth, much older version of what Ricoeur calls a "*science of meaning which is irreducible to the immediate consciousness of meaning*"<sup>8</sup>. The central Cartesian moment of the consciousness of meaning arrived at through the method of doubt is now problematised by the radicalisation of that doubt. "*After doubting the thing, we have begun to doubt consciousness*"<sup>9</sup>. This is the role of the three crucial figures of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. Alongside the three other 'sciences of meaning' (Marx, Nietzsche and Freud) kabbalism also offers an interpretation of the world, the self and truth which is not religious but which is plainly pre-Enlightenment and in which the event of faith is far more pronounced since it is a practice *initiated by faith* rather than by reason. The final crisis is thus not a mere crisis of the intellect, a maturing of the self-critical

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made by Crowley (details).

7 'Liber 474', also known as 'Liber OS ABYSMI vel DAATH sub figura CDLXXIV', <http://www.sacred-texts.com/oto/lib474.htm> (accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> sept 2007)

8 Paul Ricoeur. The conflict of interpretations, p149

9 Ibid, p148

intellectual capacity but is instead a crisis of belief as an affective state. The affective aspect of belief provides the powerful motor force of fear that is conceptualised as the principal characteristic of the abyss, epitomised in the figure of choronzon or satan the adversary. It is not that the kabbalist finds themselves in a crisis of belief like the Pyrrhonic sceptic in which the urge to question is quietened in the state of ataraxia, rather it is more akin to a pathological crisis of belief. There is something more clinical than critical in the encounter with the abyss.

..... (skip next section?)..... *for Manchester conference*

To develop this a little further I want to just indicate two dynamics within Crowley's account of daath in his Book of Lies. This text is also called 'Liber 333' and the number refers to the demon choronzon who is also associated with that number within Crowley's 'Enochian' derived work. With the Book of Lies daath is conceptualised as a kind of blockage or false knowledge, one that is too dependent on the intellect and reason. This understanding of daath has its roots in the ideas of the Golden Dawn, Crowley's original magical order, where daath is said to arise from the 'fall' out of Eden. Malkuth, the sephirah associated with that which is most earthly and actual, is seen as the result of the 'fall' from the state of divine grace during which the Tree of Life is reshaped. Malkuth was originally in the place of daath and so we have two versions of the glyph, a pre-fall version and a post-fall version.

Crowley, then, associates daath with the result of some event, the fall. In the commentary to Chapter 5 of the Book of Lies – p17 – we find Crowley stating that Chesed is the true link between the micro and macro prosopi (small and large faces of God). The connection from the fourth sephira of Chesed to the third sephira of Binah<sup>10</sup> is in fact the connection between the lower dualistic sephirah and the non-dualistic – in a gendered sense – sephira of what's called 'the supernal triad', that is, the triad of the top three sephirah of Kether, Chokmah and Binah. He states that "it (Chesed) is the true link between the greater and lesser countenances, whereas Daath is the false". So far we have a simple knowledge commentary, something like a route map or set of directions - follow this road to the roundabout and then take the second road on the left but don't be mistaken by the second exit off of the roundabout, despite what the signs say, since that's a false detour.

Later on in the same book, however, we find a slightly different description. In the commentary to Chapter 31 – p69 – daath is posed as the 'garotte' which needs to be released in order to allow the

<sup>10</sup> Binah is Nuit for Crowley, also noted as equivalent to Draco or The Dragon – See Vision and Voice, 28<sup>th</sup> Aethyr, fn21

free flow of the voice in its connection with the divine. Reason, situated in daath, is to be destroyed through the use of contradiction amongst other techniques<sup>11</sup>. Crowley now describes an intention rather than a direction. "The idea is that, by forcing the mind to follow, and as far as possible to realise, the language of Beyond the Abyss, the student will succeed in bringing his reason under control. As soon as the reason is vanquished, the garotte is removed; then the influence of the supernals (Kether, Chokmah, Binah), no longer inhibited by Daath, can descend upon Tiphareth, where the human will is situated, and flood it with the ineffable light."

What is crucial is not merely a 'correct' route along the glyph towards the top but rather an awareness of the affective result that arises at this point. It is a point of both understanding and affect. All the sephirah are named with specific virtues or characteristic affective states and it is this mapping of the affective states which provides their principal effective role within the magicians integration of their experiences. Chokmah is named as Understanding whereas Binah is named as Wisdom and divinity emanates through the balance of these two forces or virtues. The imbalance of these virtues within the emanation of a divine force is what produces daath and after the fall we are, as it were, naturally imbalanced for if we weren't we would be divine ("every man and woman is a star"<sup>12</sup>). In Crowley's commentary to Chapter 55 of the Book of Lies – p117 - we find him saying that "*Daath, instead of being the Child of Chokmah and Binah, becomes the Abyss, and the Qliphoth arise*". Qliphoth are the shells of a particular essence. The result of going awry here are fundamentally ethical or clinical results<sup>13</sup>.

The two dynamics, then, are dynamics of knowledge. On the one hand something like a route map is given with plainly right and wrong directions but on the other hand the right direction is dependent on the inherent value of the route itself. The tree is not a route to understand the world but rather a route to understand the divine and in this respect there is only one way to go. This doubled dynamic, of course, is common but what is crucial is that in this situation what is brought

11 See Book of Lies, Chapter 11 for more on this explicit use of contradiction.

12 See Liber Oz, the 'manifesto' of Thelema (Crowley's name for his 'new religion'). The central principle is the human as embodiment of the divine.

13 This is most explicit in Crowley's own account of his crossing, 'The vision and the voice', in his notes on the 12th Aethyr, where we find a negative description of the passover supper and in a footnote to this passage (footnote 10) the following - "Here is the first account of the Black Brothers of the Left Hand Path. Each Exempt Adept must choose between the Crossing of the Abyss to become a Master of the Temple, and the building of a false tower of egoism therein." Implicit in the passage that this is a footnote to is a critique of a particular spiritual stance – one Crowley associates with Christianity and its patriarchal god in particular. The error, it would seem, is in gaining something for oneself from spiritual practice since the very self that acquires is what needs to be overcome in the approach to the divine.

to the fore is the clinical aspect of this knowledge process. In particular death is the location of a peculiar situation in which the route to the divine produces results which then serve to undermine and halt the progress of the practitioner. As soon as you think you know, you don't know. It is a moment both of the past (tradition) and the future (creation)<sup>14</sup>, just as the moment of death, of crossing the abyss, is a moment of both the past of practice and the future of purpose. One of the crucial aspects of these moments is precisely their normative value but not because of the existence of such a value but because these are the moments of creation and transformation of value. The clinical question is how we might survive such moments, how, in this case, we might survive death. To gain some foothold on such a question we need to explore quite what constitutes such an experience.

...(end of section to be skipped)...

What exactly is it that occurs in this moment of 'crossing the abyss'? The dispersion (de-territorialisation) associated with choronzon is often associated with images of death, albeit images of death combined with notions of rebirth. This transition or threshold moment is a moment of initiation, a concept central to the kabbalist since the whole process of merkabah is nothing other than a process of initiatory movement. This concept plays an absolutely central role within most magical and pagan practice and a study of it would throw up a diversity of forms from Masonic style rituals of initiation to mystical <sup>visions of the</sup> passing on of power <sup>ranges</sup> ideas. The crux of initiation, however, can be found in two aspects. Firstly, the 'gamble' or dice-throw of a particular moment of testing, often couched in secrecy and approached, either literally or metaphorically, whilst wearing a blindfold. The initiate accepts that something will be given through the initiation, even if they are never told exactly what it is nor how it might be delivered. Secondly, the *practical* nature of the initiation. An initiation is something that cannot be thought but which must be done. The initiation is that which cannot be thought but must be practised. The more potent the initiatory experience the greater the force of this unthought <sup>Andor</sup>

<sup>used as Pierre Colombat suggests,</sup> "at least since the *Phaedo*, the confrontation with death often appears as the ultimate criterion for evaluating the power of a philosophy or system of thought." If thought is to grasp this moment, if philosophy is to think the moment of the unthought, it seems it too will turn to death as the most potent force of the unthought and the unthinkable within thought. Death becomes a figure for the externality of the world but one which reveals the most intimate essence of the self. The encounter with death is privileged in too much philosophy as a moment of radicality in which the power of thought reveals itself but does so through failure. (240)

14 The moment of the passover supper that Crowley talks of (see fn. 13 above) perhaps represents this. iff it is the paradoxical moment both of Judaic tradition (as Seder) and of Christ's birth of his new religion through the institution of the sacrament.

Simon Critchley notes explicitly that death is ungraspable but this is also plainly the case only because of the phenomenological presuppositions of the noetic-noematic structure, the presuppositions of meaning<sup>15</sup>. Critchley's response, to posit a certain meaningfulness as an achievement<sup>16</sup>, whilst a valiant and fascinating attempt to stave off nihilism, merely seems to offer a kind of verbal game. There is something in what Critchley says, but it doesn't seem to be located clearly in the something that is actually said.

The question of death is undoubtedly crucial for Deleuze, yet there seems in his work far more emphasis on joy and life. The thanatological nature of dasein, of the Freudian unconscious, the Hegelian master-slave struggle and the Cartesian *res extensa* all trace a line of death worship within modern philosophy. Our finitude derives from this internal relation to death within the mainstream tradition of philosophy, in contrast with which Deleuze proposes his minoritarian current of thought, most prominent amongst which is perhaps the Christ of philosophy, Spinoza.

*Spinoza's spiders.*

In the little book, Spinoza: practical philosophy, we find Deleuze writing in an almost biographical mode. He recounts the life of Spinoza as an example of the method of thought which embraces not death, but joy and life. At one point he describes an anecdote from Spinoza's life which recounts how he would put spiders together to watch them fight, occasionally laughing outrageously at the resulting battle to the death. This, for Deleuze, is no mere incident of cruelty but a sign of a character learning something about the world, watching some sign of confirmation of the understanding. "Animals at least teach" Deleuze says "the irreducibly external character of death. They do not carry it within, although they necessarily bring it to each other: an inevitable bad encounter in the order of natural existences. But they have not yet invented that internal death, the universal sado-masochism of the tyrant-slave" (SPP 13). Comparing Spinoza to Nietzsche, Deleuze emphasises the problem of the 'sad passions' and the way in which they distort the value of life. Within the position of the sad passionate, Deleuze claims, "we do not live, we only lead a semblance of life; we can only think of how to keep from dying, and our whole life is a death worship" (SPP 26).

The distortion, the necessary distortion, of consciousness understood as a mere effect<sup>17</sup>, is the

15 Simon Critchley: Very little – almost nothing: death, philosophy, literature. Routledge 2004: 31

16 *ibid*: 32

17 "The fact is that consciousness is by nature the locus of an illusion. Its nature is such that it registers effects, but it knows nothing of causes. The order of causes is defined by this: each body in extension, each idea of mind in thought are constituted by the characteristic relations that subsume the parts of that body, the parts of that idea" (SPP 19)

what Spinoza calls ~~the~~ the

ground of the inadequate ideas of Spinoza's Ethics. Consciousness knows nothing of causes and it is the task of thought to register the relations of bodies and ideas that only reveal themselves through the signs – the effects – of those causes. This it does through the establishment of adequate ideas, knowledge of the third kind, ~~within Spinoza~~<sup>within Spinoza</sup><sup>18</sup>. "There is, then" Deleuze declares, "a philosophy of 'life' in Spinoza" which consists in "denouncing all that separates us from life, all these transcendent values that are turned against life, these values that are tied to the conditions and illusions of consciousness" (SPP 26).

This question of death and life, then, is tied into something more than a mere theory, more than a mere analysis or reflection on a state of affairs. Intuition, for Spinoza, is formed not by reflection but through deduction. Distrust of the senses is followed by a small glimmer of necessity upon which we build, deductively, to the thought of God before returning to an adequate idea of reality grounded in and deduced from this idea. This deductive procedure seems radically present in Deleuze too, except that the word 'God' now elides into 'Life', a word that is finally ~~caught~~<sup>expressed</sup>, for those of us who come after Deleuze has died and stopped writing any more, in the essay 'Immanence: a life', an essay which has been taken increasingly to stand as almost an epigraph to the whole of Deleuze's work. Deduce life as an active power, then deduce the structure of reality, pushing always against death, against the negative, against entropy.

The tension, as always, is in explaining how this positivity – in this case of the affirmative power of 'life' – produces the negative, creates the distortions. Whence comes that fall from grace, which the kabbalist as much as the Spinozan must place centrally in their systems? It is as an answer to this that the theory of affections is needed, a theory that posits a singular essence or degree of power for each individual. The crux of this theory is that it places an economics, an energetics, at the heart of the production of ideas, an economics of the unconscious, albeit an unconscious no longer in the mode of the Freudian<sup>19</sup>.

How might we understand this economics of the unconscious? It is at this point that the concept of the event – and in particular the event of the subject – can really begin to play out its force. In a

18 The three kinds of knowledge: (1) Opinion, formed from sense experience or words and signs derived from the memory of imagination (2) Reason, which begins from simple adequate ideas and moves towards more general causes and (3) Intuition in which the structure of reality is deduced from the idea of God – Ethics: II, XL

19 Christian Kerslake's work (Deleuze and the unconscious) on this needs to be noted and brought in. He has done a remarkable job of re-placing the unconscious within Deleuze in a way that enables this separation of the Deleuzian unconscious from the Freudian in far greater detail than previously existed. It will be discussed in more detail in another essay.



short text called 'desire and pleasure' Deleuze discusses the difference between certain words he uses and those used by Foucault. In particular Foucault cannot bear to use the word desire since it smacks of lack for him and he can't prevent himself from taking the word this way. There is, therefore, a curious tension with Deleuze at this point despite some deep and profound similarities. Deleuze recounts how Foucault had informed him of this tension, albeit telling Deleuze about it 'kindly and affectionately', at least so Deleuze says<sup>20</sup>. Foucault adds that "what I call 'pleasure' is maybe what you call 'desire', but in any case I need a word other than desire" (TRM: 130). Deleuze, in turn, informs us (though it is not clear he informed Foucault of this) that he cannot stand the word 'pleasure'.

What follows this anecdote is a short account of the problems Deleuze has with pleasure and a defence of his concept of desire. Desire, for Deleuze, is not something built on lack nor is it a natural given. Rather, desire is that singularity constituted as affect, haecceity and event and opposed to things, subjectivities and persons. It is process not structure nor genesis. "Above all" he says "it implies the constitution of a field of immanence or a body-without-organs, which is only defined by intensities, thresholds, degrees and fluxes" (ibid). This flow of the field of immanence is then interrupted by pleasure. Specifically Deleuze suggests that "pleasure seems to me to be the only means for persons or subjects to orient themselves in a process that exceeds them. It is a re-territorialisation" (TRM: 131).

It seems clear in this particular text that Deleuze is valorizing flow above break, the process that exceeds always being somehow betrayed in the constituted pleasure of the subject. Now, any grasp of the process of flow might be thought to produce a kind of pleasure in the relief of understanding that which was previously encountered as threatening in its confusion and complexity. This, however, cannot be the case with Deleuze. We presumably must avoid the pleasure of understanding since this appears to contravene the excessive process of the event. It is here that I want to intervene. How are we to follow Deleuze, how are we to understand his account if it is not to give us some pleasure of understanding? How, to use Deleuze's own words, are we to make ourselves 'worthy' of the event<sup>21</sup>?

It is here that the theory of affections derived from Spinoza allows us to grasp in part what is going on. The theory of affections makes a distinction between actions, which are the capacities of the

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20 Curiously this 'kindness and affection' is not immediately obvious from the content of the conversation that Deleuze recounts.

21 DR (Athlone edition): 84 (and in following this strategy avoiding both nihilism and the 'achievement of meaninglessness')

individuated singularity, and passions, which are the result of our powers being in relation with other singularities. The individual is a degree of power to act. Within a given set of relations that degree of power is filled in by the encounters with other individuals with their degrees of power. This effectively produces a filled in set of relations between variables. Each individual is a variable, a degree of power being a variable within limits. The relation is the crucial factor and subsumes the parts, the individuals as degrees of power<sup>22</sup>.

The event, as a plane of immanence, seems to correspond here to the specific set of relations produced by the encounter. The curious thing would appear to be that the theory of affections constitutes nothing other than an ongoing flow of variable relations. There are no static things, person or subjects, only flows. This of course accords with the sort of claim Deleuze makes explicitly in a text like Nietzsche and Philosophy when he declares that “the object itself is force, expressions of force” (NP: 6). If all is flow, however, then nothing is flow since there are no distinctions.

It is as a moment of distinction that we most commonly find a turn to the event<sup>23</sup>. The event is the event of distinction within too many accounts, too easily a moment of priority, the locus of the distinctions between one flow and another. The difficulty seems to be that at this point the notion of the event as distinction is incompatible with what Deleuze says about the event. The event or plane of immanence contains, he says, intensities, thresholds, degrees and fluxes. The distinction of a threshold cannot thus encompass the concept of the event. The event rather encompasses the concept of the threshold and at this point it seems reasonable to claim that a distinction is nothing more than a threshold. The event thus encompasses the distinction, such that the event is the ground of the distinction, rather than the distinction being the ground of the event.

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22 “An individual is first of all a singular essence, which is to say, a degree of power. A characteristic relation corresponds to this essence, and a certain capacity for being affected corresponds to this degree of power. Furthermore, this relation subsumes parts; this capacity for being affected is necessarily filled by affections. Thus, animals are defined less by the abstract notions of genus and species than by a capacity for being affected, by the affections of which they are 'capable', by the excitations to which they react within the limits of their capability.” (SPP: 27)

23 Problematic readings of Deleuze on this point can be found in Reidar Due: Deleuze, Polity 2007 and his discussion of diagrams (Due: 134, 144-145) and this needs discussion in more detail elsewhere. It is also around this point of the 'event as filled relation' rather than the event as the subtractive void that we might find the grounds for clarifying what is at stake in the debate between Badiou(ians) and Deleuze(ians). Again, much more discussion is needed to fill out this barely suggestive remark, a discussion that would no doubt begin with examining recent work by Zizek (Organs without bodies) and Hallward (Out of this world).

The event, as a filled relation rather than a subtractive void, produces certain thresholds. In this sense the event of the subject, either as thing or entity or as process or way of being, constitutes its own event of death. For the Spinozan spiders, death is that which arises from outside, from the external forces, in this case other spiders, encountered in the contingent relations constituted by Spinoza's god-like intervention. For the modern subject, death is constituted as the threshold immanent to the event of the subject. In this sense it might be correct to say that only a subject can die and that an animal merely expires but it would only be a threshold that is being individuated immanently to the event of the subject, the threshold that is named as the death of the subject. Such a death is immanent to the subject, implying of course that an event of individuation that differed from the individuation of a subject would constitute a radically different event, one in which the threshold of death might appear in a radically different guise.

This radically different guise is of course what we find in the notion of initiation. Deleuze suggests that in conceptual analysis of forces we need to shift the form of the question we ask, from a 'what' form to a 'who' form. In terms of the event this 'who' asks after the set of forces and degrees of power involved in the filled relation that constitutes the event as a plane of immanence. Specifically it implies that the question is no longer 'what is death?' but rather 'who is dying?' The emphasis on meaning found within the phenomenological tradition and much traditional philosophy can now be replaced with a practice of learning, of what Deleuze would probably prefer to call apprenticeship.

A question such as 'who is dying?' might be central to an understanding of the process of learning if we conceive learning as a series of little deaths, thresholds of passage and destruction which open the space for a particular event to form, the event of the educated subject. When engaging in the process of learning, of education, we might want to ask not what is it good for, what is its goal, but who is it we are learning to be? Who is that is dying, who is it that is trying to birth?

Whoever it is we are learning to be is already constituted by the event. The forces that have filled in the relation between the degrees of power that individuate themselves in who we are learning to be, constituted themselves behind our backs and have produced a 'who-that-we-are'. It is in this sense that the filled in relations between degrees of power form an unconscious that is a material and psychic economics. Such learning is thus effectively unconscious, though the concept of learning also constitutes itself as a plane of immanence within which the agent is individuated. Agency individuates in a form of limit, as a threshold moment within the plane of immanence that constitutes the student as the one who responds to the question 'who is learning'? Who are we

learning to be, if not a student?

...(end here?)...

Such a concept of learning, of course, radically troubles the forces and relations of expertise, authority and order that constitute the academy and form one of the more liberatory conclusions we can derive from Deleuze, though one that is not in any real sense specific to Deleuze.

What is specific, is death as pure event - The outside - "essential to the

(ongoing notes)

final paragraph

... an apprenticeship to the event and the experience of the 'abyss' is a salutary lesson or warning in the power and anger involved in such an apprenticeship ("it was in that sense that Lenin had ideas").

Deleuze warns that the task with regard the event is to be worthy of it, to be able to sustain it or bear it, a theme that directly relates to the encounter with the demon of the eternal return in Nietzsche's most important presentation of that concept. (Access question, epistemic - frame problem)

Speculative suggestion - argument and problem

In Nietzsche's eternal return, Deleuze's call to be worthy of the event and Western magical practice of 'crossing the abyss' this underlying theme of danger, of death, abounds. (Only two cases, enough to make a characterisation? Anything particular about these cases? The relation to death - Ray Brassier's online paper at A/V and the moment of collapse...exhaustion as iterative and affective plane of immanence).

Is the event, then, always an event of death, rebirth, loss? Is this the central aspect of what it means to encounter the event - to lose something, to lose our selves, to die in some way or another? Does this suggest that perhaps the event is a hidden encoding of the transcendent? Is the purity of the event, the cry of affirmation, merely another way to regain what is lost with the death of god?

'Nietzsche and The Divine' discussion - Deleuze and contemplation (Actaeon - cf: Ted Hughes rendition in his Metamorphoses translation?)

Conceptualise through practice / theory (know-how / know that and then apprenticeship – 'body spirituality' as an apprenticeship to the affect). Pragmatism connection.

“The book of Enoch is the arithmetic of thought” - Eliphas Levi, Elements of the Qabalah, p11.  
(compare to Deleuze - we need a calculus of thought...)

The idea of the 'original' book, the pre-Babel text (Book of Thoth etc)...Enoch, Hermes, Cadmus  
(Levi: Doctrine of Transcendental Magic, p45).

DEF: The core practice of magic, as a 'body-spirituality', involves a continual process of learning, the aim of which is 'knowledge'.

DEF: The particular understanding of knowledge, however, is transformed from a possessive content or object (a 'know-that') into a transformative apprenticeship – but an apprenticeship to what? (perhaps bring in the pragmatism definition / characterisation issue here).