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FROM GENERAL ECONOMY TO GREAT ECONOMY: THINKING THE CONDITIONS OF RUSSIA

A researcher engaging in cultural study faces a double problem: he must open a studied tradition to a theoretical approach without turning it altogether into the theory's proving ground. This amounts to being caught between natural economy and market economy: between a self-sustaining tradition and a speculative context, or, inversely – between history as a space of change and speculation, and conditions which are sufficient for existence and make history unnecessary.

My idea in this study was to turn the uneasiness to use – to balance the speculative theory with an economical tradition and to derive theoretical profit from this balance. The idea is, rather than harmonizing theory and tradition, to confront them and thus reveal their mutual limits. This is not a dialogue, however, but rather a series of monologues wherein tradition and theory speak for themselves, but in languages so different from their own that they no longer recognize themselves. In view of this purpose, this work could be neither „written in Russian“, nor „composed in English“, but was *originally translated* to cast a self-comprehending tradition in analytical terms, making it strange in the original.

Bread and Money

Western consumer strategy is determined, according to Keynes, by a „rational preference for money“,¹ money being the most liquidable and therefore the most secure holding. Rational as it is, this principle is hardly applicable to the Soviet and the post-Soviet economies where *natural* demand for goods prevails and where given the shortage of cash, money itself becomes a material commodity.

The fetishism of goods is not the result of the modern Russian condition, rather it originates in the *natural economy* of the peasant which being an economy of survival, subsists as a tradition. The peasant mode of survival is saving – preserving goods instead of trading them for money. Consumer goods sustain life; they, as it were, store lifetime, which is measured by their capacity to sustain, or „durability“. This, in particular, is the case with raw materials, where the

¹ Alain Bérière, „The Keynesian Project“, *The Foundations of Keynesian Analyses*, ed. A. Bérière, London: Macmillan 1988, xxvi.

quantity of material embodies the continuity of life: life lasts as long as the stock keeps.

A long-living Russian value is *khleb*, which means both „bread“ and „grain“, i.e. an essential food and a storable raw material, subsistence and a substance. Speaking in his book „Letters from the Countryside“ (1882) of the „true-natural“ Russian peasant (*nastoiashchii muzhik-khoziain*), Aleksandr Engel'gardt takes pains to save this value:

The true peasant would never sell grain, even if he had it in excess... Why sell grain? – argues the peasant, – grain is money; and if on having sold hemp, flax, lard he has enough money to pay taxes, then he will not sell grain, even if he has a two-year reserve of it. He would rather feed pigs, cattle....

Meat is another matter. Meat you may eat or you may not, whereas bread is a common need; nobody can live without bread.²

In contrast to the subsidiary function of meat, bread is a *necessary* food. It is not, really, that „nobody can live without bread“ (nomads actually do). Rather, bread is valued as the minimal food which sustains life and thus guarantees its continuation. Preserving life, bread provides security and therefore cannot be the object of consumption: one may liquidate the store, if one does not need it, but one cannot *eat* it, just as one cannot eat one's insurance policy.

Khleb te zhe den'gi: bread is money, i.e. bread is not for eating. But it is not for selling either, since one does not pay money for money. If bread and money are equivalent, it is because both are unsellable: both are treasures.

One may, however, *spend* money, just as one may eat meat. One may dispense with all the treasures of life except for the treasure of life – the pure and poor value of bread.

Aristotle, in his *Politics*, warns against confusing Economics, managing the house, with Chrematistics, earning wealth: the first is limited to the goods necessary to life; the latter explores the potential of money for unlimited growth. Economics combats speculation. Guarding over the necessary, it cleanses the good from excess over itself, nails the good to its Self: „It appears necessary that there should be a limit to all riches“ (1257b). Economics itself is economical: it is *economy itself*.

Taking up Aristotle's economical reasoning, Marx pervertedly applies it to capital defining it as a *pure* Chrematistics. Later, though, he reverts to natural ground accusing capital of metaphysical speculation – of masking by its evolution the true and natural value, value itself – the lifetime of the worker.³

² A.N. Engel'gardt, *Iz Derevni*, Moscow: Sel'skhokhoziajstvennaia literatura, 1956, 359, 360.

³ Karl Marx, *Capital*, v.1, Chicago: Kerr 1919, 170.

It is with reference to Marxist „political economy“ that Derrida, in 1967, vindicates the *excess* of writing, clearing it of charges in a „reactionary“ character (and thereby pardoning the surplus value of the trace).⁴ Writing needs clearing, else it will not be clean writing.

Everybody needs economy. Nobody can live without need. Both Aristotle and the peasant, are afflicted by the need, both succumb to the law of the Necessary and the Sufficient. Providing the necessary, economy is a necessary law, and being necessary, it is sufficient: it does not need any other law supplemental to itself.

The problem is that it is never sufficient *enough*. Defined economically, as it demands – *definitio est negatio* – economy evades specification. Setting limits to all, it loses its own limits.

Economy saves, yet economy is *not* saving; it preserves the necessary and no more than the necessary: preserves the least in order to spend out the rest. Since the volume of the necessary economically shrinks, the main effect of economy consists in extending the territory of the *unnecessary* – in *economizing concern*.

A peasant does not care about the rest. He needs meat to get money, and he needs money to pay taxes – to do away with the State. Bread he needs no more than money: bread is a means for paying taxes to Life – the legal tender of Life, which may well be rice, or fish, or meat. However, since one does not pay money for money, the legal tender is, in fact, unusable. The problem is the hardness of money, which is illiquidable not because it is preferred but because there is no reason to avoid it. To wit, there *is* a good reason – economy of concern, and there is no reason why to change it for any other kind of reasoning.

There is no way that there be something other than what is. If you have economy in hand, you cannot have anything other than what you have. Economy, for all its good, leaves no choice. It allows only necessary, i.e. untradable values, which one can neither reject, nor prefer, which persist inevitably; economy leaves only what remains.

It is this residual quality which underlies the value of *Khleb* shaping also the concepts and contexts of *Zhizn'* (Life: „the most important“ in Being); *Smysl* (the sense warrant of Life, as in *smysl zhizni*); *Kul'tura* (the central depository of *Smysl*). The same necessary economy could account for Russian preoccupation with semantic sediments, be it Potebnia's „inner form of the word“, Bakhtin's „voice“, or Marr's „elements“. ⁵ All these are *illiquidables* – the last and the least

⁴ „On commettrait une erreur grossière à interpréter ces propositions [sur la perte d'énergie excédante] dans un sens „reactionnaire“ (J. Derrida, „De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale“, *L'écriture et la différence*, Paris: Seuil, 1967, 397).

⁵ Cf. V. Toporov's remark on „resources-energies“ as basic Russian values: „The emphasis here lies not on satisfaction but on salvation as a minimal level of sustaining life“ (V. Toporov, *Mif. Ritual. Simvol. Obraz*, Moscow: Kultura, 1995, 10).

values, which survive through the elimination of values – values so much last, that there remains no chance for their not being values.

This does not mean that the last values evade elimination. No, they are the first candidates for it. Reserved economically, they are not reserved *from* economy, and therefore should be economized: only then is economy a law, when there are no exceptions from the law.

Economy, economy *itself*, unreserved economy is not saving. And yet economy itself, wasteful as it is, saves. Preserving the least – bread, it leaves out of its hold the rest – the world. Saving the amount of its concern, it saves the world from its concern, and thus keeps life resources intact – it *redeems resources*, and at the same time saves the labour of saving, labour being also one of life's resources.

In this view, *Bread is money* may mean „bread saves money“: laying up a store of grain allows one not to spend money to buy food and not even to have money. A minimal domestic resource saves a bundle of social resources, becomes a resource of saving resources. It is the word which is, arguably, the least possible saving and the most illiquidable one: it may be granted the role of key Russian resource, the more so since „bread“ as an untouchable deposit actually becomes a symbolic entity. If this last resource is saved, or economized, the net residue of economizing would be silence, or Russia itself posited as existence rather than as content.

There would be no need for economy if resources were not deficient, i.e. if Being were not already economical.

There is deficit. *Es gibt Mangel*.⁶

This may be because Being is an infinite source which hides and never shows up; or else because it is a limited resource: there is one single Being, while the consumers are multiple. That suits the fact that it is such a simple thing, the least thing, indeed: by limiting resources to the necessary, economy brings them to the level where they really start to be deficient.

All the more reason to exercise economy. To preserve the resource of Being one must reduce the expenses of life: store life, put a store of life against life. Surely, this would be equal to the death of life, however there is no reason to live once life is guaranteed. Such, indeed, was the economical logic developed by High Stalinism (which I shall address below), however it is inherent in the mere act of saving, in what may be considered the real use of economy: reserving life for the future, it allows not to live *now*.

Is a peasant really alive? That is, does he live his life, or spend out its treasure? It is evident that he is not *too* willing to live: he is being economical rather than being.

⁶ „Mangel als Nichtvorhandensein eines Gesollten ist eine Seinsbestimmung des Vorhandenen“ M.Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Bd. 2, Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1976, 376.

In Chaianov's model of peasant economy, a peasant checks his welfare by two questions: „Is there enough, or not enough?“ and „Is there much not enough?“. „Enough“ here never means „sufficient“: it marks the level where increasing productivity is outweighed by the drudgery of labor.⁷ A peasant will not overstep this level. His objective is not to maximize output but to minimize outlay. His objective is economy *itself*, and nothing more than that.

Analogously, by saving a peasant does not really intend to keep safe what he saves: he saves since saving demands less effort than selling. To save in order not to spend, and to waste in order not to save: not to spend and not to save, to spend *no more* than to save – that is what peasant economy is: economizing difference, saving indifference. Can one notice any difference between this indifference and that in which Being indulges: the indifference of *Ereignis-Enteignis* – unconcealing-unrevealing, piggish nonsaving and bearish nonspending? It is through this deficit of difference that a store of bread becomes a resource of life: the restricted economy of Bread merges with the general economy of Earth.

Chaianov's economy of efforts invites a parallel with Freud's libidinal economy, that is the libido's tendency to maintain excitation at as low a level as possible – a tendency, which implies that complete economy is achieved by total spending, since it leaves no more wherewithal to spend.⁸ However since this manner of economy becomes too expensive for the libido, it binds its energy, limits itself by the Reality Principle: „economizes death.“⁹ In fact, this would *not* promote economy, since the bound energy shifts to the process of binding: what is taken from pleasure gets consumed by fear.

Freud's *Bindung*, similar to Hegel's *Aufhebung*, gives back to the consumer his expenses. To this „restricted economy“ Bataille opposes „general economy“ – unlimited spending, *dépense sans reserve*,¹⁰ through which the subject gets rid of his assets and achieves sovereignty, and which is in fact similar to is a panic conduct of a shareholder in crisis – liquidation of all liquidity. Dispensing with bonds, the marketer binds himself to freedom and will not be free unless he disengages from freedom also, i.e. unless his economy becomes general, which Bataille's economy is not.

Bataille faces what is not a simple task: to clean up the hidden reserves of metaphysics. In Derrida's treatment, liquidity itself becomes a capacious resource – *réserve sans dépens(e)* – „taking into account the nonreserve, keeping in reserve the nonreserve“.¹¹ With this resource in hand everything becomes

⁷ A.V. Chaianov on the *Theory of Peasant Economy*, ed. D. Therner, Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin, 1986, 108, 124.

⁸ S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Complete Works, v. 19. 9.

⁹ J. Derrida, *The Post Card*, 359.

¹⁰ J. Derrida, „De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale“, 389.

¹¹ J. Derrida, *Marges de la philosophie*, Paris: Minuit, 1972, 20.

money – or tobacco, „the object of pure and luxurious consumption“.¹² Everything vanishes into smoke or crumbles into ashes.

The crucial problem implied here for deconstruction is not how to save – liquidity cannot be lost, since liquidity is loss – but how to *give*: not to expedite but to deliver; not to buy tobacco but to present bread. This kind of gift Derrida refuses to give:

For there to be gift, not only must the donor or the donee not to perceive or receive the gift as such, have no consciousness of it, no memory, no recognition; he or she must also forget it right away.¹³

To give a gift is equivalent, for Derrida, to sending a gift – sending it away, not giving one's giving, *sparing* the gift – not for the donor's benefit, but for the donee's own sake: it is the most secure when undelivered.

Derrida desires to give a gift unreservedly – without turning it into a „debt“, without entering it into the circle of compensation. The theoretical interest concealed in this desire is that by giving unreservedly, he makes the gift *pure* thus conforming it to the law of (restricted) economy.

To give unreservedly, one must give up one's interest. This however cannot be done through negation of the gift, which makes it even more generous and more difficult to repay. It is evident that the act of giving cannot be accomplished by the giver, i.e. within the horizon of *his* economy. To be given, the gift must be delivered – deducted from the donor's command. To give, the giver must stop giving – must stop being a donor.

Should the donor resign his role before resigning his property? Resign: i.e. give it to somebody else? This may become a new wasteful aporia unless one treats the resigning as an event of general economy, i.e. as the donor's expiration *in* the act of giving, the donor being the economized rather than the economizer.

The consequences of unreserved giving will be discussed later. What is evident now, is that the consequences are not moral ones, the reserve of morals being untenable under the regime of general economy.

Meanwhile, theoreticians insist on giving the gift – on transferring the wealth into the other's hands and on holding responsibility for the transfer. Economy they treat likewise: through the act of economy the libido limits its energies, transfers its assets – *submits* to Reality. Economy is an investment in Reality, and general economy is a total investment into the affair of the world, which inasmuch as it exceeds itself, *remains* an investment.

However, wealth is not lost by being given; what is lost is its part retained by man, while wealth itself gets reassembled, re-stored as a whole, rejoined to the

¹² J. Derrida, *Counterfeit money*, 107.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 16.

safe store of the whole. The store of Being retires wherever it occurs, and man's task, inasmuch as he „guards over Being“, is to keep it stored – to preserve from the expensive spending and from the wasteful excess. It is for that reason that loss bespeaks economy and that economy of concern results in substantial economy: by loosening his hold on things man allows the world whole to reassemble.¹⁴

And for this reason economy is necessary. Economy, i.e. economy itself, general economy, reduces *any* excess – that of possession as well as that of spending – and thus keeps safe the *whole* store. What if instead of investing in economy, capital itself would be subjected to economic treatment? Undoubtedly, it deserves such treatment, since it combines an excess of possession with that of investment. Capital *itself* should be subjected to economy – capital as a loss for profit, since money means nothing without being invested by the libido.

To defeat capital *itself* economy cannot merely liquidate it for its own profit; it should efface it economically, without falling in excess or leaving a trace, without investing even in „Economy“, acceding imperceptibly its own „symbolic capital“. ¹⁵ While Freud argues for seminal reservation, Bataille for full-scale investment and Derrida for dis-semination, the Russian economic imperative is onanism – not withholding the wealth and not spending it altogether. The onanist gives nothing to woman and withholds nothing for himself; he dispenses with possession without engaging in investment. As a result, the wealth of the world does not suffer any decrease: it goes to where it belongs.

Like Onan, who „spilled on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother“ (Gen, 38,8), Russian hero accedes semen to the Earth instead of giving it to woman. Lavretsky's motto „Let us plough the soil and let us plough it as best we can!“ accompanies the collapse of his love affair. (I. Turgenev, *A Nest of Gentryfolk*). Korchagin, while working at railroad construction („the spades were crunching the earth's depth“), breaks with his former love (N. Ostrovsky, *How the Steel was Tempered*). Davydov ploughs the kolkhoz field in order to uproot his affection for Lusha (M. Sholokhov, *Podniataya Tselina*).

Platonov's novel *Kotlovan* exposes a solitary group of male laborers devotedly inseminating the earth: „Voshchev started to dig the earth pushing all his force (*puskaiia vsiu silu*) into the spade“, „Chiklin hastily cracked the pristine ground transforming all his body's life into strokes“. Proletarian onanism is opposed here to bourgeois masturbation: one of the workers „loves himself by the night under the blanket and does not fit to live by day due to the emptiness of

¹⁴ Heidegger's *Sammlung*, unlike this, is a *holding together*, a gathering of world parts in the presence of the Thing (See *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, tr. Ralph Manheim, New York: Doubleday 1961, 112. (On Heidegger's speculative ontology vs. Russian economical realism see below).

¹⁵ Bourdieu's term seems appropriate here, since the author applies it to *habitus academicus* and thus includes in it his own theoretical investment in this term.

his body". The implied difference involves economy: the onanist disposes of *superfluous* energies (cf. Platonov's „Antisexus"), while the masturbator derives a *supplemental* pleasure.

This amounts to peasant's routine activity: acceding semen to Earth, ac-seeding the Earth. Nothing is spent abroad, everything is used at home and thus, *everything* is used – the product as well as the producer, since everything belongs to the body of the Earth and nothing escapes its borders.

The product is used completely – *used up*, rather than used, consumed exhaustively, which excludes the possibility that anything of it has been withheld from use or carried to some other place.¹⁶

Thus investment also becomes excluded. A peasant does not give what he accedes – the product does not pass any border – he loses nothing and therefore does not *invest in value* (a Dostoyevskian gesture of feeding pigs with grain is a similar act of anti-sacrifice). A peasant owns nothing and therefore does not give anything: the gift is consumed by the Debt before being given and even before being. There is no excess, even momentary, beyond Deficit. Nothing has ever been possessed and hardly anything will be given.

Devoid of property and unable to give, the peasant may be considered „castrated".¹⁷ But how could he be castrated, if he is de-void of possession, if even the trace of castration would lie as an egoistic burden on him? (In fact, onanism as ultimate accedence can no longer be associated with man becoming indistinguishable from menstruation – giving in to the truth of the world in the form of pain).

Castration as deprivation constitutes the subject of lack and desire – the subject of restricted economy. What counts in our case is the state of Economy in general, or general economy. In the myth, castration is the act which restores general economy by fertilizing the land and bringing wealth back to its place. In this respect castration of Uranus and Attis is not different from the manual behavior with which Atum, in Egyptian myth, begins cosmic creation, or from the *coitus interruptus* described in Platonov's novel: „Nature did not forget to take back from Dvanov [the treasure] which she presented him in his mother's unconscious strife – the semen of procreation" (*Chevengur*). Onan's onanism, too, may have its origin in a fertility cult deriving, probably, from a Sumerian ceremony in which the king brought regeneration to the land by entering into sacred marriage with a temple prostitute, representing the goddess Inanna.¹⁸

¹⁶ Russian verbs *ispol'zovat'*, *upotrebit'* represent the act of use as depletion or deterioration of the object, i.e. as an event of general economy, while *to use*, *user*, *benutzen* focus on use derived by the subject, i.e. are built into the perspective of private (restricted) economy.

¹⁷ Cf. Igor Smimov's exploration of the „castration complex" in Pushkin, *Psihoistorija Russkoj Literatury*, Moscow 1994, echoing his study of „masochism" in Soviet literature („Scriptum sub specie Sovietica", *Russian Language Journal*, 1987, 41).

¹⁸ *Encyclopedia of Religion*/ Ed. Mircea Eliade, v.7, New York McMillan 1987, 146.

Regarded as a „punishment“, castration, nonetheless, is connected to *coitus interruptus*: failing the subject in his enterprise, it spills his entire investment. Thus, it approaches the social behavior originally termed „brainfucking“ (*ebat' mozg'*), which also has something to do with a fertility rite (unlike „brainwashing“, which suggests rather a purification procedure). The gist of this activity is not „cleaning“ – not limiting the mind, but limiting mind's limits by exposing it to non-limit (*bespredel*) which is its *true* limit. Brainfucking is an act of general economy – a purposeless unreserved *clearing* of all reservations and limits.

By clearing its reserves economy would only follow its character. Economy cannot be rigorous, else it will be consumptive. Economy has nothing to do with making economy: it just has nothing to do. Similar to capital, it might be called „subversive“, if subversion of subversion were not reticence. Economy is not different and not opposed to difference, „not“ here being not negative, i.e. opposite, i.e. wasteful, but, neutral (*ne-utras*): indifferent.

True, for indifference to come into effect there must exist the play of difference, which is somehow „irreducible“. However, since one speaks of difference without being sure of its identity and even by being sure of its nonidentity, one must recognize the *force of indifference*, no matter whether it lies in Being, or in language, or in economy itself.

This superfluous supplement

Modern theoretical use parallels the *play of difference* with the *play of writing*, revealing through the identity of the *play* the „unrest“ of capital, which taking ever-different forms stays irreducible. By the force of this use writing has become money of theoretical investment – an illiquidable element of liquidity, a volatile mercury enabling capital's transformations. The play of writing is inexhaustible, not afflicted with deficit, not burdened with need, and therefore – not *needed*.

The word made store withstands speculation of writing, however what is this „humbleness of form“ (D. Likhachev) if not writing *itself* – economizing voice, storing silence? Economy of writing effaces *play* and eliminates *supplement* – not as a supplement which supplants but as a supplement which is superfluous. In fact, the entirety of Russian classic literature sets itself against „literature“ as a superfluous supplement to Life.

To start with the classic's classic – *granddaddy* Krylov. Vygotsky discovered in Krylov's fables the Machine of Catastrophe – a machine working towards its crash. He however underrated the sway of the crash which exceeds a deconstructive turn: the crash, since it befalls a textual machine, opens up the space beyond the text – the space of Reality.

Typically, Krylov's fable consists of a proliferating monologue or description followed by a statement, which undermines the „verbal“ part and makes the continuation of the text impossible: the final *pointe* is a point of transition from 'words' to 'deeds' and the dead end of the text.

The guests are trying to open a box which they take for a trick device. „One knob and then the next, and then the handle press“. The *pointe*: „*This was a box that opened by itself*“ („A Small Chest“).¹⁹

Four animals gather to play a quartet. To improve performance they change places, but to no avail. The *pointe*: „*Then try new tunes and change positions: the truth is that you're poor musicians*“ („A Quartet“, my translation).

A cook is preaching to a cat exposing the flaws of his conduct. The *pointe*: „*But ere the sermon was complete, The cat had polished off the meat*“ („Cat and Cook“).

Whatever the character does, he fails. Whatever words say, they miss Reality. Could it be that the problem lies in difference *whatever* – in differences which do not make the Difference, in limitations which do not touch the Limit?

That is because whatever way man goes is not the way of Being *itself*. There is only one difference – that between man's difference and the world's indifference, that difference differing man, not the world. All the difference belongs to man; reality is simple – and therefore ungraspable by the play of difference. It may be conceived only as a sediment, which being unconsumable by the play, remains after the play.

The play of difference constitutes the field of textuality to which reason is confined. Like Kant, Krylov is engaged in the critique of reason, which by accumulating *its* differences loses the Thing itself: *But wiseman Perkins has got no gherkins*. However, Krylov's message is anti-Kantian as well, because anybody questioning about the thing *itself* is already trapped by the play of difference and misses the object of his question. Krylov's silent lesson is anti-metaphysical: it deals away the supplement of the „meta“.

If unlucky Perkins would conceptualize his failure, he would probably say that the object is always missing, that the gherkin is „a place of lack“. Thus he would miss it again, exactly because he pretends to grasp its *place*. He would always practically miss gherkins, and that is the best he may do, since it is only by failing practically – by losing its game undeliberately that reason may get to Reality.

The reason is failing because reality is economical. Unlike Heidegger, who exploits what he calls „ontological difference“, Krylov deals with ontic deficit: *strashnyi deficit Bytija*. Rather than supplementing onto- with logical, he dis-

¹⁹ If not indicated otherwise, the excerpts of Krylov's fables are given in B. Pares' translation, Ivan Krylov, *Russian Fables with Verse*, New York: Penguin 1942.

penses with the augmentation to reach the *bare* reality. The supplement should be economized, because reality is deficient. Deficit is real. There is deficit.

There is deficit because, as Kant argued, Being is not a predicate, or „life is not a theory“, as it is likely to be rendered in Russian. Being is not *anything*: it is what it is, or it lives as it lives. Being evades conceptualization: whatever one considers Being to be, is not Being itself – and that is *what* one understands under Reality: Being's economy of the human.

Being is poor but it is not crooked. It does not hide anywhere except here, where it *is* hidden: lost amidst the presence, thrown into indifference. The unprecedented crime committed by the later Heidegger, in the face of his Russian jury, consists of infusing difference into the heart of Being: distancing Being from Life, *Sein* from *Dasein*, Being *itself* from Being *as it is*. Heidegger overlooked the elephant („Slona-to ja i ne primetil“) – not that he forgot about the elephant's Being, but that he did not notice the Elephant-Being being *here*.²⁰

Heidegger had an interest in doing what he did. By splitting Being from itself, he opened up a space of speculation on the body of Being, made Being into an object of investment – claiming all the same time the return to Being *itself*.

Meanwhile, Being, being as it *is*, does not hide from man and therefore does not appear to man. Being does not conceal, nor reveal, it does not conceal *and* does not reveal, it conceals *no more* than reveals: it stays indifferent, and that is not a „double difference“ but one and the same indifference. Being is being economically. It is nothing else than economy, *no more* than economy. And therefore there *is* economy. Economy economizes.

But what does economy economize if there is only economy and if it is only economical? If there is no excess in the world, economy, in order to economize, must draw excess out of its own body, or make the world into its own excess. And so in fact it acts, constructing a necessary world to deal it away as a supplement to its own necessity, or feeding up an economical body to squash it as a parasite on Economy's own body.

This allows also to say that Economy is a parasite that feeds on Speculation's body, because it treats Speculation as a *body* – as a quantitative augmentation which is liable to economy unrelatedly to its inner qualities and function. This way any Krylov's fable develops a theory, builds a home for Reason which then it destroys just as a theory, i.e. as 'words' which must be rejected independently of what they say. Any fable inflates its textual body to burst it with the pin of the *pointe*. Any fable treats the human body as a domestic, i.e. sodomitic object, considering the neighbour's brains always exposed for fucking, the

²⁰ Heidegger is still one of the most influential figures in modern Russian scholarship (with such adherents as V. Bibikhin and V. Toporov). However, the line of opposition to the theory does not lie within the theory, but rather may be associated with silencing practices inherent in the tradition.

reader not being exempted from that natural economy. Without this resource provided the fable machine would not work, or would not be what it is – the brainfucking machine which produces Reality.

Self-exposure to failure is a gesture inherent to Russian textual and social bodies – a gesture of unreserved economy. In Pushkin's and Gogol's short stories, when the *poor man* loses his last possession, the narration dies out in the ineffable poorness of the world.

Turgenev's novels perform self-defeat by staging the death of the hero – a „Hamlet“ or a „Don Quixote“. Death is originally inscribed in these characters demonstrating a commitment that stretches beyond the limits of life. However, death as a failure to live is a failure of commitment as a life principle. There is no place for commitment within the space of dependence, like that of beings' dependence upon Being – nor even for commitment to Being itself, since it does not initiate from Being *itself*.

But if it is Being which decides, than, whatever the hero does, must fail – must lose excess over Being and thus give entirely what it may be taken from him. This would also allow utilizing the author, making him a fallible author and earning his body for economy.

Leo Tolstoy was probably the only Russian author, if not the only Russian individual, to resist utilization. At least he allowed it to his character who flees from a flagellation scene, breaking his engagement all at the same time („After the Ball“).²¹ Tolstoy's idea was non-engagement in unimportant, which amounted to restricted economy: individual's withholding from social practices threatening seminal drain. The importance of this idea being out of the question, it demanded however full engagement on the part of the person, notwithstanding his failure. Tolstoy teaches his hero economy by making him fail in squandering. He, too, can plough better only by whipping his horse – always the same horse.

Managing salvation

The self-enclosed character of natural economy is not to be overestimated: just as an „economic machine“,²² a peasant's farm may be regarded as an eschatological vehicle, its entire functioning being aimed at survival, all its resources being put in reserve for this purpose.

It is another matter that eschatology is based economically, i.e. that it has a 'base', is secured by a „guarantee“.

²¹ On this tale as a wedding trial and on the hero's failure in this trial see: A. Zholkovsky, „Morfologija i istoricheskie korni rasskaza Tolstogo ‚Posle Bala‘“, *Bluzhdaushchie sny' i drugie raboty*, Moscow: Nauka 1994, 100.

²² A. Chalanov, *On the Theory of Peasant Economy*, 123.

Every good comes from economy. There is no other way to provide good except by pro-viding it – ensuring it in advance by setting its conditions.

Revolutionary salvation did not choose another way. The Bolshevik idea – which was not only the Bolsheviks' – was to „harness the law“ (*osedlat' zakon*)²³ – to put the man in possession of the law, to make the law *his* resource. To achieve this purpose the proletariat had to be armored with appropriate resources – Marxist theory, the Bolshevik party and Lenin's brain – and once so armored, it already provides the required resource, puts itself in the position of the mastery. The work of revolution, no matter how violent, amounts to a peasant's toil of „preparing grounds“:

After one party had won over the majority in the leading Soviets and had in this way secured the basic political premise for seizure of power....

Once the majority of the toilers is on our side... the formation of Soviets would be sure to follow our summons....

The realization of each progressive stage in our plan is prepared and secured by the fulfillment of the antecedent stage.²⁴

In contrast to the enlightened Reason which turns its equippedness into mastery,²⁵ Bolsheviks reduce mastery to its necessary and sufficient base – possession of resources.

Everything is a resource. Everything serves a purpose. Every resource is redeemed – reserved from use, and every resource is condemned – reserved to be used. There is no thing so unworthy that it cannot be redeemed – *nado berech vsiakoe dobro*²⁶ – and there is no value too precious to be condemned – turned into unworthy in the face of its purpose.

The best are resources – minor resources, since they provide the major resources, and the major resources since they economize the minor ones. Therefore, the best use one may make of a value is to turn it into resource – to pledge it for a greater value. One may not know *what* this value would be, certain is that it will be a greater value. Nothing is saved for itself but only as a pledge for something else, however, as a pledge, it is saved with the utmost care:

He doubted whether it were necessary that the excessive truth [*izbytochnaia pravda*] come some final day; or rather one should keep all the communism and all its bliss in a cautious reserve, supplying it to the

²³ Joseph Stalin, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, Moscow: Foreign languages 1952, 7.

²⁴ Leo Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, v.2, New York: Pioneer Press, 1953, 330, 351, 352.

²⁵ Horkheimer Max, Adorno Theodor, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Frankfurt: S. Fischer 1969, 28-33.

²⁶ Andrei Platonov, *Gosudarstvennyi zhitel'*, Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel 1988, 451.

masses once in a while in reasonable quotients, so as to save undamaged the wholesomeness of wealth and cheer.²⁷

To save a resource one must earn it. There is no hope of saving a trifle as long as all resources are absorbed by the body of the Earth. One will gain nothing by ploughing the Earth better, since the surplus earned would be consumed by its natural holding place. The only way for man to procure a resource is to seize Earth's entire body: to seize her *in body*, and to turn this body to his use – to sodomize the Earth.²⁸

This would mean repossessing the mother, or taking her twice, since one aims not only to guarantee her fecundity but also to take hold of her products. That is what the proletariat is up to in its efforts to harness the law: not to break it, but to appropriate its benefits. The law of general economy is not broken: the body of the Earth remains a store to which all resources are confined, however this store is forestalled: reserved by man for his purpose (as suggested by Nikolai Fyodorov, who offered to treat cemeteries as „repositories“ – resources of future resurrection).

The problem of mastery is how to take hold of the *entire* resource. For this one does not „use“ a resource but „exploits“ it – i.e. *abuses*, thus guaranteeing one's command over it:

Socialist society will command nature in its entirety, with its grouse and its sturgeons.²⁹

Poetry requires language in all its entirety, in all its aspects and moments...

Poetry as it were squeezes out all the juice (*vyzhimaet vse soki*) from language.³⁰

By acquiring the greatest resource, man acquires all possible resources without actual holding them. On the other hand, providing oneself with a resource of *such* capacity may itself be considered a universal guarantee. A double mortgage is taken out on the body of the Earth: guaranteeing the possession of all possible resources, it serves as the greatest possible pledge to secure one's purpose.³¹

²⁷ Andrei Platonov, *Chevengur*, Moscow: Vysshaia Shkolia 1991, 325.

²⁸ In Russian folk-tales sodomization, far from pertaining to sexual purpose, serves a tool of domination (the *Soldier and Priest* plot). At the same time it is evident that man cannot win the Earth for nothing: he must outflank her to take her in surprise, like hare outflanks fox in another folk-tale.

²⁹ Leo Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution* (Michigan: Ann Arbor, 1966), 252.

³⁰ M. Bakhtin, „Problema materiala, sodержaniya i formy“, *Voprosy literatury i estetiki*, Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya literatura 1975, 46.

³¹ Cf. the double mortgage of savior's body in Christian theology – first as a ransom paid to Death to redeem humankind and second as a pledge given to humankind to guarantee its inheritance until it becomes effective („who is the guarantee of our inheritance till the redemption of the purchased possession“ – Eph. 1:14).

The body of the Earth is the mightiest of resources. To earn it one must mobilize the entirety of available resources, up to the entirety of one's own body – especially since it is absorbed within the entirety of the Earth:

The nature of man is hidden in the deepest and darkest corner of the unconscious, of the elemental, of the sub-soil. Is it not self-evident that the greatest effort will be in this relation?³²

One must mobilize the entirety of resources, or mobilize them entirely: without reserving any effort. Only an exhaustive gage is sufficient for the greatest purpose. Onanism is the price to pay for sodomization.

In fact, the proletarian has nothing else to pledge except his effort. Exploiting any resource whatsoever is actually an attempt to exploit the only resource he knows how to exploit, and to pledge the only wealth he may pledge all entirely – his onanic body. „Poetry requires the entire person – breathing, moving, seeing, hearing, remembering, loving and comprehending“.³³

With man's body captivated by the Earth, he cannot start the affair of salvation otherwise than by pledging the same pledge the second time. Thus he already redeems it: gives worth to his flesh, turns it into resource, makes it demanded and needed.

„How much does the Soviet Union weigh? Stalin once asked one of his cronies, – Quite heavy, don't you think? And *he* believes that he alone may outweigh the entire Soviet Union?“

It was, one may surmise, a Bolshevik whom Stalin targeted – a man who tried to outweigh the body of the Earth by putting it on economical scales. For Stalin, the Soviet Union, well loaded with mountains, rivers, peoples, ores, is a body that weighs. There is no need to weigh this body: the weight of the Soviet Union – the good weight of a resource – weighs above here.

The weight weighs. It exceeds the weight of any single human body and yet is totally put into the man's hands insofar as he is able to perceive its cumulative gravity. To experience this overbearing weight one must *get weighed*: get matched against the whole or get suspended within the whole.

The weight is the presence of the Whole. The entirety of Being is being here. Being is entirely being here. Being gives itself to man entirely by taking him within its entirety.

One must appreciate the truth which stands behind demagoguery and gives weight to Stalin's words. Never before was social life such a pure manifestation of Being. Never did man stand so undoubtedly close to the truth of Being – closer than to the fact of his own being.

³² L. Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution*, Michigan: Ann Arbor 1960, 255.

³³ M. Bakhtin, „Problema materiala, soderzhaniya i formy“, 69-70.

Truth takes man: rapes him rustically, sodomitically – not by appealing to him with a distant voice but by assaulting him with an inevitable word. Nobody can avoid hearing a word; everybody is enclosed within the space of its audibility and comprehensibility – and Stalin's words are fairly comprehensible.

Never else was life so full of life. Nobody else was so joy-ful – as „nobody else“:

Nobody else in the world is so able to love, to laugh and to believe.

(A. Lebedev-Kumach)

„Everything is production“:³⁴ production of production, incessant growth of production, feast of resources (production cannot stop, else it would be not resourceful).

Soviet economic doctrine prescribes a faster growth of department 1 (production of the means of production) over department 2 (production of means of consumption). Thus it seems to lay emphasis on reserving products against their immediate consumption. In effect, this law opposes reservation: stockpiling metal makes it unusable and guarantees that it cannot be withdrawn from the production process. Wasting the product is the best guarantee against its use; production becomes a work of excepting exceptions – the economy of difference.

Everything is production. Nothing is withheld from the feast of waste. Economy becomes unnecessary in the days of Great Economy, when Being itself is rendered to man, when the only mode of being is that of being given. Everybody is given to the other, and everybody secures the givenness of the other: the regime of brainfucking and „alertness“ (*bditelnost*) creates the plane of engagement, keeping bodies suspended on this plane.

Being itself is being given. Being itself has become a dispensable resource. This includes not only Being's readiness to hand (*Zuhändigkeit*) but also its readiness not to be – to economize itself by laying compact in the resource of Truth or by dissolving in the resource of non-Being.

Actually, what reason is there for Being to be? Once the truth of Being is provided, the fact of being becomes unnecessary. The physical existence of a resource adds nothing to its resourcefulness. The hero's being, for instance, is excessive to his being a hero, while the hero's death, making him a finished hero, transforms him into a manageable resource. A dead hero feeds living people, who, fed by this resource, live easily on Earth, making their lives that much easier to efface.

In order for the resource of Being to be exploitable, there must exist an instance external to Being, that is, the resource of non-Being. However being re-

³⁴ Gille Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, tr. R. Harley, New York: Viking Press 1988, 4.

source-ful, Being cannot rely on anything exterior to itself. Consequently, Being must exploit itself by itself: it must possess a resource of Non-Being within itself. No external resource is external to Being, as no external resource *is* a resource, the supplement of the exterior undermining the economy of the interior.

This goes to the heart of Stalin's business with Being. His interest is not in the body within the game, however richly paid-off; his interest is in the big body of the game. This interest demands that nobody withhold his stake and therefore every body is at stake, that the cumulative fund of the game be staked over and over again. In this situation Stalin is not one who makes his stake, but he who is created by the Stake and is absolutely transparent to it, assuming, as he does, the role of the stake collector required by the game.

The situation of total stakedness and suspension demands that there be no one-sided exploitation, but bodies' mutual waste. The instrumental sado-masochist treatment of resources gives place to sodom-onanic waste; sodomization evolves into Sodomy.³⁵ There are no exploiters and exploited in Sodomy: within its economical realm each belongs to everybody and everybody belongs to each.

By the law of Sodomy the Earth cannot be an object of man's exploitation, nor can man distance himself from the exploited resource. The body of the Earth grows to encompass man and to become the Full Body – a community of partial bodies. The form of their union is incompleteness: Man is incomplete without his Motherland, the Motherland is incomplete without her sons. Even the Full Body is incomplete: it cannot achieve completeness without incompleteness of its member parts.³⁶

Bodies become partial by being used. There is no more privileged user standing out of the resource or exceeding it even to the slightest extent. The user is useable – not that he *may* be used, but that he is entirely submitted to use: there is nothing in him which may *not* be used or which is intended for something other than use.

³⁵ The following folk-tale may illustrate the transformation of Bolshevik project by Stalin:

„Once upon a time there lived a peasant with his wife, and they had a stupid son. It came into the fool's head to marry and he began to pester his father: „Dad, I want to get married!“ The father said: „Do not hurry, my boy, the time has not yet come for you to marry. When your cock will reach your ass, then you will marry“. As time goes by, the fool has no other concern but to pull on his cock. At last there came the day when the cock reached the ass and even went over... The father says to him: „Fine, my boy! Now, as your cock has grown that long, you have no need to marry. Stay alone as you are and fuck yourself through the ass“ (*Russkii Dekameron*, Moskva: Pioner 1993, 36).

The text, bearing to the practice of *snokhachestvo* (the father's cohabitation with the daughter-in-law), realizes at the same time the brainfucking scenario typical for Krylov's fables and corresponds to Stalin's policy of „exploiting internal resources“ which came to succeed the Bolshevik's tactics of „preparing tools for victory“.

³⁶ Cf. missing leg(s) as a habitual handicap of the socialist realism hero (Igor Smirnov, „Scriptum sub specie Sovietica“, 126) which guarantees his placedness within the Full Body.

One may say more: *the user* is useable; it is the user who possesses an excess over the object used and thus becomes a privileged resource of the Great Economy. Absorbed in exploiting resources, society breeds users, makes their difference ripen to efface it completely and right away. This becomes the function of Stalin's purges which efface difference through elimination of particular bodies; they do not make difference between the „moral lesson“ and physical elimination.

Purging is cleaning, yet it cleans neatly: without purifying or producing the sediment of reality, as the fable machine does, reality being as exploitable a resource as any other: it is shaped and reshaped every day as expediency demands. There is no reality beyond brainfucking except the reality of brainfucking.

Economy, as always, cuts margins, however the margin, the superfluous surplus, is now associated with the interior Self of the body, which economy removes towards the exterior. There is no more place to deposit the levied surplus: the body of the Earth is already outraged and it is further outraged all along the way. The surplus is not deposited, but is constantly re-levied through perpetual Sodomy. Wealth is desedimentized; however, the community's *last value* is not wealth but the Full Body itself which resedimentizes itself through the acts of desedimentation.

The turn to the new system of economy becomes traceable in Bakhtin's work from the end of the 1920s. In early papers Bakhtin encompasses the resource of the language within the horizon of the poet-manager. He now absorbs the restricted economy of *oeuvre* within the general economy of language:

There remain no neutral, ownerless words and forms in language, it turns out to be entirely embezzled, permeated by intentions³⁷.

The body of the text is „embezzled“ (*raskhischchen*) by language, embezzling presuming, as hoarding does, the situation of general deficit.

The embezzling agency is the *dialogue* which permeates the text down to the last word, providing at the same time the reader's body to the author, as it draws him personally (which is more than bodily) onto a public scene. Dialogue extends to every person spoken to or even thought of.³⁸ Nobody may avoid being dialogized: „dialogic imagination“ verges on carnivorous carnival.³⁹

³⁷ M. Bakhtin, „Slovo v romane“, *Voprosy literatury i estetiki*, 115.

³⁸ „To think about people means to talk with them“ (M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, tr. C. Emerson, Minneapolis, Univ. of Minnesota 1984, 68).

³⁹ „Speech... becomes absolutely transitive, immanently containing within itself the entire world“ (Mikhail Ryklin, „Bodies of Terror: Theses Toward a Logic of Violence“, *New Literary History*, 1993, Winter 24:1, 45).

The enclosure of the individual body being broken, there emerges „the grotesque body of the folk“ – actually the Full Body of the people – for which „the death of the individual is no more than a moment within the jubilant life of people and mankind, a moment essential for their renewal and perfection.“⁴⁰

The death of an individual is but a moment of grotesque body's life: the Full Body lives by embezzling its parts. There is no difference within this body between spending and saving. Full Body spends itself and thus saves itself. This is a reserved and dispensed, a speculatively inflated and economically digested body, the spent raw material and the end product, the source and the store – all that is contained in the word „resource“.

Unlike Deleuzian bodies-organs which transgress their borders dispersing in „flaws“, the grotesque body internalizes its borders: it has no surface which is not a surface of *contact*: it is always beset by neighboring bodies, pressed in the middle. The grotesque body lives within the density of the Full Body – the density of *contact* and *use* involved by the Deficit.

The grotesque body gets contacted through the word. This is a sodomitric contact: both supplemental and abusive – involving the entire person. In this act of sublime rape the imaginative merges with the corporal, the metaphorical with the real, performance with description. Bakhtin does not distinguish an urban „speech genre“ from agricultural fertility rite – earthfucking from brainfucking, just as he does not distinguish the jubilant life of the Full Body from its celebration *within his text*. Bakhtin does not distinguish these „moments“: he does not make difference.

Bakhtinian carnival lives a new life nowadays in Russia when „cleansed from its geographical appendage,“⁴¹ the Full Body revealed itself as the sole formative structure of the community and when the imperial space changed into the space of brainfucking, displaying under different forms – political, military, criminal – one and the same pattern. This space where „money whirls“ (*kru-tiat'sa den'gi*) is not that of financial interaction: what they call „money“ is a means of brainfucking – a carnival device for beating each others heads through nonpayment and overpricing. The society which whirls money is not different from that which hoards bread, both types of economics being forms of recycling economy through which the community comes into possession of its body and achieves self-identity.

⁴⁰ M. Bakhtin, *Tvorchestvo Rable i narodnaja kultura srednevekov'ja i Renessansa*, Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura 1990, 377.

⁴¹ Mikhail Ryklin, *The Bodies of the Terror*, 68.