

Anatomies of the subject: Spinoza and Deleuze

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TITLE: Anatomies of the subject: Spinoza and Deleuze.

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis centres on an examination of Gilles Deleuze's non-subject centred philosophy and the influence of the earlier (seventeenth century) work of Benedict Spinoza, whom Deleuze describes as one of an "alternative" tradition of philosophers, and whom he claims as an antecedent.

Historically, the subject has always appeared as a question, or as in question, as a problem around which concepts cluster. The focus here is on Deleuze's approach to the problem of subjectivity, his treatment of it and his attempt to configure an "anti-subject" based on his own transformations of Spinozist concepts, which he takes up and modifies for his own purposes. The proposal is that Spinoza provides a key or a way into Deleuzian concepts, and at the same time that Deleuze's readings of Spinoza's theories reinvigorate them.

What unites Spinoza and Deleuze, and is a recurring theme of this thesis, is that they both conduct their critiques and elaborate models from within a conceptual framework of a radical immanence that opposes all transcendence, and especially the transcendent subject of consciousness. It is on the basis of Spinoza's radical immanence and his non-analogical approach to Being/beings that Deleuze constructs a theory of becoming – as "de-individualising" process – that will be his alternative to models of the subject based on identity.

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Abbreviations

I have adopted the following abbreviations for referring to Spinoza's *Ethics*:

A = axiom

D= definition

P = proposition

Schol = scholium

L = lemma

Dem = demonstration

Post = postulate

Def.Aff = the definition of the affects in Part III

EI = *Ethics*, Part I

EII = *Ethics*, Part II, etc.

Therefore, for example, EIP29Schol2 refers to the second scholium of proposition twenty nine in Part I of the *Ethics*.

All quotes from the *Ethics* are from the Edwin Curley translation, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, Volume I (Princeton, 1985).

Introduction

What we most lack is a belief in the world, we've quite lost the world, it's been taken from us. If you believe in the world you precipitate events, however inconspicuous, that elude control, you engender new space-times, however small their surface or volume [...] Our ability to resist control, or our submission to it, has to be assessed at the level of our every move. We need both creativity *and* a people.¹

Alain Badiou set out the three maxims of Deleuze as follows: i) elude control, and ii) revive belief in the world, based on a new configuration of the subject; iii) precipitate events, by rejecting “communication” in favour of creation.² In this thesis I argue that it is a formative encounter with Spinoza that infuses Deleuze's thought on exactly these three problems. With Spinoza, Deleuze can think an alternative model of identity as something fluid and emerging out of relations – crucially out of constitutive relations with the world – and Spinoza also points the way into a philosophy of production as the corollary of a move away from the specificity of “the subject” (understood as ‘something invested with duties, power, and knowledge’, or as ‘the self-defining point from which the orders of thought and of the world are constructed’).³

The Critique of the Subject

For what is a ‘subject’? ‘Subject’ (or ‘suppositum’) is the name given to a be-ing whose *identity* is sufficiently stable for it to bear, in every sense of the word (sustain, serve as a foundation for, withstand), change or modification. The subject remains the same, while accidental qualities are altered. Since Descartes, the most subjective of all subjects is the one which is certain of its identity, the *ego* of *ego cogito*. The quality of subjectivity is thus confined to consciousness.⁴

Historically, the subject has always appeared as a question (or in question), as a problem around which concepts cluster. As a foundation, therefore, it takes the form of a heterogeneous problematic space. What “begins” with Descartes' *cogito* then is not only the construction of the modern subject but also the questioning of what a subject

¹ Deleuze, *Negotiations*, p.176.

² Alain Badiou, Lecture at the conference ‘Immanent Choreographies: Deleuze and Neo-Aesthetics’, Tate Modern, London, 21st September, 2001

³ Deleuze, *Negotiations*, p.176; Callinicos, *Is there a future for Marxism?*, p.26.

⁴ Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, p.76.

can be and/or do (in the case of Descartes, questioning the certitude of knowledge the individual can have, or what would constitute certain knowledge). Today, the problem of subjectivity remains, as John-Luc Nancy writes, ‘one of the great motifs of contemporary philosophical work in France’:

the critique or deconstruction of interiority, of self-presence, of consciousness, of mastery, of the individual or collective property of an essence. Critique or deconstruction of the firmness of a *seat* (*hypokeimenon*, *substantia*, *subjectum*) and the certitude of an *authority* and a *value* (the individual, a people, the state, history, work).⁵

The problematising of the subject, which so characterises contemporary European philosophy, itself enfolds a ‘double attack’, as Vincent Descombes has pointed out: on the premises of phenomenology – the idealism of its search for an ‘authentic *cogito*’, which ‘retains the principle of the *subject*’ – and on the dialectic – understood as revolving around ‘a superior concept of identity’.⁶ Deleuze’s rejection or deconstruction of the subject is our focus here then, approached via the Spinozists concepts which, I propose, he takes up and modifies for his own purposes.

Deleuze’s affinity with Spinoza revolves around the rejection of the negative and all its forms, and has at its heart a critique of the traditional logic of identity (A = A as the paradigm of Western philosophy). It proceeds on the basis of a primary denunciation of the subject of consciousness – as the last vestige of transcendent structure – that is also absolutely central to Spinoza’s philosophical enterprise. As Genevieve Lloyd points out of Spinoza:

To read him is to glimpse unrealised possibilities of individual and collective self-consciousness – alternative ways of thinking of minds and bodies, of self and other, of personhood, agency and responsibility, or the relations between human beings and the rest of nature, between reason and the passions, of power, dominance and difference.⁷

The basic premise of all such critique, of course, is that “the subject” no longer works, no longer functions as a means to negotiate the social and political environment. What

⁵ From Jean-Luc Nancy’s letter of invitation (February 1986), in *Who comes after the subject?* Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, Jean-Luc Nancy (eds.), p.4.

⁶ Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, p.76.

⁷ Genevieve Lloyd, *Spinoza and the ‘Ethics’*, p.23.

unites Spinoza and Deleuze, and what will be our recurrent theme, is that they both conduct their critique and elaborate their alternative models on the basis of a radical immanence. For Deleuze, this commitment to immanence involves the disavowal of a transcendent God, of transcendent values, and of a transcendent subject (consciousness) – *the figure*, as far as modernity goes, of (neo-religious) transcendence.

Immanence is opposed to any eminence of the cause, any negative theology, any method of analogy, any hierarchical conception of the world. With immanence all is affirmation.⁸

I want to say that Spinoza's immanence, through a Deleuzian lens, is the key to getting many of the concepts Deleuze later invents in place. With Spinoza we can situate Deleuze as firstly and primarily a philosopher of immanence, of the One-All (Omnitudo), rather than on either side of a dichotomy between absolute multiplicity and ultimate transcendence, and this positioning is crucial.

A voyage in immanence⁹

Deleuze wrote two books on Spinoza, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* and *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, published in 1968 and 1970 respectively.¹⁰ His reading of Spinoza is unique and selective, sometimes rendering him unrecognisable, all the better to elaborate some new and specifically Deleuzian terrain of thought. Deleuze himself characterised his form of discourse – what he does with the philosophers he works on – as his way of breaking free from a “repressive” history of philosophy: a remaking and redeploying of concepts designed to stir up stagnant intellectualism:

I belong to a generation, one of the last generations, that was more or less bludgeoned to death with the history of philosophy [...] Many members of my generation never broke free of this; others did, by inventing their own particular methods and new rules, a new approach [...] I suppose the main way I coped with it at the time was to see the history of philosophy as some sort of buggery or (it comes to the same thing), immaculate conception.

⁸ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p.173.

⁹ ‘The entire *Ethics* is a voyage in immanence’, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.29.

¹⁰ For an overview of the French interest in Spinoza at this time, and the “renaissance” in French Spinoza studies during the late 1960s and early 1970s which incorporated Spinoza into a politically leftist discourse, see Warren Montag's Preface to Etienne Balibar's *Spinoza and Politics*.

I saw myself as taking an author from behind and giving him a child that would be his own offspring, yet monstrous. It was really important for it to be his own child, because the author had actually to say all I had him saying. But the child was bound to be monstrous too, because it resulted from all sorts of shifting, slipping, dislocations, and hidden emissions that I really enjoyed.¹¹

However, Deleuze also admits that,

It was on Spinoza that I worked the most seriously according to the norms of philosophy – but it was Spinoza more than any other that gave me the feeling of a gust of air that pushes you on the back each time you read him, a witch’s broomstick that he mounts you atop.¹²

Reading him through the concept of immanence, Deleuze is revealed as profoundly Spinozist, especially in the sense, as Badiou has it, of being a ‘*physicist*’, or “thinker of the All”:

Yes, Deleuze will prove to have been our great physicist: he who contemplated the fire of the stars for us, who sounded the chaos, took the measure of inorganic life, and immersed our meagre circuits in the immensity of the virtual. [...] There is in Deleuze, as in every physicist of this kind, a great power of speculative dreaming and something akin to a quivering tonality that is prophetic, although without promise. He said of Spinoza that he was the Christ of philosophy. To do Deleuze full justice, let us say that, of this Christ and his inflexible announcement of salvation by the All – a salvation that promises nothing, a salvation that is always *already there* – he was truly a most eminent apostle.¹³

‘What singles out the philosopher’, says Deleuze, ‘is the part played by immanence or fire’, and what is important to him is Spinoza’s rejection of all remnants of transcendence, his ‘triple denunciation: of “consciousness,” of “values,” and of “sad passions”’, in favour of a model of ‘immanent modes of existence’ which restore the individual to a concrete relation with the world.

There is, then, a philosophy of ‘life’ in Spinoza; it consists precisely 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.¹⁴

¹¹ Deleuze, *Negotiations*, pp.5-6. Deleuze acknowledges this kind of transformation at work in Spinoza: the *Ethics* is the ‘definitive form’ of ‘a way of thinking that uses Cartesianism as a means, not to eliminate, but to purify all of scholasticism, Jewish thought, and Renaissance philosophy, in order to extract from them something profoundly new which belongs only to Spinoza’, *Practical Philosophy*, p.8.

¹² Deleuze, *Dialogues*, p.15.

¹³ Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, p.101.

¹⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* p.45; Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.17; p.23; p.26.

It is Spinoza's compelling monism and his non-analogical approach to Being/beings, as we shall see, that attracts Deleuze, enabling him to construct a philosophy based around "de-individualising" in order, as John Marks puts it, 'to find a connection with the collectivity at a level underneath that of the individual'.¹⁵

Which Deleuze?

The direction of this thesis came from a series of seminars with Peter Hallward on 'Foucault, Deleuze, and Contemporary French Thought'¹⁶; in one session we were asked to read selections from Deleuze's books on Spinoza, along with Part II of the *Ethics*, 'Origin and Nature of the Mind'. What was striking was how Spinoza provided a "way in" to Deleuze, to understanding his approach to the subject as well as what amounts to a cosmology of immanence. Spinoza taught me to speak Deleuzian.

Why Spinoza? Deleuze after all wrote extensively on other philosophers: Hume (in 1953), Nietzsche (1962), Bergson (1966). All are claimed in some way as antecedents when he begins to write – on his own account and with Felix Guattari – his major philosophical works (*Difference and Repetition* (1968), *Logic of Sense* (1969), *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), *What is Philosophy?*(1991)). What is more, the influence of Bergson, Nietzsche, and Spinoza has been variously divined and divided up in readings of Deleuze's work. For example, Badiou has Bergson as Deleuze's 'real master', and reads him in terms of an idealism that requires 'the renunciation of "this life"'.¹⁷ Similarly, Keith Ansell Pearson reads Bergson as supplying Deleuze's ontology (as well as Deleuze's reading of Spinoza as being 'often inspired by his Bergonism), as does Constantin Boundas.¹⁸ Michael Hardt has divided Deleuze's philosophy into a Bergsonian-inspired ontology, an ethics of Nietzschean

¹⁵ John Marks, *Gilles Deleuze, Vitalism and Multiplicity*, p.91.

¹⁶ Queen Mary College, University of London, 1998.

¹⁷ Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, p.39; p.13.

¹⁸ Keith Ansell Pearson, *Germinal Life: the Difference and Repetition of Deleuze*, p.11; Constantin Boundas, 'Deleuze-Bergson: an Ontology of the Virtual', in Patton (ed), *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, pp.81-106.

affirmation, and a politics based on a collective model of ethical praxis and provided by Spinoza as ‘a practice of joy [which] takes place on the plane of sociality’.¹⁹ Hardt also attributes Bergsonian, as well as Nietzschean inflections to Deleuze’s work on Spinoza (‘Bergson and Nietzsche breathe life into Spinoza’), and describes Bergson, Nietzsche and Spinoza together as ‘successive steps towards the realization of [Deleuze’s anti-Hegelian] project’.²⁰ And Todd May’s recent book on Deleuze sets out the triad in terms of a ‘Holy Trinity’: ‘If Spinoza is the Christ among Deleuze’s philosophers, then Bergson is the Father, and Nietzsche the Holy Ghost’. May has Spinoza and Bergson as supplying two halves of Deleuze’s ontology – respectively the concepts of immanence and duration – with Nietzsche’s affirmation - understood, as it appears in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, as the affirmation of difference – constituting a ‘subversive’ ethics.²¹

Against all this, Manuel DeLanda has argued for Deleuze’s theoretical *independence* from Spinoza, Bergson and Nietzsche, and links him instead with a scientific discourse as a processist thinker.²²

What emerges then is that the provenance of Deleuze’s concepts are eminently debatable and debated. Confining ourselves to the Deleuze-Spinoza equation, we see that the concept of expression, centralised in *Expressionism in Philosophy*, has been read as ‘structuralist overkill’ and as betraying a ‘pervasive tone of neo-Platonism’ (Barbone), as well as an honourable attempt to ‘extract [Spinoza] from his traditional place in the history of philosophy and restore his unclassifiable character’ (Macherey).²³ Deleuze’s Spinoza is variously ‘an unrecognisable creature’ (Badiou) and ‘unsurpassable’ (Negri): ‘it is only in complicity with [Deleuze’s reading] that we can

¹⁹ Michael Hardt, *An Apprenticeship in Philosophy, Gilles Deleuze*, p.55.

²⁰ Michael Hardt, *An Apprenticeship in Philosophy, Gilles Deleuze*, p.xi; Philip Goodchild also notes the Nietzschean inflection: ‘Deleuze reads Spinoza through Nietzschean eyes’, in *Deleuze and Guattari, An Introduction to the Politics of Desire*, p.37.

²¹ Todd May, *Gilles Deleuze: An Introduction*, p.26; p.69,

²² Manuel DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*.

²³ Steve Barbone, review of *Expressionism in Philosophy*, in *Studia Spinozana*, Vol. 8 (1992), p.345; Pierre Macherey, ‘The Encounter with Spinoza’, in Patton (ed) *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, p.148.

build up a knowledge [conoscenza] of Spinoza’, insists Negri.²⁴ And whereas Philip Goodchild identifies a central ambivalence in Deleuze’s attitude to Spinoza – Spinoza as Christ figure versus the Spinoza who does not go far enough in thinking pure immanence and whose ontology is haunted by transcendence – Peter Hallward sides with Badiou in recognising no ambiguity, only transcendence, and reads Deleuze’s Spinozism in terms of a neo-religious ‘philosophy of redemption’ (‘like Spinoza, Deleuze studies the Given for one and only one reason: to announce the manner of its dissolution’).²⁵

The only sustained, book-length, analysis to focus exclusively on the Spinoza-Deleuze equation (Gillian Howie’s *Deleuze and Spinoza: Aura of Expressionism*) is a close and against-the-grain reading of *Expressionism in Philosophy* as providing a largely incoherent representation of Spinoza – and also claims transcendence for Deleuze. ‘The logic of [Deleuze’s] system’, latent in *Expressionism in Philosophy*, ‘is idealist’, says Howie, identifying it as ‘idealism, posing as materialism’ and insisting on the presence of both a negative dialectic and a retained concept of subjective authenticity.²⁶

What this thesis proposes is a reading of Spinoza-Deleuze as thoroughly materialist, but in a special sense. I will argue that Spinoza-Deleuze (the hybrid) supplies a materialist ontology of forces and relations, which offers a way not only out of the dialectic, but of subject-object dichotomies *per se*, and which sustains a model of the embodied/embedded individual, as well as of a revolutionary “becoming-active” anti-subject as its corollary, in opposition to the essentialist subject. It is Spinoza, I

²⁴ Alain Badiou, *The Clamor of Being*, p.1; Antonio Negri, *Subversive Spinoza: (un)contemporary variations*, p.102.

²⁵ Philip Goodchild, ‘Spirit of Philosophy: Derrida and Deleuze’, in *Angelaki Special Issue, Rhizomatics, Genealogy*, Vol. 5, No.2 (August 2000), p53; Peter Hallward, ‘Gilles Deleuze and the Redemption from Interest’, in *Radical Philosophy*, p.13. (Hallward subsequently amends his position, in *Badiou: A subject to Truth*, p.178: adequate expression of the One ‘certainly involves the preliminary death of equivocal – signifying – psychologizing delusions, but need not involve the dissolution of actuality *tout court*’).

²⁶ Gilliam Howie, *Deleuze and Spinoza: aura of Expressionism*, p.206; Deleuze presents ‘an anti-humanism which is at one with an extreme and “virile” form of political individualism – the individual is to be freed from social constraint in order to discover his or her own *daimon*’, p.5.

want to say, who provides a *fundamental orientation*, a Spinozist landscape together with a radical approach to the *division* of that landscape. As John Marks has it, ‘Bergson and Nietzsche may form the building blocks of Deleuze’s thought, but Spinoza is a “wind” that constantly blows at his back’.²⁷

Goodchild has pointed out that ‘The frequent failure to comprehend Deleuze’s philosophy on the part of readers and critics is a result of attempting to *represent* it [..] as opposed to *rethinking* it’.²⁸ Such an approach is contrary also to the one Deleuze would have us make:

There are, you see, two ways of reading a book: you either see it as a box with something inside and start looking for what it signifies [..] And you annotate and interpret and question, and write a book about the book, and so on and so on. Or there’s the other way: you see the book as a little non-signifying machine, and the only question is “Does it work, and how does it work?”²⁹

More than 300 years after his death Spinoza’s thought still resonates, still functions (‘texts that function [..] multiply our functioning. They turn us into madman; they make us vibrate’),³⁰ and what this thesis argues is that *Expressionism in Philosophy* and *Practical Philosophy* set up a series of alliances between Deleuze and Spinoza:

The success of a revolution resides only in itself, precisely in the vibrations, clinches, and openings it gave to men and women at the moment of its making and that composes in itself a monument that is always in the process of becoming, like those tumuli to which each new traveler adds a stone. The victory of a revolution is immanent and consists in the new bonds it installs between people, even if those bonds last no longer than the revolution’s fused material and quickly give way to division and betrayal.³¹

We deal with Deleuze-Spinoza on these terms, as a set of strategic accords formed in various ways throughout Deleuze’s philosophical life and staged here as transformative *encounters*. My focus then is on how Spinoza’s masterwork, the *Ethics*, works for and is reworked by Deleuze variously across his philosophical output. I want to show how Deleuze’s unique reading of Spinoza illuminates concepts in his own

²⁷ John Marks, *Gilles Deleuze, Vitalism and Multiplicity*, p.63.

²⁸ Philip Goodchild, ‘Deleuzian Ethics’, *Theory Culture and Society*, Vol.14, No.2, p.41.

²⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972-1990*, p.7.

³⁰ Felix Guattari, ‘A Liberation of Desire’, *Homosexualities and French Literature*, p.69.

³¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* p.177.

philosophy, and gives us their ancestry: the rejection of negativity, of the subjective measure, of the paradigm of identity, of all transcendent foundations – all are characteristic of his generalised Spinozism.

Philosophy then is understood here as a matter of dialogue, discourse, back and forth – and especially of wilful misunderstandings. What I attempt to trace is an “illegitimate” line, family resemblances that enrich our understanding of both thinkers. What this thesis contributes specifically therefore, beyond the exploration of the acknowledged and unacknowledged links between Spinoza and Deleuze, is the marking of lines of flight, points of transformation, and the new terrains Deleuze constructs, in order to show a connection based on affinity (shared orientation). Beyond the working out of what in Spinoza attracts Deleuze, what is crucially attended to are those points where a repetition becomes a true Deleuzian creation, no longer recognisable in terms of Spinoza scholarship.

Chapter one here starts out from the proposition that what links Deleuze to Spinoza is the attempt to think immanence. The argument is that Spinoza’s ontological model – which Deleuze fashions *Omnitudo*, or the One-All – supplies an alternative to the plane of organisation or the structure of transcendence, and in this chapter these two models are counterposed and identified as on either side of a fundamental split in the orientation of a philosophy of the subject. On the side of immanence, Spinoza’s monism (*Omnitudo*) is held up by Deleuze as *the* thinking of immanence (‘Spinoza is the vertigo of immanence from which so many philosophers try in vain to escape’) and absolute exclusion of the negative.³²

³² Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* p.48.

What is key for Deleuze is that Spinoza presents a single category of Being: substance as absolute productive power in and of itself. In chapter one we draw out Spinoza's Omnitudo on this basis: substance (Nature) is instantiated in a 'positive infinity' of heterogeneous attributes: an unlimited One-All where neither term (thought, extension, etc.) cancels the other. In Spinoza's dynamic model active power (the active forces of Nature) is ontological and non-attributive, and crucially *not* conditioned by a supplementary dimension (a true 'plane of immanence has no supplementary dimensions; the process of composition must be apprehended for itself, through itself, through that which it gives, in that which it gives').³³

In chapter two we see how Deleuze reads Spinoza's immanence as providing an alternative, non-negative typology of difference or distinction which, I argue, he co-opts into his own philosophy of positive difference. What Deleuze is concerned with is the construction of an ontology that would revolve around becoming and change, without making it answerable to a higher power (the requirements of identity), and that would have difference as its internal constitutive force. Spinoza is indispensable to him in this enterprise because his substance as 'positive infinity' provides the model for an ontological field of productive difference. This is also where we first see Deleuzian transformation at work: I trace how, with considerable sleight of hand, Deleuze transforms Spinoza's ultimately law-like substance (operating according to the laws of Nature) into a plane of pure becoming and unforeseeability – the ontological field presupposed in his own anti-subjectivism.

³³ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p.28; Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.128.

After setting out Spinoza's metaphysic, then Deleuze's appropriation and transformation of it, I turn in chapter three to the problem of how an alternative model of non-substantive individuality might be worked out. Beginning with Spinoza's model of the individual as part of Nature, or as a *modification* of substance, I explore the position of the finite human individual within an infinite universe, looking at what kinds of individualities we get with this non-substantive modal model. The focal point is Spinoza's rejection of a mind over body hierarchy in favour of a fundamental *dependence* on the body, and the demotion of human consciousness and free will that that entails. The model of the *cogito* as foundation is counterposed to a Spinozist model which privileges determining "external" relations and an impersonal, non-teleological, striving (*conatus*) as defining the human individual – the latter as its essence. This notion of the individual as a site of continual variation locked into a relation with its world – essence here being irreducibly co-present with existence, *conatus* as the drive for actual relation – is opposed to all models based on interiority, the first principle of substantive/transcendent models.

Spinoza's concept of *conatus* appeals to Deleuze's anti-transcendent sensibilities, opening for him the possibility of an anti-subjective model which takes relations of difference as prime, rather than as secondary to a more fundamental identity within an attributive framework.

I argue that for Deleuze, what Spinoza's modal model provides is a description of the individual which is compatible with his ontology of becoming, and in chapter four I work out the implications of this position in epistemological terms – the individual (no longer subject) in relation to knowledge. What Spinoza sets out is a typology of "ways-of-being" which privileges thought's connection to an outside (world). The key concept that Deleuze takes from Spinoza's modal model is that of

encounter. In opposition to a model which takes the *cogito* as prime, individualities here are crucially understood as the result of an encounter in the world, and are differentiated on the basis of their encounters (relations) and equivalent to their power to organise encounters (degree of *conatus*). I set out how *conatus* is amplified by Deleuze as an alternative principle of governance, its striving for individual augmentation ultimately directed towards acts of thought, as sources of increased power (Spinozist individuals are constituted in processes of enquiry). In this chapter I trace these (non-successive) types of individuality and examine Spinoza's notion of an *activity* of thought which offers a way out of – or rather further into – his deterministic universe.

As Nick Millett describes it, in the case of Deleuze, 'philosophy [...] arrives at the point of the collapse of the power to say I':

This de-dramatization of the 'I', the disenfranchisement of the principle of the person, subject, self or ego is absolutely crucial to Deleuze's thought: for this principle inhibits philosophy as 'a free and savage creation of concepts'.³⁴

Revolution for Spinoza and Deleuze consists in a reconfigured subjectivity, and in the final chapter five I go further into this attempt to move away from specificity and examine – from a Deleuzean perspective – how the a-subjective appears in Spinoza as the life of blessedness, which Deleuze transforms into his own model of an ideal "anti-subjectivity".

For Deleuze, identifying Spinoza with a constructivism, this is the point at which the individual learns to "install" himself on the plane of immanence, or make himself a part of the plane: 'it has to be constructed if one is to live in a Spinozist manner'.³⁵ Constructivism – as active creation – replaces contemplation or reflection in a hybrid Spinoza-Deleuze, and in terms of individual subjectivities transformation is privileged over continuous identity and given equivalence with an ethical exercise of

³⁴ Nick Millett, 'The Trick of Singularity', in *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol. 14, No. 2, (pp.51-67) p. 61; p.55.

³⁵ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.123.

power. In this chapter then we see how the freedom to “become-other” is counterposed to the specificity of a subject as ‘origin of desire, thought, speech, and action’ which is at the centre of networks of ‘legal, political, philosophical, and aesthetic reflection’.³⁶

Deleuze makes constructivism – production as an ontological principle and ethical imperative - the vital power of “a life”. Like Spinoza, in his own philosophy Deleuze has this huge scope: he wants to provide a metaphysics, a physics, a psychology, an epistemology. Spinoza’s project appeals to him from this point of view because, as Patrick Hayden points out, it presents a complete and *practical* system which ‘rests upon the double inclusion of ontology in ethics and ethics in ontology’. ‘In other words’, Hayden says, ‘Spinoza’s ontology of pure immanence finds its meaning in relation to his positive ethics of life, which is the practical manifestation of his ontology.’ Deleuze himself described Spinozism – in terms which capture the simplicity and modesty as well as the force and the grandeur of it - as ‘the becoming-child of the philosopher’, that is, with Spinoza we learn how to become ‘question machines’.³⁷

Creating concepts is constructing some area in the plane, adding a new area to existing ones, exploring a new area, filling in what’s missing. Concepts are composites, amalgams of lines, curves. If new concepts have to be brought in all the time, it’s just because the plane of immanence has to be constructed area by area, constructed locally, going from one point to the next ... But that doesn’t mean they can’t be taken up again and treated systematically. Quite the reverse: a concept’s power comes from the way it’s repeated, as one area links up with another.³⁸

Rejecting the comfort of the already known in favour of the unforeseeable and a constructivism “*sans fond*”, as well as being an apt description of what Deleuze does with Spinoza, is revealed as the ethical and political principle of philosophy itself.

³⁶ Warren Montag, Preface to *The New Spinoza*, Montag & Stolze (eds), p.xvii.

³⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.256.

³⁸ Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972-1990*, p.147.

Chapter 1

Spinozist Ontology: A Philosophy of Immanence

In *What is Philosophy?* the last book they produced together, Deleuze and Guattari describe Spinoza as, ‘the Christ of philosophers’ and ‘the infinite becoming-philosopher’, because he:

Showed, drew up, and thought the “best” plane of immanence – that is, the purest, the one that does not hand itself over to the transcendent or restore any transcendent, the one that inspires the fewest illusions, bad feelings, and erroneous perceptions.¹

In the Deleuze-Guattari vernacular “plane” signifies an image or orientation of thought, a pre-philosophical set of assumptions which “distribute” thought and what it is possible to think.² Throughout their work together and in Deleuze’s work without Guattari, two basic models (which are, however, heterogeneous in themselves) are contrasted: planes of immanence, or of ‘consistency or composition; and plan(e)s of transcendence, or of ‘organization or development’. The proposition is that ‘there are two planes, or two ways of conceptualising the plane’,

The plane can be a hidden principle, which makes visible what is seen and audible what is heard, etc., which at every instant causes the given to be given, in this or that state, at this or that moment. But the plane itself is not given. It is by nature hidden. It can only be inferred, induced, concluded from that to which it gives rise [...] the plan(e), conceived or made in this fashion, always concerns the development of forms and the formation of subjects. A hidden structure necessary for forms, a secret signifier necessary for subjects [...] It exists only in a supplementary dimension to that which it gives rise ($n+1$). This makes it a teleological plan(e), a design, a mental principle. It is a plan(e) of transcendence.³

¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* p.60.

² See Deleuze and Guattari, ‘The Plane of Immanence’, *What is Philosophy?* pp.35-60; also Deleuze, ‘The Image of Thought’, *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 129-167. “Planes” and “images” of thought coincide.

³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 265.

In contrast to this, ‘there is an altogether different plane, or an altogether different conception of the plane’,

Here, there are no longer any forms or developments of forms; nor are there subjects or the formation of subjects. There is no structure, any more than there is genesis. There are only relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between unformed elements, or at least between elements that are relatively unformed, molecules and particles of all kinds [..] We call this plane, which knows only longitudes and latitudes, speeds and haecceities, the plane of consistency or composition (as opposed to the plan(e) of organization or development). It is necessarily a plane of immanence and univocality [..] However many dimensions it may have, it never has a supplementary dimension to that which transpires upon it.⁴

Planes of transcendence comprise transcendent philosophies which, as described here by Patrick Hayden:

contend that the world is but an imperfect and transient image of a more significant and eternal realm of transcendent essences, causes, and ideas. The tendency here is to devalue the world as it is experienced in favor of the notion of a metaphysical domain “behind” or “beyond” the world we live in; human beliefs, meanings, and values can be given the appearance of certainty only by an appeal to what transcends the contingencies and exigencies of our experiences.⁵

Deleuze and Guattari’s contention is that Western thought – the questions it asks, the conclusions it reaches, as well as the question-solution/conclusion model itself – is produced as the result of an orientation towards transcendence founded on a notion of exteriority: a real beyond being. This plane produced universal concepts, such as God, Truth, Consciousness, etc., and produces them as privileged in a hierarchy of being – installing dualism at the heart of being (for examples, God, Reason, the cogito, are privileged over man, experience, and the body). In contrast, ‘philosophies of immanence’ (Hayden again):

deny all appeals to transcendent causes, essences, and universal and unchanging principles. Instead, they emphasise the ways we are part of the world we experience, and the ways we construct, interpret, and change it in order to make new and different things, interpretations, and experiences possible; for them, change is inherent to the immanent world.⁶

⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 266. Spinoza’s Nature exemplifies the plane of consistency as is sets out ‘a common plane of immanence on which all bodies, all minds, and all individuals are situated’. It is thus ‘a plan, but not in the sense of a mental design, a project, a program; it is a plan in the geometric sense: a section, an intersection, a diagram’, see Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.122.

⁵ Hayden, *Multiplicity and Becoming*, p.37. Hayden cites Plato as ‘the progenitor of philosophical transcendentalism’, and says that ‘Descartes, Kant, and Hegel follow in his path in various ways’, p.37.

⁶ Hayden, *Multiplicity and Becoming*, pp.37-38. Materialist and empiricist philosophies come within this definition of ‘philosophies of immanence’, according to Hayden, and he lists Epicurus, Lucretius, and the

For Deleuze and Guattari, only immanent philosophers truly “do” philosophy (defined as the creation of concepts) – transcendent philosophy being rather a species of religion: ‘Whenever there is transcendence’, they say, ‘vertical Being, imperial State in the sky or on earth, there is religion; and there is philosophy whenever there is immanence’.⁷ Spinoza thinks ‘the “best” plane of immanence’ because he thinks his entire philosophy in terms which undermine such foundational assumptions of Western thought. His counterposition is a “gust of air”, forcing philosophy/the philosopher to examine the concepts understood as given.⁸ Deleuze and Guattari quote Nietzsche warning how: “[Philosophers] must no longer accept concepts as a gift, not merely purify and polish them, but first *make* and *create* them [...] Hitherto one has generally trusted one’s concepts as if they were a wonderful dowry from some sort of wonderland”. ‘But trust’, they continue, ‘must be replaced by distrust, and philosophers must distrust most those concepts they did not create themselves’.⁹

In this chapter we are going to look at how Spinoza, from the distrust of concepts handed down to him, creates his own conceptual plane, constructing a metaphysics and an ontology of immanence. This immanent terrain is crucial to the articulation of an a-subjective philosophy, because it gives us a model in which all elements of transcendence, and in particular the transcendence of a self-constituting and constitutive subject (the transcendent concept of God, the transcendent concept of man) as the source of meaning and creative power, are eliminated.

Stoics as forerunners, with Spinoza, Marx, and Nietzsche constituting a “second-wave” of philosophers working within an immanent orientation.

⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* p.43.

⁸ Deleuze, *Dialogues*, p.15: ‘it was Spinoza more than any other that gave me the feeling of a gust of air that pushes you on the back each time you read him, a witches broomstick that he mounts you atop’.

⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* pp.5-6.

God or Nature: Spinoza's Omnitudo

The central plank of Spinoza's philosophy is the proposition in the first part of the *Ethics* that '*Except God, no substance can be or be conceived*' (EIP14). This proposition directly opposes a dualistic or pluralistic and hierarchical model of being in favour of "this-worldly existence". As Yirmiyahu Yovel describes it: 'All Being is this-worldly and there is nothing beyond it, neither a personal creator-God who imposes His divine will on man, nor supernatural powers or values of any kind'.¹⁰

Spinoza starts from the premise that there is a single substance (EIP14), which he calls '*God, or Nature*', the existence of which is axiomatic (EIP7&EIP11) or necessary, since it encompasses the whole of being and since, '*Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God*' (EIP15). Spinoza's '*God, or Nature*' is the plane of immanence on which all experience is distributed, with no ontological distinction between types of experience and no distribution of experience allotted to identifiable subjects. Rather than beginning with the *cogito*, Spinoza begins with the a-subjective infinite, his '*God, or Nature*', or substance itself, and he distributes modes - that is, all finite things, including human beings - on a single, multi-dimensional, plane.¹¹ This is a plane on which the predicate form (the form which appends an action/production to a subject, a deed to a doer) has not - or not yet - structured experience, one which introduces what Deleuze and Guattari call 'an "Omnitudo"'. With a philosophy of immanence, they say, the plane 'always introduces a powerful Whole that, while remaining open, is not fragmented: an unlimited One-All, an "Omnitudo" that includes all the concepts on one and the same plane'.¹² Spinoza's formulation of a single category of being, in EIP14, is just such a plane ('*Except God, no substance can be or be conceived*'). The opening propositions of Spinoza's *Ethics*,

¹⁰ Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, p.ix.

¹¹ Spinoza's '*God, or Nature*' does not appear until the Preface to Part Four, but the identification runs through the whole of the *Ethics*.

¹² Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* p.35.

which establish this plane, along with his starting point from within substance itself, rather than from within the individuality of a mind, is essentially an attempt to solve what Spinoza saw as the contradictions or inconsistencies of Cartesian metaphysics. This pressing task shapes the *Ethics*, and in Part I Spinoza begins by distinguishing his metaphysical basis from that of Cartesianism, that is, from a philosophy founded on substance pluralism.

By his own definition of substance ('a thing which exists in such a way as to depend on no other thing for its existence', *Principles*, I, 51), Descartes's thought and extension do not fully possess the status of substances. Only his God is truly substance, and thought and extension are created substances which depend upon Him – although they are entirely mutually independent. The basic problem of this position arises from this separation and the subsequent privileging of thought over extension (mind over matter): the connection between thought and extension cannot be accounted for and thought becomes essentially separated from the world. Descartes's triadic model, with thought and extension as two separate substances ultimately under the jurisdiction of God as superior substance, is remade in the *Ethics*, where there is a single substance, of which thought and extension are two attributes or aspects, but in a special sense in which they are equivalent to and not properties of God. Proposition 14 – the proposition that there can be only one substance – along with the other propositions in Spinoza's argument against substance pluralism (see especially EIP5, '*In Nature there cannot be two or more substances of the same nature or attribute*', & Dem), rests on the definitions set out at the very beginning of Part One which assign specific meanings to various terms (e.g. 'cause of itself', 'finite', 'substance', 'attribute', 'mode', 'God', 'free', and 'eternity').

This is also where Spinoza sets up his identification of substance with God, and with the attributes (which become his ‘*God, or Nature*’), so that the definitions we need here, when talking about the essential features of Spinoza’s single substance, are the definitions of God (EID6), substance (EID3), and attribute (EID4).

The definition of substance is that it is self-caused, and therefore independent of any external causal relation: that is, substance has no point of origin outside of itself and cannot be produced by another substance. Attributes are defined as ‘what the intellect perceives of a substance as constituting its essence’ (by EID4), and God is defined as ‘a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes’ (EID6). From these definitions we arrive at a single substance – in which God, substance and infinite attributes are identified – which is both self-caused and absolutely infinite. What this identification – central to Spinoza’s “anti-dualism” – entails, is that the God of Western theology and transcendent philosophy (including Cartesian metaphysics), is radically transformed.¹³

On the Nature of the Attributes

There has been some debate on whether the attributes should be understood objectively or subjectively. The debate turns on the interpretation of EIDef.4, which says that: ‘By attribute I understand what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence’. Curley’s authoritative translation renders the attributes ‘as’ constituting the essence of substance, whereas the definition may also be translated from the Latin ‘as if’ constituting the essence of substance.¹⁴ When rendered ‘as’ the definition is less problematic to those who take an objectivist position, that is, who interpret the attributes as actual instantiations of substance itself, or as forms of being.

¹³ The relations between Descartes’s system and Spinoza’s are subtle and are not examined here in any depth. For a very clear account of their disagreements and similarities, see Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method*. See pp.8-19 on Spinoza’s refutation of Descartes’s substance pluralism.

¹⁴ See Curley’s note to the text in *The Collected Works*, Volume 1.

However, rendered ‘as if’, the definition becomes more amenable to a subjectivist account which understands the attributes as referring to substance in an epistemological and not an ontological relation, that is, as forms of knowledge about substance. According to this position the attributes are only different in terms of the mind’s perception of them and are not really distinct. It seems clear however that giving the attributes a merely subjective reality goes against the essentially a-subjective grain of Spinoza’s thought, and particularly at this early setting out of his metaphysic. For example, according to the subjectivist account, the existence of thought becomes the prime ontological fact, and the attributes are categories of the intellect. Understood subjectively, the attributes “belong” to the intellect rather than to substance, and they are therefore external to and determining of substance – a position clearly at odds with Spinoza’s insistence on the singular self-caused and self-determining nature of substance. The subjectivist position also entails a leap from the a-subjective realm of substance, or ‘*God, or Nature*’, to the positing of a subjective consciousness which is then applied retroactively to determine substance.

Even if we accept this definition of the attributes as being an epistemological one, we cannot deduce ontological fact from it, since it would apparently apply to finite ‘perceiving’ intellects, which could never have any power of determination over substance. We must also rule out any notion of EIDef.4 as referring to the divine intellect – that is, the attributes as forms of knowledge God has about himself – since that type of knowledge or intellect would be active (and Spinoza would have to say ‘what the intellect *conceives* of a substance’), rather than passive or perceiving (in EIID3 Spinoza describes ‘perceiving’ as indicating a mind in passive relation to its object). Subjective intellectualist ‘perceptions’ of substance could only be *a posteriori*, non-productive, and contingent.¹⁵

¹⁵ Harry Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, pp.142-157, is taken by most Spinoza scholars as the model of the subjective position, but perhaps the most influential subjectivist reading has been that of

Conversely, according to our objectivist reading, the attributes in the *Ethics* (thought and extension, plus infinite attributes unknown to the human intellect) are not “attributes” in the traditional sense, that is, they are not possible properties belonging to and dependent upon God, rather they are essences of substance/God and as such their existence has the same necessity that the existence of substance/God has. They are no longer merely attributed to substance, but they dynamically constitute and instantiate substance, such that rather than being its creation, the attributes are ways in which substance exists, or they actually constitute substance as what Pierre Macherey called its ‘concrete existence’:

if one absolutely insists on establishing an order of succession between substances and the attributes, it is no longer at all certain that substance ought to be situated before the attributes, but it is rather the attributes that precede substance as the conditions of self-production, since in the process of its constitution they play an essentially causal role ... The attributes are not less than substance; for example, they are not essences that, taken in themselves, lack existence; but substance is precisely what they are.¹⁶

The relation of substance/God to the attributes is an internal and mutually expressive one which flattens out hierarchical relations, in terms of precession, between substance and attribute: one is immediate to the other so that there is no eminent God (as in Descartes). The attributes do not have their cause or explanation in substance/God, instead they share the same causal and ontological status (that is, they are self-caused, eternal and infinite in their kind). This gives the sense in which Spinoza is a pantheist, or an atheist: the analogical model of being common to transcendent philosophies situates its “beyond being” – God, in this case – outside of actual being and

Hegel. Hegel understands Spinoza’s substance as simple (as opposed to our complex and differentiated reading of substance), inert and undetermined, with the attributes as points of view on substance. See his *Science of Logic* for the critique of Spinoza’s philosophy, and in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* Hegel reads Spinoza as a form of idealism which contains and supersedes Cartesian dualism. Also see p.257 in the *Lectures*: ‘The cause of [Spinoza’s] death was consumption, from which he had long been a sufferer; this was in harmony with his system of philosophy, according to which all particularity and individuality pass away in the one substance’. In Hegel, Spinoza’s absolutely positive substance becomes absolutely undetermined simple substance in which particularity and change are only illusory: all that can be affirmed is eternal and unchanging substance. Hegel posits thought, or mind, as the only potential force for movement in Spinoza’s system, and in this way the attributes must be understood as negative determinations of substance.

¹⁶ Macherey, ‘The Problem of the Attributes’, *The New Spinoza*, pp.65-94, see p.78.

representation (the ineffable) and makes a formal distinction between God and his creation as qualitatively different forms of being. For Spinoza however, God, as ‘*God*, or *Nature*’, is immediately and not analogically instantiated and given in the world in thought and extension. Thought and extension are qualitatively different expressions or instantiations of God or of singular being – or, substance is internally differentiated in terms of attributes or essences which however are unified in being (substance itself or God) from which they are not fundamentally different. There is simply no room for a creator God apart from the dynamic immanent self-constitution of ‘*God*, or *Nature*’ (or apart from the productive forces of nature) in Spinoza’s system, so that in contrast to a theological model which posits God as transcendent to his creation and fundamentally concealed and unknowable to this creation/creatures, Spinoza’s positive theology has God as cause and essence of the world.

Natura Naturans: Production and Divine Will

Transcendental philosophical and theological models assume a final external cause as the principle of reality. Spinoza’s immanent philosophy, however, posits substance/God as an efficient cause which does not go outside of itself to produce and which remains in its effects as its effects remain in it.¹⁷ In the *Ethics*, as Michael Hardt has pointed out, there is only a positive and productive ontological movement in which “actuality is perfection”: immanence in this sense is contrary to transcendence and its model of God’s creations or productions as less perfect emanations.¹⁸

¹⁷ Final cause is Aristotelian in origin, indicating a teleological explanation, or one which explains an effect in terms of the goal or end result it aims at. Spinoza’s “efficient cause” is borrowed from medieval/scholastic metaphysics which posits an efficient cause or “agent cause” as well as a final cause as operating in the world. The efficient cause is the agent of change or motion, that is, the active principle, whereas the final cause is the goal or end toward which a process is oriented. In the *Ethics* final cause drops out and the only true form of causality is efficient cause.

¹⁸ Hardt, *An Apprenticeship in Philosophy*, p.19. The assumption of efficient causality entails an ontological model which operates on ‘a materialist terrain’, according to Hardt, p.31 (here Hardt is referring to the model of efficient causality in Nietzsche, but it applies equally to Spinoza who has the same model).

Spinoza's efficient causality posits an immanent cause rather than a transitive and emanative cause (see EIP18&Dem), and this move entails that 'God, or Nature', as the identification of substance with the attributes, erases the traditional (Western theological/transcendent) hierarchical distinction between God the Creator and his creation. But this erasure brings with it two problems: firstly the identification of substance with the attributes, particularly with the attribute of extension, implies that in some sense God has a body; does this identification entail then that God as infinite eternal being is compromised in Spinoza's system? How can God be equivalent to 'Nature', yet still remain undivided, unlimited substance? Secondly, how are the attributes distinguishable from one another, and from substance, if not ontologically?

In the first place, as the scholia to EIP15 make clear enough, the identification of God with the attributes is not at all the same thing as the identification of God with the totality of nature or the material universe. For Spinoza the implied "body" is in no way corporeal or material in the sense of having 'quantity, with length, breadth, and depth, limited by some certain figure' (EIP15ScholI). The demonstration to EIP29 gives a positive description of what we can understand by 'Nature' or God's instantiation in extension. First of all, Spinoza's 'Nature' stands in contradistinction to a mechanical model of the material universe (such as Descartes's) which requires external force to set it in motion (God as transcendent cause). Spinoza's universe is dynamic and active of itself (God as immanent cause, see EIP18). Spinoza's 'Nature' is bi-partite: it comprises an active, constitutive part – the laws of Nature, which Spinoza calls *Natura naturans* - and a finite passive dimension of individual things, such as a blade of grass, a rock, or a human being, which follow from and are affected by those laws, and which Spinoza calls *Natura naturata*. Only the active power of *Natura naturans* conforms to

the stipulated qualities of self-expression or actualisation and self-causedness assigned to substance ('by *Natura naturans* we must understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, *or*, such attributes of a substance as express an eternal and infinite essence' (EIP29.Schol.). In the Preface to Part II of the *Ethics* Spinoza also insists that his '*Nature*' is equivalent to the immutable, eternal and law-like general principles of order found in the universe:

Nature is always the same, and its virtue and powers of acting are everywhere one and the same, that is, the laws and rules of Nature, according to which all things happen, and change from one form to another, are always and everywhere the same.

The attributes then are the "concrete being" of substance, as Macherey says, in the sense of expressing substance in an immutable, eternal, non-degradable sense, rather than in a "thingy", crudely material, sense: they are active and constitutive forces, so that what is being ascribed to God is active power, and that power is also ascribed to the attribute of extension (as the '*Nature*' half of '*God, or Nature*'). Spinoza has extended the compass of God, by making him identical with Nature, but he has simultaneously replaced the traditional transcendent and eminent God with a concept of dynamic power as natural and non-purposive, non-directed, and non-personal (Spinoza's atheism).¹⁹ God as efficient cause is equivalent to the active, productive and material forces of constitution, and at an absolute level those forces operate in a way which is eternal and unchanging.²⁰

¹⁹ See Donegan's essay 'Spinoza's theology', in Garrett, pp.343-382, on what he calls Spinoza's "naturalised" theology, in which the natural universe, as conceived in Baconian-Cartesian natural science, derives its existence from nothing above and beyond it'. Donegan understands Spinoza's ontology/theology as a development of the seventeenth century scientific theories from which it emerges: 'having embraced the revolution in the physical sciences associated with Galileo, Bacon, and Descartes, [Spinoza] wished to pursue its implication for religion', writes Donegan, p.343. Spinoza's contribution – the disavowal of a creator God – was both original and radical and, as Donegan points out, few of his contemporaries were willing to follow him down this theoretical path. This disavowal in turn has repercussions for mechanical concepts which understand the universe as composed of inert material requiring external force to move it. This position is untenable for Spinoza, and in the *Ethics* we see that his model of substance moves towards a dynamic model.

²⁰ From the human perspective, however, those laws do change as, for example, Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Einstein, Bohr, etc. have all fundamentally changed our scientific understanding of the world and the laws in operation. The progression is towards a more adequate or rational understanding of the world as necessary (see EIP44) and which reveals the eternal and immutable nature of its Laws.

Spinoza's motive for creating such a model was probably "scientific", or rationalist, since conceiving the universe as operating according to eternal, immutable and essentially rational Laws of Nature means that such laws can provide a certain basis for knowledge of the universe, in contrast to a model based on divine law. As Curley says:

[..] if the laws of nature are the result of a divine choice, how can they be eternal and immutable? Does not the very notion of choice imply that they could have been otherwise? And if they could have been otherwise, how can it be necessary now that they not be otherwise? For Spinoza, to introduce a personal creator at this point was to give up the hope of a rational explanation of things, to betray the sciences Descartes had hoped to found. Better to identify God himself with those most general principles of order described by the fundamental laws of nature.²¹

Spinoza's '*God, or Nature*', much more than it implies heretically that God has a body, implies atheistically that '*Nature*' has a power of production, which is not God-like in the Christian-Judaic sense (purposive divine will), but which replaces such a God.

God's Power

The substitution of natural necessity for supernatural divine will is required by and founds the proposition of a single substance ("Omnitudo") over Cartesian substance pluralism, and it also resolves a crucial problem of Descartes's: the obscurity as well as the absolutism of divine will, which entails that the laws of nature are ultimately subordinate to God's divine will. For Descartes, what the fundamental laws of nature are is not strictly unknowable, however, why they are as they are is strictly beyond human knowledge, since God is above any compulsion to create them in a particular way, and could equally have made them another way. God's exemption from natural necessity marks out therefore a part of the universe which remains inscrutable, and entails that we can never reach, at some ultimate scientific level, an adequate, absolute, description of reality.

Whereas free will, both divine and human, and the notion of freedom which flows from it, are defining features of Western theology and ontology, in Spinoza's system they are replaced by rational necessity and a form of freedom utterly unlike the

²¹ Curley, *A Spinoza Reader*, p.xxv.

desire-oriented one associated with the exercise of free will. Spinoza's God has no desires which he acts to fulfil, because he lacks nothing (desire, arising from lack, would in any case indicate an imperfection in God). '*God, or Nature*' is absolutely positive substance with no limit and no lack – because there is for it no external substance which can either impose limitations or subtract from its being. In Spinoza's system everything that is, especially God or substance itself, is an expression (instantiation) of a single law of necessity. Assigning God a purposive, personal and essentially supernatural will is part of our human tendency to anthropomorphize him, which stems from and is complicated by a transcendent and hierarchical model of being. Because freedom is associated with the exercise of free will, absolute freedom and absolute free will (applicable to God alone) would not be bounded by any law at all. Contrariwise, for Spinoza freedom follows from necessity. His '*God, or Nature*' is absolute necessity, rather than absolute will, so that his freedom consists in following his own nature.

And Spinoza tells us that necessity ('the necessity of the divine nature', or the necessity of the universe) is 'the same thing' as the laws of God's nature (EIP17Dem) so that there is never a question of choice or of God choosing between variables (such as whether or not to bring certain things into being).

God is free then in the sense that he is self-determined or '*acts from the laws of his nature alone, and is compelled by no one*' (EIP17), and as we shall see further on he is distinct from the rest of nature in just this way (that is, in terms of essence and existence), as absolute necessity and absolute self-determination. God's ('*God, or Nature's*') active, non-reflective, non-teleological power of production replaces desire-oriented divine will, so that God is constitutionally incapable of directing or of

contravening nature. For Spinoza this power of necessity is what is constitutive of all being.²² What ensures the unity of all the attributes (of thought and extension, from the human perspective), their connection and correspondence, is that they run according to natural necessity or the immanent logical order that is synonymous with ‘*God, or Nature*’ (EIP18), which is always and everywhere the same, and which is the cause and the ultimate explanation of all things.

Internal causality (*cause sui*) is what makes being necessary since, by EIP7Dem: ‘A substance cannot be produced by anything else; therefore it will be the cause of itself, that is, its essence necessarily involves existence, or it pertains to its nature to exist, q.e.d.’. Existence exists simultaneous with essence, which is its cause, and the essences of substance are the natural necessary powers of production which are constitutive of all being. For Spinoza, that power has to be actualised, and not possible (as we have already said, there are no possibles that God “decides” whether or no to bring into being). In other words, God’s essence is identical with the constitutive power of necessity (‘*God’s power is his essence itself*’, by EIP34) and is that ‘by which he and all things are and act’ (EIP34Dem), or is the immanent causal and organisation principle of being. Being, then, is organised around non-purposive real production, rather than a transcendent or hierarchical principle (final cause), which entails that substance – in which the attributes are united – cannot be or be thought apart from its actual instantiations. According to EIP36&Dem:

Nothing exists from whose nature some effect does not follow.

Dem: Whatever exists expresses the nature, or essence of God in a certain and determinate way (byP25C), that is (by P34), whatever exists expresses in a certain and determinate way the power of God, which is the cause of all things. So (by P16), from [NS: everything which exists] some effect must follow, q.e.d.

²² See EIP31.Dem.&Cor.1&2, and EIP33.Dem.&Schol.1&2 on the accord between Nature and God’s nature.

Therefore, God's power consists in the actuality of producing all that exists (Hardt's "actuality in perfection"). Spinoza's God then does not have the power of a legislator or external or transcendent power of authority: rather than a power of judgement and/or indifference, Spinoza's God ('*God, or Nature*') is an immanent power or is the constitutive force of production.²³

Omnitudo: Unity and Diversity

The attributes are all united then in substance, which they actively instantiate. But how are we to understand their diversity, their distinctness from one another? According to EIP14 (Spinoza's formulation of one substance) the distinction between the attributes is not "real" in the ontological sense, that is, they are not independent and self-subsistent types or categories of being, but rather are different aspects of being which are given together and co-dependent and which are also "attributive" or which instantiate substance. Substance consists of and is instantiated by infinite attributes, so that it is not possible that one or another of the attributes could be subtracted and substance still exist. Attributes are qualitatively or formally – but not ontologically – different ways in which substance is, yet it makes no sense to speak of the distinction as illusory, since that implies an underlying reality, which would be quite wrong. Attributes are diverse instantiations of a single substance which does not underlie or transcend them, but which is only constituted by all of them (the unity of substance is constituted by the infinite attributes). This difficult concept is Spinoza's transformation of the philosophical formulation of the One and the Many.

The problem of the One and the Many is classical in origin, with Plato and Aristotle elaborating two contrasting models: Platonic "realism" and Aristotelian "nominalism". The problem focuses on whether particular things exist only in and of

²³ As many Spinoza scholars have noted, the first eight propositions of the *Ethics* are concerned with setting out what substance is, rather than explaining why it is or that it is. Spinoza's ontological proofs are set out in EIP11.Dem.&Schol., where he presents two *a priori* arguments and two *a posteriori* arguments for the existence of God, but he is not much concerned with the ontological argument and rather takes the existence of his God (or Nature), as being itself, as axiomatic (see EIP7 and EIP8.Schol.).

themselves (as in nominalism), or only in relation to a supra-sensible realm of universal essences, from which they draw their reality (realism). Transcendental philosophy models its ontology on the basis of the One as eminent being which transcendently causes the Many (that is, ordinary, divisible, countable, beings), or in which the Many participate.

In Spinoza's system however, the attributes retain their causal distinctness and independence whilst expressing the same ontological substance, so that substance is not constituted by the aggregation or totality of the attributes – in which case the “One” of substance would be sacrificed to a form of ultra-nominalism – neither does substance underlie the attributes as a single *a priori* ontological truth which they all express – in which case we would have a form of realism in which the diversity of the attributes is rendered as an illusory or at least tertiary level of being. With the ‘*God, or Nature*’ of the *Ethics* (which we have earlier identified with Deleuze's “Omnitudo” or ‘unlimited One-All’) there is rather a unity constituted by a multiplicity of essences (attributes) that equally instantiate and are instantiated by necessary, non-purposive, rational principles and processes.

Deleuze described Spinoza's substance as a ‘positive infinity’, because the attributes do not oppose, limit, contradict, or cancel either one another or substance itself.²⁴ According to Hardt, what Deleuze calls Spinoza's ‘innocence’ consists in just this: the elimination of the ‘relational, or negative’ from distinction, in favour of a positive distinction. Hardt also describes the unity of the attributes in substance (the “One-All”) in (Deleuzian) terms of attributes being ‘expressions’ and substance being

²⁴ See Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p.28. Deleuze is opposing Spinoza's model of substance with that of Descartes's here, and he sees a fundamental hostility between the two. The purpose of this chapter (and thesis) is not to deduce the existence or non-existence of any antipathy between the Spinozist and Cartesian models, which would require a detailed examination of Descartes's texts, as well as of Spinoza's *Descartes' "Principles of Philosophy" & Metaphysical Thoughts*. However, we should note that Deleuze often contrasts a negative view of Descartes with a positive one of Spinoza, perhaps the better to illuminate the latter's “positivity”. In terms of a theory of distinction, Deleuze acknowledges in *Expressionism in Philosophy* that Spinoza starts out ‘from a Cartesian framework’, but goes on to set out what he believes Spinoza ‘takes over from Descartes, what he discards and, above all, what he takes over from Descartes in order to turn it against him’, p.29, see pp.28-29.

the ‘expressing agent’.²⁵ The ‘expressing agent’, as we have already alluded to, is natural necessity itself, or an internal and immanent force which does not, however, (and by virtue of the model of efficient causality) exist apart from its expressions. In the *Ethics*, real distinction is formal and not ontological (because positive) and it excludes all “relations between” (as we will see in chapter three, thought and extension are not “related” to one another: as two qualitatively or formally different but indivisible expressions or instantiations of a single event their correspondence is assured by their ontological unity in substance).

In the *Ethics*, substance is the substantial unity of the attributes – their ontological unification (but not merely their aggregation). This equality of being encompasses all forms (all attributes) and entails that one form of being cannot be privileged over another (thought over extension, for example). This “positive difference” can only result from the internal causality of a “One-All” which excludes negation so that the attributes do not negate substance and substance does not cancel the diversity of the attributes. As Hardt says, ‘The real nonnumerical distinction defines the singularity of being, in that being is absolutely infinite and indivisible at the same time as it is distinct and determinate.’²⁶

Spinoza’s “Omnitudo” sets up a model in which the choice between favouring the One (idealism) or the Many (materialism/empiricism) as ultimately constitutive of being, does not have to be made. God or substance is Being – rather than a being (ontologically distinct), and this is what Macherey points out, from a similar standpoint to Hardt:

The unity of substance is thus not an arithmetic unity: it does not designate the existence of an individual irreducible to all others by the simplicity of its nature. Substance is not a being, and this is the fundamental condition of its unicity: it is everything that exists and can be understood, which thus has its cause only in itself. Yet this plenitude of being, the absolute affirmation of self, which constitutes substance, cannot be the empty form of the One that would only be One, or that would be, if one can say it, only a One: it is this infinitely diverse reality that

²⁵ Hardt, *An Apprenticeship in Philosophy*, p.64.

²⁶ Hardt, *An Apprenticeship in Philosophy*, p.63.

includes all the attributes, and that expresses itself in their unity. This reality is not that of a Being that would already enclose this totality, by virtue of an initial gift, but it is at first that of an irresistible movement, through which all the attributes pass and are unified in the substance that appropriates them for itself. There is only one substance, but it includes an infinity of attributes: its unity is incomprehensible outside of this infinite diversity that intrinsically constitutes it. The result is that substance has multiplicity in itself and not outside of itself, and, from this fact, this multiplicity ceases to be numerical [...] the identity of substance and its attributes is not formal and abstract but real and concrete.²⁷

In the *Ethics* then, we have a form of the One-All which entails a materialism of necessary forces and flows, and an idealism with no ideal beyond being. That the connection of singular substance with the multiplicity of attributes be maintained and continually produces and reproduces is key since, as Macherey says,

the infinity of the attributes can be grasped positively only if one connects them to the divine, absolutely infinite, nature, in which they co-exist without being opposed. This is why the attributes cannot exist outside of God but are necessarily in him, in which they are affirmed identically as essences infinite in their kind, in a mode of determination that excludes all negativity. At the same time substance is nothing but the unity of its attributes, which it brings together in absolute existence.²⁸

Active Attributes and Passive Modes

As we have seen, in the *Ethics* the distinction between substance and its inessential properties is not drawn between substance and attributes, since one cannot be or be thought apart from the other. That distinction only comes in at the level of finite modes. Whereas attributes are basic categories of being, in virtue of which everything that exists both is and is conceivable, finite modes are the things (human beings, trees, etc.) which pass in and out of existence, and which embody change in the world. Finite modes “follow from” the existence of the attributes, or they are “in” the attributes, but

²⁷ Macherey, ‘The Problem of the Attributes’, in Montag & Stolze, *The New Spinoza*, pp.83-84. This is also the basis on which Spinoza is not, for Macherey, a monist, since his substance is a One with no external/numerical relation.

²⁸ Macherey, ‘The Problem of the Attributes’, in Montag & Stolze, *The New Spinoza*, p.81. As we will see in later chapters, Deleuze understands the relation of the multiplicity of attributes or forms of being and their unity in substance in terms of “transcendental empiricism”, or the immanent ungrounded connection and flow of experience. Whereas for Spinoza what constitutes the unity and equality of substance is rational necessity, Deleuze’s formulation will draw out becoming as the defining feature of what he calls in *Difference and Repetition* “univocal being”.

unlike the relation of attributes to substance, there is no reciprocity between them and substance/attributes and they do not share the same causal status. In fact, the distinction between finite things and those laws and processes that constitute them (that is, the activity of substance/attributes or '*God, or Nature*') is made in terms of causality, and in terms of active power.

Substance and attributes are, as we have already seen, self-constitutive and active forces. Finite modes, however, depend upon substance/attributes for their being. Defined as 'the affections of substance' (EID5), the existence of finite modes is conditional upon substance, whereas the existence of substance is absolutely necessary and entirely independent of its finite modes: substance is '*prior in nature to its affections*' (EIP1). In terms of the two attributes of which human beings are aware, this entails that thought is independent of individual minds and particular thoughts, just as extension – or infinite space as the 'three-dimensional theatre of experience' – is independent of individual bodies.²⁹ In contrast then to self-caused substance which, by virtue of its absolute causal independence is absolutely free (in the sense we have spoken of above), finite modes are causally dependent and determined to be and act by substance via the attributes.

Don Garrett describes finite extended bodies as 'persisting patterns in the distribution of fundamental physical forces' (we should add, together with persisting patterns in the distribution of fundamental mental forces and, indeed, together with persisting patterns in the distribution of all the other fundamental forces or attributes which are always given together, but of which human beings are unaware).³⁰ That is,

²⁹ Timothy Ferris, *The Whole Shebang*, p.365. See Donegan, 'Spinoza's Theology' in Garrett, *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, pp.343-382 on Spinoza's adoption/adaption of what he believed Descartes's had shown: 'that the physical universe is an unbounded extended plenum, in which bounded or finite things exist as modifications', p.348-350. The type of infinity given to extension by Descartes is ultimately less than the infinity of God. Spinoza's attributes are also only 'infinite of their kind', but this is not bounded by a greater magnitude.

³⁰ Garrett, 'Introduction' to *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, p.6. There are two infinite, immediate and eternal modes – 'motion and rest' and 'intellect' – which are the primary features of the

finite modes are temporary proportions or configurations of force. They are part of these fundamental powers (essences or attributes) without in any way being equivalent to them, and they are distinguished from them in terms of their passivity: finite modes are *natura naturata* or passive “naturised” nature, as opposed to active *natura naturans*. Finite modes are the passive “pole” of nature, which extends from the active constitutive attributes to what Spinoza calls the passive ‘common order of nature’ of finite things, in an ontologically unbroken line. Modes are not of a different order of being than substance/attributes, but they are distinct in terms of being determined or “compelled” to exist by something other than themselves. By EID7:

That thing is called free which exists from the necessity of its nature alone, and is determined to act by itself alone. But a thing is called necessary, or rather compelled, which is determined to exist and produce an effect in a certain and determinate manner.

Spinoza divides his universe not along ontological lines, but in terms of that which is free and that which is determined, or, that which is self-caused and that which has a cause other than itself, or, which is the same thing, that which is active and constitutive and that which is passive and constituted. From the fact that the existence of modes is determined, however, we should not infer that their existence is either accidental or merely possible.

By EIIA1, the essence of man ‘does not involve necessary existence, that is, from the order of Nature it can happen equally that this or that man does exist, or that he does not exist’. Finite modes then are assigned a weaker form of necessity, but, if we bear in mind the necessity of the attributes and the laws inscribed in them to produce particular things in a certain way, we can see that possible existence only applies if modes are taken apart from their true cause (*‘God, or Nature’*), and seen only in terms of their proximate causes (that is, other finite things). As Curley has pointed out, the

attributes of extension and thought respectively. Finite modes, strictly, are proportions or configurations of both of these “in” the attributes.

Ethics indicates that the existence of ‘*God, or Nature*’ or substance necessitates the being of modes in just the way that we have spoken of above, that is, in terms of God’s lack of “free will” or a power of judgement or indifference, which excludes the notion of possible existence from the system:

There is [...] a good sense in which there is nothing contingent in nature (IP29): the most general features of the universe, that is, the laws involved in the attributes of substance, are necessary in the sense that they could not have had a cause distinct from themselves, and hence, could not have been otherwise; other, less general features of the universe, the infinite modes in which are inscribed the subordinate laws of nature, could not have been otherwise because they follow from features of the universe which, in their own right, could not have been otherwise; and particular features of the universe, the finite modes which we might think of as particular facts in nature, could not have been otherwise because they follow from the general features of the universe in conjunction with other particular features of the universe.³¹

Finite modes then are necessary insofar as they express substance, or ‘*God, or Nature*’. It is only when conceived apart from substance, or ‘*God, or Nature*’, that they appear merely contingent (it is, of course, impossible that they should really exist apart from ‘*God, or Nature*’). The essence of a finite mode is not its mind, and is not even strictly within it, in terms of dwelling “in” an individual human being: the essence of a finite mode is what Spinoza calls *conatus* (see EIIIP7). *Conatus* is the mode’s striving ‘to persevere in its being’. It is a dynamic and relational striving that is not in-dwelling and that has no existence apart from relation. *Conatus* entails the relationality of modes, in that modal essence consists in the creation and maintenance of relations which augment that individual modal striving to preserve and enlarge its being. Insofar as the essence of a substance is indivisible from its existence, and insofar as this co-presence of essence and existence pertains throughout substance and all its production, then finite modes, as part of substance, are no more possible or contingent than are the attributes: everything that can be produced is produced, and the unity of the attributes in substance ensures that an idea (a proportion of the attribute of thought, for example, a human

³¹ Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method*, p.49. See also EIP29: ‘*In nature there is nothing contingent, but all things have been determined from the necessity of the divine nature to exist and produce an effect in a certain way*’; and EIP33: ‘*Things could have been produced by God in no other way, and in no other order than they have been produced*’.

mind) cannot exist without a body (a proportion of the attribute of extension, for example, a human body). As we have already said, there are no possibles in substance which then may or may not be actualised, rather substance just is the processes of actualisation, without a “blueprint” or plan that determines that actualisation.

What Spinoza presents in the first part of the *Ethics* then is a completely necessary and necessitated universe. All being is actual and the forces of actualisation are the rational Laws of Nature, which constitute and which pertain across the whole of a singular substance which is itself ontologically undivided, but which is internally differentiated (in terms of attributes). As we will see in the following chapters, this model is key to a Deleuzian and Deleuzian-Guattarian ontology of being. Its crucial point is the breaking down of dualistic/pluralistic ontological categories and the substitution of a single category of being, which is productive of itself and in itself, with no external determining force.

A Deleuzian-Guattarian ontology of continual production will also transform the predictability and stability in principle of Spinoza’s universe – implied by the rational Laws of Nature and their eternal immutability – into one of absolute becoming. As we will see in the following chapters, the idea of transformation – which in Spinoza is related to individual striving (as modal *conatus*, approached in detail in chapter three) - is attractive to Deleuze, however the notion of it as personal (the striving of a thing), and as related to consciousness, is completely unpalatable. Thus we will see the transplantation of Spinoza’s modal becomings onto an impersonal terrain of pre-individual forces, where the interaction of bodies/forces produce unforeseen relations, without even the minimal foundation of Spinoza’s ultimately explicable rational order.

As a precursor to that, in the next chapter we will see how Deleuze's radical form of immanence co-opts the notions of internally differentiated substance and ontological multiplicity and unity, which he finds in the *Ethics*, into his concept of pure difference as an absolute productive power of being, so that being is made to revolve around difference as its first principle.

Chapter 2

Deleuzian Difference and Univocity

In the previous chapter we focused on Spinoza's ontological universe, using the first books of the *Ethics* in order to expound a Spinozist ontology that would be as neutral as possible, or as least not too "Deleuze-inflected" or underpinned by a Deleuzian perspective. In this chapter we will look at how Deleuze develops - or transforms - certain Spinozist concepts to become keystones in his own thought.

Deleuze amplifies the question of the One and the Many in his work on Spinoza, and his approach to the *Ethics* is via his own concept of expression: his understanding of Spinoza's substance is in terms of a triad of expressing substance, attributes as expressions of substance, and essence as that which is expressed.¹ For Deleuze, Spinoza's metaphysic – understood in this way – constitutes a reformulation, or rather a new moment in the development of the question of the One and the Many. Spinoza's notion of an internally differentiated and dynamic substance ('God, *or* Nature') is what fascinates Deleuze: substance is the necessity of its different instantiations, which in turn are necessarily equal forms of being, so that multiplicity constitutes unity.

¹ See especially chapter eleven on 'Immanence and the Historical Components of Expression' in Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, pp.169-186.

The way in which Spinoza's substance allows for (is constituted by) positive difference (the diverse attributes), without negation, provides the basis for a notion of an ontological field constituted by "difference in itself" or "without negation", and for an inclusive or conjunctive ontology in which difference and unity – rather than one cancelling the other out – are mutually constitutive terms.²

Deleuze and *Difference*

Deleuze situates his own setting out of a "differential" ontology, in *Difference and Repetition* (1968) as part of an emergent twentieth century tradition, along with Heidegger's move toward ontological difference, structuralist systems of difference, and difference and repetition as figured in art.³ Deleuze's concept of difference (*différence*), though, is specifically post-structuralist and anti-Hegelian.

His antipathy to Hegel is in step with his time – part of what Deleuze described in *Difference and Repetition* as 'a generalised anti-Hegelianism' born of Heideggerian and structuralist philosophy.⁴ As Alex Callinicos has pointed out:

Philosophers of difference are necessarily opposed to Hegel – who sought to "interiorise" difference within thought, to make difference (in the shape of contradiction) the moving principle of reality and yet, as it were, to sublimate difference into the process of the self-realisation of Absolute Spirit.⁵

For Deleuze, the Hegelian concept of difference is essentially negative, because it ultimately cancels itself, and temporary, because it resolves in the identity of the Absolute, so that difference (as determinate being) is reduced to a moment – a temporary disruption of being. Hegelian ontology is therefore based on a dualism – an external other of negation or contradiction which destroys original self-identity in order for being to be set in motion as becoming. This negative model of difference – of difference as secondary to and ultimately recuperable to identity – is what Deleuze and

² See Deleuze, *Practical Philosophy*, pp.108-109: 'The formal-real distinction of the attributes does not contradict the absolute ontological unity of substance; on the contrary, it constitutes that unity'.

³ See Deleuze, 'Preface to the English Edition', *Difference and Repetition*, xv-xvii.

⁴ 'What I detested most was Hegelianism and dialectics', Deleuze wrote in his 'Letter to a Harsh Critic', *Negotiations*, pp.5-6;

⁵ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Preface, p.xii; Alex Callinicos, *Is there a Future for Marxism?* p.81.

his contemporaries sought to combat. For Deleuze there can be no originary self-identity – only difference as the perpetual self-differing or variation of being. In a neat deconstructive move Deleuze turns the Hegelian dialectic against itself: what makes a cause necessary, he says, is that it is internal to being, otherwise, if cause is external, it can be or not be, so that the existence of being becomes only contingent or accidental. For Deleuze, as for Hegel, “cause” is equivalent to “difference” – but only understood as an internal cause does it become necessary: the being of being. As Michael Hardt says, this ‘special conception of difference takes the place of opposition’, since,

It is a difference that is completely positive, that refers neither to an external cause nor to external mediation – pure difference, difference in itself, difference raised to the absolute.⁶

The “problem” of difference, that is, the need to formulate a non-Hegelian, non-dialectical concept of difference was a response (post-1960) to the dominance of Hegel/Hegelianism in French intellectual life.⁷ The primacy of self-proliferating and non-totalised difference becomes a central concept in deconstructive and post-structuralist theory, derived via structuralism from Saussurean linguistics. In the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure’s system (set out in his *Course in General Linguistics*, published posthumously in 1916) the idea of a natural bond between sign (word) and referent (thing) is rejected and the relation is instead seen as purely arbitrary and conventional, with the sign being endowed with meaning only by virtue of its differential relation with other signs. Saussurean linguistics proved hugely influential in the structuralist movement which began to establish itself in the 1950s and 60s, and where it appeared, shorn of its linguistic aspect, as the basic methodological approach of structuralist theory. Working with a Saussurean model, structuralism comes to focus on the analysis of differential phenomena (e.g. different social customs across societies) in

⁶ Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy*, p.62.

⁷ On the reception of Hegel, his influence on twentieth century French philosophy and the role of Alexandre Kojève as promulgator of Hegel, see Vincent Descombes, ‘The humanisation of nothingness’, *Modern French Philosophy*, pp.9-54. Kojève’s series of lectures on Hegel were given at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, 1933-1947, and were attended by, among others, Jacques Lacan, Georges Bataille, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

order to find their underlying (universal) structure, such that difference in structuralism is ultimately related to and understood as produced by or representative of universal structures.⁸ In contrast, the post-structuralist turn of the late 1960s-early 1970s emphasises the discontinuity and instability of all systems of difference, and refuses to assign to “surface” difference (cultural customs, for example) an underlying, relatively stable system, in the way that structuralism does, or, indeed, to theorise any ground at all. Rather there is only this surface difference without the absolutism of a determining structure.

Jacques Derrida, one of the key theorists of post-structural difference, coined the term *différance* in order to describe the endless deferral and indeterminacy of meaning which he saw as endemic to language, and thus to texts, and their resistance to closure or unity. *Différance* as such is opposed to unity, but Derrida’s *différance* –working with the play of significations contained within the French verb *différer* which means both ‘to differ’ and ‘to defer’ - is coined as a third term which resists both absolute difference as well as the stability or stasis of unity or totalization: instead, difference and unity are held in tension, rather than one ultimately being resolved or sublated in to the other. Deleuzean difference (*différence*) – understood as not merely linguistic but as ontological and epistemological - is consonant with this aspect of the Derridean concept of *différance*, so that difference is preferred or made prime, rather than similarity, and unforeseeability is emphasised rather than ultimate “knowability”.⁹ The extent to which this amounts to the privileging of difference over unity in Deleuze’s work divides

⁸ Claude Levi-Strauss’ structural anthropological work on on kinship systems and “primitive” mythology, Roland Barthes’ early structuralist approach to literary and cultural studies, and Jacques Lacan’s structuralist psychology are prime examples of structuralism at work in French intellectual life during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

⁹ Derrida’s paper, ‘Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences’, delivered at the John Hopkins Conference of 1966 on ‘The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man’, is credited with inaugurating post-structuralism, or the deconstructive critique of structuralism. The outline of Derrida’s concept of *différance* set out above is necessarily brief, and therefore somewhat inadequate; for a fuller exposition see Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, pp.136-152. In distinction from Deleuze’s *différence*, which posits ‘the here-now of a differential reality’ (*Difference and Repetition*, p.52) Derrida’s *différance* indicates also the absence of presence, or its deferral.

Deleuzeans, with the majority (Bogue, Hardt, Boundas, Massumi etc.) emphasising difference and multiplicity as the defining terms in his philosophy, and a minority (Badiou, Hallward) arguing for a characterisation of Deleuze as a philosopher of unity who ultimately sacrifices the multiple to the primacy of the One (ontologically, to substance understood as productive of difference or the multiple).¹⁰ This latter position casts doubt on Deleuze's "anti-Hegelianism", and instead insists upon an "against the grain" deconstructive reading of Deleuze – and in particular of his critique of the Hegelian negative dialectic – as itself premised upon a 'preliminary transcendence'. In other words, Deleuze is accused of reserving a privileged "plane" for his own critique/critical position, which itself starts out from, and returns to, what Hallward calls 'the redemptive identity of the One and the multiple'.¹¹

Hallward describes the opposition between divergent readings of Deleuze in terms of a divide between broadly Nietzschean readings, which produce Deleuze as a philosopher of difference, and a Spinozist reading, producing Deleuze as a philosopher of "the One".¹² As we shall see further on though, what is really at stake is the competition between two particular readings of Spinoza, and therefore two forms of "Spinoza-Deleuze"; between what we described in the previous chapter as an immanent reading which emphasises non-hierarchised difference; and an Hegelian reading which emphasises the recuperation of difference in the unity of substance. Our position is based on the former, and further, as we shall see, it is perfectly possible to discover a

¹⁰ As representatives of the first tendency, to characterise Deleuze as a philosopher of "anarchic" difference, see for example Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari*; Constantin V. Boundas & Dorothea Olkowski, *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*; Michael Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy*; Brian Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari*; Keith Ansell Pearson, *Deleuze and Philosophy, the Difference Engineer*. Of the second tendency, to read Deleuze as a philosopher of "the One", see Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*; and Peter Hallward, 'The Singular and the Specific, Recent French Philosophy', in *Radical Philosophy*, 99 (Jan/Feb 2000), pp.6-18, and especially 'Deleuze and the Redemption from Interest', in *Radical Philosophy*, 81 (Jan/Feb 1997), pp.6-21.

¹¹ Hallward, 'Deleuze and the Redemption from Interest', see p.6; p.8.

¹² Hallward, 'Deleuze and the Redemption from Interest', note.30: it is 'typical to assume that, rather than Spinoza, it is Nietzsche – the same radically anti-Hegelian Nietzsche of Klossowski and Foucault – who is the decisive model and ally'.

Spinoza with whom Deleuze can think both difference and unity, without ultimately resolving into being either a philosopher of difference, or a philosopher of the one. Indeed, on the basis of Deleuze's declaration that philosophy should be propelled by the destruction of dichotomised terms, Spinoza is indispensable to him on this point. In so far as oppositional structures function to fix both terms, and therefore close off relations of becoming, dichotomy becomes a structure of totalisation, and the 'task of modern philosophy', according to Deleuze, 'is to overcome the alternatives temporal/non-temporal, historical/eternal and particular/universal'.¹³ This refusal to assign a binary structure is one of the most interesting aspects of Deleuzian thought, and will enable us to argue that there is no necessary competition between terms (between difference and unity) which requires their final resolution on one side or the other (Deleuze as philosopher of anarchic difference, or Deleuze as philosopher of redemptive unity). Rather, as Todd May has argued, in similar vein, difference 'must be thought alongside unity, or not at all'.¹⁴

Expressionism: the monstrous child

One of the major Deleuzian concepts deployed against the type of binary thought described above is that of expression. Expression is a specifically Spinozist-Deleuzian "monstrous child" – one which, according to Deleuze, is implicit in Spinoza without being named as such, but also one which he, Deleuze, "gives" to Spinoza. As what Deleuze would call a 'signed concept', expressionism appears nowhere in the *Ethics*.¹⁵ Yet his first book on Spinoza (*Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*) reads his philosophy entirely in terms of expression, based on the amplification of Spinoza's use of the Latin verb "exprimere", which appears in various ways throughout the *Ethics*

¹³ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Preface, p.xxi.

¹⁴ Todd May, 'Difference and Unity in Gilles Deleuze', in *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*, Constantin V. Boundas & Dorothea Olkowski, pp.33-50; p.47.

¹⁵ Deleuze & Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* p.7.

(and especially in Part I), and which Deleuze magnifies to become a major theme.¹⁶ For Deleuze, expression provides an alternative to the negative dialectic and to transcendental philosophy, as well as being the practical link connecting ontology, epistemology, and ethics: for Deleuze expression describes the forms both of being and of knowing, as well as a way of being or a mode of life. The concept of expression which Deleuze finds in Spinoza is credited with the power to ‘impose a new set or division on things and actions’, since,

It sometimes happens that those concepts are called forth at a certain time, charged with a collective meaning corresponding to the requirements of a given period, and discovered, created or recreated [...] The concept of expression applies to Being determined as God, insofar as God expresses himself in the world. It applies to ideas determined as true, insofar as true ideas express God and the world. It applies, finally, to individuals determined as singular essences, insofar as singular essences express themselves in ideas. So that the three fundamental determinations, *being*, *knowing* and *acting* or *producing*, are measured and systematized by this concept. Being, knowing and acting are the three forms of expression.¹⁷

Expression also allows for a concept of difference which will be neither the opposite of identity, nor assimilable to a dialectical “moment”, as well as providing the theoretical link or passage between a positive non-dialectical concept of difference and a constitutive theory of practice – between a speculative ontology and a practical or applied ethics. Specifically, in terms of a Deleuzian ontology, what it frames and/or produces is (i) a way of understanding infinite difference – that is, difference in itself - as well as finite difference between things; and (ii) the univocity of the attributes in substance as a model for the conjoining of unity with difference.

¹⁶ As “expresses” or “involves” it appears, for example, at EI.Def.6; EI.P10.Schol., EI.P16.Dem., EI.P9.Dem., EI.P19.Dem., EI.P23.Dem., EI.P25.Cor., EI.P29.Schol., EI.P31.Dem., EI.P32.Dem., EI.P36.Dem.; EII.Def.1, EII.P5.Dem., EII.P29.Dem., EII.P6.Dem.; EIII.P55.Schol., EV.P21.Dem.; EV.P22. As Deleuze’s translator notes, “express” is a minor term as far as most Spinoza scholars are concerned: ‘Curley does not list (the “equivocal,” “informal”) *exprimere* as a “systematic” term in his glossary [to *The Collected Works*, Vol. I], and most commentators [...] have also passed over this term in their reconstructions of the “logic” of the system. Deleuze’s use of a disregarded term as the principal axis of his reconstruction of a philosophical or literary system had already characterised his earlier studies of Nietzsche and Proust’. See Martin Joughin’s, Translator’s Preface, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p.8.

¹⁷ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p.321.

Expressionism in philosophy

“Expressionism” as it appears in aesthetics, that is, as signifying the expressionist artistic and literary movement which emerged from Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century, is concerned with the often highly dramatized expression of emotional content. Whilst the form of expressionism Deleuze finds in Spinoza will have a rather different character from this aesthetic one – and as we shall see Deleuze will associate it with an older philosophical tradition – his whole approach to Spinoza is itself entirely expressionistic in these terms. In the first place, Deleuze often speaks of Spinoza’s philosophy as affective.¹⁸ And he also consistently divides the *Ethics* into two (sometimes three) “books” and assigns one as a “subterranean” dimension. For example, his Appendix to *Expressionism in Philosophy*, titled ‘A Formal Study of the Plan of the *Ethics* and the Role of Scholia in its realisation: The Two *Ethics*’ presents the work in terms of the explicit ‘Themes’ of the propositions and the more or less implicit ‘Corresponding Expressive Concepts’ of the Scholia. Again, in *Practical Philosophy*, the *Ethics* is described as,

a book written twice simultaneously: once in the continuous stream of definitions, propositions, demonstrations, and corollaries [...] another time in the broken chain of scholia, a discontinuous volcanic line, a second version underneath the first [...]¹⁹

And later on, in *Negotiations*, he says that,

The *Ethics* appears at first to be a continuous stream of definitions, propositions, proofs, and corollaries, presenting us with a remarkable development of concepts. An irresistible, uninterrupted river, majestically serene. Yet all the while there are “parentheses” springing up in the guise of *scholia*, discontinuously, independently, referring to one another, violently erupting to form a zigzagging volcanic chain, as all the passions rumble below in a war of joys pitted against sadness. These scholia might seem to fit into the overall conceptual development, but they don’t: they’re more like a second *Ethics*, running parallel to the first but with a completely different rhythm, a completely different tone, echoing the movement of concepts in the full force of affects.²⁰

¹⁸ ‘Who is Spinozist? [...] the individual who, without being a philosopher, received from Spinoza an affect, a set of affects, a kinetic determination, an impulse, and makes Spinoza an encounter, a passion, Deleuze, *Practical Philosophy*, p.130; ‘anyone can read the *Ethics* if they’re prepared to be swept up in its wind, its fire’, Deleuze, *Dialogues*, p.140.

¹⁹ Deleuze, *Practical Philosophy*, pp.28-29.

Deleuze's approach to Spinoza is then apparently archeological and his understanding of the *Ethics* is in terms of an expressionistic text which contains, for him, an affective charge. This affective content however is understood as lying alongside its conceptual content: Deleuze really does find two (or even three) distinct books within the *Ethics*, but neither has a causal or explanatory relationship with the other(s). As Pierre Macherey writes:

The movement of expression, then, as a key to reading the *Ethics*, is not somewhere behind the words, like something beyond their explicit meaning that is the ultimate basis of their meaning anything, a sort of *causa remota* or 'remote cause' – it takes shape, rather, as the words are woven together, like a 'purloined letter' or a 'figure in the carpet' concealed by excessive rather than adequate display.²¹

Deleuze's reading then is not structuralist, but rather fully immanent. And this immanent reading is entirely in keeping with the form of expressionism which Deleuze wants to credit Spinoza with: an immanent development or reworking of a philosophical concept historically connected with transcendent philosophies of emanation.

Deleuze describes expressionism as having a 'long philosophical tradition', evolving from Neoplatonism through the philosophy of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Based upon its application to the problem of the One and the Many, its key terms are *implicate*, *explicate*, *involve*, and *evolve*, with *complication* as the 'principle of synthesis' of these terms. Deleuze says that Spinoza's form of expressionism is either 'taken to be synonymous with "emanation"', or as 'another word for *explication*' – in both cases it is a form which lacks real creative movement

²⁰ Deleuze continues 'And then there's a third *Ethics*, too, when we come to Book Five. Because Spinoza tells us that up to that point he's been speaking from the viewpoint of concepts, but now he's going to change his style and speak directly and intuitively in pure percepts [...] The line of proof begins to leap like lightning across gaps, proceeding elliptically, implicitly, in abbreviated form, advancing in piercing, rending flashes. No longer a river, or something running below the surface, but fire [...] This is the style at work in Spinoza's seemingly calm Latin.' Deleuze also insists that 'a historian of philosophy who understands only Spinoza's concepts doesn't fully understand him', 'Letter to Reda Bensmaïa, On Spinoza', in *Negotiations*, pp.165-166. See also Deleuze's essay, 'Spinoza and The Three *Ethics*', in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, where he says that 'The *Ethics* of the definitions, axioms and postulates, demonstrations and corollaries is a river-book that develops its course. But the *Ethics* of the scholia is a subterranean book of fire', pp.138-151.

²¹ Macherey, 'The Encounter with Spinoza', *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, pp.143-144.

(emanation is understood as progressive degradation or representation, rather than evolutionary creation).²² Contrariwise, Deleuze understands Spinoza's expressionism as synonymous with a positive power of production. As far as Deleuze is concerned, his project is united with Spinoza's because, he thinks, what they are both preoccupied with is the productive power of difference itself.

Infinite Difference and Univocal Being

The problem with which the first part of the *Ethics* is concerned, in terms of expressionism, is how to understand distinction within infinite being itself. The concept of expression frames the nature of those distinctions, so that when Spinoza begins, in Part I, with the infinite or with substance, he begins also with difference itself, or with the nature of the distinctions within substance (that is, substance-attributes, given simultaneously).²³ 'At the very beginning of the *Ethics* Spinoza asks how two things, in the most general sense of the word, can be distinguished, and then how two substances, in the precise sense of that word, must be distinguished', says Deleuze.²⁴ As we saw in the previous chapter, this line of questioning results in Spinoza's assertion of a single substance, against what he deems to be the logical impossibility of there being more than one substance (see EIP1-14). What is being worked out here, as Deleuze points out, is the nature of distinction in the infinite, or the nature of the productive self-differing of God as infinite attributes. And that distinction is framed immediately by Spinoza (according to Deleuze) in terms of immanent expression. Apart from references in the scholia and demonstrations, the verb "express" appears twice in the *Ethics* as a definition. The first time (EID6) it defines the nature of distinction within infinite substance, and the second time (EIID1) it defines the nature of determined difference:

²² Hegel, for example, reads Spinoza in this way – see chapter one. On Deleuze's history of expressionism and Spinoza's place within it, see *Expressionism in Philosophy*, pp.16-20.

²³ 'For Deleuze, the initial problem which defines Spinoza's whole project is that of understanding differences or distinctions not only among finite elements (assuming at the outset, like Descartes, a plurality of substances) but starting from infinity and in infinity considered absolutely and positively as such', Pierre Macherey, 'The Encounter with Spinoza', in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, ed. Paul Patton, p.149.

²⁴ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, pp.28-29.

EID6: By God I understand a being absolutely infinite, that is, a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence.

EIID1: By body I understand a mode that in a certain and determinate way expresses God's essence insofar as he is considered as an extended thing.

What is being set out here then, and what Deleuze amplifies in his reading, are two types of distinction: between forms of being within being (between attributes, substance, and essences, in EID6); and between determined things within their form (extended bodies and the form of extension, in EIID1). As we shall see further on, Deleuze will inscribe these two forms of difference with his own terms in *Difference and Repetition*, but what we are concerned with here – and what chiefly preoccupies Deleuze – is the first type of distinction.

The analysis of the attributes in the previous chapter needs only slight modification, or rather it needs now to be extended, in order to accommodate specifically Deleuzian requirements. That the attributes are the actual and active instantiation of God or substance is a commonplace understanding, and when Deleuze tells us that ‘the attribute is no longer attributed, but is in some sense “attributive”’, since ‘each attribute expresses an essence, and attributes it to substance’, he is not telling us anything which has not already been extracted from the *Ethics*.²⁵ Yet for Deleuze the importance of this formulation cannot be emphasised enough. Spinoza's expressive formulation of the relationships between substance, attributes, and modes, introduces a new concept of univocity which Deleuze maps onto his own non-transcendental, univocal field of non-representational difference.

Any hierarchy or pre-eminence is denied insofar as substance is equally designated by all the attributes in accordance with their essence, and equally expressed by all the modes in accordance with their degree of power. With Spinoza, univocal being ceases to be neutralised and becomes expressive; it becomes a truly expressive and affirmative proposition.²⁶

²⁵ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p.45.

²⁶ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.40.

The significance of Spinozism seems to me this: it asserts immanence as a principle and frees expression from a subordination to emanative or exemplary causality. *Expression itself no longer emanates, no longer resembles anything.*²⁷

That is, being is no longer dualistic or hierarchical. That Spinoza's attributes are (i) 'really distinct', that is, formally or qualitatively distinct rather than substantially distinct, and (ii) cause and explanation of themselves, without external determination or reference, allows for a positive real multiplicity:

Every nature is positive, hence unlimited and undetermined in its kind ... all the attributes which are really distinct precisely by virtue of their distinction without opposition, are at the same time affirmed of one and the same substance whose essence and existence they express ... The attributes are both the positive forms of the essence of substance and the affirmative forms of its existence. The logic of real distinction is a logic of coessential positivities and coexistent affirmations.²⁸

For Deleuze then, Spinoza's expressive formulation asserts difference as the other side – but irreducible to – unity. In other words, it asserts the positive moment or non-emanative form of univocal being: 'Being, even if it is absolutely common, is nevertheless not a genus', it unifies but does not pre-exist or transcend the particular.

Being is said according to forms which do not break the unity of its sense; it is said in the single and same sense throughout all its forms [...] That of which it is said, however, differs; it is said of difference itself.²⁹

With Spinoza's notion of immanent causation, together with the expressive formulation of attributes, modes, and substance, Deleuze can formulate a notion of irreducible difference. As Michael Hardt says, it is the 'internal causal dynamic' of self-producing substance as *causa sui* that 'animates the real distinctions of being' and gives 'the absolutely positive difference that both supports being in itself and provides the basis for all the differences that characterize real being'.³⁰ In other words, expression describes a relation which is productive in and of itself, which does not require negation; which is immanent, rather than transcendental; which is ontologically one, but really (formally) plural; and which produces the conditions and forms of its own

²⁷ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p.180.

²⁸ Deleuze, *Practical Philosophy*, p.94; p.95.

²⁹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.35; p.304. On Duns Scotus and Spinoza as thinkers of univocity, see *Difference and Repetition*, pp.52-61.

³⁰ Michael Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy*, p.62.

existence in the processes of self-production, with no pre-given-ness. Expression takes the form of immanence: the nature of substance consists in the relations between differential terms – but these differences, insofar as they are Spinozist, remain internal to and causally linked by substance and to this extent are univocal, that is, they express and are expressed by substance. Internally self-caused difference is the very nature of substance, and this remarkable formulation can replace opposition as the principle of difference.

Difference – of the qualitative infinite kind Deleuze gets from Spinoza – is “affirmative” because it does not rely on a “relation to” for its existence: infinite difference is not “difference from” or “difference between” forms, but is productive power in and of itself. Similarly, this model, as Deleuze says, ‘posits the equality of all forms of being’ in terms of univocity:

The philosophy of immanence appears from all viewpoints as the theory of unitary Being, equal Being, common and univocal Being. It seeks the conditions of a genuine affirmation, condemning all approaches that take away from Being its full positivity, that is, its formal community.³¹

Substance is the unity of the attributes, but is not produced by that unity, and in fact the attributes could not exist outside of the unity of substance (all attributes must be given, or none at all). Similarly, substance could not exist without the differentiations of the attributes (substance is production in the form of differentiation, or in the form of the attributes).³² Therefore, there is an equality of unity and difference: substance is necessarily differentiated, and difference is necessarily unified, such that difference or multiplicity cannot be seen as the “result” of self-differentiating substance, nor can unity be seen as the synthesis or transcendent principle of difference. Univocity is the positive principle of multiplicity.

³¹ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p.167.

³² ‘For Spinoza, nature is its own dynamic source of creation and it relies not at all upon a transcendental foundation or “occult entities” but expresses itself through immanent and actual powers that, in acting, are parts of nature’, Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p.228.

The “inter-expressive” relations between substance, attributes, and essence in the first part of the *Ethics* is what frees expression from the negative, that is, frees it from an emanative structure (attributes as predicates of substance) and from negative binary form. It does this, according to Deleuze, because it works in terms of triads or a triadic structure (‘Expressionism presents us with a triad’) in which each term remains distinct - with no moment of synthesis – despite their interdependent status. ‘The originality of the concept of expression’, Deleuze says, ‘shows itself here:

essence, insofar as it has existence, has no existence outside the attribute in which it is expressed; and yet, as essence, it relates only to substance. An essence is expressed by each attribute, but this as an essence of substance itself. Infinite essences are distinguished through the attributes in which they find expression, but are identified in the substance to which they relate. We everywhere confront the necessity of distinguishing three terms: substance which expresses itself, the attribute which expresses, and the essence which is expressed. It is through attributes that essence is distinguished from substance, but through essence that substance is itself distinguished from attributes: a triad each of whose terms serves as a middle term relating the two others, in three syllogisms.³³

The distinction between the attributes and the essences they express, and between the essences and substance, is real and ‘qualitative, quidditative, or formal’, Deleuze says.³⁴ Spinoza’s formal distinction, or rather what Deleuze makes of it, is vital to his ontology of positive difference, and is one of the key principles he appropriates. It leads Deleuze

³³ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p.p.27-28.

³⁴ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p.38. As Macherey points out, this type of distinction in terms of “quiddities” is not Spinozist, but rather derives from the medieval philosophy of Duns Scotus. Deleuze had already acknowledged his distortion, but justified it on the ground that Spinoza himself transforms Scotist notions of formal distinction: ‘Spinoza restores formal distinction, and even gives it a range it didn’t have in Scotus [...] One may then ask why Spinoza never uses the term, and speaks only of real distinction. The answer is that formal distinction is indeed real distinction, and that it was to Spinoza’s advantage to use a term that Descartes, by the use he had made of it, had in a sense neutralized theologically’. As Deleuze adds though, ‘I don’t believe that Spinoza’s Cartesianism went any further than this. His whole theory of distinctions is profoundly Anti-Cartesian’, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p.66. According to Deleuze, Descartes’ real distinction has only a limited value for Spinoza: ‘Descartes sets us on the way to a profound discovery: the terms distinguished each retain their respective positivity, instead of being defined by opposition, one to another’. But ‘Descartes still gives real distinction a numerical sense, a function of substantial division in Nature and among things. He conceives every quality as positive, all reality as perfection; but all is not reality in a qualified and distinguished substance, and not everything in a thing’s nature is a perfection [...] For Descartes there are limitations “required” by a thing by virtue of its nature [...] And through these everything that the logic of real distinction had been thought to throw out, privation, eminence, is reintroduced [...] In order to bring out the deepest consequences of real distinction conceived as a logic of affirmation, on the other hand, it was necessary to reach the idea of a single substance with all its attributes really distinct. And it was first of all necessary to avoid all confusion, not only of attributes with modes, but of attributes with *propria*’, Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, pp.60-61. That is, it was necessary to define the nature of infinite distinction in terms of formal-real distinctions.

to an idea of univocity or a “plane” of univocal being which is opposed to the notion of unity or totality: the unity of univocal being is rather a force of composition. However, the univocity of substance is, according to Deleuze, not fully realised in Spinoza. It requires, in order to encompass all of being, the inclusion of the modes, and therefore of the type of distinction – quantitative – specific to them.³⁵ This type of distinction, alongside the immanent relations of substance-attributes-essence, appears in *Difference and Repetition* twice removed. Expressionism is the mediate term, so that this distinction between qualitative and quantitative distinction – already a Deleuzian transformation – appears a second time in *Difference and Repetition* in another highly nuanced transformation, as two forms of expression: “differentiation” and “differentiation”.

The Logic of Different/ciation

The distinction of attributes is nothing but the qualitative composition of an ontologically single substance; substance is distinguished into an infinity of attributes, which are as it were its actual forms or component qualities. *Before all production there is thus a distinction, but this distinction is also the composition of substance itself.*

The production of modes does, it is true, take place through differentiation. But differentiation is in this case purely quantitative. If real distinction is never numerical, numerical distinction is, conversely, essentially modal. Number is of course more suitably applied to things of reason than to modes themselves. Yet it remains that modal distinction is quantitative, even if number does not well explain the nature of such quantity.³⁶

In Paul Patton’s English translation of *Difference and Repetition*, he introduces the neologism “differentiate”, in order to distinguish between Deleuze’s use of the French terms ‘*différencier*’, meaning to make or become different, and ‘*différentier*’, use of which is, Patton tells us, ‘restricted to the mathematical operation’.³⁷ The hybrid different/ciation conjoins the two terms and contains the two forms of distinction described in the quote above, which appear in many guises throughout *Difference and Repetition* - so that we can add to Patton’s description of the two terms

³⁵ See Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, Chapter 1 ‘Numerical and Real Distinction’, pp.27-39, especially pp.34-39.

³⁶ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p.182-183, my emphasis.

³⁷ Paul Patton, Translator’s Preface, *Difference and Repetition*, xi.

differentiate/differenciate the following: qualitative distinction/quantitative distinction; virtual operation/operation of actualisation; intensive difference/extensive or spatial distinction; matrix of difference/production of determinations; and infinite distinction/finite distinction, all of which however are parallel terms and positively distinct, on the Spinozist model, rather than binary oppositions.³⁸ All of these terms appear in *Difference and Repetition* applied to difference, and we should note that these concepts are not binary terms but tightly co-implied concepts as well as an ontologically double series of events. Different/ciation describes the passage between infinite and finite and the production of the actual – of finite determined things – in terms opposed to the model of emanative causality. It at the same time characterises the positive production of difference in terms of an intensive distinction in the realm of the virtual between qualities or quiddities; and in terms of actualisation at the level of the particular, manifest primarily in extensive differences of degree.

Whereas differentiation determines the virtual content of the Idea as problem, differenciation expresses the actualisation of the virtual and the constitution of solutions (by local integrations). Differenciation is like the second part of difference, and in order to designate the integrity or the integrality of the object we require the complex notion of different/ciation. The *t* and the *c* here are the distinctive feature or the phonological relation of difference in person. Every object is double without it being the case that the two halves resemble one another, one being a virtual image and the other an actual image. They are equal odd halves.³⁹

³⁸ The virtual/actual –derived from Duns Scotus’s virtual/potential - is perhaps more a Deleuzean-Bergsonian concept. Bergson makes a distinction between what he calls “duration”, or time as we experience it psychologically, that is, as a continuous flow of variations, and physical/spatial and mathematized time. Duration is essentially unitary and cannot be divided into parts or distinct “moments”. The two types of distinction we are making here maps onto or are included along with this characterisation of virtual/actual in terms of Bergsonian duration/time. In Deleuze, the virtual appears as the immanent realm of real difference, as opposed to the supereminent realm of possibilities re-presented in the real or actual. The actual is opposed to the possible, not to the real. See *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 211-212. For a discussion of the Bergsonian influence on Deleuze’s notion of difference, see Constantin V. Boundas, ‘Deleuze-Bergson: an Ontology of the Virtual’, in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, pp.81-106.

³⁹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp.209-210.

Differentiation then describes the types of distinctions and the movements of individuation at work in the ontological (and epistemological) universe as a whole, divided now, in Deleuzian terms, into virtual and actual with those terms corresponding roughly to Spinoza's non-ontological distinction between substance-attributes and modes, and to the distinctions – qualitative and quantitative – at work in each.

Differentiation stands for something like the primary abstract field of individuation that is the internal self-differing of substance itself. Differentiation, as a process of spatial distinction at the level of the particular, is coupled with the primary (necessary) processes of differentiation which designate internal or virtual self-differing: differentiation 'gives rise' to differentiation.⁴⁰ Just as in *Expressionism in Philosophy* Deleuze identifies two levels of expression, and says that 'expression as production [that is, at the level of attributes expressing themselves] is grounded in a prior expression', so particular difference in *Difference and Repetition* is based upon a more fundamental difference: the virtual field of differentiation.⁴¹ In Spinoza, any neat distinction between qualitative and quantitative distinction is undone at this "second" level of expression, since every quantitative distinction (every particular thing) is at the same time always also qualitative (bodies and minds are proportions or quantities, in essence, of qualities, of thought and extension, or rather of motion and rest and intellect). As Macherey points out,

Spinoza never considers any distinction that is purely qualitative because free from any quantitative determination, with quantity understood simply in terms of numerical distinction. And this is no accident, because for Spinoza there aren't two different orders of things, but only the single order of nature itself which is at once *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, the same nature on the two levels of constitution and production.⁴²

⁴⁰ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.247.

⁴¹ 'God expresses himself in himself "before" expressing himself in his effects: expresses himself by in himself constituting *natura naturans*, before expressing himself through producing within himself *natura naturata*', *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p.14. Of course, since chronological time does not apply to substance, that "before" is logical, rather than temporal.

⁴² Macherey, 'The Encounter with Spinoza' in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, p.151.

However, having divided the *Ethics* in terms of these two forms of expression or difference, Deleuze also wants to insist upon their ontological co-implication and to make it extend across his whole ontological universe, in order that the univocity of being be fully realised. And Spinoza's interexpressive substance-attributes-essences and expressive modes are not enough for him on this point. Whereas, for Spinoza, the existence of modes depends upon substance in a non-reciprocal relation, what Deleuze wants is the irreducible co-presence and co-productivity of differentiated series. In other words, he wants to get rid of the residual asymmetry of Spinoza's system – modes as determined by an in principle immutable *natura naturans* – in favour of an ontology of "becomings" as foreseeable processes. The two forms of expression – of difference – must be made to ramify both ways in order that difference in itself be installed at the heart of being.

Univocity and Repetition

As Deleuze says, in Spinoza, 'there still remains a difference between substance and the modes:

Spinoza's substance appears independent of the modes, while the modes are dependent upon substance, but as though on something other than themselves. Substance must be said *of* the modes and only *of* the modes. Such a condition can be satisfied only at the price of a more general categorical reversal according to which being is said of becoming, identity of that which is different, the one of the multiple, etc. That identity not be first, that it exists as a principle but as a second principle, as a principle *become*; that is revolve around the Different: such would be the nature of a Copernican revolution which opens up the possibility of difference having its own concept, rather than being maintained under the domination of a concept in general already understood as identical.⁴³

Whereas contingency only enters the Spinozist universe at the level of modal distinction (see EII.A1), Deleuze wants it installed within being itself, in order to open up a philosophy of difference as an unpredictable, unforeseeable process, which creates its own ground with each new movement or production.⁴⁴

⁴³ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp.40-41.

⁴⁴ This project appears to contrast with that of Curley, who wants to "rescue" Spinoza's system from contingency (see our chapter one, p.38 & note 31). Yet Deleuze too wishes to remove contingency

To get to this full ontology of contingency and “becoming” entails a great deal of “shifting” or “dislocation” of the relations between Spinoza and Deleuze. For Spinoza, actual modal instantiations of substance do not affect or add to the being of substance (see EII.P10) nor its power of production (*natura naturans*), which remains as the “ground” of the particular or as that (universal) through which the particular mode both is and is understood. As we saw in the previous chapter, Spinoza’s commitment to an in principle scientifically understandable universe necessarily leads him to a position in which ground, as the eternal and universal laws of nature instantiated in particular modes, must be retained. Conversely, Deleuze’s commitment to the notion of unforeseeability and perpetual difference demands that real production be local and mutable. For Deleuze, only the “raising” of finite modes can make change, as variation or difference, the real fundamental first principle of being.

Making substance ‘turn on finite modes’ confers productive power onto modes and makes difference – or the perpetually varying relations or constitutive forces of modes – the defining feature of substance.⁴⁵ This effectively “dissolves” Spinoza’s ground: the connection to fundamental and unchanging causal laws becomes in Deleuze pure flux, with no ground or “given-ness”. In ontological terms, this pure form of difference is constituted as being only when coupled with repetition, its complement and the other defining term in Deleuzian ontology. The univocity of being, its consistency, is produced by the repetition of endless variation.

The repetition of difference is what gives being its continuity. This form of univocal ontology, in which repetition is understood as the creative production of difference, rather than in terms of the reproduction of the same, is realised, Deleuze

insofar as it is identified with the *possible*, and to insist upon a thoroughgoing *necessity*, understood as concrete and actual difference.

⁴⁵ ‘What interested me most in Spinoza wasn’t his Substance, but the composition of finite modes. I consider this one of the most original concepts of my book. That is the hope of making substance turn on finite modes, or at least of seeing in substance a *plane of immanence* in which finite modes operate’, Deleuze, in the Translator’s Preface to *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p.11.

says, ‘*in the form of repetition in the eternal return*’.⁴⁶ What Deleuze is suggesting, as the means to effect his “Copernican revolution”, is a Spinoza-Nietzsche hybridisation, or, rather, a hybrid of Deleuze-Spinoza and Deleuze-Nietzsche, since the two philosophical systems he wants to graft together are already distinctively Deleuzean:

Ontology – in other words, the univocity of being – is repetition. From Duns Scotus to Spinoza, the univocal position has always rested on two fundamental theses. According to one, there are indeed forms of being, but contrary to what is suggested by the categories, these forms involve no divisions within being or plurality of ontological senses. According to the other, that of which being is said is repartitioned according to essentially mobile individuating differences which necessarily endow ‘each one’ with a plurality of modal significations. This programme is expounded and demonstrated with genius from the beginning of the *Ethics*: we are told that the *attributes* are irreducible to genera or categories because while they are *formally* distinct they all remain equal and *ontologically* one, and introduce no division into the substance which is said or expresses through them in a single and same sense (in other words, the real distinction between attributes is a formal, not a numerical distinction). We are told, on the other hand, that the *modes* are irreducible to species because they are repartitioned within attributes according to individuating differences which are degrees of power operating in intensity, and immediately relate them to univocal being (in other words, the numerical distinction between ‘beings’ is a modal, not a real distinction [...]) All that Spinozism needed to do for the univocal to become an object of pure affirmation was to make substance turn around the modes – *in other words* to realise univocity in the form of repetition in the eternal return.⁴⁷

In Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche, the eternal return is ‘being, but being which is affirmed of becoming’: ‘It is not being that returns but rather the returning itself that constitutes being [...]. It is not some one thing which returns but rather returning itself is the thing which is affirmed of diversity or multiplicity’.⁴⁸ A hybrid of Spinozist expressionism (as self-constituting difference) and Nietzschean eternal return (as repetition which gives being its consistency) produces then an ontological universe as the field of forces (active and reactive) constitutive of and constituted by modes which resonates all the way down. The distinctions expounded earlier – between substance-attributes and modes, or between qualitative and quantitative distinctions – now ramify both ways: not only do qualitative distinctions produce quantitative ones (modes which are “in” substance) but also quantities of force produce qualitative phenomena.

⁴⁶ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.304.

⁴⁷ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp.303-304.

⁴⁸ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p.85, 48. And see pp.27-28; 47-48; 68-72 on the eternal return.

This conjoining of difference and repetition – like that of difference and unity - is opposed to their synthesis. Repetition, in the form of the eternal return, is the immanent mechanism which distributes difference, and coupled with difference, says Deleuze, constitutes ‘the virtual ground of the movement of actualisation of differentiation as creation. They [difference and repetition] are thereby substituted for the identity and the resemblance of the possible, which inspires only a pseudo movement’.⁴⁹ We have travelled some way from Spinoza here. By reading him against the grain and associating him with Nietzsche, Deleuze arrives finally at his concept of being as continuous non-dialectical becoming. At this point, we come to the final description or stage of development of Deleuze’s ontology: the multiple.

Multiplicite: Being as becoming

For Deleuze the raising of modes brings about a fully realised univocity of being, and this is directed against a hierarchy of being. The point is that non-univocal (equivocal or analogical) conceptions of being imply different kinds and, crucially, levels of being: if I say that in ‘Peter exists’ and ‘God exists’, the term ‘exists’ is being used in different sense, the implication is that Peter’s existence is an inferior copy of God’s; if ‘exists’ means something different in ‘Peter exists’ and in ‘Peter’s anger exists’, the same applies, as if Peter’s anger exists on the level of a mode, inferior to that on which Peter exists as a finite substance.

⁴⁹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.212.

The univocal concept of being is thus essential to Spinozist monism, and to the non-emanative conception of the relationship of finite to infinite upheld by Deleuze. It allows for the coupling of difference with repetition, and thus endows both with a power of constructive transformation (the repetition of difference as creative rather than derivative). Univocity here also implies the equality of cause and effect (substance and mode, in Spinoza), such that we have a completely non-teleological, non-emanative field of becomings, without even the barest form of regulation (Spinoza's *natura naturans*, for example). This radical immanence (univocity) of substance and its effects is described by Deleuze in terms of the multiple, or multiplicity (*multiplicité*): 'The true substance, substance itself, is multiplicity'.⁵⁰

Multiplicity describes an anti-foundationalist and/or processual ontology of becoming – a field of processes which are variously connective, synthesising, destructive, creative, totalising, composing, decomposing, virtual at the same time as being actual, and always concrete. As such, multiplicity contains or is the field of enactment of all of the concepts set out above: infinite and finite distinction, differentiation, virtual and actual, and is itself univocal, or rather the unity of all of these terms.

All of Deleuze's subsequent philosophical concepts which we will see in the following chapters presuppose the metaphysical/ontological field of relations inscribed in the multiple, and the given-ness of univocal processes of non-dialectical difference and creative repetition. The multiple is therefore becoming, but not the evolutionary

⁵⁰ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.236. Multiplicity refers to Riemannian manifolds: see Patton's Translator's Preface to *Difference and Repetition*, p.xii, and p.182. The mathematical geometry of Georg Riemann sets out a concept of four-dimensional space, which Deleuze appropriates but, as ever, transforms. On his use of Riemann's concept of manifolds Deleuze says: 'You don't need to know much ... I know just enough to understand that it's a space which is constructed piece by piece and where the links between pieces are not predetermined; for completely different reasons I need a concept of space whose parts aren't linked and which is not predetermined, I need this. I'm not going to spend five years of my life trying to understand Riemann, because at the end of five years I would not have progressed in my philosophical concept ... I know just enough about something to evaluate encounters, if I knew more I'd be a scientist'. *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.160. For a comparison of Riemann's 'discrete multiplicities' and the 'continuous multiplicities' Deleuze constructs from his theory, see Boundas, 'Deleuze-Bergson: an Ontology of the Virtual', p.83.

becoming *of* being, but rather being *as* becoming. We must not, however, understand the putting of modes into substance in terms of a “humanisation” of substance: rather, the affirmation of being as becoming implies equally the rejection of all foundations, including human consciousness, in favour of a concept of becoming as pre-human or one which understands all modal activity (human and non-human) as crucial to being. In the following chapters we turn to look firstly at Spinoza’s model of the human being as part of nature, and then at how this fits with Deleuze’s ontology of becoming as a creative combinatory process based on human and non-human modal interactions.

Chapter 3

Endeavouring to Be

Spinoza's "absolute immanence" opens for Deleuze the possibility of an ontology which revolves around becoming and the creative power of difference: one which is constituted by becoming at the most microscopic level, that is, at the level of modes and modal parts.

What interested me most in Spinoza wasn't his substance, but the composition of finite modes. I consider this one of the most original aspects of my book [*Expressionism in Philosophy*]. That is: the hope of making substance turn on finite modes, or at least of seeing in substance a *plane of immanence* in which finite modes operate [..]¹

Given his logic of different/ciation - his positive ontology of virtual multiplicity discussed in the previous chapter - Deleuze needs to construct a positive and constitutive model of finitude and finite modes. Different/ciation and the virtual/actual couplet opposes on every count the divisions of possible and real, proposing instead a model of productive actualisation (of the virtual) in place of a derivative realisation (of the possible). What is required then is a theory of finite modes which understands them in terms of a creation of the Real, rather than a contraction, negation, supplementation or reduction of the Real (the One), and which preserves immanence.²

¹ Deleuze, in conversation with the translator, Translator's Preface, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p.11.

² Deleuze's virtual/actual couplet breaks with the order of resemblance and the negative, with the subordination of difference to identity. 'The virtual', he says, 'possesses the reality of a task to be performed or a problem to be solved: it is the problem which orientates, conditions and engenders solutions, but these do not resemble the conditions of the problem'. Rather, 'actualisation of differentiation is always a genuine creation. It does not result from any limitation of a preexisting possibility'. *Difference and Repetition*, pp.211-212.

Whereas in “transcendent” philosophies the finite (and moreover substantial, rather than modal) individual divides and encloses immanence (now understood as the field of experience) within itself, Deleuze reaches for a theory which would discount subjectivist identifications in order to emphasise a differentiated – but undivided – field of becoming. Since [i]mmanence is immanent only to itself’ it ‘consequently captures everything, absorbs All-One, and leaves nothing remaining to which it could be immanent’. However, ‘whenever immanence is interpreted as immanent *to* Something, we can be sure that this Something reintroduces the transcendent. In modern philosophy (‘Beginning with Descartes, then with Kant and Husserl’) immanence becomes immanent to a finite subject, which is transcendent to it:

the cogito makes it possible to treat the plane of immanence as a field of consciousness. Immanence is supposed to be immanent to a pure consciousness, to a thinking subject [...] Kant discovers the modern way of saving transcendence: this is no longer the transcendence of a Something, or of a One higher than everything (contemplation), but that of a Subject to which the field of immanence is only attributed by belonging to a self that necessarily represents such a subject to itself (reflection).³

For Deleuze, Spinoza’s model of finite individuals as modes – as ‘affections of a substance’ (EID5) – rather than as discrete and substantial selves, provides the basis for a redefinition of individuals in terms which can be accommodated within an ontology of becoming. In this chapter we will look at Spinoza’s model of modal individuals, which needs must confer insufficiency (rather than self-sufficiency) on the individual in order to fully realise an immanent model of modes as dynamically involved with their external world.

For transcendental or subjectivist philosophies, the status of modes as ‘affections’ of substance within which they inhere is problematic in itself, threatening the individuality and distinctness of an individual life. In the face of this, what we must take care to put into play – what is crucial to Deleuze also – is Spinoza’s concept of substance as differentiated, rather than simple. As we said in chapter one, Spinoza’s

³ Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* p.45; p.49

metaphysic has been read in two broadly divergent ways: the transcendent reading, and the immanent reading, to which we have subscribed. The problem described only appears from a transcendental standpoint. That is, one which understands substance as essentially undifferentiated, except in conceptual terms, on the basis that determinations of substance can only be external, and must be ontological to be real and enduring. In contrast to our immanent reading, which recognises substance as self-caused and internally self-differentiated via the attributes as its dynamic and diverse self-production, transcendental philosophy regards Spinoza's substance as simple and static.⁴ And although Spinoza does indeed deny that modes are in any way substances, he does not deny them individuality. Only once the notion of a distinction which is causal and not ontological (described more fully in chapter one) is grasped, can we understand how Spinoza might be able to produce "selves", albeit ones without the traditional attributes of substancehood.

⁴What is at stake here can also be put in terms of an Hegelian reading of Spinoza versus our Deleuzean one. The transcendental position is set out by Charles Taylor in summary of Hegel's transcendental interpretation of Spinoza: 'for Spinoza the absolute is only substance and not subject. The absolute is beyond determination, beyond negation. But this absolute is one in which particular things sink without trace, it is simple self-identity. And for this reason it remains a pure hidden inner reality; hence it is a reality without inner movement, which is not conceived as such that the external determinate things can be deduced from it, or flow out of it, in virtue of its own nature'. Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, p.281. This is Taylor's rendition of Hegel's interpretation of Spinoza, as contained in *Science of Logic (Wissenschaft der Logik)*. In Hegel, of course, the absolute is subject, and this can be seen as an appropriation and reinscription of Spinoza's metaphysic. Roger Scruton has also briefly set out Hegel's system as a transformed Spinozism in which 'The theory of the one substance becomes that of the Absolute Idea – the single entity which is realized in and through the attributes of nature, spirit, art and history. The theory of adequate ideas becomes the dialectic, according to which knowledge is a progressive advance [...] to the ever completer, ever more 'absolute' conception of the world. The theory of *conatus* becomes that of 'self-realization' through the successive 'objectifications' of the spirit [...] The sublime impertinence of Hegel is to have combined these Spinozist conceptions with the idea which they deny, the idea of the self [...] whose process of self-realization is also the actuality and the meaning of all that there is' (Scruton, *Spinoza*, p.112. Hegel's transformed Spinozism becomes a theory of the triumph of subjectivity and of epistemology over ontology. For more on the relationship of Hegel to Spinoza see Macherey, 'The Problem of the Attributes' in Montage and Stolze's *The New Spinoza*, which is a translation of the third chapter of his *Hegel ou Spinoza*. See also Yirmiyahu Yovel's chapter on 'Spinoza and Hegel' in *Spinoza and other Heretics*.

The notion of substance as singular and internally differentiated is the basis on which we can understand Spinoza's notion of finite human beings, denuded of their status of substance, but not of their status as enduring individuals: what Genevieve Lloyd describes as Spinoza's 'individuality without substancehood'.⁵

As we will see, Spinoza's unique constitution of modes, which proceeds from the infinite, does give modes both actual existence and a specific individuality distinct from substance, although that individuality will be of a different order from the one associated with substancehood and an essentialist position.

Conatus I: Infinite and finite, the relation of substance to modes

Infinity and indivisibility are two unique properties of substance, deriving from its status as self-caused (see EIP7, P8&Dem&Schol1, and P15&Schols). How then can finite and divisible modes have actual existence within substance? It is clear that Spinoza will not define the essence of a mode as belonging to an individual in the sense of being ontologically distinct from substance, since this would compromise the ontological unity of substance as the whole of being. Yet the causal distinction between substance and modes – the fact that modes are “in” substance, whereas substance is self-caused – means that substance cannot be the essence of modes either (see EIIP10). Modal essence then must refer to the attributes as the intermediary forces of which modes are modifications (see EIIP10Cor).⁶

⁵ Genevieve Lloyd, *Part of Nature, Self-Knowledge in Spinoza's 'Ethics'*, p.4.

⁶ Deleuze will understand this as a reinstatement of immanence: 'Immanence does not refer back to the Spinozist substance and modes but, on the contrary, the Spinozist concepts of substance and modes refer back to the plane of immanence as their presupposition. This plane presents two sides to us, extension and thought, or rather its two powers, power of being and power of thinking'. Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* p.48.

The essence of a mode is that it is a finite modification of something infinite (in the case of the attributes, infinite in their kind, in the case of substance, absolutely infinite). Yet, as Martial Gueroult has pointed out in his essay on ‘Spinoza’s Letter on the Infinite’, each mode is also ‘infinite *by reason of its cause* ... every mode, in relation to its divine cause, must be conceived as “without limits” or as infinite, at least as far as the internal force which affirms it’. Gueroult distinguishes this type of “infinite” – infinite by cause – from that which belongs only to substance itself, and which is infinite ‘by reason of its essence’. We already have here then a distinction between substance and mode.⁷

The essence of an individual mode is that it is a modification, proportion, or enduring arrangement of “motion and rest”, in terms of its physicality, together with a proportion, or degree, of “intellect”, in terms of its mentality, such that the individual itself is a modification or proportion of the active forces or active power of substance. But besides this definition Spinoza adds a unifying force (Gueroult’s ‘internal force’), which is applied to all finite things, which he calls *conatus*, and which finally, together with these proportions constitutes the essence of a mode.⁸ Following on from his positive and active model of substance itself (at EIIP6&Dem), Spinoza sets out his conception of *conatus*, or striving:

EIIP7: *The striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing.*

⁷ Martial Gueroult, ‘Spinoza’s Letter on the Infinite’, in *Spinoza: A Critical Collection of Essays*, ed. Marjorie Grene, p.185.

⁸ See Lloyd, *Spinoza and the ‘Ethics’*, pp.8-9 on the history of the concept of *conatus*. Using Wolfson’s *The Philosophy of Spinoza* as a resource, Lloyd traces the concept back to the ancient Stoic notion of self-preservation as the unique impulse of animals. The idea endures in the writings of Augustine (c.400AD) and Aquinas (c.1200) as ‘a natural force which impels living things away from self-destruction’, and also appears in the Hobbesian notion of “endeavour” (in *Leviathan*, c.1651) applied to the physics of motion as well as to ideas of mental concepts. As Lloyd points out, Spinoza’s concept of *conatus* differs from the ancient and Stoic ones in that, firstly, it is applied to all finite things, not just those we would consider animate (although Augustine and Aquinas certainly credit inanimate bodies with tendencies or inclinations akin to *conatus*); secondly, that Spinoza makes no distinction between the finite ‘thing in itself’ and its striving; and, thirdly, that his *conatus* is ‘intimately connected with reason – the faculty commonly set over against natural drives towards self-preservation’ (p.8). Lloyd does though connect this latter feature to the Stoic notion of ‘living in accordance with reason as ‘natural’ for rational beings’ (p.8). On the influence of Stoicism on Spinoza’s philosophy, see Susan James’s essay ‘Spinoza the Stoic’, in Tom Sorell’s *The Rise of Modern Philosophy* pp.289-316.

Conatus is a pre-personal active power or striving which is actualised (and personalised) in the individual and is oriented to the maintenance and ultimately the augmentation of the individual's own being – their particular proportions – in contrast to the external forces which affect it and with which it interacts. The individual is thus a degree of *conatus*, that degree determined by the extent to which the individual passively interacts and/or actively relates to things (bodies and minds) external to itself.

As Gueroult points out, it is this interaction with external forces and bodies – the striving of *conatus* in existence - which also distinguishes modes from substance:

Insofar as it envelops the divine power that causes it, every singular body carries an internal tendency to persevere in its being; and, as a result, its nature does not embody anything that might limit or divide its existence. Thus it remains identical to itself, and undivided as long as exterior causes do not intervene to limit it, to fragment it, or to destroy it. But, because its essence does not necessarily envelop its existence, we can conceive it at will [...] as able to be or not to be, or to be limited, fragmented, made larger or smaller and divided into parts [...] indivisibility and infinity are real in the modes and appear as such as soon as we enter into its interior to see at the heart of its being the primary indivisibility of the eternal and infinite power of God, the immediate cause in it of immanent force that makes it exist and continue. As for division, this is extrinsic to it, for it befalls the mode, as if by accident, from without.⁹

Conatus is modal essence but, as a purely positive principle (by EIIIP6Dem: 'it is opposed to everything which can take its existence away'), it is not what determines the life of the mode and its distinction from substance. By EIIIP8, striving involves '*indefinite time*', so that the mode is differentiated from substance, constituted and determined by its external relations, rather than by its essence. External relations and the fact that the mode – unlike singular and self-caused substance – is subject to them, also determines the transformations over time of each mode, as well as its finitude and duration, and ultimately its divisibility and destruction. Whereas substance, which by definition can have no exterior relations, is infinite and indivisible, modes are limited not by their nature (essence) or cause, but by external relations.¹⁰

⁹ Gueroult, 'Spinoza's Letter on the Infinite', in *Spinoza: A Critical Collection of Essays*, ed. Marjorie Grene, p.187.

¹⁰ Stuart Hampshire, in *Spinoza*, points out that it is 'the change of distributions of proportions of motion-and-rest within the [modal] configuration' which 'accounts for, or is the real equivalent of, what we

Note though – and this is key to Spinoza’s model – that the individual cannot be construed simply as at odds with these forces: the relation here is one primarily and in the first place of constitution, rather than of negation. Nor should we imagine that individual striving is played out as a competition between modes:

EIIPostIV: The human body, to be preserved, requires a great many other bodies, by which it is, as it were, continually regenerated.

EIVP18Schol: [...] it follows that we can never bring it about that we require nothing outside ourselves to preserve our being, nor that we live without having dealings with things outside us. Moreover, if we consider our mind, our intellect would of course be more imperfect if the mind were alone and did not understand anything except itself. There are, therefore, many things outside us which are useful to us, and on that account to be sought.

The substantial subject – what Deleuze would call a ‘form of the negative’ – is replaced in Spinoza with a model of the individual as dynamically engaged with and dependent upon his milieu, in terms of both body and mind.¹¹ So long as we understand the ontological and conceptual link of man to substance – as part of nature, and “in” substance – we retain the crucial sense of finite modes as affirmations of substance.

The essence of the human individual then is not that it is a self-sufficient entity, causally and essentially distinct from the most general laws of nature, but that it expresses those laws operating on the planes of thought and extension, as well as being completely determined by them. Because of the nature of its essence (*conatus*) the human individual is in constantly changing relation with other individuals, and is constituted by those relations, both in terms of body and mind.

ordinarily call the changing qualities of the object’ (p.74). He also notes that, ‘Like Descartes and other natural philosophers after Galileo, Spinoza regarded all change in the qualities of things as properly to be described in purely quantitative terms [...] this was to be the great discovery of the century [...] changing colours and sounds [...] are properly described in terms of light-rays and vibrations, and these in turn are ultimately explained (by Spinoza) as exchanges of energy among elementary particles’ (p.75). Human bodies are not only configurations of elementary particles, but have a much higher level of complexity, being ‘configurations of configurations of configurations’ – so long as ‘the total amount of motion-and-rest within the configuration as a whole remains roughly constant, the physical object retains its nature or identity’ (pp.73-74). *Conatus* is the principle which attempts to maintain the “structural integrity” of the individual in the midst of these ‘exchanges of energy’.

¹¹ Deleuze would identify the negative conception of this relation with transcendent philosophy: ‘Forms of the negative do indeed appear in actual terms and real relations, but only insofar as these are cut off from the virtual which they actualise, and from the movement of their actualisation. Then, and only then, do the finite affirmations [for instance, Spinoza’s modes] appear limited in themselves, opposed to one another, and suffering from lack or privation’, see *Difference and Repetition*, p.207.

Counter to a model of the individual based on will then, Spinoza tells us that ‘*We are acted on, insofar as we are a part of Nature*’ (EIVP2), that ‘*The force by which a man perseveres in existing is limited, and infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes*’ (EIVP3) and that this situation is insurmountable, since ‘*It is impossible that a man should not be a part of Nature, and that he should be able to undergo no changes except those which can be understood through his own nature alone*’ (EIVP4). Modes, in the Spinozist metaphysic, are inextricably wrapped up in the chains of causality, radically interconnected and ontologically indistinct from substance itself, on the two distinct planes of thought and extension. It is *conatus* – which Curley has described as a principle of ‘cosmic egalitarianism’ since it is applied to all modes – which differentiates modes from substance as well as differentiating between modes.¹² *Conatus*, as active power, thus replaces will in Spinoza’s system. All things have or are a degree of *conatus*, so that *conatus* is something like a power or life force which differs or is individuated according to the complexity of the mode and its capacity to be affected by, or to interact with, its environment. Human beings as the most complex modes have the most fully developed power: what differentiates between modes then is the degree to which they are able to interact with their environment. Yet, as Lloyd has pointed out, and even in the case of the human individual, since *conatus* is their “actual essence” or, ‘is what it is for the individual to exist’,

The activity [of striving] is inextricably tied to the existence of the individual; it is not something in which the individual can be coherently said to engage. In other words, a human being has no choice or power not to strive, no decision or judgement can be applied, but striving is just what a human individual is.¹³

¹² See Curley’s essay ‘Man and Nature in Spinoza’ in Wetlesen’s *Spinoza’s Philosophy of Man*, pp.19-26.

¹³ Lloyd, *Part of Nature, Self-Knowledge in Spinoza’s Ethics*, p.15. Curley translates the Latin *conatus* as “striving”: ‘*Conatus* does normally suggest “trying,” “making an effort,” terms which in turn suggest that the thing trying has some concept of a goal it wants to achieve. But *conatus* also has a technical use in Cartesian physics – in the phrase *conatus ad motum* – to refer to the tendency bodies have to persist in a state either of rest or of uniform motion in a straight line. In that usage it does not imply any thought on the part of the thing “striving” (see Principles III, 56), and hence does not imply a goal the thing literally wants to achieve [...] Spinoza is influenced by that Cartesian usage’ (Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method*, p.107).

Modal essence then is not something “in-dwelling”, and it does not lie exclusively within the boundaries of one individual, but rather *is* the dynamic interchange of forces and bodies across those boundaries. To the degree that a body is active and able to maintain its proportions in the face of external forces, it has some individuality, but in order to get to a recognisable individual, we have to include alongside the body its idea, or mind, to which *conatus* applies equally. Only with the mind and body can we begin to talk about an individual.

Spinoza’s materialism: the mind as “Idea” of the body

Spinoza sets out, in EIIP13Schol, the rather startling idea that all things ‘though in different degree’ are ‘animate’.¹⁴ This form of “pan-psychism” is a logical consequence of his parallelism: for every body in the attribute of extension, even at the lowest level of complexity, there must be an idea in the attribute of thought which corresponds to it. However, the qualification that things are animate ‘in different degree’ modifies the extent to which we can say that all things have what we could call a life, that is, one which includes a recognisable mind. As we shall see, it is clear that for Spinoza the human individual, as the most complex body in nature, is the only finite mode the physical component of which can be said to have as its mental counterpart anything like a thinking mind.¹⁵ That this mind or complex idea depends upon and is derived from the nature of its body, as a diversified composite of other bodies, for its level of complexity – a level which gives rise to individual thought – is what we turn to now.

¹⁴ In *Behind the Geometrical Method*, Curley translates “animate” from the Latin *animata*, and says that it ‘is simply an adjectival form of the Latin word for soul (*anima*), so it would be reasonable to read this [EIIP13Schol] as saying that, in the same sense in which man has a soul, all things have a soul’, p.71.

¹⁵ I am, however, in agreement with Curley that the application of life itself – as opposed to conscious life – is universal, where “life” is understood as ‘*the striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being*’ (EIIP6) – or *conatus* as life force. See *Behind the Geometrical Method*, p.73 and note 36.

Spinoza's individual *in toto* is constituted by a proportion of motion and rest (that is, a body), and a corresponding degree of intellect (a mind), together with the active striving (*conatus*) that animates both. The concept of *conatus*, as a desire for self-preservation, is the unifying force which expresses and/or establishes the equality of all the attributes and rejects, in terms of the individual, any hierarchy of mind over body, so that the individual is only given when each of these three are given together. At the level of the finite individual Spinoza's commitment to parallelism, as Deleuze says, 'excludes any eminence of the soul, any spiritual or moral finality'.¹⁶ Not only can the individual as thus described not be divided, when it comes to defining the individual mind Spinoza implies its absolute dependence upon its body as its "idea":¹⁷

EIIP11: *The first thing which constitutes the actual being of a human Mind is nothing but the idea of a singular thing which exists.*

EIIP13: *The object of the idea constituting the human mind is the body, or a certain mode of extension which actually exists, and nothing else.*

The complexity of the individual mind corresponds with the complexity of its body, and the degree to which the individual mind becomes conscious is connected to or parallels the degree to which the body is affected or undergoes change/interchange with other bodies. Since, by EIIP7, '*The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things*', Spinoza's form of parallelism, based on the ontological unity of the attributes, ensures that the 'order and connection of the affections of the human body' (EIIP18Schol) – as a distinct causal order – corresponds with, or is the same thing as, the 'order and connection of ideas' (EIIP19Dem) – another distinct

¹⁶ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p.256. J.J. Groen describes Spinoza as 'one of the first to formulate the holistic concept of the unity of man [...] according to which mind and body are not two separate "things" [...] but two different aspects, respectively different ways of existence of man, depending on whether he is regarded and studied psychologically ("under the attribute of thought") or biologically ("under the attribute of extension") [...] the two are fundamentally only different ways of "expression" of the same process', see J.J. Groen, 'Spinoza's theory of affects and modern psychobiology', in Jon Wetlesen's *Spinoza's Philosophy of Man*, p.106.

¹⁷ For usages and transformations of the term "idea", see Robert McRae's ' "Idea as a Philosophical Term in the Seventeenth Century", in the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, (No 1) vol. 26; (January-March 1965). pp.175-190.

causal order.¹⁸ As we saw in chapter one (in respect of the objective or subjective nature of the attributes), the finite subject is not the epistemological centre of the universe in Spinoza's metaphysic, which instead begins with the infinity of substance and moves towards finitude, locking the mode into a causal chain of natural necessity. Spinoza rigorously applies necessity to both mind and body, denying the mind any special status or exemption from causal processes, as well as any cross-causation between mind and body:

EIIP2: *The body cannot determine the mind to thinking, and the Mind cannot determine the body to motion, rest, or to anything else (if there is anything else).*

Schol.: These things are more clearly understood from what is said in IIP7S, namely, that the mind and the body are one and the same thing, which is conceived now under the attribute of thought, now under the attribute of extension. The result is that the order, *or* connection, of things is one, whether Nature is conceived under this attribute or that; hence the order of actions and passions of the body is, by nature, at one with the order of actions and passions of the mind [..]

Between parallelism and the primacy of the body though, as Curley has pointed out, the primacy of the body is the stronger term:

what Spinoza wishes chiefly to emphasize is that the mind's knowledge of other things – its knowledge of bodies other than its own in sense perception (P16), its memory of the past (P18), its knowledge of itself (PP20-23), its knowledge of the common properties of all material objects (PP37-39), even its knowledge of the essence of God (PP45-470 – all of these depend on the fact that it first has knowledge of its own body [...]) It is hard to see how any philosopher could give a greater priority to knowledge of the body than Spinoza has.

To understand the mind, we must understand the body, without which the mind could not function or even exist. In spite of all the parallelistic talk, the order of understanding never proceeds from mind to body.¹⁹

¹⁸ Strictly speaking, there is of course more than just a doubling of thought and extension, since the unity of the attributes in substance and their correspondence applies equally to all the unknown attributes.

¹⁹ Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method*, pp.77-78. Curley assigns a form of materialism to Spinoza's mind-body theory, but is careful to point out that it is not 'a simple minded materialism. The person is not simply identical with a body, but rather is identical with a body functioning at a certain level of performance, engaging in sophisticated cognitive activities which require a complex physiological basis', p.86. Mind, in other words, is not reducible to body.

In making the mind the idea of the human body, Spinoza establishes not simply the correspondence of the realms of thought and extension, but the essential dependence of thought upon the body, as well as upon those other bodies to which all composite individuals are causally and relationally bound and only through which the mind becomes aware of its body, since:

EIIP13.Schol: ... in proportion as a body is more capable than others of doing many things at once, or being acted on in many ways at once, so its mind is more capable than others of perceiving many things at once.

EIIP14: *The human mind is capable of perceiving a great many things, and is the more capable, the more its body can be disposed in a great many ways.*

EIIP19: *The human mind does not know the human body itself, nor does it know that it exists, except through ideas of affections by which the body is affected.*

The human mind then, as Genevieve Lloyd says,

rather than being the repository of private mental contents, set over against an outer world, becomes itself an idea with the human body as its object. The mind's awareness is not directed at some mental item from which it infers the existence of body as something external.²⁰

The relation of the mind to its body in the *Ethics* is one of immediate identity, and the awareness of the mind is not of a body-in-itself, rather it is the interrelatedness of its body – as affected by other bodies – which initiates and sustains the mind's capacity to think. Individuality, as we shall see now, comes from the fact that each mind is connected to a specific body, unified by its “proportion” of conatus, itself determined by a specific set of experiences, appetites and desires, produced in interaction with external phenomena. Furthermore, with this model of identity, consciousness is made dependent upon a constitutive unconscious as affective experience.

²⁰ Lloyd, *Spinoza and the 'Ethics'*, p.7. Lloyd contrasts Spinoza's mind-body identity with 'the mediated relation characteristic of earlier Cartesian treatments of the mind-body relations' (p.7). For a comparison of what he terms 'Cartesian Anthropology' and 'Spinozistic Anthropology', see Curley's *Behind the Geometrical Method*, pp.52-62.

Conatus II: Desire

For Spinoza, the notion of an individual as a ‘dominion within a dominon’, with ‘absolute power over his actions’ and ‘determined only by himself’ is a fallacy, and one which underpins systems of superstition which enslave men.²¹ As Deleuze says,

In [Spinoza’s] view, all the ways of humiliating and breaking life, all the forms of the negative have two sources, one turned outward and the other inward, resentment and bad consciousness, hatred and guilt [...] He denounces these sources again and again as being linked to man’s consciousness, as being inexhaustible until there is a new consciousness, a new vision, a new appetite for living.²²

The definition of the individual in terms of *conatus*, and of the mind as Idea of its body (EIIIP13) is the basis for this new vision.

As we have already said, *conatus* stands in contradistinction to a concept of the individual based on will. The distinction consists in this: striving here is not ‘related only to the mind’ – as with a model of free will – but rather is ‘related to the mind and body together’ (by EIIIP9Schol). This unified existential striving Spinoza calls appetite, or desire, and he describes it as ‘the very essence of man’:

EIIIP9Schol: When this striving is related only to the mind, it is called will; but when it is related to the mind and body together, it is called appetite. This appetite, therefore, is nothing but the very essence of man, from whose nature there necessarily follow those things that promote his preservation.

The difference between desire and appetite is only a nominal one. Spinoza says that (EIIIP9Schol): ‘Between appetite and desire there is no difference, except that desire is generally related to men insofar as they are conscious of their appetite. So that *desire* can be defined as *Appetite together with consciousness of the appetite*’. But besides this definition of desire as appetite accompanied by consciousness, Spinoza also says that he ‘really recognize[s] no difference between human appetite and desire’, and that ‘whether a man is conscious of his appetite or not, the appetite still remains one and the

²¹ Preface to EIII. See also EIIIP2Schol. On systems of superstition see Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, pp.270-271: ‘*Superstition* is everything that keeps us cut off from our power of action and continually diminishes it [...] Spinoza [...] sets the image of a positive Nature against the uncertainty of gods: *what is opposed to Nature is not Culture, nor the stat of reason, nor even the civil state, but only the superstition that threatens all human endeavour*’.

²² Deleuze, *Practical Philosophy*, p.13.

same'. Therefore, by desire we should understand 'any of a man's strivings, impulses, appetites, and volitions' (Def.Aff.I).

The answer to our initial question then: how are individuals distinguished from substance, and from one another - is in terms of their desire. With desire, that is, *conatus* determined by an affection or feeling 'to do something on the basis of an idea or object', Spinoza gives a reoriented concept of human essence.²³ As Etienne Balibar says,

"essence" does not refer to a *general idea* of humanity, an abstract concept under which all individuals are subsumed and their differences neutralised. On the contrary it refers precisely to the power that *singularises* each individual, conferring upon him a unique destiny. Thus, to affirm that desire is the essence of man is to affirm that every individual is irreducible in the difference of his own desire.²⁴

This formulation involves a devaluation or demotion of consciousness and the role of conscious agency. By recognising 'no difference between human appetite and desire', and insisting that consciousness adds nothing or changes nothing, Spinoza asserts the "modesty" of consciousness, the smallness of its compass in terms of the human individual, and restates his determinism and his peculiar materialism. Consciousness is desiring-consciousness, itself determined by affections (modifications of the body, 'by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained', by EIIID3), which are 'the cause of this consciousness' (EIIIDef.Aff.I.Exp).

²³ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p.230.

²⁴ Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, p.107. In his Preface, p.xviii, Warren Montag notes that Balibar uses "singularity" as an alternative to "individuality": 'a term that prevents us from taking the individual, indeed all individuals, as copies of a single model'.

What Spinoza is proposing then is a model of consciousness as indivisibly connected to “unconscious” forces over which it has no power of mastery. There is no free decision of the mind, and no recognisable agency (see EIIP2Schol)here,²⁵ but rather a constitutive desire, or appetite, which operates on the basis of an immanent exercise (*conatus*, as internal force) and according to the constitution of the mode and its requirements of self-preservation and augmentation. The objects of individual desire then consist in anything which preserves (by EIIP7) and increases (by EIVP38) individual being. However, the whole orientation of the *Ethics*, insofar as it concerns human individuals, is to show ‘man’s lack of power’ (EIVP17Schol) and the extent to which human individuals misunderstand their power – what they *can* do – and where it lies. It is on the basis of misunderstanding their real nature that men so often “see and approve the better” but follow the worse (EIVP17Schol).²⁶

The notion of striving which purely concerns the mind, that is, of free will or free decision of the mind, is at the apex of such misunderstanding (see EIIP2Schol and EIV Preface): an inadequate idea which is the basis of erroneous belief and imagining about which objects and ideas will increase one’s power. Spinoza’s concept of essence offers an alternative principle of governance. As Deleuze sets out, with Spinoza,

One is never free through one’s will and through that on which it patterns itself, but through one’s essence and through that which follows from it.²⁷

²⁵ EIIP2Schol: ‘when men say that this or that action of the body arises from the mind, which has dominion over the body, they do not know what they are saying, and they do nothing but confess, in fine-sounding words, that they are ignorant of the true causes of that action’.

²⁶ In EIVP17Schol, Spinoza’s quote from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* VII,20-21. See also EIV Preface, man ‘sees the better for himself, [but] he is still forced to follow the worse’.

²⁷ Deleuze, *Practical Philosophy*, p.70.

Conatus III: Dynamic Function

Because of the partiality of modes – the status of man as part of Nature – desire is necessarily a connective force, and a positive one, oriented towards a maximisation and augmentation of the individual, which embeds him in his affective field of constitution.

Straddling both thought and extension, *conatus* has two aspects: what Deleuze calls its ‘mechanical’ function, that is, the striving to persevere in existing which we have already mentioned (EIIIP7); together with a ‘dynamic’ function: to seek out what is *useful* to man, or (in the first instance) what increases the body’s capability for being affected.²⁸

This second aspect is set out in Part Four of the *Ethics* thus,

EIVP38: Whatever disposes the human body that it can be affected in a great many ways, or renders it capable of affecting external bodies in a great many ways, is useful to man; the more it renders the body capable of being affected in a great many ways, or of affecting other bodies, the more useful it is; on the other hand, what renders the body less capable of these things is harmful.

Again, the sequence of constitution follows from body to mind, so that,

EIVP38Dem: The more the body is rendered capable of these things, the more the mind is rendered capable of perceiving (by IIP14). And so what disposes the body in this way, and renders it capable of these things, is necessarily good, or useful (by P26 and P27), and the more useful the more capable of these things it renders the body. On the other hand (by the converse of IIP14, and by P26 and P27), it is harmful if it renders the body less capable of these things, q.e.d.

Insofar as each human individual expresses his true nature (as an instance of the general laws of Nature) he strives toward self-augmentation, that is, towards the variable objects of sustenance and increase dictated by his individual constitution, as well as and primarily towards what Spinoza has as the one permanent and unchanging object of desire: perfect knowledge. As Balibar says here,

A major part of Spinoza’s originality is to have proposed that the object of desire is neither predetermined nor already defined, but is changeable and can be substituted. The one exception to this rule is the desire for rational knowledge (knowledge “by causes”),

²⁸ On dynamic and mechanical characteristics of *conatus*, see Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p.230.

whose object is *any singular thing*. That is why the essential distinction here is not that between the conscious and the unconscious, but between activity and passivity, depending on whether the individual is dominated by the object on which his desire has focused or whether he becomes himself the objects' "adequate cause": All the polymorphous forms of desire are nothing other than a certain degree of activity which is sufficient to overcome passivity, a (positive) differential between life and death.²⁹

On the Spinozist model consciousness, as Deleuze notes, is 'completely immersed in the unconscious. That is [...] we are conscious only of the ideas we have, under the conditions in which we have them'. Consciousness then is 'secondary in relation to the idea of which it is the consciousness' and 'is worth only what the primary idea is worth'.³⁰ Self-consciousness begins with the mind's first cognition of its body, and via the strivings of *conatus* proceeds to ever more adequate knowledge of the natural and rational processes exemplified in it, as a part of Nature, and thus towards a more objective awareness of its desires. On the basis of EIVP38 then, Spinoza draws out a new principle of governance and a new ethic.

EIVP23Dem: Insofar as a man is determined to act from the fact that he has adequate ideas, he is acted on (by IIIP1), that is, (by IIID1 and D2), he does something which cannot be perceived through his essence alone [...] But insofar as he is determined to do something from the fact that he understands, he acts (by IIIP1), that is (by IIID2), does something which is perceived through his essence alone [...]

In terms of the human mind, *conatus* strives towards greater power (its dynamic function) and thus, when man governs from his nature, his natural activity is always directed towards adequate knowledge (there is no power to "do otherwise", rather, when man pursues other objects he displays only his *lack of power*). The desire for knowledge then is made constant and consistent with the desire for self-preservation and augmentation, properly understood.

This process is transformative: the passage from inadequate, "subjective", knowledge to more adequate, more objective knowledge is also the conversion of irrational desires into rational ones ('desires of reason'), such that understanding

²⁹ Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, p.107.

³⁰ Deleuze, *Practical Philosophy*, p.59.

replaces will as a faculty of real transformation.³¹ Understanding, as the human individual's active power, replaces acts of mastery, transcendence, and suppression. This involves a reconfiguration of the relation between affectivity and knowledge. Thus, as Balibar says,

The artificial distinction between knowledge and affectivity, which is part of the doctrine of both the intellectualist and the irrationalist, must therefore be replaced by another distinction: that between *different types of knowledge*, which correspond to different *affective regimes*.³²

In the following chapters we will explore the problem of how the human individual becomes active, or learns to govern from his essence. We will also see how Deleuze constructs a new "ethological" description of what an individual is, based on concepts he encounters in Spinoza which we have introduced here: the recuperation of affectivity, the notion of consciousness as constituted by affects, and desire as positive and productive, rather than negative (that is, proceeding from lack) and acquisitive; and of the individual as "singularised" by desire, rather than an agent of selection.

³¹ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p.204.

³² Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, p.109.

Chapter 4

On Knowledge

What Deleuze calls Spinoza's 'devaluation of consciousness'¹ as essentially an effect of substance individuated by its affects (as discussed in the previous chapter), is encapsulated in the following proposition:

EII.P10: *The being of substance does not pertain to the essence of man, or substance does not constitute the form of man.*
 Cor.: [...] the essence of man is constituted by certain modifications of God's attributes.

This proposition and the accompanying scholia, demonstrations, and corollary have clear implications for any epistemological definition of consciousness. In opposition to Descartes (see the 'Preface to the Third Part of the *Ethics*'), who had set up the *cogito* as a new foundation for knowledge, Spinoza's thinking mind is construed as the variable result or effect of various forces, and as radically determined. The mind, Spinoza insists, has no absolute free will, nor does it have an innate orientation towards truth (EII.P48): freedom of thought comes after necessity and is only constituted by an objective awareness of the necessitated basis of thought and consciousness itself.

For Spinoza, it is power that defines the mind, rather than will – an active power of understanding or capacity for active thought. Moreover, mental power or the capacity for active thought is contingent upon a capacity to be acted upon – bodily, in the first instance - and derives from that capacity.

¹ Deleuze, *Practical Philosophy*, p.17.

This reformulation of the relation between individual consciousness and knowledge provides much material for Deleuze as he attempts to elaborate a model of thought “on a plane of immanence”. Deleuze however, in his transformations, will go much further than Spinoza, who, although he starts out from a position of philosophical mistrust (as did Descartes) retains both a residual ground for knowledge – a solid foundation now relocated at the level of rational substance (‘God, *or* Nature’) - as well as a commitment to the search for truth and rational knowledge (*more geometrico*) which places him firmly in the rationalist tradition (though Deleuze will show how he subverts that tradition with a form of “rationalist empiricism”). In contrast, although Deleuze’s rejection of the cogito as epistemological ground is, as we will see, Spinozist in many respects, his ensuing wholesale rejection of the possibility of any ground for truth claims - and of truth as the proper aim and goal of thought - goes much further than Spinoza. Whereas Spinoza retains ‘God, *or* Nature’ as the ultimate solution to the problem of knowledge, Deleuze rejects the whole problem-solution form in favour of an amplification of the Spinozist notion of thought as an active power of production. The creation of problems then becomes the proper function of philosophy.

The Image of Thought

The notion of the finite mind as the centre of the epistemological universe, the notion of truth as the goal of thought, and the primacy of identity in thought are the three fronts of Deleuze’s critique. They are the touchstones of what he calls an “orthodox”, “moral”, “dogmatic” and/or “classical” image of thought, which orientates modern social and intellectual life.

As Deleuze explains:

By image of thought I don't mean its method but something deeper that's always taken for granted, a system of coordinates, dynamics, orientations: what it means to think, and to "orient oneself in thought" [...] The image of thought is what philosophy as it were presupposes; it precedes philosophy, not a philosophical understanding but a prephilosophical understanding.²

At the apex of this image is the philosophical figure of the thinking subject – the foundational *cogito* and his natural (naturalised) orientation towards truth.

The philosopher, it is true, proceeds with greater disinterest: all that he proposes as universally recognised is what is meant by thinking, being, and self – in other words, not a particular this or that but the form of representation or recognition in general. This form, nevertheless, has a supposition that thought is the natural exercise of a faculty, of the talent for truth or an affinity with the true, under the double aspect of a *goodwill on the part of the thinker* and an *upright nature on the part of thought* [...] According to this image, thought has an affinity with the true; it formally possesses the true and materially wants the true. It is *in terms of* this images that everybody knows and is presumed to know what it means to think. Thereafter it matters little whether philosophy begins with the object or the subject, with Being or with beings, as long as thought remains subject to this Image which already prejudices everything: the distribution of the object and the subject as well as that of Being and beings [...] The form of identity in objects relies upon a ground in the unity of a thinking subject, of which all the other faculties must be modalities. This is the meaning of the Cogito as a beginning: it expresses the possibility that all the faculties will relate to a form of object which reflects the objective identity; it provides a philosophical concept for the presupposition of common sense; it is the common sense become philosophical.³

Upon this ground then, according to Deleuze, all the distinctions and distributions of thought are organised: the distinction between knowing and being, and between the active thinking subject and the passive object of thought; the distribution or ordering of thought according to the primacy of identity and the problem-solution form. As

Deleuze says,

when we suppose that thought possesses a good nature, and the thinker a good will (naturally to 'want' the true) [...] we designate error, nothing but error, as the enemy to be fought; and we suppose that the true concerns solutions – in other words, propositions capable of serving as answers.⁴

² Deleuze, *Negotiations*, pp.147-148. From a conversation with Raymond Bellour and François Ewald, in *Magazine Littéraire*, 257, September 1988. On the "orthodox" image of thought, see Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.131. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari coin the term "noology" to describe a new critical practice – the study of images of thought, which define for thought its 'goals and paths, conduits, channels, organs, an entire *organon*', p.374.

³ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.131-133. The inspiration here is surely Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*, Part I: see Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, pp.94-110. The concept of a 'dogmatic image of thought' is also first set out here, p.103.

⁴ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 'Preface to the English Edition', p.xvii.

According to Deleuze, philosophy is disabled by this image and its presupposition of knowledge as a transcendent domain, or a “transcendent exercise of the faculties”. This “orthodox” image, he says, suppresses the fact that ‘men rarely think’, and that ‘in fact it is difficult to think’⁵. The orientation produced by this image, he insists, ‘is a hindrance to philosophy’ and leaves it ‘without means to realise its project of breaking with *doxa*’ or belief (opinion). Instead,

it retains the essential aspect of *doxa* – namely, the form; and the essential aspect of common sense – namely, the element; and the essential aspect of recognition – namely the model itself (harmony of the faculties grounded in the supposedly universal thinking subject and exercised upon the unspecified object). The image of thought is only the figure in which *doxa* is universalised by being elevated to the rational level.⁶

Deleuze’s overriding commitment is to philosophy as an active and constitutive power of thought, and for him that is always bound up with the imperative of thinking difference since, as we saw in chapter two, according to his ontology difference is the being of Being. Philosophy which cannot think difference cannot think reality itself, therefore cannot engage with reality, and cannot participate in it. The creative power of philosophy – its ability to produce new concepts – is curtailed insofar as the transcendentalisation of reason divorces knowledge from its conditions (that is, from real difference) and makes rational consciousness the pseudo-cause of thought. For Deleuze the transcendent structure of the model of representation makes thought contemplative and disengaged: it assigns subjective consciousness an illusory autonomy and gives it a relationship to thought which obscures difference itself:

The ‘I think’ is the most general principle of representation – in other words, the source of these elements and of the unity of all these faculties: I conceive, I judge, I imagine, I remember and I perceive – as though these were the four branches of the Cogito. On precisely these branches, difference is crucified.⁷

⁵ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.132. This position is Spinozist in inspiration: ‘The question is no longer “Why do we have inadequate ideas?” but rather “How do we come to form adequate ideas?” In Spinoza it is the same with truth as with freedom: they are not given to us in principle, but appear as the result of a long activity [...] if we listen to the rationalists, truth and freedom are, above all, rights; they wonder how we can lose these rights, fall into error or lose our liberty [...] From an empiricist viewpoint everything is inverted: what is surprising is that men sometimes manage to understand truth, sometimes manage to understand one another, sometimes manage to free themselves from what fetters them’, Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p.149.

⁶ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.134.

The “orthodox” image of thought determines thought in terms of philosophical Idealism: it separates thought from life and destroys or disables its generative power. It is this, rather than any categorical or representational distortions it effects, that is Deleuze’s chief concern. As Bruce Baugh points out, Deleuze’s critique of the model of representation is, on this basis, profoundly ethical: ‘What is wrong with Idealism’ for Deleuze, says Baugh,

is that it suppresses creativity and spontaneity, not that it is not well founded, and not even, at least not primarily, that it cannot account for the phenomena, for perhaps it can, if we are willing to pay a sufficiently high price for it. The point of French anti-Idealism has always been moral, or moral and political.⁸

As we will see in this chapter, the creativity of thought - its ability to produce new concepts - has an ethical rather than a purely epistemological aim: it “deterritorialises” existing bodies of knowledge and generates new relations, new connections, new bodies, and articulates “minor” discourses in contradistinction to universal ones. For Deleuze, then, thought properly has a different aim from that which orientates the “orthodox” image: not the pursuit of truth understood, as Alex Callinicos puts it, ‘in its traditional sense as *adequatio rei et intellectus*, the correspondence of reality and thought’, but rather the production of truth, understood as equivalent to the production of the new: ‘Truth’, says Deleuze, ‘is in all respects an affair of production, and not of adequation’.⁹

What this chapter will show is the Spinozist aspects of Deleuze’s model of philosophy or what it is to think philosophically: how its keystones are “deterritorialisations” of Spinoza’s major epistemological themes, including (i) Spinoza’s notion, in contradistinction to his contemporaries, that the individual is not the locus of knowledge, and that individuality is an effect of “social” existence; (ii) his

⁷ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.138.

⁸ Bruce Baugh, ‘Transcendental empiricism: Deleuze’s response to Hegel’, in *Man and World*, No.25, (pp.133-148), pp. 143-144. I have said ‘ethical’, rather than Baugh’s ‘moral’, in order to distinguish Deleuze’s ethical position from the moral one he attributes to the orthodox image of thought. Deleuze consistently associates ethics with applied philosophy, and morality with transcendental philosophy, and this distinction will become clearer further on.

⁹ Alex Callinicos, *Is There a Future for Marxism?* P.171; Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.199.

refusal to assign any transcendental form to reason, as separable from and opposed to the determinations of Being; (iii) his notion of thought as connected to labouring, to active power, rather than to an innate orientation of the mind towards or affinity with knowledge and the true.

The theory of knowledge: A “materialist” devaluation of consciousness

As we have seen in the previous chapters, Spinoza defines finite modes as modifications (‘affections’) of substance (see EID5), and we will now briefly re-iterate the model of mind set out in the preceding chapter. In the case of the human being, he/she consists of a mind and a body, or finite modifications of infinite intellect and infinite extension which are actually ‘one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways’ (EIIP7Schol). The human individual then is a particular instance (by EIIP21Schol) of the unity of substance itself, so that mind and body are substantially identical. In terms of the human mind, Spinoza says that,

EIIP11: *The first thing which constitutes the actual being of a human Mind is nothing but the idea of a singular thing which actually exists.*

EIIP12: *Whatever happens in the object of the idea constituting the human mind must be perceived by the human mind, or there will necessarily be an idea of that thing in the mind; that is, if the object of the idea constituting a human mind is a body, nothing can happen in that body which is not perceived by the mind.*

EIIP13: *The object of the idea constituting the human mind is the body, or a certain mode of extension which actually exists, and nothing else.*

As we saw in the preceding chapter, the relation of mind to body established in Part II of the *Ethics* is such that it excludes any possibility of an autonomous consciousness (or metaphysical soul) existing apart from the body. For Spinoza, mind and body depend upon one another for their being – one cannot be without the other – and what the propositions above remind us of is that relation of dependency: in describing the nature of the mind, what Spinoza first sets out is that its being is contingent upon the existence of its body. Thought proceeds on the basis of the body to which each individual mind is connected, or rather, the mind thinks solely and in the first instance on the basis of its

body as a complex individual which is continually undergoing internal and external modification (see Spinoza's digression on the physics of bodies in Part II, between P13 and P14). These modifications or processes of its body constitute the first objects of knowledge for the mind:

EIIP14: *The human mind is capable of perceiving a great many things, and is the more capable, the more its body can be disposed in a great many ways.*

EIIP19: *The human mind does not know the human body itself, nor does it know that it exists, except through ideas of affects by which the body is affected.*

The human mind then knows itself via bodily modification, or the relations of motion and rest, speed and slowness (by EIIL1) contracted between the many bodies its individual body is composed of. Just as the body is a composite of simple bodies, so the mind is a composite of ideas of those bodily modifications, and is an individual mind insofar as its body is an individual body, that is, insofar as those relations are disposed within the defining parameters of what constitutes a living human body. Thinking is dependent then not only on the specific body related to an individual thinking mind, but upon the interaction of the great many "forces" and other bodies which modify that body.

As is clear by EID5 ('By mode, I understand the affections of a substance, *or* that which is in another through which it is also conceived'), the mind as an idea of its body will not, according to Spinoza, have substantial status, nor will it be constituted by any innate faculties, nor will it be characterised by its own free decision; rather, the mind must be regarded as necessitated by substance, in the same way and at the same time as its body is, and as constituted by its various processes. However, mind as idea is not reflective of bodily states/modifications, but rather is the mental aspect of these changing-states (according to Spinoza's identification of mind and body in substance, see EIIP7Schol & P2EIIP21Schol.). In terms of knowledge, the order of formation proceeds from the body:

EIIP23: *The mind does not know itself, except insofar as it perceives the ideas of the affections of the body.*

This nascent form of mind is then produced by and has as its basis “interactive” (we might say, “social”) relations: the relations of modification between bodies necessitate thought. In the first instance though, the kind of thought they necessitate is confused and passive, just as the body is more acted upon than active in its initial interchanges.

In the three-term model of knowledge which Spinoza sets out in Part II of the *Ethics* – which is, however, neither hierarchical nor evolutionary in terms of its stages - this type of knowledge is called ‘knowledge of the first kind, opinion or imagination’ (EIIP40Schol.2).¹⁰ It consists, he tells us, in ideas which are ‘mutilated, confused, and without order for the intellect’, and which derive from ‘random experiences’, as well as from ‘signs’, or from ‘the fact that, having heard or read certain words, we recollect things, and form certain ideas of them’ (EIIP40Schol1&2). ‘*Knowledge of the first kind*’, Spinoza says, ‘*is the only cause of falsity*’ (EIIP41), and the types of ideas which pertain to it are ‘inadequate and confused’ (EIIP41Dem). Indeed, to the extent that they are largely passive, as are the bodily modifications of which they are the idea, the type of mind they constitute can be described as “thinking” only in a limited way. The formation of the first kind of knowledge, or the imagination, ‘happens according to the order and connection of the affections of the human body’, by EIIP18.Schol., as well as according to the structure of prior opinions (a system already in place, see EIIP40Schol.2:I&II). These ideas owe nothing to reason or ‘the order of the intellect’ (EIIP18.Schol.), but are formed ‘in accordance with what the body has more often been affected by, and what the Mind imagines or recollects more easily’ (EIIP40Schol1). Ideas of the first kind are subjective and passive, with the connections between going by

¹⁰ Although Spinoza divides his typology into knowledge of the first, second, and third kind, we should not infer an evolutionary development: the stages do indeed lead on to the other, but equally one type can exist alongside another in the same mind. Additionally, there is no sense of an irrevocable progression – a mind can be characterised in terms of the first type of knowledge, for instance, and never attain the second and third kinds, and indeed this is the norm, as Spinoza points out.

way of a random association, or by way of habit or custom, for example: ‘a soldier’, Spinoza says, ‘having seen traces of a horse in the sand, will immediately pass from the thought of a horse to the thought of a horseman, and from that to the thought of war, etc. But a Farmer will pass from the thought of a horse to the thought of a plow, and then to that of a field, etc.’ (EIIIP18).

What we have so far then is a model of knowledge which sets out from the body or bodily modification, and a model in which knowledge, or at least the first kind of knowledge or knowledge of the imagination, is identified with passivity. The problem then is how the mind becomes active, or how it forms what Spinoza terms “adequate” ideas.

As we saw in the preceding chapter, the essence of each individual is its striving to remain in existence, or *conatus* (EIIIP7). This striving pertains equally to the mental as to the physical aspect of the individual, so that in terms of mind, (by EIIIP10Dem) the first and principal [tendency] of the striving of our mind (by P7) is to affirm the existence of our body’. *Conatus* applied to the mind is the effort then – since mind is idea of the body - to become a more adequate idea of its body. What this entails, as we shall see now, is a certain “devaluation” of consciousness, or rather of that most essential characteristic usually assigned to it: that of free will and the free decision of the mind. For Spinoza, it is the paradigmatic subjective mind which corresponds with the subjected body, and which is therefore more passive than active.¹¹

¹¹ As Margaret Gullan-Whur notes in *Within Reason: A Life of Spinoza*, ‘Spinoza would not recognise the word ‘subjective’ as we use it: he would take it merely to denote a thought held by a subject. Yet ‘subjective properly characterises his *singular thoughts or this or that thought* [EIIIP36], the opinions, passions and sensations of any finite mind in so far as these remain unrelated, through rational examination, *to the common properties of things* [EVP7D.]’, p.78.

Will and *Conatus* in the Transition to Adequate Ideas

At the very beginning of Part II of the *Ethics* Spinoza reminds us that what he is dealing with in this Part – the ‘Nature and Origin of the Mind’ – ‘*necessarily follow from the essence of God*’. He then refers us to EIP16, in which necessity, rather than will, is identified with God’s nature:

EIP16: *From the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes, (i.e., everything which can fall under an infinite intellect).*

As we saw earlier, in chapters one and three, Spinoza’s commitment to one substance entails withdrawing substancehood from individual bodies and minds, which must rather be understood as equally determined by those laws which operate throughout the whole of nature. In the case of the mind, this means that:

EII.P48: *In the mind there is no absolute, or free, will, but the mind is determined to will this or that by a cause which is also determined by another, and this again by another, and so to infinity.*

Spinoza then cannot give authority to individual thoughts, nor to the minds that think them, since minds, like bodies, are dependent upon an external causal order and are therefore inadequate when considered in-themselves, apart from this causal order. By EIP16, all modalities of thought (minds and ideas) are in reality determined, compelled, or necessitated by the laws or processes specific to the attribute of Thought, so that what the individual mind lacks is the power or authority of necessity: the kind of thought it produces is purely contingent, or subjective (as in the example of the soldier and the farmer above). Considered as the locus of free decision, that is, apart from God/the order of causes, the idea which is the mind, as well as the ideas which it has, is marked by inadequacy, since, when individuals assign free will to the mind, and subsequently take the free decision of the mind to be the determining causal factor of their actions, they produce a false order of causes.¹²

¹² See EIIIP2Schol: ‘[.] when men say that this or that action of the body arises from the mind, which has dominion over the body, they do not know what they are saying, and they do nothing but confess, in fine-sounding words, that they are ignorant of the true cause of that action, and that they do not wonder at it’.

Spinoza's withdrawal of will as the essential characteristic of mind (see below) apparently only complicates, rather than resolving our initial problem: how do individual minds move from inadequate to adequate knowledge?

EIIP48: In the mind there is no absolute, or free, will, but the mind is determined to will this or that by a cause which is also determined by another; and this again by another, and so to infinity.

Dem.: The mind is a certain and determinate mode of thinking (by P11), and so (by IP17C2) cannot be a free cause of its own actions, or cannot have an absolute faculty of willing and not willing. Rather, it must be determined to willing this or that (by IP28) by a cause which is also determined by another, and this cause again by another, and so on, q.e.d.

Not only is man merely a part or modification of substance, but his mind, as an equally determined idea of that body, is quite incapable of rising above its embodied perspective. For Spinoza, however, the problem itself does not need solving on these terms, which are based, he thinks, on an inversion of the order of things. On the contrary, following from the Spinozist assumption that reason follows and has the same logical structure as things/physical events (*EIIP7: The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things*) - which is the epistemological consequence of his metaphysical monism - individual minds must have access to adequate knowledge precisely because they are part of substance.

The mind's natural "necessitatedness" entails that it is also predisposed to rationality and that what it strives for is to become more rational, or to become a more adequate idea of the rational processes traversing its body and the wider milieu of bodies. It is therefore precisely its *conatus* or 'striving to persevere in its being' (EIII.P7) – that is, its human essence – that requires, involves, and is naturally orientated towards the abandonment, on the mental plane, of any notion of the self as a free cause since, insofar as the mind strives to become a more adequate idea of its body, that mental striving is orientated towards expressing a necessity of thought equal to the necessity assigned to the body.¹³

The partiality of reason is then an inescapable fact for modal (human) beings. Yet the nature of reason - its structure - does allow modal knowledge to exceed modal being, or for the modal mind to grasp truths which go beyond - but which are exemplified in - its own body. As we saw in the preceding chapter, the character of mental striving (*conatus*) is connective: applied to the mind, it consists in a relation the mind has to the ideas it has. In contrast to the immediacy and necessity which characterises the connection between the idea which is the mind and its body, the relation between a mind and the ideas it has represents a particular "synthesis", a particular approach or a particular relation of the individual to nature (the world) mediated in thought and described in terms of types of knowledge, which are also indicative of the operational functioning of *conatus* (that is, the degree of striving involved). With imaginary knowledge, the mind passes from one thought to the next without the connections between being necessary, but rather the result of habit or custom – knowledge of the imagination derives from first-person experience rather than

¹³ Gullan-Whur says that this central and assumption, that 'logical, mathematical and metaphysical necessity are identical', and therefore that 'reasons and causes were identical, and natural causes, being mathematically ordered in nature, could be known as eternal truths', was, for Spinoza, beyond doubt. In assuming this ontological/rational identity, Gullan-Whur says that Spinoza simply accepts what she calls a 'medieval assumption', one which would have been common currency among his contemporaries, but which Spinoza inflects: in his system logical power is assigned wholly to substance itself, and only partially to individual minds.

objective necessity, and insofar as this misrepresents, rather than expresses, the nature of substance, it is an inadequate form of knowledge. This is where knowledge is derailed: at the imaginary level, the mind's degree of striving for rationality – or to express its rationality - is hardly realised, and mental passivity characterises the mind rather than the activity associated with rational thought. Yet just because an individual body is part of nature it exemplifies the universal properties of substance, and just because a mind necessarily perceives everything which goes on in its body (by EIIP12: *'nothing can happen in that body which is not perceived by the mind*), so it necessarily encounters some adequate ideas, however much those ideas may be obscured or overwhelmed.

The activity of the mind (*conatus*) is thus, in the first instance, oriented towards distinguishing and selecting what best preserves and enhances it (the same criteria as applies to bodily *conatus*), that is, towards ideas which express something that is common to its body and other bodies, as opposed to ideas which express its subjective experience. *Conatus* effects the transition to adequate ideas, a transition that is always in principle possible just because the body is the site of perpetual modification (EIP14: *The human mind is capable of perceiving a great many things, and is the more capable, the more its body can be disposed in a great many ways*).

Common Notions

Rationality then, in the *Ethics*, is explicitly associated with mental striving, and this striving involves a connective and/or integrative process. Thus, rather than random or experiential knowledge being abandoned or deemed extraneous to rational thought, it instead remains essential. Only *conatus* now connects that knowledge to a more inclusive, more objective explanatory system. In simple terms, this entails that specific bodily modifications and their ideas be understood in terms of the larger laws they exemplify. Once the individual intellect, going by way of knowledge of its bodily

modifications, connects individual events to their causal laws, it begins to understand things by their common properties and also to have the beginnings of a logical framework for knowledge: these ideas, which understand things in terms of their common properties (EIP39) are what Spinoza calls common notions, or, ‘reason and the second kind of knowledge’ (EIP40Schol2).

The term “common notions” would have been familiar to Spinoza’s contemporaries from the Cartesian model of them as connoting the foundations of reasoning, and they retain this sense for Spinoza, (see EIP40Schol1) except that for him they have a quite different genesis. For Descartes, common notions were innate ideas implanted in the mind, with their qualities of clarity and distinctness - the mark of their veracity – the object of an immediate recognition or intuition. This concept of common notions supposes that rational beings have faculties which are oriented towards truth, and that human rationality has an innate criterion for judging or for detecting error. For Spinoza, however, common notions are neither innate nor common to all men. Whilst he agrees that truth and falsehood are distinguishable, his use of common notions does not locate the power of distinction with individual human cognition, but rather with the logical power of ideas themselves. Spinoza’s common notions are not, therefore, common because implanted in all minds alike, but common insofar as they are ideas about what is common to all things, as we have said above (see EIP37-39).¹⁴

¹⁴ On how Spinoza’s concept of common notions differs from that of Descartes, Gullan-Whur says that, ‘Although the properties of clarity, distinctness and self-evidence assigned to *common* notions were also Cartesian, Spinoza diverged from Descartes’s traditional claim that ‘common notions’ were undeniably true just because they were innate ideas, planted in our minds at birth and accessible through intuition. When [...] Spinoza propounded his quite different doctrine, he stressed that to be *common*, a thing or ideas had to be exemplified either in all things or in all of a kind, such as humankind’, see *Within Reason: A Life of Spinoza*, p.78. Descartes’ view itself was unusual, contrasting with scholastic Thomist-Aristotelian usage in which common notions are accessed by abstraction from sense-experience. On historical usage of the term “common notions”, see Michael Ayers, ‘Theories of Knowledge and Belief’, in *Cambridge History of Seventeenth Century Philosophy*, Volume II, pp.1003-1061.

The point is, though, that there is no new material here, no new object of knowledge as such, except that rationality reveals or penetrates to another aspect of the same object: rather than dealing with random things, events, experiences, as imaginary knowledge does, common notions are concerned with what is common to those objects, or with the relations between things, events, experiences, etc.

EII.P38: *Those things which are common to all, and which are equally in the part and in the whole, can only be conceived adequately.*

EII.P39: *If something is common to, and peculiar to, the human body and certain external bodies by which the human body is usually affected, and is equally in the part and in the whole of each of them, its idea will also be adequate in the mind.*

It is not that the objects change then, but rather that reason discovers more about ‘God, or Nature’, or substance itself - which is the only and ultimate object of knowledge - by virtue of the type of connections it makes: rationality connects singular things by their common properties, whereas imagination connects things to first person memory, belief, etc. Since rationality has for its object the common properties between things (by EIIP29Schol.), and since these relations between can only be deduced, according to Spinoza, conclusions are transformed as the methodological approach tends towards a deductive logic.¹⁵

¹⁵ For example, common notions transform the universal ones which are characteristic of the first kind of knowledge: ‘*Universal*’ notions and ‘*Transcendental*’ terms (see EIIP40.Schol.1) result from the mere accumulation of subjective, and therefore confused ideas, by which the imagination concocts agreement or commonality between things according to how it has been most affected. In contradistinction to common notions, ‘these notions are not formed by all men in the same way’, but rather according to a subjective and general impression which is then transcendentalised or universalised. Terms Spinoza designates transcendental include ‘Being, Thing, and Something’, and they result from the fact that ‘when the images in the body are completely confused, the mind also will imagine all the bodies confusedly, without any distinction, and comprehend them as if under one attribute, namely, under the attribute of Being, Thing, and so forth [...] all these terms signify ideas that are confused in the highest degree’ (EIIP40Schol1). Similarly, ‘notions they call *Universal*, like Man, Horse, Dog, and the like’ result from the body and mind being overwhelmed by so many instances (of men, horses, dogs) ‘to the point where the mind can imagine neither slight differences of the singular [...] nor their determinate number, and imagines distinctly only what they agree in’. This “agreement” is deduced subjectively according to what has left the firmest impression upon each mind, so that one mind might imagine ‘man’ to be ‘an animal capable of laughter’, whilst another might imagine him to be ‘a featherless biped’, and yet another ‘a rational animal’ (EIIP40Schol1).

Spinoza then does not sit unproblematically in the rationalist tradition, if rationalism is understood as partitioning experience off from knowledge, and equally we cannot think of him as an empiricist in the sense of inferring from empirical premises: experience is always presupposed and integral to knowledge in the *Ethics*, yet Spinoza's position is ambiguous: he says both that adequate knowledge does not require experience (common notions have no inferential relation with the information of the senses, but constitute a self-contained logical system), and that knowledge of any kind cannot exist without experience (experience as bodily modification is the prerequisite/precursor of all knowledge). What we have with Spinoza, instead of an opposition between reason and experience, is a continuum of forms of knowledge ranged between poles of passive and active thought and in which experience – at the pole of mental passivity – is nevertheless that which necessitates thought, or forces the individual to think. This entails that no transcendental form can be assigned to reason over and above experience. As we have seen transcendental and universal notions are explicitly put within imaginary or inadequate knowledge, so that rather than an external (transcendental) criteria of truth, what Spinoza posits instead is the notion of the veracity of thought being connected to activity. And furthermore, he posits that activity - of “thought going on” - as having its own autonomy:

EIIIP40: *Whatever ideas follow in the mind from ideas which are adequate in the mind are also adequate.*

Adequate ideas follow one from the other, independently of experience and regardless of any ‘free decision’ of the subjective mind, so that the measure of veracity – which as we have already said cannot be located with an individual mind – is replaced by an “automatism” of thought constituted by the relations of ideas within a logical system, which in turn reveal the determined nature of the human mind. Common notions are adequate ideas about which all minds (insofar as they reason) will agree, but their

veracity is mind-independent – they constitute objective or formal knowledge and bear what Spinoza calls the ‘intrinsic denomination of a true idea’: common notions or adequate ideas cohere logically in themselves and ‘without relation to an object’ (EIIDef.4). The criterion of veracity, rather than being the product of a thinking subject insulated from mutable nature (see the Preface to EIII) must therefore be internal to the idea and the laws of logic, or must be a feature of thought itself, so that in place of a consciousness which is brought to bear on or which adjudicates truthfulness, Spinoza gives us the notion of an idea which is true in itself, or intrinsically, insofar as it coheres logically with other adequate ideas.¹⁶ As Macherey points out,

by returning onto itself, without escaping its own order, thought discovers everything contained within substance, insofar as the latter is expressed in the infinity of all its attributes [...] this can be said of all the attributes, which are identical to all the others, not in a relationship of comparison, or correspondence, or agreement, or homology, which would imply their reciprocal exteriority, but in their intrinsic nature, which unifies them from the outset within the substance that constitutes them and that they constitute.¹⁷

This is the import of EIIP7 (*‘The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things.’*): all regimes are connected in substance, and since substance is also rational, that connection both guarantees that adequate knowledge is possible, at the same time as it turns away from a representational or analogical model of thought. The notion of rational automatism then is strictly opposed to the self-autonomy of a thinking subject acting in contrast to necessity, since reason itself is thought of not as a human faculty, but rather as the way in which substance exists and operates. Being can be understood by a modal mind only insofar as it understands the autonomous connections of its own ideas.

¹⁶ Spinoza refers to ‘a spiritual automaton’ in *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*: ‘We have shown that a true idea is simple, or composed of simple ideas, that it shows how and why something is, or has been done; and that its objective effects proceed in the soul according to the formal nature of its object. This is the same as what the ancients said, that is that true knowledge proceeds from cause to effect – except that so far as I know they never conceived the soul (as we do here) as acting according to certain laws, like a spiritual automaton’. See *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, Volume I, edited and translated by Edwin Curley, p.37.

¹⁷ Macherey, ‘The Problem of the Attributes’, in *The New Spinoza*, eds. Montag & Stolze, p.90.

If Spinoza points out the indivisibility of consciousness from illusion ('Nor does it suffice to say that consciousness deludes itself: consciousness is inseparable from the triple illusion that constitutes it, the illusion of finality, the illusion of freedom, and the theological illusion. Consciousness is only a dream with one's eyes open')¹⁸, he at the same time points towards a new model of thought which, in the first place, will not be dominated by the primary imaginary figure of the "*cogito* as a beginning", and which, in the second place, will not be defined in terms of judgement and adequation, but rather in terms of active power. As we will see now, these two tightly co-implied ideas are amplified and transformed by Deleuze into (i) a model of consciousness as transitive and/or informational – an interior radically connected to and dependent upon its exterior; and (ii) a model of thought/thinking as a constitutive power, in which, at the "nth" degree, the concept and life are *the same thing*.

Transformation 1: Ethological Consciousness

Spinoza's formulation of the modal body and mind as proportions of forces, maintained in a certain ratio, supplies a ready alternative to rationalist and/or essentialist models of mind as irreducible human essence. With Spinoza, consciousness is reminded of what Deleuze calls its 'necessary modesty' ('To remind consciousness of its necessary modesty is to take it for what it is: a symptom; nothing but a symptom of a deeper transformation and of the activities of entirely non-spiritual forces'), and redefined within the terms of what Deleuze describes as an "ethological" model of the individual.

... if we are Spinozists we will not define a thing by its form, nor by its organs and its functions, nor as a substance or a subject. Borrowing terms from the Middle Ages, or from geography, we will define it by *longitude* and *latitude*. A body can be anything; it can be an animal, a body of sounds, a mind, or an idea; it can be a linguistic corpus, a social body, a collectivity. We call longitude of a body the set of relations of speed and slowness, of motion and rest, between particles that compose it from this point of view, that is, between

¹⁸ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.20.

unformed elements. We call latitude the set of affects that occupy a body at each moment, that is, the intensive states of an *anonymous force* (force for existing, capacity for being affected). In this way we construct the map of a body. The longitudes and latitudes together constitute Nature, the plane of immanence or consistency, which is always variable and is constantly being altered, composed and recomposed, by individuals and collectivities.¹⁹

The ‘plane of consistency’ (Spinozist substance), and the various “bodies” which constitute it and which it constitutes, recognises no hierarchy of being, nor any demarcation between man as subject and the “world” as external object, nor any dualism of consciousness and the unconscious (that is, the field of affects/affections) as substantially different orders of being. As such, it is opposed to what Deleuze calls the transcendental ‘plane of organisation’, which consists in ‘the development of the formation of substance or a subject’.²⁰ The type of modal consciousness which exists within it is, as we have already seen, indivisibly linked and dependent upon a ‘capacity for being affected’:

consciousness appears as the continual awareness of this passage from greater to lesser, or from lesser to greater, as a witness of the variations and determinations of the *conatus* functioning in relation to other bodies or other ideas. The object that agrees with my nature determines me to form a superior totality that includes us, the object and myself. The object that does not agree with me jeopardizes my cohesion, and tends to divide me into subsets, which in the extreme case, enter into relations that are incompatible with my constitutive relations (*death*). Consciousness is the passage, or rather the awareness of the passage of these less potent totalities to more potent ones, and vice versa. It is purely transitive. But it is not a property of the Whole or of any specific whole; it has only an informational value, and what is more, the information is necessarily confused and distorted.²¹

What Deleuze gets from Spinoza then, is a model of consciousness as a degree of power – with that power having its basis in a power to be affected, that is, in various transitions from one affective state to another. Consciousness, then, is emphatically embodied and/or embedded in and sustained by concrete relations (physical and organic, as well as political, intellectual, etc.).

¹⁹ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p.39; Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, pp.127-128. This is certainly reminiscent of Spinoza’s treatment of bodies after EIIP13.

²⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.507. On the contrast between ‘planes of consistency’ and ‘planes of organisation’, see also Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, pp.122-124.

²¹ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.21.

From an ethological standpoint,

a thing is never separable from its relations with the world. The interior is only a selected exterior, and the exterior, a projected interior. The speed or slowness of metabolisms, perceptions, actions, and reactions link together to constitute a particular individual in the world.²²

Following Spinoza (EII.P19), Deleuze insists that the basis for active thought is relation, rather than contemplation, and therefore that any model of thought must also concern itself with relations. For Deleuze, thought depends upon the interaction of material and social, human and non-human bodies – not only in its derivation, but in its being. These are the forces which engender thought, which ‘force us to think’ As such,

The conditions of a true critique and a true creation are the same: the destruction of an image of thought which presupposes itself and the genesis of the act of thinking in thought itself.

Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter.²³

In other words – and this is what Spinoza provides for the ethological model of consciousness – thought needs to be “grounded” in what Deleuze calls ‘an immediate relation with the outside, the exterior’:

an experience of *not* continuing by way of an interiority, whether this be called the inner soul of consciousness, or the inner essence or concept – that is, what has always served as the guiding principle of philosophy. It is characteristic of philosophical writing that relations with an exterior are always mediated and dissolved by an interior, and this process always takes place within some given interiority.²⁴

The ethological model of consciousness has this notion of exteriority as its guiding principle. And this profoundly affects the model of thought which connects with it: ‘if you put thought into contact with the exterior,’ says Deleuze, ‘it assumes an air of freedom’:

Like any handsome painting or drawing, an aphorism is framed – but at what point does it become handsome? From the moment one knows and feels that the movement, the framed lines, come from without, that it does not begin within the limits of the frame. It began beneath or beside the frame, and traverses the frame [...] Far from being the delimitation of a pictorial surface, the frame immediately relates this surface to an outside. Now, to hang thought on the outside is what philosophers have literally never done.²⁵

²² Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.125.

²³ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.138; p.139, my emphasis.

²⁴ Deleuze, ‘Nomad Thought’, p.144.

Thought “hung on the outside” starts out then from a quite different place than the “orthodox image” allows. Its methods and movements, divisions and distributions will be different from those of the model of representation, which begins with or mediates through the interiority of ‘the identical thinking subject, which functions as a principle of identity for concepts in general’.²⁶ Deleuze is clear however that,

[the] form of exteriority is not at all symmetrical to the form of interiority ... is not at all *another image* in opposition [...] It is, rather, a force that destroys both the image *and* its copies, the model *and* its reproductions, every possibility of subordinating thoughts to a model of the True, the Just, or the Right.²⁷

The ethological model of consciousness described above insists on the indivisibility of modal consciousness from what Spinoza calls ‘God, *or* Nature’, and what Deleuze calls simply ‘Life’, or the plane of immanence.²⁸ Consciousness expresses a relation – that of an interchange between bodies that either augments or diminishes the individual aggregated body – as well as a degree of power based on that relation. For Spinoza the notion that understanding is built on, and (perhaps) never completely surpasses this form of imaginary consciousness does not negate the possibility that the individual can achieve reason: rather than going by way of a “transcendental illusion”, which attempts to cover over the indivisibility of thought from its imaginary basis, rationality can be attained via the common notions. Spinoza dispenses with abstract transcendence but retains what we might call an ultimate (though not transcendental) structural rationalism. Common notions, as the paradigm for rational knowledge, are the universal conceptual framework which, in principle, can arrive at a complete understanding of the world, via their object, the laws of Nature, which instantiate an immutable geometric logic.

²⁵ Deleuze, ‘Nomad Thought’, p.144-145 (Deleuze is referring to Nietzsche’s aphorisms).

²⁶ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.265.

²⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.377.

²⁸ Spinozist substance - which Deleuze describes as univocal, rather than as a unity, in order to emphasise its internal generative multiplicity - consists in ‘the infinity of the modifications that are part of one another on this unique plane of life.’ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.254.

In contrast, Deleuze wants to dissolve this residual ground in order to emphasise becomings, relations, productivity, rather than structure. So whereas both Spinoza and Deleuze insist upon the “materiality” of thought and its absolute indivisibility from substance, substance itself, (as we saw in chapters one and two) means quite different things for each of them: a logical order for Spinoza (as ‘God, *or* Nature’), endless becomings for Deleuze (as the plane of immanence). For Deleuze, as we saw in chapter two, the being of Becoming, or the becoming of Being, turns on difference and repetition. The repetition (production) of difference is ontologically, and therefore (since substance is “univocal”) also epistemologically primary. This entails that in a Deleuzian universe of absolute becoming, in which everything is in play, there is neither an absolute object of knowledge nor a totalising form. Thought only (re)claims its power to change reality when it recognises this and when it no longer refers to a fundamentally unchanging object and/or structure. What is required then, is a fundamental reversal. And just as he unbalanced tensions in Spinoza’s ontology in order to make substance turn on modes (see chapter two),²⁹ the epistemological consequences of that deconstructive move are apparent now: an emphasis on modal becoming translates into an amplification of the ethological model of identity, to the point where it removes completely the possibility of any enduring explanatory or legislative form.

What Deleuze proposes is a ‘thought without Image’, which will replace subjectivist categorisations (domination of the self identical *cogito*) with ‘nomadic distributions’, and thus restore to philosophy its creative function and its power to ‘impose a new set of divisions on things and actions’.³⁰

²⁹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp.40-41.

³⁰ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.132, p.56. ‘A philosophy’s power is measured by the concepts it creates, or whose meaning it alters, concepts that impose a new set of divisions on things and actions’, Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p.321.

Transformation 2: Dissolving the ground: Transcendental Empiricism

Nomadic distributions feature within thought without Image as an alternative (acategorical) model of identity. As opposed to ‘sedentary distributions’, which enclose difference, nomadic distributions divide up and/or specify without permanently fixing the flux of becomings. Following on from an ethological model of identity, they rather register effects, without closing off the possibility of further change or introducing law, hierarchy, etc., into the field. Thought without Image is always open and contains the conditions of its own continual transformation, that is, contains its own constitutive relations, or is immanent to itself. As Deleuze describes it,

Then there is a completely other distribution which must be called nomadic, a nomad or *nomos*, without property, enclosure or measure. Here, there is no longer a division of that which is distributed but rather a division among those who distribute *themselves* in an open space – a space which is unlimited, or at least without precise limits.³¹

Nomadic distribution allows for the realisation of a constitutive/productive form of thought, since it distributes things according to what Brian Massumi has called an ‘open equation’. According to Massumi, nomadic distribution,

replaces the closed equation of representation, $x = x = \text{not } y$ (I = I = not you) with an open equation: $\dots + y + z + a = \dots$ [...] Rather than analysing the world into discrete components, reducing their manyness to the One of identity, and ordering them by rank, it [...] synthesizes a multiplicity of elements without effacing their heterogeneity or hindering their potential for future rearranging (to the contrary).³²

This is the core of the model which Deleuze calls “thought without Image”, or “Transcendental Empiricism”. On the basis of nomadic distributions (ethological categorisations), it asserts the primacy of conjunctions/conjugations and attempts to

³¹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.304; p.36.

³² Massumi, ‘Translator’s Foreword’ to *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari, p.xii-xiii. One is reminded again of the similarities with the Spinozist ethological definition of individuals which Deleuze sets out in *Practical Philosophy*, pp.123-124, and with which, says Deleuze, ‘many things change’: definitions along genus/species lines are replaced with definitions in terms of the ‘affects of which [the individual] is capable’. ‘Take any animal’, Deleuze instructs, ‘and make a list of affects, in any order. Children know how to do this: Little Hans, in the case reported by Freud, makes a list of affects of a draft horse pulling a cart in a city (to be proud, to have blinders, to go fast, to pull a heavy load, to collapse, to be whipped, to kick up a racket, etc.). For example: there are greater differences between a plow horse or draft horse and a racehorse than between an ox and a plow horse. This is because the racehorse and the plow horse do not have the same affects nor the same capacity for being affected; the plow horse has affects in common rather with the ox’. See also Deleuze’s famous example of the tick (borrowed from naturalist and ‘one of the main founders of ethology’ J. von Uexkull) in terms of what it can do (drop, suck, etc.). Ethological definitions are always open.

relate thought again to its outside, that is, to its constitutive relationality (capacity to be affected) and thus to its active power. It is then a peculiar kind of Spinozism which Deleuze uses to dissolve all ground. The fertile Spinozist notion of transition between ‘differential elements’ is transformed into what Deleuze calls the “empirical”, “the multiple”, or the “field of immanence”: a field of differential becomings which is always immanent to thought, but which is also transcendental in the sense of being the necessary condition of thought.³³ Like Spinoza’s adequate ideas, Deleuze’s “concepts” deal with the relations of constitution, rather than with the constituted as such.

However, Spinoza’s commitment to an in principle completely understandable universe, and to a set of laws (*natura naturans*) as ground for that knowledge inevitably means he also retains rationality’s paradigmatic notion of “solvability”. Conversely, for Deleuze concepts are concerned exclusively with the relations which create difference – or the differences which create problems (becomings) – rather than on an attempt to discern laws (solutions).³⁴

‘This empiricism’, says Deleuze, ‘teaches us a strange ‘reason’, that of the multiple, chaos, and difference (nomadic distributions, crowned anarchies)’:

Empiricism is by no means a reaction against concepts, nor a simple appeal to lived experience. On the contrary, it undertakes the most insane creation of concepts ever seen or heard. Empiricism is a mysticism and a mathematicism of concepts, but precisely one which treats the concept as object of an encounter, as a here-and-now, or rather as an *Erewhon* from which emerge inexhaustibly ever new, differentially distributed ‘heres’ and ‘nows’. Only an empiricist could say: concepts are indeed things, but things in their free and wild state, beyond ‘anthropological predicates’.³⁵

³³ These ‘differential elements’ are historical, social, bio-genetic, political, etc. bodies. Deleuze also calls them “problems”: ‘problems are the differential elements in thought, the genetic elements in the true’, *Difference and Repetition*, p.162. Bruce Baugh notes the affinity between Deleuze’s “empirical” and Spinoza’s substance: ‘The empirical is the effect of causes which contain no less reality than it does, causes which are immanent and wholly manifest in the effect through which they are experienced, much as Spinoza’s God is entirely immanent in his attributes’, ‘Transcendental Empiricism: Deleuze’s response to Hegel’, in *Man and World*, No.25, (pp.133-148), p.135.

³⁴ ‘‘solvability’ must depend upon an internal characteristic: it must be determined by the conditions of the problem, engendered in and by the problem along with real solutions. Without this reversal, the famous Copernican Revolution amounts to nothing. Moreover, there is no revolution so long as we remain tied to Euclidean geometry: we must move to a geometry of sufficient reason, a Riemannian-type differential geometry which tends to give rise to discontinuity on the basis of continuity, or to ground solutions in the conditions of the problems’, Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.162.

³⁵ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.162; p.xx-xxi)

Deleuzian concepts then have no ground outside of themselves - and especially no subjectivist element. Deleuze's thought without Image, or Transcendental Empiricism, or "Nomad thought", as Massumi says,

does not respect the artificial division between the three domains of representation, subject, concept, and being; it replaces restrictive analogies with a conductivity that knows no bounds. The concepts it creates do not merely reflect the eternal form of a legislating subject, but are defined by a communicable force in relation to which their subject, to the extent that they can be said to have one, is only secondary. They do not reflect upon the world, but are involved in the changing state of things³⁶

In common with Spinoza's notion of automatism this model of thought has an unconscious character, but this connective flow operates according to a logic of becomings, rather than one of *more geometrico*. By making the empirical "transcendental", Deleuze sets up a notion of perpetual ungrounding as the basis for thought. As Baugh points out, empiricism is,

a concern [...] for contingency, difference and incommensurability, and a resistance to universalising abstractions through emphasis on the particularity of situated, historical practices [...] But it also wants to be a metaphysics, a transcendental empiricism: "transcendental" in the sense of "necessary condition," but not in the sense of providing foundations for knowledge claims; empiricism, because it searches for real conditions of actual experience, not because it bases all knowledge on generalizations from experience [...] it is the empirical which explains the conceptual and the abstract conditions of all possible experience, not the reverse.³⁷

Transcendental empiricism, or thought without Image, is then a philosophy of the unforeseen. In contrast to a representational model of thought, there is no universal concept of set of Ideas which ultimately enfolds the particular (particular differences). And with an epistemology based on becomings the power of difference is finally realised: each difference (differential relation) is constitutive of something new, rather

³⁶ Massumi, 'Translator's Foreword', *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari, p.xii.

³⁷ Bruce Baugh, 'Transcendental Empiricism: Deleuze's response to Hegel', in *Man and World*, No.25, (pp.133-148), pp.133-135.

than being a mere displacement or degraded copy of some original. In contrast to the orthodox image which ‘fails to capture the affirmed world of difference’, which rather ‘mediates everything, but mobilises and moves nothing’, thought without Image engenders movement, creation, just because it affirms the generative power of ‘positive differential elements’:

Movement [...] implies a plurality of centres, a superposition of perspectives, a tangle of points of view, a coexistence of moments which essentially distort representation [...] Difference must become the element, the ultimate unity; it must therefore refer to other differences which never identify it but rather differentiate it. Each term of a series, being already a difference, must be put into a variable relation with other terms, thereby constituting other series devoid of centre and convergence. Divergence and decentring must be affirmed in the series itself. Every object, everything, must see its own identity swallowed up in difference, each being no more than a difference between differences. Difference must be shown *differing*.³⁸

On this basis, thought without Image contains the means to resist the substitution of new grounds: the continual production of difference has a shattering effect on all ideas/discourses which threaten to become fixed Images. At the same time, an ethological or nomadic model of identity limits the possibility of disembodied and/or abstract bodies of knowledge (for example, a universal morality: ‘The illusion of values is inseparable from the illusion of consciousness’), and of the construction of privileged spaces of interiority.³⁹

Just as the character and thrust of Spinoza’s model of knowledge is entirely ethical – the acquisition of knowledge being a virtue in itself, insofar as the adequacy of ideas is associated with activity and thus the positive augmentation of being – so Deleuze’s thought without Image, or Transcendental Empiricism, is an ethics. Deleuze’s concern for difference, as we said at the beginning, has at its heart considerations which are primarily ethical. Resistance to the orthodox Image of thought is resistance to a model in which, as Baugh says,

³⁸ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp.55-56.

³⁹ Deleuze, *Practical Philosophy*, p.23.

[t]he rule of the concept over empirical actuality is the rule of the old over the new, the subjection of singularity to the universal, and so a paradigm of “reaction” in every sense of the term, but particularly the political sense that would sacrifice the individual exception to the law, the State, and the march of History.⁴⁰

And just as the veracity of Ideas, in Spinoza, is connected to the quality of active joy and active relations they institute, so Deleuzian concepts are to be judged in terms of the extent to which they, as Baugh again says, ‘facilitate[.] anti-authoritarian practices’.⁴¹ This is the point at which Ideas become constitutive, rather than merely reflective: concepts continually make and remake new conjugations, divide and re-divide ‘domains’. As such, Deleuze’s critique of the orthodox Image of thought in *Difference and Repetition* – specifically in the third chapter, which Deleuze retrospectively described as ‘what *Difference and Repetition* is all about’, and as the ‘most necessary and the most concrete’ part of the book – lays out the terrain for his later work.⁴²

What endures is set out here then as: (i) a commitment to immanence and to the connection of thought (philosophy) to “exterior” forces of constitutive difference, such that “interiority” cannot be seen as anything other than historically specific, mobile and temporary constructions; and (ii) a concern with the constitutive force of ideas, over their determinative power. The point, as Deleuze and Guattari say in one of their collaborations, is ‘to make a map – not a tracing’.⁴³

⁴⁰ Bruce Baugh, ‘Transcendental Empiricism: Deleuze’s response to Hegel’, in *Man and World*, No.25, (pp.133-148), p.143.

⁴¹ Bruce Baugh, ‘Transcendental Empiricism: Deleuze’s response to Hegel’, in *Man and World*, No.25, (pp.133-148), p.143.

⁴² Deleuze, *Negotiations*, p.49; Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, ‘Preface to the English Edition’, p.xvii.

⁴³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.24.

Chapter 5

A New Image

In this chapter we turn to Part V of the *Ethics*, where Spinoza sets out his theory of the third kind of knowledge. Spinoza's explanation divides fairly neatly in two: the first twenty propositions of Part V are concerned chiefly with describing how one might attain the third kind of knowledge, how this practice gives a measure of freedom, and what we should understand by that freedom, with the following twenty-two propositions (EVP21-42) describing a new mode of life which this striving opens onto – a form of eternal being. This section has proved to be something of a problem, an enigma which has baffled many experts: Curley, for instance, is compelled to confess that, 'in spite of many years of study I still do not feel that I understand this part of the *Ethics* at all adequately [...] I also believe that no one else understands it adequately either'. Delahunty, another very able exigent, calls Spinoza's theory of eternal mind a 'botched job', whilst Bennett describes the whole of Part V as an 'unmitigated and seemingly unmotivated disaster'.¹

¹ Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method*, p.84; Delahunty, *Spinoza*, p.300; Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's 'Ethics'*, p.357.

Deleuze however, as we shall see, not only makes sense of Part V but makes it absolutely central, not only in his reading of Spinoza but also featuring – transformed but still recognisable – as a “big concept” in his own work. For Deleuze, Part V is ‘not at all the most difficult, but the quickest, having an infinite velocity’:

In the last book of the *Ethics* [Spinoza] produced the movement of the infinite and gave infinite speeds to thought in the third kind of knowledge. There he attains incredible speeds, with such lightening compressions that one can only speak of music, of tornadoes, of wind and strings. He discovered that freedom only exists within immanence.²

For him, the importance of Part V is two-fold. Firstly, it sets out a “practical ethics” – in place of a morality - based on ‘what a body can do, together with a concept of freedom not as a universal and essential right, but as the result of productive labour. Unlike Judeo-Christian and Kantian ethics, Spinoza’s is not founded on law, and Deleuze emphasises the *Ethics* as an anti-juridical and immanent basis from which to reject the assumption that human behaviour and sociability must be patrolled by means of external statute. Secondly, the notion of an absolute active power, which Deleuze understands as accorded in the third kind of knowledge, marks Spinoza out, for him, as a philosopher of pure immanence: here production is not reserved as a transcendent power, but is a mode of life, a form of being-in-the-world immanently, as ‘pure potency’, or in blessedness.³

In the previous chapter we saw how Deleuze elaborates an alternative image of thought which is concerned with the creation of concepts as an active and constitutive power. The Spinozist devaluation of freewill and free decision, together with the understanding of thought and truth in terms of active power, provided the basis for Deleuze’s transitive/ethological model of a thought and an interior (consciousness) radically connected to its exterior (Spinoza’s Nature, transformed into the Deleuzean field of immanence). In this chapter we will explore further this notion of active power,

² Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.130; Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* p.48.

³ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.72.

firstly as it appears in Spinoza's third kind of knowledge as a life of blessedness, and which Deleuze describes as an 'absolute velocity', thought's 'most concentrated intensive peak', and the point at which 'there is no longer any difference between the concept and life'; secondly, at it appears transformed and transported onto a Deleuzian terrain of a-subjective "active becomings".⁴

With Deleuze we will come to an understanding of the third kind of knowledge not only as adequate knowledge of 'God, or Nature' in terms of 'a *common plane of immanence* on which all bodies, all minds, and all individuals are situated', but also as an activity by which one learns eventually to 'install oneself on this plane' via a 'mode of living, a way of life' which is at the same time constructive/constitutive of new parts of the plane ('it has to be constructed if one is to live in a Spinozist manner').⁵ We will also see how this model of active power, which we approached in the previous chapter, defines a way of being-in-the-world which Deleuze transforms into his own model of an ideal "anti-subject".

From Common Notions to the Third Kind of Knowledge

We first come across the third kind of knowledge at EIIP40.Schol.2 [IV]:

In addition to these two kinds of knowledge [*imagination* and *reason*] there is, (as I shall show in what follows) another, third kind, which we shall call intuitive knowledge. And this kind of knowing proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the [NS: formal] essence of things.

Spinoza then gives the following example, intended to explain the differences between the three kinds of knowledge:

Suppose there are three numbers, and the problem is to find a fourth which is to the third as the second is to the first. Merchants do not hesitate to multiply the second by the third, and divide the product by the first, because they have not yet forgotten what they heard from their teacher without any demonstration, or because they have often found this in the simplest numbers, or from the force of the demonstration of

⁴ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p127: 'the different parts of the *Ethics* are assigned changing relatively velocities, until the absolute velocity of thought is reached in the third kind of knowledge'; and in 'Spinoza and the Three "Ethics"', *Essays Critical and Clinical*, Deleuze describes Book V as 'an aerial book of light, which proceeds by flashes', and as a 'secret book', wherein 'signs and concepts vanish, and things begin to write themselves, crossing the intervals of space'.

⁵ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, pp.122-123.

P19 in Book VII of Euclid, namely, from the common property of proportionals. But in the simplest numbers none of this is necessary. Given the numbers 1, 2, and 3, no one fails to see that the fourth proportional number is 6 – and we see this much more clearly because we infer the fourth number from the ratio which, in one glance, we see the first number to have to the second.

What differentiates the three types of knowledge then is not the conclusion they reach – since whether calculating by a rule ‘heard from their teacher’, or logically from ‘the common property of proportionals’, or by intuiting ‘in one glance’, the merchant arrives at the same answer to the problem. With the first kind of knowledge we have mere unthinking repetition of a rule, whereas with the second we progress to engagement with a logical method; with the third kind of knowledge however, though bedded in human reason (‘no one fails to see’) we have neither rule nor method, but the mind itself is cause of the idea which solves the problem. It is the type of mental activity involved which differentiates the forms of knowledge. Only the active labour involved with the second and third kinds of knowledge brings with it the positive affects which in turn strengthen the mind and determine it to more perfect knowledge.⁶ The last propositions of Part IV and the early propositions of Part V describe this active labour – the processes of the mode becoming active or free - and what is set out is the effort of *conatus* (the essence of the mode, by EIIIP7) to exercise its individual active power and to become cause of its own adequate ideas, and of the joyful passions that follow from them. As Deleuze says,

Active affects or feelings follow necessarily from these adequate ideas, in such a way that they are explained by the mode’s own power (III, def 1 and 2). The existing mode is then said to be free; thus man is not born free, but becomes free or frees himself [...] Man, the most powerful of the finite modes, is free when he comes into

⁶ Reason always has an affective dimension in Spinoza, so that adequate ideas are indivisible from joyful or active affects, inadequate ideas from sad or passive affects. The affect ‘follows from’ the idea ‘as from its cause (II.ax3)’, says Deleuze, but the affect ‘is not confined to the image or idea; it is of another nature, being purely transitive, and not indicative or representative, since it is experienced in a lived duration that involves the difference between two states’, Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.49.

possession of his power of acting, that is, when his *conatus* is determined by adequate ideas from which active affects follow, affects that are explained by his own essence. Freedom is always linked to essence and what follows from it, not to will and to what governs it.⁷

In order to become cause of our own ideas/affects, that is, to convert them into adequate ideas and active affects, we begin not with the invocation of free decision or free will, but by learning how to ‘*separate emotions, or affects, from the thought of an external cause and join them to other thoughts*’ (EVP2). We can ‘*form a clear and distinct idea*’ (EVP3&4) of even the most subjective emotion when we connect it logically with the wider milieu of ideas. The common notions show us how to achieve this: they effect the conversion of sad passions into joyous ones. This is what Deleuze calls the ‘*practical function*’ of the common notions, and only they provide adequate conditions for the realisation of the third kind of knowledge, constituting what he calls the set of ‘*rules for the realisation of powers*’.⁸ There can be no leap from imagination to intuition in Spinoza’s typology and ‘*The striving or desire to know things by the third kind of knowledge cannot arise from the first kind of knowledge, but can indeed arise from the second*’ (EVP28). Insofar as the second kind of knowledge depends also upon the first (see EIIP23,29,30,40&Schol.1), we can see a path then that connects the three forms. Each one is made indispensable to the other and, as a consequence of Spinoza’s parallelism, each form includes the body and at the same time excludes any characterisation of intuition in terms of mystical revelation or divine illumination.

⁷ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, pp.70-71.

⁸ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p.286; p.291.

Duration and Eternity

[W]hen the common notions lead us necessarily to the idea of God, they carry us to a point where everything changes over, and where the third kind of knowledge will reveal to us the correlation of the essence of God and the singular essences of real beings, with a new meaning of the idea of God and new feelings that go to make up this third kind (V,21-37). Hence there is no break between the second and the third kind, but a passage from one side to the other of the idea of God (V,28); we go beyond Reason as a faculty of the common notions or a system of eternal truths concerning existence, and enter into the *intuitive intellect* as a system of essential truths (sometimes called *consciousness*, since it is only here that ideas are redoubled and reflected in us as they are in God, giving us the experience of being eternal.⁹

What distinguishes adequate knowledge of the third kind is that it understands things ‘under a species of eternity’, that is, as being ‘contained in God and to follow from the necessity of divine nature’ (EVP29Schol.). In other words, insofar as ‘God, *or* Nature’ is understood as necessitated, it is understood as eternally so, or as an eternal truth or set of eternal truths (see EID8). When this rational understanding (see EIIP44Cor.2) of things ‘under a species of eternity’ includes an idea of the essence of one’s body, we cross the threshold into a new mode of existence, one in which ‘we feel and know by experience that we are eternal’ (EVP23Schol). Modal eternal mind is conferred just at the point where the body, of which it is the idea, is adequately understood as constituted by and exemplifying the eternal truths of ‘God, *or* Nature’. As Spinoza tells us (in VP23Dem), ‘since what is conceived, with a certain eternal necessity, through God’s essence itself (by P22) is nevertheless something, this something that pertains to the essence of the mind will necessarily be eternal’. And in the scholium: ‘this idea, which expresses the essence of the body under a species of eternity, is a certain mode of thinking, which pertains to the essence of the mind, and which is necessarily eternal’.

The portion of the mind which is constituted by eternal ideas *is* eternal then, and this eternal mind is the cause and prerequisite of the third kind of knowledge (that is, of one’s power of action), as well as being indivisible from intuition as a new mode of

⁹ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, pp. 57-58. And see *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p.299, where Deleuze says that the idea of God ‘plays in the *Ethics* a pivotal role. Everything turns about it, everything changes along with it. It propels us into a new element’.

being. Of this “immortality” Leon Roth says, ‘Every man, insofar as he thinks at all, is, in some, if an infinitesimal, degree, ‘immortal’’, and this according to the extent that imagination gives way to adequate knowledge. He also notes that this “immortality” brings with it a reconfigured form of individuality:

By ridding himself of the passive imagination a man becomes more active and individual. The nature and duration, however, of the individuality so acquired must be carefully noted, because it would seem at first sight that it would be, from the point of view of the individual, loss of individuality.¹⁰

Stuart Hampshire has described knowledge *sub specie aeternitatis* as Nature ‘understood, not as a temporal sequence of events, but as a logical sequence of modifications necessarily connected with each other’: eternal mind, as constituted by the third kind of knowledge, becomes a ‘logical coordinate’ of Nature so understood, and eternal in that way.¹¹ As Macherey points out however, the ‘experience of eternity available to us while alive’ is ‘an absolute actuality and thus completely independent of any beginning or end of our existence’.¹²

Spinoza’s language in this section of the *Ethics* is very oblique and misleading, describing the eternal part of the mind - ‘that which can be considered without relation to the body’s existence’ (EVP40Schol) – as that which ‘remains’ (EVP40Cor) without the body, and that our ‘ability to be affected’, as source of passions and as bedded in the body, ‘perishes’ with the body (EVP40Cor). As Macherey notes though, ‘there is nothing to suggest that the soul can ever cease being the idea of the body, and so continue to exist without the body’. And Spinoza does also stress the eternal mind’s relation to the body and to bodily capacity (EVP39: ‘*He who has a body capable of a great many things has a mind whose greatest part is eternal*’) insofar as the eternal mind springs from and is identical with the idea of the body under a species of eternity

¹⁰ Leon Roth, *Spinoza, Descartes and Maimonides*, p.141, p.122.

¹¹ Stuart Hampshire, *Spinoza*, p.174.

¹² Macherey, ‘The Encounter with Spinoza’, footnote 53, in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, p.161

(EVP30 & P31Dem).¹³ In this way he distinguishes his model from the theological one of an immortal soul.¹⁴ It seems clear enough then, and especially so in view of the indivisibility of the attributes, that the distinction Spinoza makes is purely epistemological, that is, the mind can unproblematically be ‘considered’ (EVP40Schol), but cannot be, apart from the body.

Love: the power of conversion

The transformation to eternal mind - as with all Spinozists transformations - has knowledge as its driving force. But the point of conversion, of “transmutation”, or what effects this conversion is not the accumulation of knowledge reaching critical mass, but love: knowledge of the third kind - ‘under a species of eternity’ - induces in us an ‘intellectual love’, directed ‘towards a thing immutable and eternal’ (EVP20Schol), that is, towards God.

The ‘passage from one side to the other of the idea of God’ - or from understanding to love - which Deleuze describes above involves a change of perspective: from the understanding of God (or Nature) from the viewpoint of determinate existence, to an understanding from the viewpoint of eternal existence (see EVP29Schol). The latter gives one ‘the greatest satisfaction of mind there can be, that is, joy’ (EVP32Dem), and this joy is ‘accompanied by the idea of God as its cause, that is (by Def.Aff.VI), love of God, not insofar as we imagine him as present (by P29), but insofar as we understand God to be eternal’. ‘This’, says Spinoza, ‘is what I call intellectual love of God’ (EVP32Cor). The intellectual love of God, described in the second half of Part V (P32-37), which is ‘one and the same’ with ‘God’s love of men’ (EVP36Cor), is quite different from the still passionate love of God involved with reason

¹³ See EVP30: ‘*Insofar as our mind knows itself and the body under a species of eternity, it necessarily has knowledge of God, and knows that it is in God and is caused through God*’; and EVP31: ‘*The third kind of knowledge depends on the mind, as on a formal cause, insofar as the mind itself is eternal*. Dem.: ‘The mind conceives nothing under a species of eternity except insofar as it conceives its body’s essence under a species of eternity, that is, except insofar as it is eternal’.

¹⁴ On this, see Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, pp. 315-316.

(see EVP14-20), and it is this intellectual love of God which effects the transformation from passion to action, from bondage to freedom, and thence to blessedness:

EVP36Dem.: This love the mind has must be related to its actions (by P32C and IIP3); it is, then, an action by which the mind contemplates itself, with the accompanying idea of God as its cause (by P32 and P32C), that is (by IP25C and IIP11C), an action by which God, insofar as he can be explained through the human mind, contemplates himself, with the accompanying idea of himself [as the cause]; so (by P35), this love the mind has is part of the infinite love by which God loves himself, q.e.d.

Eternal mind is mind proper, that is, mind thinking – or acting – absolutely. Eternal mind itself however is not absolute, that is, only a part of the mind is constituted in this way, and there is a difference in kind between this part of the mind and the remaining part constituted by imaginary ideas (see EVP38, P39, P40). The intellect, or eternal part of the mind resides alongside our confused and/or rational mind as ‘the better part of us’ which ‘agrees with the order of the Whole of Nature’ (EIVApp.XXXII). The common notions have access to a form of eternity (EIIP44Cor2: ‘It is of the nature of reason to perceive things under a certain species of eternity’), but only the third kind of knowledge installs the modal mind within the panoply of eternal truths as a pure degree of active power (this is the sense in which we arrive, via intuition, at the point where ‘there is no longer any difference between the concept and life’).¹⁵ On this parallelism of eternity and duration Deleuze says,

Essence, our singular essence, is not instantaneous; it is eternal. But the eternity of essence does not come afterwards; it is strictly contemporaneous, coexistent with existence in durations. This eternal and singular essence is the intense part of ourselves that expresses itself relationally as an eternal truth; and existence is the set of extensive parts that belong to us under this durative relation.¹⁶

Eternal being then is a mode of being, rather than an infinite duration of being. It can be realised whilst the mode exists, although it really constitutes a new life or “after life”, the old one left behind (EVP20Schol: ‘with this I have completed everything which concerns this present life’). The mode comes into its full power as the striving that

¹⁵ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*.

¹⁶ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, pp.40-41.

characterises the second kind of knowledge, and which links it to the third kind, gives way to this new mode of being in which freedom from the perspective of existence, which consists in the power to organise encounters, is converted into blessedness, or freedom from the perspective of essence, that is, active power. Everything which separates the mode from its power falls away, and “power to” is given up to the activity of oneself as “in” God. The essence of a modes does not act – nor is it eternal – through itself, but only insofar as it is a part of God: its immanent existence (as a degree of power) is also its eternal one.

Practical Ethics

The co-existence of body and mind, affect and idea results in a model of freedom and an ethic based on self-knowledge and bedded in “what a body can do” (‘For indeed, no one has yet determined what the body can do’, EIIIP2Schol) which, as we will see in what follows, Deleuze makes central to his own ethic of becoming, and his “singular” notion of blessedness. The processes of becoming active, with which this self-knowledge is identified, are to do with the practical strivings and relations of *conatus*, rather than with any universal or abstract ideas, and it goes by way of an understanding of our bodies and ourselves, the biology, chemistry, physics, and psychology of oneself. As Yirmiyahu Yovel puts it,

Self-knowledge for Spinoza must pass through knowledge of the world [...] we must therefore embark on a diversified program of study, aimed at knowing ourselves more and more as creature of nature [...] I must know my specific place within the chain of being; the actual circumstances of my being in the world; the causes which explain my bodily situation, my personal biography, my structure, and the mental and social forces active in me; the hidden causes of my fears; my errors; the ignorance of which I am victim; my suffering, my ambitions, my covert motives, the powers that make me waver between fear and hope, joy and grief, and other unstable emotions that hold my life in bondage.¹⁷

This self-knowledge depends upon, integrates and contextualises the mode within the logical system of the common notions, that is, it locates the mode within a rational

¹⁷ Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, p.149.

framework of Natural laws, in relation to which it understands body and mind. The latter parts of the *Ethics* develops this knowledge in terms of a practical ethics and a practice of freedom, which Deleuze opposes to a transcendent morality and to an abstract and universalised idea of freedom. ‘It is easy’, says Deleuze, ‘to separate the two domains – that of the eternal truths of Nature and that of the moral laws of institutions – if only one considers their effects’:

[..] Law, whether moral or social, does not provide us with any knowledge; it makes nothing known. At worst, it prevents the formation of knowledge (*the law of the tyrant*). At best, it prepares for knowledge and makes it possible (*the law of Abraham or of Christ*). Between these two extremes, it takes the place of knowledge in those who, because of their mode of existence, are incapable of knowledge (*the law of Moses*). But in any case, a difference of nature is constantly manifested between knowledge and morality, between the relation of command and obedience and the relation of the known and knowledge [..] In this [..] there is a confusion [..] the history of a long error whereby the command is mistaken for something to be understood, obedience for knowledge itself, and Being for a Fiat. Law is always the transcendent instance that determines the opposition of values (Good-Evil), but knowledge is always the immanent power that determines the qualitative difference of modes of existence (good-bad).¹⁸

Rather than the ‘Good and Evil’ of a transcendent normative morality, an ethic based on knowledge, and on ‘what a body can do’, recognises merely two orders of encounter: composition and decomposition. From the effects of each encounter a practical ethics emerges:

The *Ethics* judges feelings, conduct and intentions by relating them, not to transcendent values, but to modes of existence they pre-suppose or imply: there are things one cannot do or even say, believe, feel, think, unless one is weak, enslaved, impotent; and things one cannot do, feel, and so on, unless one is free or strong. *A method of explanation by immanent modes of existence* thus replaces the recourse to transcendent values. The question is in each case: Does, say, this feeling, increase our power of action or not? Does it help us to come into full possession of that power?¹⁹

Our “becoming-active” involves a whole learning process then, our ‘empirical education’ as Deleuze calls it, rather than the mastery of external and/or handed-down bodies of knowledge:

¹⁸ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, pp.24-25.

¹⁹ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p.269.

There is no Good or Evil in Nature, but there are good and bad things for each existing mode. The moral opposition of Good and Evil disappears, but this disappearance does not make all things, or all beings, equal [...] There are increases in our power of action, reductions in our power of action. The distinction between good things and bad things provides the basis for a real ethical difference, which we must substitute for a false moral opposition.²⁰

The practical ethics of ‘good and bad’ requires a new set of distinctions, and involves an applied method:

The good is when a body directly compounds its relation with ours, and, with all or part of its power, increases ours. A food, for example. For us, the bad is when a body decomposes our body’s relation, although it still combines with our parts, but in ways that do not correspond to our essence, as when a poison breaks down the blood. Hence good and bad have a primary, objective meaning, but one that is relative and partial: that which agrees with our nature or does not agree with it. And consequently, good and bad have a secondary meaning, which is subjective and modal, qualifying two types, two modes of man’s existence.²¹

Spinoza’s conception of power (ontologically and epistemology) as positive and *actual* is key for Deleuze here. Modal power, that is, the activity of *conatus*, affirms ‘essence in existence’: rather than being potential, power is concrete and realised only its exercise. Furthermore, it is without an internal limit, that is, it extends as far as it can, and the forces of decomposition which confront it are external to it (see EIIP13Dem.Cor.&Schol.and EIVP20Schol). An ethics based upon “what a body can do” thus involves a revaluation of values, since,

To do all we can is our ethical task properly so called. It is here that the *Ethics* takes the body as a model; for every body extends its power as far as it can. In a sense every being, each moment, does all it can. “What it can do” is its capacity to be affected, which is necessarily and constantly exercised by the things relations with other beings. But in another sense, our capacity to be affected may be exercised in such a way that we are cut off from our power of action, and such that this incessantly diminishes. In this second sense it can happen that we live cut off from “what we can do”. This indeed is the fate of most men, most of the time. *The weak man, the slave, is not someone of lesser strength in absolute terms.* The weak man is he who, whatever his strength, remains cut off from his power of action, kept in slavery or impotence.²²

²⁰ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p.265; p.254.

²¹ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.22. The Nietzschean tones are unmistakable here, and Deleuze quotes directly (p.22) from *On the Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay, Section 17: ‘ “Beyond Good and Evil, at least this *does not* mean: beyond good and bad” ’ (and see p.24 on Nietzsche’s connection of law). The same quote also appears in *Expressionism and Philosophy*, p.254.

What augments the power of a mode and agrees with its essence is, Spinoza tells us, a good in itself. Power is equivalent with virtue, and the desire or striving to increase one's power is equivalent with the desire to live virtuously:

EIVD8: By virtue and power I understand the same thing, that is (by IIIP7), virtue, insofar as it is related to man, is the very essence, or nature, of man, insofar as he has the power of bringing about certain things, which can be understood through the laws of his nature alone.

EIVP21: *No one can desire to be blessed, to act well and to live well, unless at the same time he desires to be, act, and to live, that is, to actually exist.*

Dem.:[...] For the desire (by Def.Aff.I) to live blessedly, or well, to act, and so on, is the very essence of man, that is (by IIIP7), the striving by which each one strives to preserve his being.

Freedom and virtue do not exist in a separate realm then, but are consistent with the work of *conatus* in existence. The processes which it effects, the ability to effect becomings, is freedom in the Spinozist sense.²³ The common notions are the body of knowledge we acquire via its experimental encounters, and they

give us knowledge of the positive order of Nature as an order of constitutive or characteristic relations by which bodies agree with, and are opposed to, one another. Laws of Nature no longer appear as commands and prohibitions, but for what they are: eternal truths, norms of composition, rules for the realization of powers'.²⁴

²² Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, pp.101-102; *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p.269. Again, this all seems rather Nietzschean. Despite Deleuze's obvious amplification of the theme of power however, I think this Nietzschean flavour persists because Spinoza is, in terms of his concept of striving as the essence of man, Nietzsche's precursor. On this, see Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, Chapter 5 on 'Spinoza and Nietzsche: *Amor dei* and *Amor fati*', pp.104-135, and especially the section on 'Conatus versus Will to Power' (pp.110-113). Yovel points out the difference between their two conceptions of power and essence: on the one hand, Spinoza's *conatus* is identified with self-preservation (see EIVP18Schol(i)&EVP20), whereas Nietzsche's "will to power" seeks only augmentation. "Will to power" enfolds self-preservation, which is, however, always subordinate to the drive to self-transcendence. However, and as Yovel acknowledges (footnotes 11 & 12, p.214), by EIIIP13, Spinoza also associates *conatus* with a pure power of activity; and at the end of the Preface to EIV, he identifies power with perfection, saying: 'For the main thing to note is that when I say that someone passes from a lesser to a greater perfection, and the opposite [...] we conceived that his power of acting, insofar as it is understood through his nature, is increased or diminished. Spinoza then goes further, saying that, 'by perfection in general I shall, as I have said, understand reality, that is, the essence of each thing insofar as it exists and produces an effect, having no regard to its duration. For no singular thing can be called more perfect for having preserved in existing for a longer time'. Therefore, as Yovel says, 'the goal of increasing the power of activity of the individual is dissociated from self-preservation and linked directly to freedom', p.214. This depiction of active power, together with Spinoza's positive conception of power is what Deleuze gravitates toward, although the "goal" of self-preservation guides practical ethics.

²³ See Macherey, 'The Encounter with Spinoza', in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, ed. Paul Patton (pp.139-161), p.156: 'Passion is subjection to another's law, which is the very principle of slavery; the only way to escape it is to develop, as far as possible, new forms of affects irreducible to this scheme of passions, genuine actions of the soul'.

²⁴ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p.291.

This brings us to Spinoza's second definition of the third kind of knowledge, the one in which this equation of knowledge with power - and the highest truth with the greatest power - becomes clear:

EVP25Dem.: The third kind of knowledge proceeds from an adequate idea of certain attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things (see its Def. In IIP40S2), and the more we understand things in this way, the more we understand God (by P24). Therefore (by IVP28), the greatest virtue of the mind, that is (by IVD8), the mind's power, *or* nature, *or* (by IIP7) its greatest striving, is to understand things by the third kind of knowledge, q.e.d.

The ability to select and organise encounters takes over from abstract rationality, since the natural 'desire to live blessedly' (EVP21Dem), that goes by way of the formation of adequate ideas (or common notions) has as its aim only self-preservation, that is, the augmentation of its powers. *Conatus* "succeeds" only insofar as it is able to order positive encounters and avoid bad ones and, eventually, to act, or to produce relations *freely*.

Insofar as the capacity for perception depends upon a body capable of being acted upon (see EIIP13Schol & VP39), freedom, or the power to act depends upon the imaginary ideas and sad passions consonant with the subjected mode of being. Their transformation into joyful affects (see EVP3&4) is what brings with it the increase on our power to act, and this is effected once the natural causes of those affections are adequately understood, that is, once the imaginary ideas they follow from are converted into common notions (see EVP20). Deleuze calls this causal explanation a 'genetic definition':

The true idea, related to our power of knowing, at the same time discovers its own inner content, which is not its representative content. At the same time that it is formally explained by our power of knowing, it materially expresses its own cause (whether this cause is a formal cause as cause of itself, or an efficient cause). The true idea, insofar as it expresses its cause, becomes an adequate idea and gives us a genetic definition'²⁵

This notion of the true idea as an action – the active thought of the thinker - is central in the *Ethics*:

²⁵ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.84.

EIIP43Schol: [...] to have a true idea means nothing other than knowing a thing perfectly, *or* in the best way. And of course no one can doubt this unless he thinks that an idea is something mute, like a picture on a tablet, and not a mode of thinking, namely the very [act of] understanding.

EIID3: By idea I understand a concept of the mind which the mind forms because it is a thinking thing.

Exp.: *I say concept rather than perception, because the word perception seems to indicate that the mind is acted on by the object. But concept seems to express an action of the mind.*

Spinoza links potency – the active power of adequate ideas and the joyful affects which accompany them – to freedom (freedom from domination by the objects of thought), which is produced as an effect of our “becoming active” and which goes hand-in-hand with the understanding that process involves. But inverting what Deleuze calls the ‘Adamic’ rationalist model, Spinoza makes our modal status, as creatures subject to passion and cut off from our power of reasoning, both the efficient cause and the necessary condition of our freedom.²⁶

EIVP68: *If men were born free, they would form no concept of good and evil so long as they remained free.*

‘We act’, Spinoza says, ‘only insofar as we understand’ (EIVP24Dem). And as we have already said, the learning process developed here does not involve the mastery of a strictly external body of knowledge, but is rather to do with rational self-mastery that goes by way of practical experimentation. Deleuze interprets adequate knowledge as ‘gaining knowledge of our power of understanding. Not of gaining knowledge of Nature, but gaining a conception of, and acquiring, a higher human nature’. The third kind of knowledge is ‘the full actualisation’ of our power of understanding, and it opens onto ‘the bliss of action’.²⁷ The common notions and the strivings of *conatus* bring us up to this point via the accumulation of adequate ideas and consequent joys which increase our power of action. However, we inescapably remain in bondage, and ‘separated from our power of acting’, so long as we are subject to passions at all, albeit

²⁶ On the Adamic tradition, see Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p.149.

²⁷ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p.129 and p.130; *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.28.

joyful ones. What Deleuze calls the ‘point of transmutation’ – the point at which we leave behind ‘everything which concerns this present life’ (EVP20Schol) is yet to come. This last conversion, which transforms all of our passions into actions, confers a new mode of being, an eternal being (EVP23Schol) which, Spinoza tells us, it is possible in principle for all modes to experience whilst they exist.

The Ethical Test

The notion that we can enjoy blessedness in this life – that it ‘*is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself*’ (EVP42) – is what gives force to our existential ethical striving to form adequate ideas and experience active passions.

if our capacity is completely exercised while we exist by passive affections, then it will remain empty, and our essence will remain abstract, one we have ceased to exist. It will be absolutely realized by affections of the third kind if we have exercised it with a maximum proportion of active affections. Whence the importance of this “test” that is existence: while existing we must select joyful passions, for they alone introduce us to common notions and to the active joys that flow from them; and we must make use of the common notions as the principle that introduces us while still existing to ideas and joys of the third kind.²⁸

Active becoming is inseparable from an ethical process which distinguishes between modes: ‘the good or strong individual is the one who exists so fully or so intensely that he has gained eternity in his lifetime’, says Deleuze. Salvation here does not refer to a transcendent state, nor does it uphold a transcendent set of values, rather it is realised in our immanent efforts to produce good relations (‘instead of a synthesis that distributes rewards and punishments, the ethical test is content with analysing our chemical composition, the test of gold or clay’).²⁹ Rooted in “singularising” desire (see chapter three), blessedness is not a transcendent goal which functions to circumscribe our daily conduct, and the strengths of character which Spinoza describes (see EIIIP59Schol on

²⁸ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p.319. In this section (pp.317-320) Deleuze’s language is rather confusing, in that he talks, in a way not dissimilar to Spinoza in EVP38-40, of a soul which exists after the death of the mode. I suggest we understand this “death” in terms of the passing away of all passive affects and of the part of the mind associated with them. See *Practical Philosophy*, p.43 and footnote 18 on the two parts of the mind.

²⁹ Deleuze, *Practical Philosophy*, p.41.

nobility and tenacity) are likewise not external to existence (ideal) but, insofar as they are related to actions of the mind, they follow from reason and are bedded in self preservation: ‘the first and only foundation of virtue, *or* of the method of living rightly (by IVP22C and P24), is the seeking of our own advantage’ (EVP41Dem).

In the third kind of knowledge, this immanent process is raised to the “*nth*” degree and perfection, blessedness, virtue, or the active power of the mode is fully realised.³⁰ However, this is not a pure productivity of the mode or by the mode: the form of blessedness we see in Part V is not personal, but rather consists in a radical depersonalisation. It is the marker of what Macherey has called a ‘new association of soul and body’,

The soul becomes entirely active and master of itself by beginning to cultivate a new affect divested of all passion, ‘the intellectual love of God’, *amor intellectualis Dei*, far removed from the impulse that draws the soul toward any external thing, however elevated, because it expresses the attachment that draws the absolute thing that is God toward itself, as felt by a soul detaching itself completely from the particularity associated with its personal identity.³¹

We might expect becoming to drop out in blessedness, and indeed the form of becoming consistent with the work of the *conatus*, the augmentation and diminution which is indivisible from a particular modal subject and its individual strivings, is left behind, along with the notion of passage. However, insofar as constancy is not a virtue in the *Ethics*, and insofar as the “state” of blessedness, though not explicitly described by Spinoza, is equated with virtue as power (EV42&IVDef8), it seems that in the third kind of knowledge it is only the particularity of becoming as related to a specific consciousness which is given up. What changes is the relation of the mode to substance, man to nature, consciousness to being. If subjects are always to some extent

³⁰ On the strong and the weak individual, see *Practical Philosophy*, pp.22-23.

³¹ Macherey, ‘The Encounter with Spinoza’, p.154.

produced, and thus the marker of a being cut-off from what it can do, with the third kind of knowledge the “subject” is completely dissembled, and the mind is cast as a pure modality of thought – still variable but no longer “subject to” variation. In blessedness the mode gives up his individuality as a subject and becomes what Deleuze calls “singular”.

Singularities, Haecceities and the Plane of Composition

The life of the individual gives way to an impersonal yet singular life that releases a pure event freed from the accidents of internal and external life, that is, from the subjectivity and objectivity of what happens: a “Homo tantum” with whom everyone sympathizes and who attains a sort of beatitude. It is a haecceity no longer of individuation but of singularization: a life of pure immanence, neutral, beyond good and evil, for it was only the subject that incarnated it in the midst of things that made it good or bad. The life of such individuality fades away in favour of the singular life immanent to a man who no longer has a name, though he can be mistaken for no other. A singular essence, a life³²

In ‘Immanence: A Life’, the last essay he wrote before his death, Deleuze counterposes the notion of “a life” – indefinite, ‘impersonal but singular nevertheless’ – to the definite life of an individual. The singularity of “a life” resembles Spinoza’s blessedness in this way: ‘A life is the immanence of immanence, absolute immanence: it is complete power, complete bliss’. Furthermore, as we shall see, the “bliss” of complete immanence is co-present with the particularity of an individual life in just the same way as Spinoza’s eternity and duration are given together: ‘The singularities’, says Deleuze, ‘and the events that constitute *a* life coexist with the accidents of *the* life that corresponds to it, but they are neither grouped nor divided in the same way’.³³ Singularity in Deleuze is the model of an alternative “synthesis” of the immanent field (Nature, or Difference), and of an ideal “anti-subject” which stands as the permanent abolition of specific subjects.

³² Deleuze, ‘Immanence: A Life’, in *Pure Immanence: essays on a life*, pp.28-29.

³³ Deleuze, ‘Immanence: A Life’, p.27; p.30. And see Deleuze, *Practical Philosophy*, p.28 where blessedness is described as ‘the bliss of action’.

In contrast to Spinoza's conscious becomings, Deleuze posits a field of pure immanence, individuation, involution, of pure passage or becoming ('increase or decrease in power') that is, however, consistent with Spinoza's blessedness.³⁴ For Deleuze, however, whereas Spinoza's conception of this passage or quantity of power still appeals to consciousness, what Deleuze posits is a 'pure stream of a-subjective consciousness, a pre-reflexive impersonal consciousness, a qualitative duration of consciousness without a self',³⁵ constituted by a stream of becomings – becoming-woman, becoming-animal, becoming-child – that “shatters” the self-identity of the subject. As François Zourabichvili puts it,

shatters because it carries the subject into an a-subjective, that is, a singular *and* impersonal becoming-other, rather than shattering by a will-to-shatter or to impose a new, already envisioned, figure of subjectivity.³⁶

Here, every becoming is a creation, a new existent, rather than a “becoming-like”.

Zourabichvili again:

Deleuze rejects the idea of imitation as he does identification, to the extent that they still presuppose persons and individuals, whereas becoming, far from simply making the subject pass from one individuality to another, involves it in another type of individuation altogether, at once singular and impersonal, from which persons derive when the existent is separated from what it can do. Deleuze calls this non-personal individuation, of the order of an event, *haecceity*.³⁷

A “haecceity” of singularisation is a mode of individuation defined in opposition to the closed systems of forms and subjects.³⁸ It gives us an alternative model of identity, based on a Spinozist ethology, with individuals defined in terms of a unity of forces and relations:

³⁴ Deleuze, 'Immanence: A Life', p.25.

³⁵ Deleuze, 'Immanence: A Life', p.26; p.25.

³⁶ François Zourabichvili, 'Six Notes on the Percept' in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, ed. Patton (pp.188-216), p.207.

³⁷ François Zourabichvili, 'Six Notes on the Percept', p.207.

³⁸ 'There is a mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance', say Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.261; and in the note to this: 'This is sometimes written “ecceity”, deriving the word from *ecce*, “here is”. This is an error, since Duns Scotus created the word and the concept from *haec*, “this thing”. But it is a fruitful error because it suggests a mode of individuation that is distinct from that of a thing or subject', see note 33, to p.261.

A season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date, have a perfect individuality lacking nothing, even though this individuality is different from that of a thing or subject. They are haecceities in the sense that they consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected.³⁹

There is no personal identity here, only the individuation of a process: ‘haecceities, events, the individuation of which does not pass into a form and is not effected by a subject’: ‘It is the military men’, say Deleuze and Guattari, ‘and meteorologists who hold the secret of proper names, when they give them to a strategic operation or a hurricane. The proper name [...] marks a longitude and a latitude’.⁴⁰

For Deleuze, “singularisation” is an anti-fascistic move, an attempt to reconnect with what is “common”, impersonal, with our objective being, that is, with life as productive power.⁴¹ Following on from what he called Spinoza’s ‘triple denunciation’, of ‘consciousness’, ‘values’, and ‘sad passions’, and from the notion that ‘goodness is a matter of dynamism, power, and the composition of powers’,⁴² Deleuze’s project is guided by three lights: (i) experimentation, or the invention of new modes of life; (ii) production, or the construction of new parts of the plane (of concepts and affects); and

³⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.261. Deleuze and Guattari describe ethology as Spinoza’s ‘critique of substantial or essential forms’, p.254. The ethological model is first developed by Deleuze in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, pp.124-129, and assumes greater importance in *A Thousand Plateaus*, where it underpins the whole notion of becomings: see especially the 10th Plateau, ‘1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible ...’ (pp.232-309), in particular the sections ‘Memories of a Spinozist I & II (pp.253-260). In *Dialogues*, p.92, Deleuze defines haecceities ethologically as ‘degrees of power which combine, to which correspond a power to affect and to be affected, active or passive affects, intensities’.

⁴⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.264. ‘There are many types of individuation. There are subject-type individuations (“that’s you ...,” “that’s me ...”), but there are also event-type individuations where there’s no subject: a wind, an atmosphere, a time of day, a battle ... One can’t assume that a life [...] is individuated as a subject’, Deleuze, *Negotiations*, p.115.

⁴¹ See Foucault’s ‘Preface’ to *Anti-Oedipus*, p.xiv, the fifth principle of the ‘art of living counter to all forms of facism’: ‘Do not demand that politics restore the “rights” of the individual, as philosophy has defined them. The individual is the product of power. What is needed is to “de-individualize” by means of multiplication and displacement, diverse combinations’.

⁴² Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.17; p.23.

(iii) the connection of an interior (self) to an exterior (world) that does not require the reduction, sublation, or transcendence of one or the other term. The point is rather to disconnect all terms from their habitual associations, ‘Tearing consciousness away from the subject in order to make it a means of exploration, tearing the unconscious away from signification and interpretation in order to make it a veritable production’.⁴³

The concepts of singularisation and haecceity-type individuation offer an alternative “synthesis of being” to that contained within individualisation. Always for Deleuze the question is one of utility: does it work? that is, does it produce? If the subject is an article of faith, or a force of habit, we should ask only, does this belief give a better, that is, more dynamic, more productive, mode of life? A haecceity of singularisation is Deleuze’s version of the life of blessedness, and in common with Spinoza for him it is not something one becomes by a process of transcendence, but rather what one is:

For you will yield nothing to haecceities unless you realise that that is what you are, and that you are nothing but that. You are longitude and latitude, a set of speeds and slownesses between unformed particles, a set of non-subjectified affects. You have the individuality of a day, a season, a year, a *life* (regardless of its duration) – a climate, a wind, a fog, a swarm, a pack (regardless of its regularity). Or at least you can have it, you can reach it.⁴⁴

For Deleuze as much as for Spinoza, singularisation “returns” us to substance – to ‘God, or Nature’, to difference and repetition - as our objective being. With it we become fully identical with the eternity and creativity of Being itself (‘the smallest becomes the equal of the largest when it is not separated from what it can do’).⁴⁵ But, again for both Deleuze and Spinoza, that identification is only partial: as with blessedness, the individuation of a singularity opens on two sides: onto the a-subjective, impersonal, self-constituting plane of immanence, becomings, or *natura naturans*, and onto the subject-life of a person.

⁴³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.160.

⁴⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.262.

⁴⁵ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.37.

The concept of singularity borrows – as singular being really partakes in – the qualities of substance itself as self-differing, self-constituting, eternal and infinite, and therefore without (external) relation. “Singular being” is also, like blessedness, disconnected from any notion of will or volition: though art leads up to it (an art of becoming-woman, becoming-animal, etc., for Deleuze) this is not a “self-singularisation” but rather the ‘immanent end’ and ‘cosmic formula’ of all personal becomings, a ‘becoming-imperceptible’.

If becoming-woman is the first quantum, or molecular segment, with the becomings-animal that link up with it coming next, what are they all rushing toward? Without a doubt, toward becoming-imperceptible. The imperceptible is the immanent end of becoming, its cosmic formula [...]⁴⁶

Singular-being is the end point of a radically ascetic process of subtraction: the real pertains through the elimination of the imaginary. This process of becoming-imperceptible, which strips away in order to reach real plenitude, requires, Deleuze says, ‘much asceticism, much sobriety, much creative involution: an English elegance,

[...] “Eliminate all that is waste, death and superfluity,” complaint and grievance, unsatisfied desire, defense or pleading, everything that roots each of us (everybody) in ourselves, in our molarity.⁴⁷

The singular creates a ‘plane of proliferation’,⁴⁸ or constructs a part of the plane, which abolishes the primacy of the subject, and reduces it to a result (productive processes “disgorge” subjects) and a strategic function: subjects are slowed-down becomings, coagulations, and Deleuze always counterposes them and their milieu to the singular in terms of large (molar) and small (molecular), organisation and consistency, inertia and absolute speeds. The same elements – singular points, relations – can be distributed

⁴⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.p.279.

⁴⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.279.

⁴⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.267: ‘but this proliferation of material has nothing to do with an evolution, the development of a form or the filiation of forms. Still less is it a regression leading back to a principle. It is on the contrary an *involution*, in which form is constantly being dissolved, freeing times and speeds’.

according to a “molar” or a “molecular” organisation: whereas molar stratifications ‘delimit objects, subjects, their representations and their systems of reference’, the molecular order is one of ‘flows, becomings, transitions between phases, intensities’.⁴⁹

However, that this is a counter-position rather than a binary opposition is key:

‘It is not enough [...] to oppose the centralized to the segmentary. Nor is it enough to oppose two kinds of segmentarity, one supple and primitive, the other modern and rigidified. There is indeed a distinction between the two, but they are inseparable, they overlap, they are entangled [...] Every society, and every individual, are thus plied by both segmentaries simultaneously: one molar, the other, molecular’.⁵⁰

Both paradigms must be understood as traversing one another:

you have to keep small supplies of significance and subjectification, if only to turn them against their own systems when the circumstances demand it, when things, persons, even situations, force you to; and you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality.⁵¹

In contrast to everything that makes up the world of the subject, Deleuze lists ‘the three virtues’ as ‘imperceptibility, indiscernability, and impersonality’. And Spinoza himself becomes the ascetic model for singular being, the ‘true visionary’, since with him,

Humility, poverty and chastity become the effects of an especially rich and superabundant life, sufficiently powerful to have conquered thought and subordinated every other instinct to itself. This is what Spinoza calls Nature: a life no longer lived on the basis of need, in terms of a means and ends, but according to a production, a productivity, a potency, in terms of causes and effects.⁵²

For Deleuze, Spinoza’s modesty is of a piece with his singularity, its ‘expression’. The singular – become-imperceptible – creates its own immanent criteria of life, based on what is needed to create: the ‘ascetic virtues’, Deleuze says, ‘are not moral ends in his case, or religious means to another life, but rather the “effects” of philosophy itself’,

⁴⁹ See Guattari’s ‘Glossary’ in *Molecular Revolution*, pp.288-290.

⁵⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.213.

⁵¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.160. Deleuze and Guattari warn many times against a too rapid or absolute “de-subjectification”, which they associate with ‘dread’ and ‘agony’ (p.240). ‘So much caution’, they say, ‘is needed to prevent the plane of consistency from becoming a pure plane of abolition, death’, p.270. Thus they connect abolition to creation: ‘they can make war only on condition that they simultaneously create something else’, p.423.

⁵² Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.280; Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p.28; Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.3.

signs of ‘an especially rich and superabundant life’, a ‘way of being a *grand vivant*’.⁵³ The (singular) philosopher renounces worldly interests in favour of a production. This is why Spinoza’s intuition, together with his concept of the true Idea as active thought, is so important for Deleuze – it supplies a concept of pure production without representation: without a knowing subject representing self to self. Production replaces representation here: the singular is the ‘universal producer’, mobile, nomadic, ‘a hermit, a shadow, a traveller or boarding house lodger’, and thus free to go ‘a little beyond the ends of the state, of a society, beyond any milieu in general’.⁵⁴

Production and Genetics

The model of the subject here is replaced with a notion of individuals as non-possessive ‘assemblages’.⁵⁵ Essentialist notions of identity are dissolved into the flux of Nature, a Spinozist ‘plane of consistency or composition’, or plane of continual variation or ‘*becomings* which have neither culmination nor subject’:

There are only haecceities, affects, subjectless individuations that constitute collective assemblages. Nothing develops, but things arrive late or early, and form this or that assemblage depending on their compositions of speed. Nothing subjectifies, but haecceities form according to compositions of nonsubjectified powers or affects. We call this plane, which knows only longitudes and latitudes, speeds and haecceities, the plane of consistency or composition (as opposed to the plan(e) of organisation or development). It is necessarily a plane of immanence and univocality. We therefore call it the plane of Nature, although nature has nothing to do with it, since on this plane there is no distinction between the natural and the artificial. However many dimensions it may have, it never has a supplementary dimension to that which transpires upon it. That alone makes it natural and immanent.⁵⁶

The plane of consistency then appears as one more guise of “a life”, that is, of the indefinite, the impersonal, the constitutive. This notion of “a life” preoccupied Deleuze from the earliest formation of his own philosophy, appearing in *Difference and*

⁵³ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.3.

⁵⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p.7; Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.4. Deleuze defines the ‘best society’ therefore as one which ‘exempts the power of thinking from the obligation to obey, and takes care, in its own interest, not to subject thought to the rule of the state, which only applies to actions. As long as thought is free, hence vital, nothing is compromised’.

⁵⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.266. Note that ‘assemblage’ applies as much to large communities (societies) as to small (individuals).

⁵⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.506-507; p.266

Repetition as a differential ‘genetic’ field of ‘pure positivity’: the ‘productive elements of affirmation’.⁵⁷ It also appears in the book on Spinoza (*Practical Philosophy*) as a ‘*common plane of immanence* on which all bodies, all minds, and all individuals are situated’, linked to Spinoza’s intuition (as we saw above) as the thought which reaches to the ‘*genetic definition*’.⁵⁸ And in *Cinema 2* Deleuze refers to intuition in Spinozists terms as a method which goes beyond ordinary perception, penetrating to this genetic field: ‘if cinema goes beyond perception, it is in the sense that it reaches to the *genetic element* of all possible perception, that is, the point which changes, and which makes perception change, the differential of perception itself’. As Bruce Baugh describes it, for Deleuze,

“intuition” is not an immediate impression or feeling. On the other hand, it is not a recognition through the already known (the concept), the reduction of the new to the old, but an encounter with the not-yet-known, with the different and the new as such [...] “Intuition” is a form of interpretative insight capable of relating an empirical actuality to its causal history or “genealogy” [...] not according to an antecedently given schema or method, but creatively, in such a way that differences and singularities can be grasped in their uniqueness and positivity. In practice, that means using genealogy to grasp things and events not as new instances of an old rule, or as mere exceptions to the rule, but as new and contingent interactions between terms that have no intrinsic, conceptual connection [...] “Intuition” is thus a complex process that is a goal of knowledge, not a starting point. It is the richest, not the poorest form of knowledge, and although it is capable of formalization, it does not try to reduce the singular to some combination of general rules that would make each actuality or event predictable in principle.⁵⁹

Consistent with his ontology of pure difference then, a genetic or causal definition will be a mobile one which understands things in terms of the active powers which constitute them, and as such is welded to the model of ethology and ethological definition mentioned above. With an ethological/genetic definition then we arrive at a new mode of individuation: singular entities are “open unities”, constituted by and productive of genetic difference, where genetic stands for processes which despecify and dissolve essentialist notions of identity. ‘There is no genetics’, Deleuze and Guattari say, ‘without “genetic drift”’. The field (of genetic elements, of immanence, of

⁵⁷ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp.207, 209, 211.

⁵⁸ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.122; p84.

⁵⁹ Bruce Baugh, ‘Transcendental empiricism: Deleuze’s response to Hegel’, in *Man and World*, No.25, 1992, p.141.

Nature) is “decoded” by its own natal productivity: every code has a ‘margin of decoding’ which is ‘inherent to it’ (all codes ‘fundamentally include phenomena of relative decoding that are all the more useable, composable, and addable by virtue of being relative, always “beside”’).⁶⁰ In the same way that striving appears as a positive ontological principle in the *Ethics* (EIIP6), rather than one which proceeds on the basis of lack, so production features as pure positivity in Deleuze – with heightened or intensified production and proliferating relations counterposed to the requirements of identity:

it is certain that neither men nor women are clearly defined personalities, but rather vibrations, flows, schizzes, and “knots” [...] The task [...] is that of tirelessly taking apart egos and their presuppositions; liberating the prepersonal singularities they enclose and repress; mobilizing the flows they would be capable of transmitting, receiving, or intercepting; establishing always further and more sharply the schizzes and the breaks well below conditions of identity [...] For everyone is a little group (*un groupuscule*) and must live as such [...]

Ethological or genetic definitions decode subjects, or “closed unities”, and keep the unity open by insisting upon their concrete and processual being. From the point of view of genetics, ethology, or intuition, there are no universals, subjects, or objects, only processes of universalisation, subjectification, specification, and the “closed unities” they produce.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.53.

⁶¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, p.145: ‘there are no such things as universals, there’s nothing transcendent, no Unity, subject (or object), Reason; there are only processes, sometimes unifying, subjectifying, rationalizing, but just processes all the same’.

Becoming like grass: a new Image of freedom

The ascetic revaluation noted above is then the way in which to ‘offer no purchase’, ‘no target’, to ‘blend in with the walls’, become-imperceptible, and thus come into the real that is denied by subjectivity – the ‘molar organisation’ which separates the individual from its power, that is, from its ‘objective being’.⁶² ‘It is no use’, according to Deleuze and Guattari, ‘saying: We are not green plants; we have long since been unable to synthesize chlorophyll, so it’s necessary to eat ...’ rather,

[..] it should be noted that this is not a phrase uttered by the poor or the dispossessed. On the contrary, such people know that they are close to grass, almost akin to it, and that desire “needs” very few things – *not those left overs that chance to come their way, but the very things that are continually taken from them* – and that what is missing is not things a subject feels the lack of somewhere deep down inside himself, but rather the objectivity of man, the objective being of man, for whom to desire is to produce, to produce within the realm of the real.⁶³

Desire disconnected from external objects and reconnected to an internal production, life disconnected from death and reconnected to an eternal power, this is blessedness, this is a haecceity of singularisation, this is the triumph of ethics over morality and, finally, this is the mode governing from essence. The point, as Paul Patton has it, ‘is to reduce oneself to a minimal set of traits on the basis of which to forge new connections with the world’: ‘One is then like grass’, says Deleuze.⁶⁴ In this way the singular becomes imperceptible as far as the (molar) logic of identity goes. Singularisation though is not (or its *raison d’être* is not) a withdrawal to the margins, but the creation of “lines of flight”, the reduction of oneself ‘to one or several abstract lines’ which do not “flee” but rather “flow”, like liquid, ‘slipping between things’, and in this way entering into ‘the haecceity and impersonality of the creator’.⁶⁵

⁶² Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.3; Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.279; Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p.27.

⁶³ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p.27.

⁶⁴ Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, p.86; Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.280.

⁶⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.280. And see Deleuze, *Dialogues*, p.49: ‘The great and only error lies in thinking that a line of flight consists in fleeing from life; the flight into the imaginary, or into art. On the contrary, to flee is to produce the real, to create life, to find a weapon’.

The creative power of the singular is identified with a positive deterritorialisation, a power of “disorganisation”, “disarticulation”. Opening the Self to processes of becoming is revolutionary – or *counter-revolutionary* – since these processes are ‘what underlies all codes, what escapes all codes, and is what the codes themselves seek to translate, convert, and mint anew’.⁶⁶ As Patton says, consequently,

it is the process of deterritorialisation which constitutes the essence of revolutionary politics [...] not the incorporation of minority demands by adjustment to the axioms of the social machine, nor the reconstitution of a code, but the process of becoming-minor, of widening the gap between oneself and the norm.⁶⁷

The singular – a ‘*Monsieur Zero*’ - ‘puts what it traverses to flight’, effectively deterritorializing the continents it crosses.⁶⁸ In this way it “worlds”, makes ‘a world or worlds’ which ‘can overlay the first one, like a transparency’.⁶⁹ There is no question here then of a solipsistic transcendence, or of a sublation or even total annihilation of the social and/or natural field (field of constitutive relations), but rather a multiplication (singularisation = multiplication). As we have already said, the ethical process that leads up to this point (selective augmentation in Spinoza, processes of becomings in Deleuze – ‘the passage of a subject through all possible predicates’)⁷⁰ finds its meaning and force in the creativity/productivity of blessedness, or becoming-imperceptible (‘The immanent ethic is inseparable from a creation’).⁷¹ But, despite the fact that the ‘immanent ethic is’, as Zourabichvili puts it, ‘genuinely addressed to everyone’, the singular life or life of blessedness is available – can be borne – at its fullest extent, or as absolute intensity, by only a few. As with Spinoza’s blessedness, Deleuze’s concept of singularity properly marks an elitism, ‘in a general way’, as Zourabichvili says,

⁶⁶ Deleuze, ‘Nomad Thought’, in *The New Nietzsche*, p.146.

⁶⁷ Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, p.7.

⁶⁸ ‘Paul Morand’s *Monsieur Zero* flees the larger countries, crosses the smallest ones, descends the scale of States, establishes an anonymous society in Lichtenstein of which he is the only member, and dies imperceptible, forming the particle 0 with his fingers: “I am a man who flees by swimming underwater, and at whom all the world’s rifles fire ... I must no longer offer a target.” ’ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.279; p.277.

⁶⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.280.

⁷⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p.77.

⁷¹ François Zourabichvili, ‘Six Notes on the Percept’, p.210.

Deleuzianism is in fact an elitism, if this is understood to mean that all ways of existing and thinking are not of equal value, and that the selective evaluation of possibilities for existence is the immanent activity of life and thought.⁷²

That absolute singularity, as with absolute blessedness, is rarely available need not worry us however, since, to the extent that it exists at all, the singular puts the subjective into play by overlaying processes of becoming, by over-determining identity. The singular is the counterpoint to the subjective – its outside, the world which constitutes it and traverses it, even as it separates itself from it. At the nexus of these counter-posed relations/forces is a paradoxical individual: both more or less relational and evolutionary (the subject of form and function) and liquid and revolutionary (a singular individuation). And this according to the extent that the individual ‘gives way’ to the impersonal field of immanence, to the extent, in Spinozist terms, that he is in blessedness.⁷³

It is Spinoza who ‘discovered that freedom exists only within immanence’, but freedom here is qualitatively different from normative models of negative and/or positive freedom (models based around “freedom from”, or “freedom to”, both of which are, as Patton says, premised upon ‘the preservation or continuity of the individual subject of freedom, rather than its transformation’).⁷⁴

⁷² François Zourabichvili, ‘Six Notes on the Percept’, note 19, p.215.

⁷³ Deleuze, ‘Immanence: A Life’, in *Pure Immanence: essays on a life*, p.28..

⁷⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* p.48; Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, p.83, and see pp.83-85 on these definitions.

The paradoxical individual – deterritorialised by processes of becoming imperceptible – ‘no longer has the same interests nor the same desires or preferences [as his “subject self”]’, says Patton.

His goals are not the same, nor are the values that would underpin his strong evaluations. As a result, the kind of freedom that is manifest in a break of this kind cannot be captured in the definitions of negative and positive freedom [...] It is on this kind of line that critical freedom is manifest.⁷⁵

Critical freedom ‘concerns the moments in a life after which one is no longer the same person’, and thus corresponds to the experience of Spinozist-Deleuzean blessedness: that is, of “potency”, of “freedom within immanence” –

It is the freedom to transgress the limits of what one is presently capable of being or doing, rather than just the freedom to be or do those things [...] It is realised in those moments when a qualitatively different kind of transition is involved.⁷⁶

This, then, is the anti-subject, or rather the anti-subjective process: the individual as point of “inclusive disjunction”. Rather than a synthesis of contradictory elements, here all the terms are prised apart and held in tension:

A disjunction that remains disjunctive, and that still affirms The disjoined terms [...] *without restricting one by the other or excluding the other from the one*, is perhaps the greatest paradox. “Either ... or .. or,” instead of “either/or”.⁷⁷

Shrinking from an absolute annihilation, paradoxical individuals - variously, a Deleuzean (as opposed to clinical) schizophrenic, a philosopher, a Chinese poet, a “mere man” (*homo tantum*), children - ‘remain in disjunction’.⁷⁸ The experimentation of the inclusive disjunction – an active rather than a passive synthesis – brings with it engagement with, rather than transcendence of, the constitutive field of immanence. For wherever ‘you invoke something transcendent’, Deleuze says, ‘you arrest movement, introducing interpretations instead of experimenting’:

⁷⁵ Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, p.87.

⁷⁶ Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, p.85.

⁷⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p.76.

⁷⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.280; Deleuze, ‘Immanence: A Life’, in *Pure Immanence: essays on a life*, p.28; Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p.76; Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, p.133.

it's only ever abstractions, a transcendent viewpoint, perhaps just the Self, that prevents one constructing a plane of immanence. Processes are becomings, and aren't to be judged by some final result but by the way they proceed and their power to continue [...].⁷⁹

The productivity of “anti-subjects”, their revolutionary power, or their ability to construct a plane or part of the plane of immanence, to decode, to resist molar organisation, depends upon this then: the continual putting into circulation of “the subject” (as transcendent ground, as ‘something invested with duties, power, and knowledge’),⁸⁰ along with the desires, morality, properties and rights associated with it, in the face of the forces of hypostatisation. A new, Spinozist, ethic, which puts into question all normative standards, crystallises at just this point:

Heretofore it was only a question of knowing how a particular thing can decompose other things by giving them a relation that is consistent with one of its own, or, on the contrary, how it risks being decomposed by other things. But now it is a question of knowing whether relations (and which ones?) can compound directly to form a new, more “extensive” relation, or whether capacities can compound directly to constitute a more “intense” capacity or power.⁸¹

‘A life’, as Patton says, ‘will manifest more critical freedom the more it is capable of variation of this kind’. Becoming-imperceptible, as with blessedness, it turns out, far from being the marker of a withdrawal, a mysticism, is inseparable from a practical ethic concerned with ‘the composition of a world that is increasingly wide and intense’.⁸²

⁷⁹ Deleuze, *Negotiations*, p.146.

⁸⁰ Deleuze, *Negotiations*, p.176.

⁸¹ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.126.

⁸² Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, p.85; Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.126.

Concluding Remarks

We embark, then, in a kind of raft of “the Medusa,” bombs fall all around the raft as it drifts toward icy subterranean streams – or toward torrid rivers, the Orinoco, the Amazon; the passengers row together, they are not supposed to like one another, they fight with one another, they eat one another. To row together is to share, to share something beyond law, contract, or institution. It is a period of drifting, of “deterritorialization”.¹

In this thesis I have sought to frame an image of Spinoza and Deleuze as philosopher-friends, plying their oars together, arguing that each one comes fully into his power through the other. Although, for instance, Deleuze’s metaphysic of virtual/actual might be more straightforwardly read with Bergson (the virtual appears nowhere in Spinoza as either term or concept), and his model of power and becoming likened to Nietzsche’s, I have turned only to Spinoza as a resource, in order to present a Spinozism that is fully realised and present in Deleuze right from the start of his philosophical life, and which, I argue, remained an indispensable fount of concepts which are variously taken up, reinscribed, and recharged with meaning from the first writings to the last.

Specifically, what I have sought to show is that Deleuze is a thinker neither of the One (of transcendence) or the Many (ultra-nominalism), but of the One-All: Omnitudo. I argue not only that this thought-position is absolutely crucial to an understanding of Deleuze’s philosophy, but also that it is Spinoza who provides the framework for this orientation. It is Spinoza’s positive infinity of substance/attributes which is the basis for a Deleuean model of positive distinction/difference and the related project of thinking non-dialectically.

¹ Deleuze, ‘Nomad Thought’, *The New Nietzsche*, p.144.

We invoke one dualism only in order to challenge another. We employ a dualism of models only in order to arrive at a process that challenges all models. Each time, mental correctives are necessary to undo the dualisms we had no wish to construct but through which we pass. Arrive at the magic formula we all seek – PLURALISM = MONISM – via all the dualisms that are the enemy, an entirely necessary enemy, the furniture we are forever rearranging.²

To this end, I began by setting out a “materialist” metaphysic based on a Deleuzean-Spinozist transformation of the concept of emanation – emanation is thought no longer in terms of representation but in terms of creation/production. I showed, firstly (in chapters one and two), how this appears ontologically as univocal being (positive difference), and later (in chapters three and four), epistemologically as thought without image (thought which does not subordinate difference to identity). I also explored (in the fourth chapter) Spinoza’s notion of conception/conceiving – of thought *acts* – a notion which is especially attractive to and emendable to the Deleuzean model of an interventionist thought without image.

Finally, I showed how Deleuze has made sense of Spinoza’s particularly difficult Part Five of the *Ethics*, and how, in a language remote from Spinoza, he has constructed an anarchic but Spinozist inspired ethic centred around a “this-worldly” blessedness. Again, I emphasised a progressive-regressive immanence (Omnitudo), and a form of salvation which is always already at hand, over a dichotomised and transcendentalised Real beyond being and the fantasy of annihilation (dis-embodiment) that attends that model. Throughout, however, I have emphasised the necessity of the abolition of a specific form of subjectivity – imaginary, oedipalized – as at the heart of a Spinozist-Deleuzean philosophy and ethics of immanence, as its price and prerequisite.

It is Spinoza’s conception of the individual within immanence which provides Deleuze with a model which overturns all hierarchy, placing individual beings in an immediate – rather than analogical – relation to Being. Furthermore, it is the modal model which restores power proper to the individual. As Deleuze says,

² Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp.20-21.

the reduction of “creatures” to the status of modes, far from taking away their own power, shows rather how a part of their power properly belongs to them, along with their essence [...] Reducing things to modes of a single substance is not a way of making them mere appearances, phantoms [...] but is rather the only way, according to Spinoza, to make them “natural” beings, endowed with force or power.

The identity of power and essence means: a power is always an act or, at least, in action.³

Deleuze understands Spinoza as substituting actual active power – as a correlated ‘power of acting and a power of being acted on’ - for ‘the distinction of power and act, potentiality and actuality’ (‘a mode [...] has no power that is not actual: it is at each moment all that it can be, its power is its essence’).⁴ This immanent model gives no quarter to any conception of power based on transcendence: ‘the *Ethics* consists in denying [...] any power (*potestas*) analogous to that of a tyrant, or even an enlightened prince’.⁵ And it is this which is the basis for a Deleuzian “philosophy of Life”, a philosophy which proposes a form of what Bruce Baugh calls ‘individualist anarchism’ (although there is no sense in which the individual could be isolated from “individualities”) and a ‘politics without norms or rules’ (here, *conatus* ‘defines the [...] natural *right* of the existing mode [which is] strictly identical with [its] power and is independent of any order of ends, of any consideration of duties’).⁶

A Spinozist-inspired “philosophy of Life” then, is emphatically a philosophy of the *new*: becoming always involves a relation to the outside that is at the same time the creation of a new existent, and this power of production (“problematization”) is privileged over the discovery of transcendent foundations. As such, it is identified with an experimentalism – the always mobile horizon of becoming, the active synthesis which embeds the individual in the immanent field - which stands as the principle of a “practical philosophy” that is Spinozist in its (un)grounding, and at the same time uniquely Deleuzian.

³ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, pp.92-93.

⁴ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p.93.

⁵ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.97.

⁶ Bruce Baugh, ‘Transcendental empiricism: Deleuze’s response to Hegel’, *Man and World*, No.25, 1992, p.145; Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.102.

On the basis of a Spinozist ethological model, Deleuze is able to formulate a philosophy of difference organised around the production of unforeseen combinations. Ethological experimentation – the selection of ‘what affects or is affected by the thing, what moves it or is moved by it’ – prises open the door held shut by a model based on identity or the reproduction of the same.⁷ Experimentation becomes the keystone of a new, non-normative, anti-foundational, ethic:

It is no longer a matter of utilizations or captures, but of sociabilities and communities. How do individuals enter into composition with one another in order to form a higher individual, *ad infinitum*? How can a being take another being into its world, but while preserving or respecting the other’s own relations and world?⁸

Deleuzian ethology opens onto experimentation as a practice of forming new concepts, new groups, new (nomadic) distributions, configurations, subjectivities. As becoming, it involves perpetual opening to the production of new relations and chance encounters. Otherness – as processual “becoming-other” – is seen here as pure positive difference, and as a force of connection (one becomes part of or “enters” Nature) rather than ‘the emblematic mark of alterity’.⁹

An ethics and politics of ethology and the singular embeds the individual within the milieu of concrete multiplicities, as opposed to placing him in relation to an abstract universalism. As Todd May notes:

Without any transcendental clues as to how to elude the oppressions of a given system, one can only try things out, and then assess the effects of one’s own attempts. And one does not perform such an assessment by exiting, but rather by means of, the system or group of systems that one inhabits.¹⁰

⁷ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.125: ‘Ethology is first of all the study of the relations of speed and slowness, of the capacities for affecting and being affected that characterize each thing [...] What does it react to positively or negatively? What are its nutriments and its poisons? What does it “take” in its world? Every point has its counterpoints: the plant and the rain, the spider and the fly. So an animal, a thing, is never separable from its relations with the world. The interior is only a selected exterior, and the exterior, a projected interior. The speed or slowness of metabolisms, perceptions, actions, and reactions link together to constitute a particular individual in the world.’

⁸ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p.126.

⁹ Rosi Braidotti, ‘An anti-Oedipal Tribute’, *Radical Philosophy*, Symposium Gilles Deleuze, 1925-1995, March/April 1996, p.5: ‘In Deleuze’s thought, ‘the other, is not the emblematic mark of alterity, as in classical philosophy; nor is it a fetishized and necessary other, as in deconstruction. The other for Deleuze is rather a moving horizon of perpetual becoming, towards which the split and nomadic subject of postmodernity moves.’

¹⁰ Todd May, ‘The System and its fractures: Gilles Deleuze on Otherness’, *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Vol.24, No.1, Jan 1993, p.10.

The specific is favoured here over the universal – ‘specific acts of thinking’ which forge new relations.¹¹ What must be given up is belief in absolutes: ‘There is not heaven for concepts’.¹² Both Spinoza and Deleuze seek an unequivocal ontological principle – beyond the equivocations of the subject of consciousness:

the war of the righteous is for the conquest of the highest power, that of deciding problems by restoring them to their truth, by evaluating that truth beyond the representations of consciousness and the forms of the negative, and by acceding at last to the imperatives on which they depend.¹³

Adequate ideas go beyond the subjective and force us to think the immanent plane on which terms (and subjectivities) are produced and arranged – to think the outside which distributes ‘the furniture’. Thinking immanence then – the ‘unthought in every plane’¹⁴ – becomes the practical task of philosophy, revealing the active link between Spinoza and Deleuze.

¹¹ Goodchild, ‘Deleuzian Ethics’, in *Theory Culture and Society*, Vol.14, No.2, (pp.39-50), p.42.

¹² Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* p.5.

¹³ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.208.

¹⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* p.59.

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