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**Spinoza and the Hydraulic Discipline of Affects:  
From the Theologico-Political to the Economic Regime of Desire**

Chiara Bottici and Miguel de Beistegui

### **1. Dilemmas of Servitude**

The fundamental problem for political philosophy today, Deleuze and Guattari claim in *Anti-Œdipus*,<sup>1</sup> remains the one that Spinoza saw so clearly when he raised the question of the conditions under which “human beings fight for their own servitude as if they were fighting for their deliverance, and will not think it humiliating but supremely glorious to spill their blood and sacrifice their lives for the glorification of one man” (*TTP* 7).<sup>2</sup> The question, in other words, is that of knowing how, independently of the exercise of physical force or coercion, subjects can desire their own servitude.<sup>3</sup>

Spinoza’s answer to that question is summarised in the following statement, which he borrows from Curtius: “Nothing governs the multitude as effectively as superstition [*superstitio*]” (*TTP* 5).<sup>4</sup> By “superstition,” we need to understand a specific art of government, which draws on the imagination and requires the disciplining of bodies. The reason why it is so effective a method of government is that it is able to capitalise on the fact that human beings, who are naturally governed by the relentless fluctuation of their affects, constantly oscillate between fear and hope (*TTP* 1). Whilst seemingly opposed, fear and hope are actually two sides of the same coin. Fear, Spinoza tells us, is an inconstant *sadness*, which arises from the idea of a thing, the outcome of which we are in some doubt (*E* III, Def. of aff. 13). Hope, on the other hand, is a *joy*, which arises from the idea of a thing, the outcome of which we are also in some doubt (*E* III, Def. of aff. 12). Since we are doomed to live in a condition of uncertainty, in which we do not control our destiny, these two passions are inseparable. The only difference between them is that fear is a form of sadness, whereas hope is a form of joy. As Spinoza openly put it at the beginning of the *Theological Political Treatise*:

If men were always able to regulate their affairs with sure judgement, or if fortune always smiled upon them, they would not get caught up in any superstition. But since people are often reduced to such desperate straits that they cannot arrive at any solid judgement and as the good things of fortune for which they have a boundless desire are quite uncertain, they fluctuate wretchedly between hope and fear. (*TTP* 1)

And this, he adds immediately, is why most people are quite ready to believe anything, and why superstition is a particularly effective technology of government. The primary aim of the *Theological Political Treatise*, which Spinoza wrote in haste and as a response to a specific historical and political context, is precisely to investigate the mechanisms of such a technology. As we know from his correspondence, in 1665 Spinoza interrupted the writing of the *Ethics* in order to write his *Treatise* (*Ep.* 30). The reason he did so was that, in the context of the fragile institutions of the Dutch Republic, he felt the threat of its overthrow by some active radical Calvinists who, like the ancient Hebrews described in the *Theological Political Treatise*, perceived themselves as chosen by god and on the basis of such a prophecy aimed at installing a theocracy.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast to other Enlightenment thinkers, Spinoza does not simply dismiss superstition and prophecy as an error or an illusion. He is rather interested in understanding how it works, why it is so widespread, and the extent to which it is inevitable.<sup>6</sup> It is both a natural disposition and a technology of government. Spinoza is indeed clear about the fact that, whilst it is possible to elevate oneself beyond the realm of imagination at the individual level, the situation is quite different, and far more complex, at the political level. And whilst the *Ethics* reveals the path that allows us to liberate ourselves from servitude by turning the sadness of passive affects into the joy of active ones through adequate knowledge, the *Theological Political Treatise* focuses on the situations in which, due to the intrinsic nature of the multitude, the liberation in question is not possible, or is at least far more difficult to achieve.<sup>7</sup> Given the essentially capricious and thus unstable nature of the multitude (*TTP* 210), there arises the need to organise, contain and channel the flow of human affects through a certain discipline of imagination. Every society is, to a certain degree at least, imaginary, and needs to rely on technologies of the imagination in order to tame the antagonistic and unpredictable nature of affects. The difference between pure superstition and other configurations of imagination becomes one of degree:<sup>8</sup> each configuration reveals a more or

less adequate understanding of our condition, and, thus a different degree of power or *potentia*.<sup>9</sup>

At this point, it is important to recall that Spinoza defines affects firstly as the affections of the body by which the body's power to act (*potentia agendi*) is either increased or diminished, helped or hindered, and, secondly, as the ideas of those affections (*E III, D3*). Whereas the notion of affect points to the possibility of such an increase or decrease of our *potentia*, "desire" (*cupiditas*) is the more general ontological category with which Spinoza defines the essence of human nature (*E III, Def. of aff. 1*).<sup>10</sup> The reason why desire is the very essence of human beings is that, according Spinoza's ontology, everything, in so far as it is in itself (*quantum in se est*), endeavours to persevere in its being (*in sue esse perseverare conatur*) (*E III, P6*). Within this theory of the *conatus*, which applies for Spinoza to every single being, negativity and destruction can only come from external causes (*E III, P4*). The justification for this doctrine ultimately lies in Spinoza's ontology of unique substance, that is, from the fact that being comes before non-being, or better said, that there is something rather than nothing (*E I, P11Pr2*). And the fact that something *exists* also and by definition means that it endeavours to persevere in its being. Within this perspective, desire is appetite, or the *conatus* itself when related to both body and mind, together with the consciousness of that appetite (*E III, P9*). As such, it is the result of an ontological plenitude and the expression of one's own *potentia*, which, as we will see, can either be increased through active affects or diminished through passive ones.

Now, while knowledge enables us to transform our passive affects into active ones, thereby increasing our power or *potentia*, imagination, which is an inadequate form of knowledge, tends to generate passive affects, that is, affects that decrease our power. We will come back to Spinoza's distinction between activity and passivity, which is crucial in order to understand how liberation is possible. For the time being, it is sufficient to underline that, while reason, as grounded in common notions, unifies us, imagination brings discord.

As a result, human beings find themselves in a condition similar to that described by Hobbes in his state of nature (*TTP 199-200*). Insofar as that condition endangers their own survival, they subject themselves to a common power.<sup>11</sup> The structure of Spinoza's argument

is very similar to Hobbes' justification of the sovereign state, but with a crucial difference: since desire is the very essence of human beings, no subject could ever deprive herself of the right to do whatever is in her power, that is, to renounce her own nature. And given that, for Spinoza, "right" is nothing but *potentia*, or power itself, the subject is perfectly within her right when she does something at a certain point in time and its opposite later on, according to the fluctuations of her affects (*TTP* 199-200).<sup>12</sup>

But since the particular instantiation of a mind and a body are, for Spinoza, just one mode seen from two different attributes of the same substance, there cannot be a discipline of the mind that is not also a discipline of the body. What we would like to call the hydraulic discipline of affects works at the point of encounter between the two attributes.<sup>13</sup> We cannot enter into a detailed discussion of Spinoza's ontology. But it is important to remember that, for Spinoza, there is only one, infinite substance that expresses itself through an infinity of modes, or affections of the substance (*E* I, D1, D5). This idea grounds Spinoza's radical monism, which lies at the heart of the issue we are concerned with here.

Within this radical monism, thought and extension are therefore simply two attributes of the substance, that is, two different ways in which the substance is perceived by the intellect (*E* I, D4). As a consequence, a single body is just a mode of the unique substance in the attribute of extension, while a single mind is a mode of the very same substance in the attribute of thinking. There is therefore no body-mind dualism: although thought and extension are the two attributes that we, as finite modes, have access to, the substance is itself characterised by an infinite number of attributes (*E* I, D6). As a consequence, a discipline of affects, that is, of affections of the body that are, at the same time, the ideas of those affections, is inseparable from a discipline of the mind. Conversely, as Spinoza fully explains in the course of the *Theological Political Treatise*, affects can be captured and channelled only by the imagination itself, which, for Spinoza, is, in turn, just a form of bodily awareness.<sup>14</sup>

This point clearly emerges in Spinoza's puzzling analysis of political obedience (*TTP* 209). He establishes the principle of political obedience as necessary to the creation of a social order (*civitas*). But it is a principle that is intrinsically fragile, and constantly

threatened, given that the transfer of natural rights from the individual body to the political body is only ever tentative, and could be withdrawn at any time. This is the reason why, given the essentially affective, and thus fickle and unpredictable nature of the multitude, the state needs to develop techniques of obedience, which the multitude will internalize, to the point of turning them into a second nature. In other words, in addition to the problem of sovereign power, and its legal solution, there is the problem of what, following Foucault, we would like to call “governmentality,” or “the art of conducting conducts.”<sup>15</sup> The problem for the state, then, is one of knowing how to best to guarantee the stability of the transfer of rights that led to its creation in the first place; it is a question of knowing by what means subjects will continue to accept the supremacy of the state. Spinoza observes that this can happen through physical coercion: “One man has another in his power if he holds him in bonds, or has deprived him of the arms and means of self-defence or escape” (*TP* 2.10). But he also thinks that the same goal can be achieved through the instillation of certain affects, such as terror, or by forcing the other into feeling indebtedness, as a result of having conferred upon him some benefit or privilege. Of the two techniques, Spinoza argues, the second is far more effective, in that it takes hold not of the other’s body, but of her mind. But we need to go even further, and acknowledge a form of power that, whilst drawing on passions, is yet more precise and effective: individuals are never more inclined to desire the desire of an other, and never more submissive, than when they embrace it *wholeheartedly*:

Therefore he who wholeheartedly [*integro animo*] resolves to obey another in all his commands is fully under another’s power [*sub alterius imperio est*], and consequently he who reigns over his subject’s hearts holds the greatest power. . . . [H]earts are to some degree under the control of the sovereign power, who has many means of inducing the majority to believe, love, hate what it wills. (*TTP* 202)

It is not only by instilling fear, by the threat of harm, or by depriving subjects of their freedom, but by winning over their hearts, that a sovereign power can chain its subjects to its own desire. Spinoza’s conclusion is unequivocal: “In my opinion no more effective means can be devised to influence men’s hearts, for nothing can so captivate the heart as joy springing from devotion, that is, love combined with admiration” (*TTP* 216).

## **2. The theological-political siphon**

In order to disentangle such technologies of the heart we need to turn to Spinoza's analysis of the history of the Ancient Hebrews, which occupies most of the *Theological Political Treatise*, providing the pretext for a more general reflection on the imaginary nature of society itself: every political body needs to organise itself around some pattern of imagination that can tame the unstable character of the multitude through a disciplinary organisation of their affects. To the extent that, in the long term, people tend not to tolerate pure coercion, but also fail to submit to the common power for rational reasons only, myths, rituals and other collective and bodily forms of government of the imagination become an essential ingredient of politics itself. Borrowing a term from Louis Althusser, we could say that, for Spinoza, every society needs its own "ideological state apparatus." The use of that term in this context is not accidental, insofar as Althusser explicitly says that it is by following Spinoza that he came to insist on the "material existence of ideology."<sup>16</sup> With this expression, he meant not only its material social *conditions*, that is, its connections with interests blinded by the imagination of a social group (ideology as false consciousness), but also the *materiality* of the very existence of ideology, the fact that, within a monistic framework such as Spinoza's, it does not make sense to counterpoise the ideal and the material or, for that matter, the mind and the body.

According to Spinoza's reconstruction, Moses was able to institute such a regime of the imagination, precisely by inserting the immanent, historical and contingent condition of his people within the framework of a more general *sacred* history, which transcended it. In his view, after the exodus from Egypt, the people of Israel fell again into a pure state of nature. It is in this context that Moses labelled the Hebrews the "chosen people," and employed the idea of *historia sacra* as a means of morally encouraging his people to subject themselves to a lawful condition. Spinoza is explicit on this point: "This is why Moses, with his virtue and by divine command, introduced religion into the commonwealth, so that people would do its duty more from devotion than from fear" (*TTP* 74).

Spinoza's analysis of the Hebrews' history displays thus a very peculiar view of political theology. While Carl Schmitt sustains in *Political Theology* that the most important (modern) political concepts are the result of a transposition of originally theological ideas into politics,

Spinoza suggests in Chapter 3 of the *Theological Political Treatise* exactly the opposite: concepts such as the omnipotent God as a lawgiver of monotheism are the religious transposition of specific political situations.<sup>17</sup> It is because the Hebrews had only recently left their slavery in Egypt and were therefore used to it that Moses had to present God as a supreme lawgiver and persuade them to subject themselves to the law. In the theological-political nexus, it is the political, and not the religious, which comes first. Despite its title, Spinoza's *Theological Political Treatise* can thus be read as an attempt to bring political theology to an end, because it is an attempt to bring the transcendence of the sacred history back into the immanence of politics. On many occasions, Spinoza asserts that the purpose of religious ceremonies and of the sacred history that sustains them is the preservation of the state.<sup>18</sup>

The idea of a sacred history, of a transcendent plane on which the Hebrews were playing a particular role serves thus as the pivot of a hydraulic system aimed at channelling the antagonistic passions of the multitude. The way in which the political-theological nexus works here is similar to the functioning of a siphon: it is by creating an artificial *lack*, a *void*, that desires are drained, siphoned off into a vortex. The belief in the sacred history becomes thus the ideal expression of a material regime of desire that shapes it in the form of a systematic lack: the lack of the fall from paradise, the lack of a Messiah, which is always to come, the lack of a plenitude which is always announced, but never fully there.

The Hebraic state was, from the point of view of obedience, and initially at least, a remarkable success, insofar as it managed to bring the desires of the Hebrews as a whole in line with the desire of God as interpreted by the Prophets, and then in line with Moses as God's privileged interlocutor and interpreter. In other words, it succeeded in gathering, channelling and funnelling the desires of the Hebrew through the transcendence of the Law and the devotion inspired by prophecy. Its success was due primarily to its ability to create techniques of obedience, which shaped bodies and minds alike and which included: love of country, religious fervour (combined with hatred for other religions and states), regular and precise rituals and ceremonies, holidays and traditions such as the jubilee, practices such as charity, and, of course, all the commandments and prohibitions prescribed by the Law (*TTP* 224). In sum,



every single thing they had to do according to a specific prescript of the Law. They could not plough as and when they pleased, but could only do so at certain times and in particular years, and with one kind of beast at a time; they could sow and reap only in a certain way and at a particular time; their lives without exception were a continual *practice of obedience*. (*TTP* 224, emphasis ours)

And again:

Three times in the year they feasted with God...they had to cease from all work on the seventh day of the week and allow themselves to rest; and, besides these, other times were designated when honest enjoyment and feasting were not so much allowed as prescribed. I do not think that anything can be devised which is more effective than this for swaying men's minds. Nothing captivates minds more effectively than the cheerfulness arising from devotion, i.e. from love and wonder together. (*TTP* 225)

It is therefore through such a set of practices that affects were channelled, like in a hydraulic system where the flux is apparently free to flow, but only to end up within the boundaries of a carefully engineered system. We could refer to this set of rules, habits, and codes, the aim of which is to discipline the mind and the body, as a “regime of desire” and, more specifically, as a technology of the heart.

We are using the notion of “regime” in a manifold sense, which ranges from the political to the medical, through the sexual and the dietary. What unifies them is the body, which, as we have seen, is the same as the mind for Spinoza's ontology, but expressed through a different attribute. The central role of the body is perhaps most visible in the passage on circumcision. According to Spinoza, this practice alone would have been sufficient to keep the Hebrew people separated from any other—so much so, Spinoza states with characteristic irony, that we could not exclude that, were the opportunity to present itself, “God will choose them again” (*TTP* 55). By writing the covenant with God in the body itself, circumcision simultaneously inscribes it deeply in the mind and thus becomes a most powerful and effective technique of government.

This is how, in the end, in the eyes of those wholly accustomed to this hydraulic discipline of desire, their situation “must have appeared to be freedom rather than slavery” (*TTP* 224). They ended up loving the Law, and desiring “only what was prescribed” (*TTP*

224). As a result of such practices of obedience, people end up seeing it as the expression of their own freedom, and are ready to fight for it, as if it were for their own deliverance. Furthermore, and more disturbingly, they enjoy obeying and desiring what is prescribed, which is another way of saying that they desire the desire of an Other (we will return to this specific logic of desire).

To be sure, the obsessive character of the Hebrew rituals was justified by their particular historical condition. But Spinoza clearly points out that the recourse to such a discipline is far from being a prerogative of the ancient Hebrews. Christian ceremonies, he observes, also “have [no] sanctity in them,” and are only instituted with a view to preserving the political community within which they were established (*TTP* 75). Similarly, the Chinese “zealously retain a kind of topknot on their heads, by which they distinguish themselves” from other people (*TTP* 55). In sum, the character of such rituals may vary from one society to another, but all societies have to rely on them, because every society needs to manage and control the instability of our affects.

### **3. The Economic-Neoliberal Siphon**

This is the lesson that Spinoza, by looking at the example of the Ancient Hebrews, applied to his own political world, in which, as we have seen, many radical Calvinists equally saw themselves as the “chosen people.” With a move that is perhaps not in Spinoza’s letter, but certainly in his spirit, we would like to apply now the previous considerations to our own time. What, if any, is the dominant configuration of desire in our western, late capitalist societies? The hypothesis we would like to put forward is that there is a deep analogy between the theologico-political hydraulics of desire, as described above, and the government of desire that characterise the market in contemporary capitalism. What we have called the siphon of desire works equally well, albeit differently, in the economic, and specifically neoliberal context. The similarity is, as we will see, structural and involves a lack that structures, orders and orients desire. The siphon of desire aims to produce a certain type of subject by shaping minds and generating habits, by encouraging one to *act* in a very specific

way. It corresponds to a specific way of “conducting conducts” and “encouraging behaviours.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, it is a technology of power, and one that has more features in common with the theocracy described in the *Theological Political Treatise* than with the paradigm of a political sovereignty centred around natural right and symbolized by the sword.<sup>20</sup>

The problem of the liberal, and specifically neoliberal governmentality can be expressed in the following terms: how—through what techniques or technologies—can desires be enrolled and federated? How can we be *made to consent* and align our own desire with that of Capital? What better way than by drawing on the supreme motivation, or what is taken to be the supreme motivation, that is, pleasure, or, more precisely, the promise of enjoyment? The market, as a technology of government and a specific assemblage of desire, does not operate only—and, in the case of liberal governmentality, not primarily—through fear (at least in the coercive, vertical or classical sense), but through enjoyment, or the promise of enjoyment, in the broad sense of the term, that is, as the hope of recognition, reward, and even love.

To be sure, the technology in question required new mechanisms and techniques, an entire reorganisation of desire and the production of new types of objects of desire, which differ from the theocracy that Spinoza’s contemporary aimed at installing, as much as the latter differed from that of the ancient Hebrews. But its ultimate aim is the same: it is to capture and govern human beings’ desire, that is, their power to act. Otherwise stated, it is not a question of governing—whether oneself or others—*against* one’s passions, of dominating, controlling or eradicating them, according to strategies that could be described as ascetic or materialist, but of governing oneself *with* and *through* one’s passions. The market, we wish to argue, is the space in which desires are thus set free, but also funnelled, channelled, and captured, in short, siphoned off.

In this respect, the liberal political economy is the new superstition, which in the name of a supposed “rationality” introduces and justifies the existence of the market. Markets, which existed before the emergence of political economy, are, as Foucault rightly emphasises, subjected to an epistemological transformation as a result of the emergence of that discipline. From a place of “jurisdiction,” which bore the mark of the sovereign, and

expressed his law, the market becomes a place of “veridiction,” with laws that are now ascribed to human nature and to the market as a quasi-natural field, governed by human passions and interests: “Just as the physical world is ruled by the laws of movement,” Helvetius writes, “no less is the moral universe ruled by the laws of interest.”<sup>21</sup> Put in nutshell, whereas the superstition that governed the theologico-political nexus was that of the divine law, with its promise of a paradise to come, that governing the market are the supposed laws of human nature, with their promise of worldly pleasures and satisfactions.

Within this narrative, it would be unreasonable, therefore, and altogether pointless to seek to govern (whether oneself or others) by going against the laws of human nature. What is required, rather, is a proper and complete understanding of the laws in question, which alone can decide what will constitute good and bad government. Quite logically, good government will be seen as allowing the maximum amount of space for the free expression of those laws, which themselves, insofar they are laws of nature, *spontaneously* tend to produce a state of balance, equilibrium and happiness. And the market is precisely presented as the space in which this spontaneous order can unfold and human nature flourish. This is how, in the words of Adam Smith, and once the idea of the “invisible hand” (or “Providence”) has been adopted, it is possible to affirm that even the “natural selfishness and rapacity of the rich,” with their “most frivolous desires,” “their own vain and insatiable desires,” actually contribute to the common good.<sup>22</sup> In other words, it can no longer be a question of governing oneself in spite of, or even *against* one’s “frivolous” desires, but *with* them, or according to them.

In practical terms, this means that, in the economic, and specifically neoliberal regime, desires are governed, but in the sense of being *managed*. The central question is no longer one of knowing what it is legitimate (or not) to desire, but what can generate the highest degree of satisfaction for any *individual*, how to best govern not “subjects” or “citizens,” but “individuals” who are naturally moved by their own desires, and who recognise as their true “sovereign” the principles of pleasure and pain. The problem of governmentality becomes thus an *economic* problem; and the “science” of economics, and the object it seeks to understand and predict, namely, the market, define the solution to that problem. Precisely to the extent that it is now invested with an efficiency and a rationality

that is carried out, paradoxically, by individual interests, desires and passions, the market is seen as the principle, the model and the form of *good* government, and of the state itself. The market, therefore, so long as it is not interfered with directly, is perceived as a *spontaneous* producer of satisfaction, a natural vehicle for the increase of pleasure.

That is the reason why, in such a domain, defined by *sponte acta* and a natural course, governmental intervention must be kept to a minimum (“Be quiet!”). Governmental reason is now required to follow the laws of individual *interests* (interest is now a plural), of social utility and economic profit, of the balance of the market and the regime of public power. It is now caught up within what Foucault calls the “phenomenal republic of interests,” and freedom is identified with the freedom to follow one’s passions in the market place, the fundamental mechanism of which is *competition*.<sup>23</sup> In their Draft Statement of Aims, published in 1947, the founding fathers of neoliberalism, gathered in Switzerland at a place called Mont Pèlerin, made this connection very clearly:

Individual freedom can be preserved only in a society in which an effective competitive market is the main agency for the direction of economic activity. Only the decentralization of control through private property in the means of production can prevent those concentrations of power which threaten individual freedom.<sup>24</sup>

It is no longer a matter of governing *because* of the market, and the situations of inequality it can generate, but *for* the market. Neoliberalism requires *both* this maximalist conception and practice of governmentality, for which the role of government is to accompany, support, facilitate, encourage the market economy, *and* this absolutely minimalist conception of the state. The state is to play no direct role in the economy itself; it is not an actor, or a decision maker in matters pertaining to the economy. But it plays a decisive role in providing the *conditions* for its exercise, and its expansion.

This general and constantly growing economic framing of desire has led to a transformation of the meaning of subjectivity itself, and the birth of the *homo economicus*. The *homo economicus* is the subject who has internalised the values of management and competition to the point of making it a principle of conduct of life itself, of his or her *own* life. In short, he has become the *entrepreneur* of his own self, or the self that produces itself through entrepreneurial techniques. The aim of the neoliberal technology of government is to

allow each and everyone of us, every individual, to recognise and experience him or herself as a manager, albeit of him or herself, of his own home, property, family, body, and mind. The worker is no longer defined by his or her labour force, but by his or her “skills” and “human” capital, which now includes one’s genetic inheritance (“genetic capital”), cultural background and education (“cultural capital”), and even looks (“erotic capital”).<sup>25</sup> The idea of a labour-force, which needed to sell itself at the market price to a capital that would be invested in a firm, has been replaced by the idea of skills *as* capital, which receives an income in return for its services.

Through the figure of the entrepreneur, and the theory of human capital, it is precisely the difference between labour and capital that is erased. And, to quote a commentator, “the opposition between capitalist and worker had been effaced not by a transformation of the mode of production and distribution of wealth, but by the mode of subjection, a new production of subjectivity.”<sup>26</sup> The worker is no longer compensated for a quantum of force that he or she expresses, but for an (essentially libidinal) investment that he or she made, and continues to make—for example in education, now a service industry selling skills that are negotiable in the market economy, and in need of regular updating and upgrading. There is no longer anything like a pure salary: salaries themselves are viewed as income, and by that we need to understand a return on investment in human capital broadly defined. And insofar as the investor-consumer generates her own satisfaction or utility in that way, she is also a *producer*. Human capital, Schultz writes, is “*human* because it is embodied in man, and *capital* because it is a source of future satisfactions, or of future earnings, or of both.”<sup>27</sup> In other words, “man” is the producer of his own enjoyment. Every worker is an agent or subject engaged in the same activity, that of the maximisation of the utility function, and in that respect equivalent to any other activity.

Capitalism has proved remarkably adept at creating techniques and technologies to capture, channel, package and sell our libidinal energy, such as marketing, communication and advertising. Those techniques required a new discipline and effort, which Paul Mazur of Lehman Brothers once expressed very candidly, or perhaps cynically, in an article from 1927, published in the *Harvard Business Review*:

We must shift America from a needs- to a desires-culture. People must be trained to desire, to want new things, even before the old have been entirely consumed. [...] Man's desires must overshadow his needs.<sup>28</sup>

Advertising was crucial in enacting that shift, in that, according to a specialist and former director of the General Motors Research Lab, it is nothing other than “the organised creation of dissatisfaction.”<sup>29</sup> More recently, AIDA, an acronym for Attention, Interest, Desire, Action, was invented as a communication model used by firms to help them sell their products and services. But one also and increasingly thinks of the computer technology which uses and capitalises on the extraordinary development of social networks, online videos, tweets, clickstreams and other “unstructured sources” by gathering, analysing and ultimately selling to other companies what is referred to as “big data,” and which a recent advertisement by IBM characterises as the “data of desire.”<sup>30</sup>

Yet if, through those new technologies, firms are able to understand, predict and anticipate the desires of their (actual or potential) clients, as well as generate new desires, desire also constitutes the internal mechanism or engine of the firm itself. It radiates through the firm as a whole, from its lowest echelons to its highest peak, and through the creation of new hierarchies and grades between those extreme poles (middle management, back office, intermediaries, etc.) to which corresponds a quasi-infinite list of titles (director, vice-president, president, CEO, CFO, etc.). As systems of desire, companies—and, increasingly, universities—also require the assistance of various techniques of “motivation” (such as seminars, conferences, trips and social gatherings, aimed at encouraging and consolidating the corporate ethos), “reflection” (such as coaching, performance evaluations, self-evaluations, and targets, aimed at improving productivity and competitiveness), and “recognition” (such as promotions or symbolic gestures through which members of the corporation feel valued, and even loved).<sup>31</sup> The bipolarity of the old schema has been replaced by the infinitely more nuanced and wide spectrum of a single Desire, by a series of stages or steps that one climbs patiently, by the ladder of the unifying Desire—the desire to maximise one's potential, or to obtain a maximal return on one's investment, by following the natural laws of interest-seeking and competition that are said to govern our behaviour. Finally, and as we already suggested, the model of the enterprise has been internalised and applied to life itself and as a whole: we are encouraged to comport and govern ourselves as

units of capital, for which we are responsible, and which require a never ending cycle of investment and return. Capital now defines the very *being* of the *human* being; it is the new anthropological paradigm.

To be sure, such techniques of subjectivation are different from the disciplinary techniques of, say, the military, the prison, or even the school. In a sense, they are more effective—that is, more productive and “rational”—precisely to the extent that they achieve their goals through consent and a softer *dressage*. But let us not forget that, ultimately, it is a question of *dressage*, that is, of making the multitude behave in a certain way, or of conducting its conduct. Specifically, it is a matter of producing “individuals” through the realisation and maximisation of their capital, of generating skilled subjects able to compete on the global market place. On the surface, and through the market, it seems that desire was freed, and that the market is precisely the expression of the multiplicity, the infinity, even of human desires. But it is of the utmost importance that those desires all work in the same direction, that each step or stage be a cog of the same mechanism, the desire of a unique, infinitely differentiated Desire—the Capital-Desire. This is how, already in 1972, Deleuze and Guattari summarised it: “The wage earner’s desire, the capitalist’s desire, everything moves to the rhythm of one and the same desire, founded on the differential relation of flows having no assignable exterior limit, and where capitalism reproduces its immanent limits on an ever widening and more comprehensive scale.”<sup>32</sup> In that respect, capitalism can be seen as the greatest apparatus of capture of desire ever invented, the greatest (and constantly evolving) force to have aligned the multiplicity of desires on a meta-desire. It is an apparatus that, following Lordon, we could characterise as “epithumosynthetic,” in that it manages to gather, federate and organise the majority of desires. But insofar as it also generates or produces its desires, it is also “epithumogenetic.”<sup>33</sup> At once federator and generator of desires, post-industrial capitalism has become something like the World Organisation of Desire (WOD).

Spinoza’s analysis of the dynamics of affects can help us to further disentangle how such a government of desires works. In the *Ethics*, he observes that, “if we imagine a thing like us, toward which we have had no affect, to be affected with some affect, we are thereby affected with a like affect” (*E* III, P27). This mimetic dimension of the dynamics of affects is



crucial to account for the phenomenon of competition, as well as for the convergence and homogenization of desires. With regard to the former, Spinoza says the following: “If we imagine that someone loves, desires, or hates something that we ourselves love, desire, or hate, we shall thereby love, desire, or hate it with greater constancy” (*E III, P31*).

Competition, therefore, does not only come from the mere desire to be different, but, more specifically, from the desire to be different within sameness. And, indeed, as Spinoza observes in the corollary of the proposition just quoted, “each of us strives, so far as he can, that everyone should love what he loves, and hate what he hates” (*E III, P31C*). Accordingly, we clearly see why the exercise of power through the imagination is the dominant form of government today, and why the so-called rationality of the economic discourse and the efficiency of markets presuppose this imaginary world. In other words, the practice of subjectivation through economic consent—a consent that results from precise and well-adapted techniques—is the contemporary face of servitude.

Paradoxically, we arrive at a situation that is the exact opposite of the one that is said to be the natural outcome of the market economy: the market, we recall, is supposed to be the place where pleasure and happiness are maximised. But the pleasure in question, and thus the form of desire it presupposes, is one that cannot and must not be satisfied. It *cannot* be satisfied, since, uncertain as we are about our future, we keep oscillating between fear and hope, in such a way that our relief from anxiety, and our enjoyment, can only be temporary. It *must* not be satisfied because it is precisely by fuelling such an uncertainty that the superstition of the market works, and its future is assured. Something like a Faustian pact is introduced through that form of power: the tap of desire is turned on and allowed to flow apparently freely, but only so long as its turbulent flow ends in the siphon of the master-desire, the desire as lack or void that can never be filled. By following the supposed natural laws of our human nature, we can reassure ourselves to be the new chosen people, who will one day be rewarded by income and happiness (if not salvation), but our promised land is one that is, by necessity, always “yet-to-come.”

The question, as Deleuze and Guattari emphasise, thus becomes one of “organising lack within the abundance of production,” or “precipitating desire as a whole in the great fear of lacking.”<sup>34</sup> Desire becomes, as Augustine would have it, “a land of want,” and the

economy its systematic organisation.<sup>35</sup> Yet, as we will now see, the morphology of desire as lack that underpins such a servitude is only an artificial construction, or superstition, if you want, which hides the fact that our capacity to desire is not the result of our constitutive lack, but rather the expression of our power (or *potentia*). Desire as lack must give way to desire as plenitude, or, to put it in more contemporary terms, the imaginary must give way to the real.

#### **4. With Spinoza, Towards a Different Morphology of Desire**

With his analysis of the mechanisms which lead people to fight for their own servitude as if it were their own deliverance, Spinoza's conceptual apparatus allows us to both criticise the current regime of desire and move towards a different morphology. In fact, the critique of the morphology of desire as lack is possible because, as Spinoza shows by drawing from his theory of the *conatus*, and thus from his ontology, the morphology in question is an artificially introduced negativity that reverses the original movement of desire, which is not towards lack, but rather an expression of the plenitude of being.

Let us begin with the critique. As we have already mentioned, the fear that underpins the neoliberal regime is that of the transcendence of God, as in the theologico-political nexus. It is a far more diffuse and atomised fear: the fear of lacking in goods and services that others possess, the fear of not performing or competing, the fear of falling behind in the race towards the ultimate reward, which is no longer eternal peace and bliss in the afterlife, but income and the maximisation of one's potential. But it is equally a fear that is nothing but the other side of hope: the hope that, if we follow the laws, we will be ultimately rewarded. In both cases, the basic technique of siphoning off desire, that is, of creating a void or a lack from and towards which it can be oriented, is the same. The market is supposed to be the space in which men and women exercise their freedom, when, in fact, it aims to chain them to passions, to make them live (and think) like automata of production and consumption or, worse still, as entrepreneurs managing their "human capital." It is, therefore, primarily as a government of the imagination and of passions—of rivalry, jealousy, envy, fear, and ambition in particular—that the market "works" (like religion and politics); yet, this form of

governmentality through the passions, we are told, spontaneously generates the maximum degree of rationality and utility. In a way, therefore, the neoliberal regime of desire is even more based on superstition than the theologico-political one described by Spinoza: the latter is based on the imperative “you shall have no other God before me,” while the former adds to servitude the illusion of freedom. Yet, in both cases, we are actually obeying the imperative of desire as lack.

The crucial question, from a Spinozist point of view, is to know whether desire thus configured corresponds to activity, synonymous with a greater power or *potentia*, or to the reign of passivity, that is, of passions and inadequate ideas, under the hold of which one is less able or powerful. As should be clear at this point in the argument, the answer is negative. Along with much of the Western philosophical tradition, we tend to think that our ability to desire is the result of a primal and irreducible lack, constitutive of who we are. Within the Spinozist perspective, and as a consequence of his ontology, the opposite is the case: lack can only be secondary, artificially created and thus illusory.

Siphoning and draining off our desire in the form of a lack means subjecting it to external forces and thus, ultimately, to powerlessness: under an “economic” regime, which requires lack and negativity in order to operate, desire is in fact weakened and diminished, and leads to the opposite of what it seeks naturally. Servitude is ignorant and blind desire, abandoned to itself in what it imagines to be its own spontaneity, but which is in fact only its submission to external forces. The passivity of affective life along with the sadness and toxicity that usually accompanies it are thus a result that contradicts and frustrates the fundamental movement of desire, which is the pursuit of joy, or the increase of one’s power to act. The economic “system” in which, for the most part, and increasingly, desire currently unfolds is based on the pursuit of a goal—a quantity—that is ontologically *unachievable*. As such, it leads to a joy that is only ever temporary and underpinned by sadness, one to which, remarkably, and as Spinoza makes clear, metaphysics seems to have resigned itself by saying that it is inevitable or, worse still, deserved.<sup>36</sup> But the goals of philosophy and adequate ideas are to convert sadness into real joy, dearth into excess, passion into action and to liberate life so that it can deploy its own freedom. Such is the meaning of Spinoza’s *œuvre*, which rejects

the morality of transcendent values and the metaphysics of powerlessness, and adopts instead an ethics of the joyful modes of existence.<sup>37</sup>

The project of liberation in question arises from within the analysis of affectivity itself, specifically from the point of view of *active* affects. It should therefore not be mistaken for a liberation from desire itself (an impossibility for Spinoza), but as the freedom from desire insofar as it is under the grip of imagination or, to be more specific, fantasy and superstition, as involving an inadequate idea.<sup>38</sup> It is not through free will (no such thing exists for Spinoza) that the mind can oppose the passions, but through desire itself. This means that it cannot be a question of dominating one's desires through exercising one's will, or through some ascetic practice (of which we can find many examples in the history of Western philosophy and spirituality), but through the sole *energy* of desire, remarkable in that it is able to *transform* itself (which does not mean *sublimate* itself). One desire can be confronted and overcome only by another, more powerful desire, which means by the idea of a greater joy associated with a fuller life. The transition from servitude to freedom is thus not the result of an appeal to transcendence or free will, but the fruit of a deepening of desire itself. The difference between the two lies in the ability to act, rather than receive life passively, that is, to live in the knowledge of its causes and the affirmation of its necessity. A bad regime of desire, that is, a regime based on superstition, fear and anxiety and which inevitably diminishes the power (*potentia*) of human beings, cannot be overcome through a negation of desire, but through a different regime based on an adequate knowledge. Such is the reason why superior types of knowledge, such as reason and intuitive science, can open the path to the highest "virtue." It can bring desire to its highest expression and its greatest joy. When, through knowledge, joy has reached such a state of freedom, autonomy and independence that it is possible to speak of "salvation" or "glory," it is known as "beatitude."<sup>39</sup> At that point, the individual feels a "sovereign and permanent joy" and enjoys in this enjoyment of being (*fruitio essendi*) a certain kind of eternity. This free relation of the individual to itself and the world is also known as the "intellectual love of God." That desire properly understood and realised ultimately coincides with love is perhaps the most beautiful lesson that can be drawn from Spinozism.

What are the consequences of this inversion for the dominant morphology of desire as we have defined it? First of all, desire is not defined by its object, but instead defines its object. There is no (transcendental or transcendent) object of desire that structures and defines desire. There is no noumenon behind the phenomenon of desire. There is only a *subject* of desire. What does this mean? It means, first of all, that the subject produces itself as a desiring subject, or that desire is constitutive of its essence. But it also means that the subject *produces* its own object: “we neither strive for, nor will, neither want, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary, we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it” (*E III*, P9S). Spinoza replaces the logic of lack, loss, even intentionality and fulfilment, with a logic of production.

This means, as Deleuze insists, that, like consciousness, desire is not first and foremost, or primarily, desire *of* something, but that it *is* something: it is a transitive *act*, the manifestation of a *power*, the *expression* of an essence, and not a passion, or passivity itself.<sup>40</sup> There is a genesis of being (or of the object) through desire, and not a genesis of desire through a lack of being. This, in turn, confirms that lack is never primary, but always introduced artificially, constructed, imposed by external forces, as in the hydraulic system of a siphon. But it also means the following: there is no object that is good in and of itself; there are only objects (or subjects) in which we invest our desire. Consequently, the only question is one of knowing what those objects are, how they become invested in a particular way, and whether they indeed fulfil their goal, which is to increase one’s power to be and act, and therefore one’s joy, or whether they generate sad affects. If the latter is the case, then, according to the Scholium to Proposition 9 of Part III of the *Ethics*, the object of desire can easily be changed: there is no fixed, structural or transcendental object of desire, but only a dynamic of desire.

Secondly, if desire is not limited a priori and negatively by its missing or evasive object, it cannot be limited positively either: because desire, as signalling the unity of the substance and the essence of the human, produces its own object, there is no way of saying, in advance, how far it will go or what form it will take. To characterise desire as the distinctly human *conatus*, or as the specific effort to persevere in its own being, is not the same as to define it

negatively, that is, in terms of what it is lacking in, as if it could aspire to be something other than what it is—other than the specific power and potentiality that it is.

To persevere in one's being simply means to realise one's essence or increase one's power to act. The real and only question is, up to what point? How far can desire go, given its own essence? How can it maximise its own power and, in so doing, increase its joyful affects? If the life of desire is not oriented towards an impossible object, it is not oriented towards homeostasis, or pure conservation either.<sup>41</sup> Because it cannot, even at its maximal degree of expansion, coincide with substance as such, the human *conatus* is not unlimited (hence the emphasis on the *quantum in se est* in the passage quoted above, which introduces Spinoza's theory of the *conatus*). Yet, because substance is not transcendence, but pure immanence, its modes—including human beings—are not signs of its degradation or fall, but an *expression* of its power and necessity.<sup>42</sup> Because substance is *expressed* (as opposed to imitated or emanated) in its attributes and its modes, the latter do not limit or diminish it. If substance is said of everything that is, including itself, it is said in one sense, and one sense only. There is, therefore, no degrees of separation from substance and no hierarchy within beings. Instead, we find something like a flattening or an anarchic levelling of beings; and where there is no chosen or superior being, there is no fallen or lesser being either. Difference must not be mistaken for distance, nor expression for degradation.

Finally, it follows from the two previous points that desire is not necessarily a passion, or essentially passive. As we have already mentioned, whereas desire is constitutive of our own essence, the notion of “affect” signals the ways in which the affections of our bodies and mind either increase or diminish our *conatus*, and thus our desire. In other words, affect (*affectus*) is not something that happens to an already constituted subject, but that through which the subject constitutes itself. Furthermore, this process of affection (*affectio*) translates into a more or less sad or joyful state, according to the degrees of passivity or activity involved. When we are affected in a purely passive way, we fall prey to the sadness of passions that diminish our *potentia*, and thus our desire. By contrast, active affects increase our *conatus*, and thus our desire. As the essence of the human being, desire is the very expression of the connection between the attributes of thought and extension.

However, this also means that desire is not opposed to reason, and need not, contrary to what an entire philosophical, spiritual and moral tradition has asserted, come *under* the rule of reason. Reason cannot be an instrument to tame desire, because it is desire itself or, even better, an active affect that increases our *potentia* and thus our desire. This is essential to understand the ethics of the *Ethics*, and the idea that knowledge/thought is an ethical enterprise. There is no doubt that, from the point of view of the perpetuation of our own existence, knowledge has a crucial role to play. This, however, does not mean that human beings desire in order to know, or even, as Aristotle and the entire philosophical tradition after him have claimed, that they desire to know *by nature*.<sup>43</sup> Rather, they seek to know in order to realise their desire. Reason does not so much tame our desire as increase it. It is because knowledge increases human beings' power to act and to be that they desire to know. Desire is essentially a desire *to be*, and not to possess. Such is the reason why, in Spinoza, the ascetic *morality* of desires, which can be traced back to Greek and Roman antiquity, gives way to a *right* or an *ethics* of desire understood as “power” or “virtue.”

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, let's return to the quotation from Curtius we mentioned at the very beginning. We hope to have shown why “nothing governs the multitude as effectively as superstition.” But we also hope to have shown why, in Spinoza's own words, “it is easy for people to be captivated by a superstition, but difficult to ensure that they remain loyal to it” (*TTP* 5). Whilst the first proposition speaks to the ease with which we allow ourselves to be governed by our imagination, rather than our reason, the second proposition speaks to the necessity of inventing and sustaining technologies of affects that tame their instability. But we also showed that the two forms of government of desire above analysed are fundamentally based on an artificially generated lack, which we referred to as the siphon of desire: it is by creating a void that drains off our desire that both the theologico-political and the economic-neoliberal regime of desire can govern.

However, if Spinoza is right in asserting that the desire that is constitutive of our very essence is not one of a lack, but one of abundance, there is no reason to believe that the flow of desire can ever be captured entirely. Ultimately, this is the reason why, where there is power, there is also resistance: the organisation of lack by a transcendent form of power, however secure and totalising it may seem, is fundamentally vulnerable. Every apparatus of power is an apparatus capable of capturing desire; every form of governmentality corresponds to an investment of desire. But the flow of desire can take directions that we cannot predict and that power structures themselves cannot control. In other words, as long as it continues to flow, no siphon, however effective, will ever be able to absorb it completely.



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<sup>1</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. R. Hurley, M. Seem, and Helen R. Lane (London/New York: Continuum, 2000), 31.

<sup>2</sup> We have used the following editions of Spinoza's works. For Spinoza's Latin works, Benedict de Spinoza, *Opera*, ed. Carl Gebhardt (Heidelberg: Winter, 1925), 4 vols. For the English translations: *Theological Political Treatise*, trans. Michael Silverstone and Jonathan Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); *Ethics*, trans. Edwin Curley in *The Collected Works of Spinoza* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); *A Political Treatise*, in *A Theologico-Political Treatise, and A Political Treatise*, trans. R.H.M. Elwes (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2005); *Spinoza: The Letters*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Along with an old tradition associated with La Boetie and anarchist writers, one could summarize this dilemma with the concept of "voluntary servitude," but we prefer to avoid such a formulation since for Spinoza there is not such a thing as the will. Note, on the other hand, that in the very first sentence of the Preface of the *Ethics*, Spinoza defines servitude as a form of impotence, or a lack of power (*impotentia*). Part IV of the *Ethics* later goes on to demonstrate how servitude is impotence as such, and impotence the inability to control (*moderandis*) and contain (*coërcendis*) one's affects (*affectibus*).

<sup>4</sup> Curtius, *Histories of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, ++date), Book 4, 10.

<sup>5</sup> On this point we are indebted to Michael A. Rosenthal, "Why Spinoza Chose the Hebrews: The Exemplary Function of Prophecy in the *Theological Political Treatise*," in *Spinoza: Critical Assessments*, ed. Genevieve Lloyd (London: Routledge, 2001), Vol. III, 245–81.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Hippler, "Spinoza et l'histoire," *Studia Spinozana*, (2008), Vol. 16, 155.

<sup>7</sup> On the definition of the multitude and its political relevance, see Etienne Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, trans. Snowdon (London: Verso, 2000); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), *Multitude: War and Democracy*

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*in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2001), and Martin Saar, “Multitude,” in, *Encyclopedia of Political Theory*, ed. Mark Bevir (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2010), Vol. 2, 912-14.

<sup>8</sup> As Bove emphasizes, a certain reliance on the imaginary is necessary because it is *vital*, that is, born of our effort to persevere in our being: to be accepted, the chaotic and threatening reality that we experience immediately requires its own image, its own code, which we then take to be reality itself, precisely because it is able to introduce order and meaning in the world. So, as Bove says, what is negative and objectionable from the point of view of Reason plays an important role from the point of view of life’s effort to perpetuate itself. This, however, does not mean that all codes are equally illusory and poisonous. See Laurent Bove, *La stratégie du conatus. Affirmation et résistance chez Spinoza* (Paris: Vrin, 1996), Chapter 7.

<sup>9</sup> As a consequence, as Hippler notes, historical knowledge can indeed play an important ethical role, insofar as it can enable us to increase our collective power by distinguishing between different historical interpretations and making them accessible to free consent (“Spinoza et l’histoire,” 158).

<sup>10</sup> Among those who have insisted on this aspect of Spinoza’s notion of affect, see Hasana Sharp, *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalisation* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> The latter is therefore chosen as the lesser evil, as we will see later on (*TTP* 200).

<sup>12</sup> This argument is also the basis of Spinoza’s justification for democracy insofar as is not a simple form of government, but the very constitution of the society itself, so much so that a total alienation of natural right, such as the one described by Hobbes, is for Spinoza impossible. See the opening of Chapter 17 of the *Theological Political Treatise*, where Spinoza claims that even the democratic transfer of natural rights described in his previous chapter is merely “theoretical” because no one will ever be able to transfer his power and consequently her right to another person in such a way that she ceases to be a human being.

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<sup>13</sup> This hydraulic metaphor seems to us particularly appropriate given the centrality of the dynamics of fluids in Spinoza's project as it emerges in the so-called "little treatise on physics" that appears in Part II of the *Ethics*.

<sup>14</sup> On Spinoza's definition of imagination, see Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present* (London: Routledge, 1999), 12; Thomas Hippler, "The Politics of Imagination: Spinoza and the Origins of Critical Theory," in *The Politics of Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 55-72; and Chiara Bottici, "Another Enlightenment: Spinoza on Myth and Imagination." *Constellations*, 19.4 (2012), 1-19.

<sup>15</sup> Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974-1975*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2003), 49.

<sup>16</sup> Louis Althusser, "Spinoza," in *The New Spinoza*, ed. W. Montag and T. Stolze (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 8. For the sake of completeness, we note that Althusser also mentions Pascal on this point. On the notion of ideological state apparatuses, the obvious reference is Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 127-86.

<sup>17</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985).

<sup>18</sup> See, in particular Chapter 5 of the *Theological Political Treatise*. On Spinoza and the secularization of the notion of sacred history, see Yirmiyahu Yovel, "Spinoza on History and its Secularization," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, 34 (2013), ++Page range.

<sup>19</sup> Michel Foucault, "Deux essais sur le sujet et le pouvoir," in *Michel Foucault: Un parcours philosophique*, ed. Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Paris: Gallimard, 1984). Another source of inspiration in what follows is Frédéric Lordon's *Capitalisme, désir et servitude. Marx et Spinoza* (Paris : La fabrique éditions, 2010), which describes the market, and specifically the world of enterprise, in terms of a specific government of affects.

<sup>20</sup> See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), Vol I, 136. Foucault uses the same expression (and develops exactly the same argument) in

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*Society Must Be Defended*, trans. David Macey (London: Penguin, 2004), 240. In contrast to what Foucault seems to suggest, we do not believe that there has ever been a time in history where sovereignty expressed itself only as a pure power of the sword, but for our purposes it is sufficient to distinguish between the two paradigms as ideal types.

<sup>21</sup> Claude Adrien Helvétius, *De l'Esprit* (1758-59) (Paris : diffusion Inter-forum, 1973), 60.

<sup>22</sup> Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), IV. 1. 9 and 10.

<sup>23</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 48

<sup>24</sup> From the Draft Statement of Aims of the Mont Pèlerin Society. Cited in Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe, eds., *The Road From Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 22-23.

<sup>25</sup> Although the idea of “human capital” first appears in 1902 in Gabriel Tarde’s sociology, it is usually attributed to Theodore W. Schultz. See, for example, his *Investment in Human Capital: The Role of Education and of Research* (New York: Free Press, 1971) and *Human Resources* (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1972). Another strong proponent of the theory of human capital, also from the Chicago School, is Gary Becker, *Human Capital* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).

<sup>26</sup> Jason Read, “A Genealogy of Homo Economicus,” *Foucault Studies*, No 6 (2009), 33.

<sup>27</sup> Schultz, *Investment in Human Capital*, 48.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Mazur as cited by Norbert Häring and Niall Douglas in *Economists and the Powerful: Convenient Theories, Distorted Facts, Ample Rewards* (London: Anthem Press, 2012), 17. In a book published a year after his article, he expressed the same idea, before adding that human nature “very conveniently presents a variety of strings upon which an appreciative sales manager can play fortissimo”—strings such as “threats, fear, beauty, sparkle.” Paul Mazur, *American Prosperity: Its Causes and Consequences* (New York: Viking Press, 1928), 44 and 47.

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<sup>29</sup> See Juliet Schor, *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure* (New York, Basic Books, 1991), 120.

<sup>30</sup> See “From Details to Desire: The Power of Big Data,” *Financial Times* May 4/ 5 2013.

<sup>31</sup> For a more detailed description of those techniques, see Lordon, *Capitalisme, désir et servitude*, 127-30.

<sup>32</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 259.

<sup>33</sup> See Lordon, *Capitalisme, désir et servitude*, 75.

<sup>34</sup> G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie. L’Anti-Œdipe* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), 36.

<sup>35</sup> This is the expression used by Augustine to describe his own concupiscence as an adolescent: “I slid away from thee, and I went astray [*defluxi abs te ego et erravi*], O my God, from thee my Stay, in these days of my youth, and I became to myself a land of want [*et factus sum mihi regio egestatis*]”; from Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. William Watts (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1919), Book II, Ch. X, 95.

<sup>36</sup> See, in particular, the opening page of Part III of the *Ethics*.

<sup>37</sup> As Gilles Deleuze rightly emphasises in Chapter 2 of *Spinoza: Philosophie pratique* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1981).

<sup>38</sup> Although for Spinoza imagination is clearly the only source of errors and passions, it is not necessarily false. He goes so far as to say that the mind can increase its own potentia by imagining in a more or less powerful way (*E III*, P12). For a more general discussion of the possible contribution of imagination to the liberation and human freedom, see Hippler, “The Politics of Imagination” and Bottici, “Another Enlightenment.”

<sup>39</sup> This Glory (*Gloria*), which is that of God himself, should be distinguished from the personal, ambitious and proud glory that Spinoza characterizes as a sad passion. This is the



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name that the Sacred Scriptures gave, not without reason, to “the constant and eternal love of God and God’s love for men” (E V, P36S).

<sup>40</sup> See Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Athlone, 1992), 56.

<sup>41</sup> Beyond conservation, life seeks what we could call health, that is, a process of overcoming and expansion. This means that life—including human life—is not the result of a primordial lack, but of an abundance, is not reactive, but active and creative: it invents solutions to problems that arise; beyond its ability to adapt, that is, to modify its relation to its environment (in a way that a machine can), it displays an ability to transform itself from within, by inventing new structures and introducing itself entirely within the axiomatic of vital (and by that we also mean social and political) problems.

<sup>42</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1992), Introduction.

<sup>43</sup> See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 980a21.