Gilles Deleuze

Seminar on Spinoza: The Velocities of Thought

Lecture 08, 27 January 1981

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Translation by Charles J. Stivale (duration: 2:26:15)

Part 1

At 11:30, someone alert me; I have to go to the main office. So, we'll have a break at 11:30. Don't forget to give me your forms if that applies to you. [*Pause*]

Here's what I would like to do today, and I would like you to understand that, today, we have a sort of dual object; we have a double goal. I mean to move forward into the problem where I was the last time, namely, once we've said that, according to Spinoza, we leave, we are born, we are as if thrown into, subjected to conditions of existence, meaning that everything indicates that, in the end, we cannot make our way through this. We are subjected to a kind of encounter with external bodies; so, there is very little chance that many of these will suit us. On the contrary, there is every chance that out of the number of external bodies acting on us constantly, fairly constantly, there will be encounters with bodies which do not suit us, that is, that decompose our relations.[1]

So, how do we manage to pull through in the end, not only from the point of view of knowledge -- since we are in conditions of absolute blindness, bodily shocks, encounters with unpredictable bodies – therefore, not only from the point of view of knowledge, but from a point of view of life itself? And for Spinoza, it's the same. Knowledge is really a way of life. How to act so that, very quickly, an aggressive body, a poisoning body, does not decompose us, does not destroy us? This is the common problem of knowledge and life.

You can already see: Spinoza has his own distinction among philosophers of the 17th century. It is that, like all, like all 17th-century philosophers, Spinoza will say very well that, of course, we have potential, we potentially have true ideas, adequate ideas, clear and distinct ideas. And no doubt, all the philosophers of the 17th century, when they said that we have true ideas, that it was in this way that we are reasonable beings, they knew very well that this was not given by itself, all ready to go. They knew very well that it took a very singular effort that they called a "method" to manage to conquer what we already had, namely so-called innate ideas. These true ideas, which were called innate ideas, were, in fact, ideas that had to be conquered according to a certain method and a certain wisdom. That does not prevent Spinoza, I believe, from putting a particularly strong emphasis on this: perhaps, although true ideas are innate ideas, from our birth onward, that does not prevent everything from separating us from them, everything separating us

from them. As a result, the conquest of what is innate takes on for Spinoza an aspect that truly mobilizes all modes of living.

So, it's that point [that is first], but I said a double goal today because, at the same time, I would almost like, not at all to assert, but pose some questions on this: what are the possibilities from Spinoza, that Spinoza gives us, regarding a modern problem or one which has again become very current in certain modern philosophies? And we will see how the two are linked; that is, as a result, I would like at the same time for you yourself to feel what I have emphasized, making a relatively precise comment on Spinoza as to the first aspect of the question, but as to the second one, almost seeing instead how Spinoza can be useful to us regarding a problem which seems to us to be a modern problem.

What is this modern problem based on which I'd also like to consider Spinoza's text? This modern problem, it's what we can call semiology, something that has returned so strongly today, and by semiology, we mean, overall, the theory of signs. And why then might we think in advance that Spinoza would have something to tell us about the project of a general semiology? From whom and from where did this modern semiology project come? It obviously came from a very important current which is so-called Anglo-Saxon philosophy, but particularly a very great English philosopher – who, alas, is translated very little in France -- and who is called [Charles Sanders] Peirce, [Deleuze spells it out] Peirce who is really a very bizarre, very deep philosopher. You can only find one book translated as fragments in French at Éditions du Seuil under the title *Writings on the Sign*. And indeed, at the same time as Saussure, Peirce made a theory which he himself called semiology.

Why do I name Saussure in the same era? Because he is very important, if only for the basic difference, because Saussure had a very simple principle. I'm not saying he doesn't complicate it; he complicates it greatly. But Saussure's very simple principle is roughly: signs are, above all, a conventional entity; signs are a conventional entity. Signs are a conventional entity, this allowed him to distinguish -- I'm not saying at all that it was his thesis alone -- it is a kind of starting point which allows Saussure to situate his semiology. That means that the sign has a conventional relationship with what it signifies, an institutional relationship and not a natural relationship. That is, a natural relationship, what would it be? It would be a relationship of resemblance, a relationship of contiguity. But there, it is a purely conventional relation. I decide through convention that a particular word refers to a particular thing. You see, this is the famous principle of the arbitrariness of the sign. Once again, I'm not saying this is Saussure's theory; I am saying that it's Saussure's starting point for distinguishing between the domain of signs and other domains. So, the conventional nature of the sign.

What interests me already is that when Peirce, at the same time, launched his great semiology -- this is not at all meant against Saussure, by the way; [Peirce] has his own problems -- he is not content at all with this conventional character even as a way to delimit roughly the field of signs, the domain of signs. And in fact, there is a remark which struck many linguists afterwards, which seems to me very important in considering our problem. It's this: when you have a word, for example, "bull", that the word "bull" designates the thing with horns and which ruminates and -- what is it, what is the bull's cry? -- which bellows, the bull bellows, that's a pure conventional relation. Obviously, we could look here for an onomatopoeia at that time; it would be a natural

relation. If we eliminate the onomatopoeia, it wouldn't go with "cow": "cow" there is no onomatopoeia, it's even impossible to find one [*an onomatopoeia*].[2] Cow designates this thing, a conventional relation. Is this true?

Many linguists have nevertheless pointed this out: that if you take the word, it has a double relation. You will soon understand why I am going through this long detour. If you take a word, it has a double relation. A double relation with what? It has a relation with the designated thing, with something designated. The word cow designates the cow. This relation, maybe I can -- maybe, let's say, at the point we've reached in these very simple premises -- I can say, it's a conventional relation. And indeed, in another language, cow is not said as "cow". So, fine.

But a word is not only in a relation with something designated. A word, as we say, has one or several signifieds. What is that? Imagine a language -- because there are some like this -- that has two words to designate a live bull and a dead bull. It's not the same word, a live bull and a dead bull. What's designated is the same, a live or a dead bull. But there are two signifieds, there are two words. In other words, you understand, it's very simple: even if we say that between a word and what it designates there is a conventional relation, that does not necessarily mean that there is a conventional relation between the word and its signified. Why? Because the divisions of the signified do not exist before the division of words. The signified is divided according to the same laws as the words themselves. We'll say that there is isomorphism. In technical terms, we will speak of an isomorphy of the sign and the signified. This goes beyond the conventional relation. In other words, even for conventional signs, it is doubtful whether one can define their constitutive relations as conventional relations.

So why am I saying that? Let's accept that "conventional" is a pretty bad approximation of the nature of the sign. How then will we define the nature of the sign? This is where I am reflecting on Spinoza in this way, provided that this means understanding the consequences. I am maintaining at the moment that the problem is outside Spinoza. We'll see that maybe it's not. Let's pretend that the problem is entirely outside of Spinoza. And we tell ourselves, nonetheless, there are texts by Spinoza, so let's try to extract them from their context. What would he say, Spinoza, about the status of the sign? Well, progressively, or randomly from the texts, it seems to me that he would say three things. First, it will get complicated; he would say three things, and you will see that the conventional characteristic is only a consequence of these things and not at all the main determination of the sign.

So, I see a first kind of text from Spinoza where he insists on the variability of the sign. Perhaps the conventions result from it. But he tells us: signs are strange; each thing calls for its own. What sort of specific texts am I referring to? To the texts by Spinoza precisely where we realize suddenly that I'm not attributing a problem to him that would be forced, which would, in a certain way, be legitimate to question a 17th-century philosopher, even if he has something to tell us about it, that it's not in order to reproach him for not having seen the problem, but rather, to recognize that he did see something. But this is even more than I've done since I am at least certain that as soon as I start saying variability of the sign, Spinoza had fully encountered the problem; by what means? By means of the problem of writing, that is, of the Holy Scriptures. The problem is the interpretation of Scripture, namely the interpretation of the Old Testament. And so, after all, if he devoted a whole book or at least the major part of a whole big book, one

of the only ones he published during his lifetime, the *Theological-Political Treatise*, to this question of interpretation of the Old Testament, which is the problem that I'm attributing to him, in fact, this is no longer a forced problem, because how would it be possible for him not to encounter fundamentally the problem of signs?

And in fact, we can say that, in a certain way, the *Theological-Political Treatise* is a book of innovation -- even today, from the point of view of a biblical criticism -- it remains a book of astonishing innovation because I believe that it has a method that, in the end, nobody has taken up except perhaps, once again, -- hence the link I'm making -- except from among those who are called the English positivists today. But he also has genius, I think. And after all, I'm making historical shortcuts here. Peirce, about whom I was telling you we should take seriously, and where does he come from? When he develops his whole theory of signs, to what lineage does he lay claim? He lays claim to the Middle Ages. And the Middle Ages, in fact, developed extraordinary theories of signs in all directions. And were there to be a crossing point, because Spinoza is very familiar with the theories of signs from the Middle Ages, and thus if a crossing point were there between recent semiology and certain Spinozist problems, that should no longer surprise us.

And I am thus saying the first characteristic that Spinoza established for the sign, it is the opposite of a fixed state, namely, the sign's fundamental variability. I am saying: each thing calls for a sign, and the signs of one differ from the signs of the other. What is a sign for you is not a sign for me. It's already in this way that the domain of the sign -- you see -- very roughly will be distinguished -- these are the very simple things from which we have to start -- will be distinguished from the world of the laws of nature. The laws of nature do not vary for each person; rather, the signs vary for each person, according to the temperament of each person.

What does this mean? Who knows? I ask for a sign, and all of us are constantly asking for signs. But what is the critical situation? In everyday life, we keep asking for a sign: "tell me you love me", it means, "give me a sign." "Oh my! you don't love me; what's wrong? Why are you looking at me like that? What did I do to you?" This is the life of signs. "You look like you're in a bad mood, you look like you're in a bad mood"; "No, I'm not", the other says; "Yes, yes, you seem to be in a bad mood." "Shit, I don't look like I'm in a bad mood! No, I swear." "Yes, you do, you do look like you're in a bad mood," etc. etc., and it starts there. We are in the realm of this fundamental variability of signs: "No, I didn't signal you" (*te faire signe*). "Yes, you did, you signaled me " "Ah, did I signal you?" "Stop it!" Fine, here we are. Who is it, who collects this kind of situation? So, this is a dimension of our daily experience. We live like that; that's why we have such bad lives. And it's from all this that Spinoza is going to remove us, and it's from this that by being Spinozists, you will be able to get yourselves out. But really, that won't be happening any time soon.

So, you understand, if this situation is widespread in our lives, we don't even notice that we are spending our time, that we are like children. It's children who ask for signs all the time. As they are condemned to signs themselves, they make signs; when they are hungry, they start crying; it's really a world of signs. It's terrible. What does the baby mean? Is he happy, isn't he happy? Is this believable? We never escape from this life. We never get out. When you're in love, it's the same; when you're religious, it's the same. "God, God, God, send me a sign." Maybe this is one

of the foundations of our belief. Maybe in our religious belief, when we have any, we collect, we gather all these scattered moments of signs that we call for left and right, and then, in one go, we ask for a great big sign that would make a huge sign for us: [*Laughter*] "God, send me a sign."

And in fact, the man of the sign is the prophet. And that's how Spinoza defines the prophet. The Jewish prophet is the man of the sign. In what form is he the man of the sign? You see, we are all Jewish prophets in our lives. The Jewish prophet, he only elevates to a higher power what we all experience, namely our calling for the sign. He raised it to such a power that all alone, face to face with God, but turning his face away from God, he said: "Give me a sign." And the relationship of God and the prophet is transmitted through the sign.

And in a splendid chapter in the *Theological-Political Treatise,* Spinoza said -- even if you only read that, read the chapter on prophetism; these [pages] are beautiful. -- For those interested in the question, the bibliography is not long because, of course, there are many very beautiful books on prophetism and especially on Jewish prophetism, but if you want to gather a very precise familiarity at the same time with the problems of Jewish prophetism and yet not devote your life to this question, there are two fundamental books to my knowledge: *The Theological-Political Treatise* by Spinoza -- there are two or three chapters on the prophetism which are a wonder – and, on the other hand, a book of a French Jewish thinker, very, very beautiful, a thinker called [André] Néher [*Deleuze spells it out*], and the book is called *L'essence du prophétisme* [*The Prophetic Existence,* (1955)].

So then, I'm returning [to the point]: the prophet calls for a sign; the prophet has a relationship of signs with God. And each prophet calls for a special sign which is necessarily adapted to him. You see, that's like the first characteristic of the sign; I'm not going far, but this allows me to gather at least some concrete situations. It is in this semiological path [that] we will avoid defining the sign through the conventional nature of the sign, because it is not a, how would we say, pertinent characteristic, conventional characteristic; when there is convention, that will result from other characteristics.

The first characteristic that we will retain is the variability of the sign as opposed to the constancy of the natural law. It's not complicated; it's even crystal clear. A second characteristic, if I search in Spinoza's *Treatise*, so I located the main texts on the level of variability, that's what he says about prophetism.

Second characteristic: this would be associativity, the associativity of the sign, that is, the sign -- and here too, it is simple; this is what I would like you to feel, that to do philosophy and great philosophy as Spinoza does, it is sometimes necessary to say extraordinarily complicated things and sometimes to cast an absolutely new light on some really childish things -- to speak of signs, these are variable. It doesn't seem to take us very far, but if it allows you to gather together all kinds of things, already this takes us quite far.

The second equally rudimentary characteristic is the associativity of the sign. What does this mean? It means that the sign is an element which is always caught within chains of association. So, you see that henceforth, this second characteristic is a little deeper than the previous one. Why is it a little deeper than the previous one? It is deeper than the previous one because, no

doubt, the fact that the sign is always caught within or inseparable from associative chains will explain that it is fundamentally variable. Because, necessarily, if the sign is inseparable from the associative chains in which it enters, it will vary with the nature of the chain.

And it is there, it is at this second level, that Spinoza situates language. It would even be very, very curious as a definition of language that we could extract from Spinoza. He would not define language as a system of conventional signs, once again, not even as a system of signs. He would define it more precisely: language is not the sign, but the associative chain into which the sign enters. What one must call language would be the set of associative chains into which signs enter. What does this mean? There, Spinoza again tells us childish things. There is an association between the word and the thing, for example, between the word apple and the fruit -- he himself chooses the example of the apple -- between the word and the fruit, there is an association. It does not matter whether this association is conventional or not, we're no longer concerned with this. In this case, it's a conventional association, okay, but it's an association. But what matters is that we must not isolate it, precisely, this association, because what matters, if you isolate the association between the word and the thing designated, you do not see the fabric, the network of deeper associations between the thing designated by the word, on one hand, and on the other hand, by other things.

And you cannot think of language, never can you think of language on the level of an isolated word. You can't think of language at the level of the relation. And here, that remark would go rather far. You cannot think of language at the level of an isolated word and the thing designated by that word. You can only think of language at the level of the relation between words insofar as they relate to relations between things. And at that point, there will be isomorphism between the relations between things -- there is perhaps, if you like, a conventional relation between words and things, but there is isomorophism between the relations between words and the relations between things -- yes, that's perfect as a formulation. I mean, in the end, it's clear. This is why "conventional" is not interesting as a way to define the sign. In any case, you have an isomorphism if you take the relations between words and the relations between things.

And precisely, these associative chains that unite things as we unite words, what are they? We can see how they are variable. [*Pause*] They are variable, why? [There's] an example by Spinoza in book II of *Ethics*, and it is a very beautiful text which seems very simple, but it is necessary to be wary about language. He says: a peasant hears the word horse. The word horse is already caught within an associative series with other words, and these word relationships are isomorphic, isomorphic to the relations of things, namely: the peasant who hears the word horse thinks, according to Spinoza, he thinks field, plowing. We are in an extremely simple, rudimentary domain, but again, it seems to me that already the thesis which is outlined through it is very interesting. When you give examples in philosophy, they always have to be childish, otherwise it doesn't work.

So yes, but what if he is a soldier? He's not thinking of a field, of plowing, when he hears the word horse; he thinks of inspection, war, putting on his breastplate, etc. So, ultimately, it is not the same word since it is caught up within one case, and in the other, it is caught within two completely different associative chains. So, the sign is what is inseparable from associativity.

You see, if it is variable, it is precisely because it is inseparable from associativity. So, I would say the second characteristic of the sign is: associativity.

You see, we have moved forward, I would say, more precisely now: conventional is only... an abstract and derived characteristic of the sign. The real characteristics, the real characteristics of the sign are: first, variability; second, associativity; and third, what is it? [*Pause*] The peasant: horse, associative series, plowing, field, horse, plowing, field. What can break the associative chain? What can do so? I don't know what. Plowing, field, God willing; there is always a "God willing". There is always so much of "God willing" that it wasn't by chance that, earlier, I was going from daily variability to prophetic variability. When I said: we live in such a way that we don't stop calling to one another for signs, we quickly learn that our very own signs are always to be started up again, so we would like a sign that reassures us. This sign is one that nobody in the world can give to us except the creator of the world. So, from these scattered signs, we passed on to a divine sign, the prophet, the situation of the prophet.

Here, at the level of associativity, we almost find the same thing: horse, plowing, field, oh yes, God willing, that is, if it doesn't rain tomorrow, I can plow. -- No? I don't know; can one plow when it rains? [*Laughter*] I don't know. -- That works for the harvest; "I can harvest if it doesn't rain tomorrow, God willing." And the warrior: "Ah, obviously I'm riding my horse to win the battle, but God willing." As an associative chain is wide open, it can always be interrupted, it does not have its own guarantee. So, I call for a remedy, I call for a sign of signs, just like the prophet called for ... [*Interruption of the recording*, 32:37; *cassette change*]

Part 2 (duration 46:46)

So there we have God as the great laborer or God as the great warrior, and in one case, his justice will be the justice of plowing and division of lands, and in the other case, it will be justice of the battle field, it will be the justice of the warrior; and in one case, I would say: "God has a sword", and in the other case, I would say: "God has his plow". And in one case, I would say: "I am the humble ear of wheat"; and in the other case, I would say: "I am the warrior of God". Okay, what does that mean, "God is the great warrior", "God is the great laborer"? I understand that this is not literal; I am not as stupid as that, I the peasant, I the warrior. What do I mean when I say, "the sword of God"? I understand that God does not have a sword. So, what do I mean, what am I raving about, since I know it's not true?

From another perspective, I maintain that this is true. I mean, I maintain that God has an *eminent* sword. Eminent, what does that mean? And if I am a pastor who leads his flock to the mountain, I say that God himself is the highest mountain -- see the texts in the Old Testament --, that God is "the mountain of mountains". Okay, but I understand that it is "eminently mountain". What does that mean, "eminent"? As Spinoza says cleverly: "if the triangle could speak, it would say that God is eminently triangular". [*Laughter*] Eminently triangular, what does that mean? Here he has something in mind, Spinoza; he's not joking around. He's addressing people who, obviously at that time, understood very well what he meant. Well, this question is one that has always arisen, and from the point of view of a theory of the sign in the Middle Ages, this was one of the fundamental problems of semiology of the Middle Ages, namely: how can we speak of God?

What can we say about God? It would seem that God is such that all language is canceled out at [God's] approach. There is no "speaking of God"; [God] goes beyond anything one could say.

So, to some extent, I can only say one thing about God: what [God] is not. I can say: it is not square, it is not this, it is not that, it is not, etc. "[God] is not": this is what will be called "negative theology". I can speak of God only in the mode of negation. Can I say God exists? Even at the extreme, I would say -- and how far the mystics have gone down this path -- at the extreme, I would say: "God does not exist". Why would I say, "God does not exist"? Because God goes beyond "existence" in as much as it goes beyond the triangular figure; and "existence" is such a predicate that it remains inferior, inadequate to [God]. So, literally, God does not exist. Or if I say God exists, I will say, "Yes, [God] exists, but eminently". Eminently, that means, literally, in a higher sense, in another sense, in a higher sense.

But then, was it true what I said earlier about negative theology, namely that it speaks of God only by negation? It tells us what God is not, and it cannot say anything other than what God is not; I cannot even say: "it is good, God", [God] is so far beyond goodness. Okay, but this is only a first aspect of negative theology, because I say through negative theology what God is not. Okay, but what it is not is what it is: "it is what it is not". How does that work, "it is that what it is not"? Answer: yes, it is eminently what it is not, it is so "eminently", that is, what it is not in a sense, it is, "eminently ", that is, in a sense superior to the sense that it is not. God does not exist; that means God exists, but precisely it exists "eminently", that is, in another sense than all the existences that the world presents to me, in a "superior" sense. God is not good; that means it is good, but it is good in an eminent sense such that all the goodness of the earth gives us only a very vague idea since [God] is infinitely good, and we are familiar with good things only as good things according to their finiteness. You follow me?

So, here we have negative theology inventing a whole language in which negation is affirmation because affirmation is eminent affirmation. Consequently, the sign, the words of this language, will basically have several meanings. [*Pause*] And here again, let's go back to the most everyday situation. You see, each of these dimensions of the sign has two aspects: daily life and the exceptional situation. If the negative theologian represents the exceptional situation from this point of view, well, in our daily life, we do not stop -- words have several meanings, words have several meanings, they have many meanings – so, I spend my time when I speak saying: ah, yes! okay, but in what sense are you saying that? Let's go back to negative theology, which, ultimately, is like the magnification of this situation. You see, I have three daily situations with three magnifications. I'm not saying that, in his works, Spinoza is so systematic, but I'm saying everything is there.

In fact, let's return to this third characteristic. In that case, I am saying, there is no limit within the language of negative theology. And that can inspire the most beautiful poems: God is a mountain, God is a scent, God is a sword, understanding the implication: it is not a scent, it is not a sword, it is not a mountain, understanding that what [God] is not, it's what it is, but it is "eminently" so, that is, in another sense than the common sense, than common meanings. God is a mountain, but an eminent mountain, that is, that all the mountains of the world, even the Himalayas, give us only a confused and truncated idea; an infinite mountain, "it is an infinite mountain", "it is an infinite sword ", etc., etc. So, this language of negative theology plays on the

common, everyday fact that words have several meanings, and simply pushes things to the extreme, and what is this extreme? It is the existence of an infinite meaning and a finite meaning in the case of theology, the things which are relatively good and God who is infinitely good, things which have a degree of perfection and God who is infinitely perfect, and we will use the same word because we still have to understand each other well, for these different meanings.

And at that point, a language is woven that is basically going to be, depending on the accents that you put there, a language of "equivocity", namely, a sign having several irreducible meanings, or a language of analogy, a sign having meanings that are without that relation. Equivocity is exactly a sign with several meanings, unrelated to each other. "Good" is not said in the same sense of God and the creature -- you constantly find this in the theology of the Middle Ages; you see how this theology is bound to come up against this problem of signs -- Or else the language of analogy, but from a certain point of view, it amounts to the same thing, whatever the differences, namely a word has several senses; these senses are not unrelated to each other, that is, have analogical relationships – an analogy, of what type? What infinite goodness is to God, finite goodness is to man. You see, we will propose a kind of analogy of relation in order to have some kind of law. In other words, analogy introduces a certain rule within the relations of equivocity.

So, according to tendencies within the Middle Ages, you have authors who insist on the equivocity of words when they are applied to God and to the creature. That would be, if you will, very roughly, it would be, for those who know a little about these currents, that would be the tendency of Pseudo-Denys [the Aeropagite], of a mysterious author called the Pseudo-Denys. Or else you have authors who emphasize analogy, that is, a certain rule within equivocity, an analogy of relation, and that is the tendency of Saint Thomas [Aquinas]. But in any case, theology is inseparable from this: the equivocity of words. And you see that this belongs fundamentally to [theology], and that is why Scripture has always been inseparable from a problem of the interpretation of Scripture. In what sense?

And it is necessary that theology pose this problem of signs, of the equivocity of signs, since its fundamental problem is in what sense we can attribute, can we attribute the same predicate to God and to the creature, and on what condition: provided that it is taken in two directions unrelated to each other, provided that it is taken in two directions having a certain relation with each other. Or else what? Theology has never considered either of these two solutions. So, I would say that the third characteristic of the sign is equivocity, equivocity or analogy. [*Pause*]

If I am only summing up what we've acquired here, I would say this -- ah, yes! I am developing a kind of summary although it is very simple, but it is precisely to insist on the simplicity of all this -- I would say: to some extent, in connection with Spinoza, we give up defining the sign by its nature, by a supposed conventional nature. That's not what it is; that's not what it is that allows us to define the sign. On the other hand, three characteristics allow us to define the sign, but these three characteristics have, in each one, two dimensions: a daily dimension, if you will, and an extreme dimension; that is, a daily dimension, a relation with things; an extreme dimension, a relation with God. As a result, you can eliminate one of the two dimensions, but the other remains, but so that's functioning at every step.

First characteristic: variability. The daily dimension, really what is happening... Our life, our life, as our life, does not cease being a matter of calling for signs to one another; we never cease calling for signs. On the other hand, the extreme position, the "prophet" -- not on the contrary – the extreme position, the "prophet", the relationship with God is precisely calling out for a sign of the signs. This is the aspect of variability.

Second aspect: associativity. Here too, the ordinary field, daily existence, is each word that I use can only being defined by its associative chain. The extreme situation, henceforth, there is a sign of signs, namely God as guarantor of an associative chain: "God willing". This time, it would be the attitude, if you will, not of the prophet exactly, but of the "one who prays", of the prayer "ah, God willing".

Third characteristic: signs have an equivocal meaning, that is, any sign has several meanings; the extreme situation, the "theologian". The same word is not said of God and creatures in the same sense: negative theology. [*Pause*]

At least you know, if you compare [this] to what is being said today about the sign, if you grant Spinoza these three [characteristics]... What is being said today about the sign, if it you happen to read or some of you may know Peirce who goes very, very far in his analyses, the starting point in Peirce seems rather worse to me than these starting points in Spinoza. This triple definition of the sign seems very strong to me: variability, associability, and equivocity.

So, what does Spinoza want? Suppose that, for reasons that are his own, he doesn't want all of that; that he is saying to himself that life is not worth living if that's what life is. And this is not simply a problem of knowledge; it's really a problem of lifestyle, living like that, living like that, without ever ceasing to call out for signs which, by nature, are ambiguous signs. Well then, no! It's not good if ..., If there is a truth, it's not within this that we can find it. But this is a sad life, you know, a very sad life, if you think about our life because... [*Deleuze does not finish*]

And in the end, what will Spinoza call the first kind of knowledge? This is life according to signs. I don't see any other means, like what he calls the first kind of knowledge, this is, in fact, very, very mixed, and seems... He invokes many very different examples; the only thing that makes unity of what he calls the first kind of knowledge and which is, in fact, a kind of ignorance, which is not, in fact, a kind of knowledge, which is, in fact, our sad situation, when we don't know, eh, well, it's the sign, it's the sign that gives coherence to what Spinoza calls the first kind of knowledge. And I am saying: why isn't it worth living if it's living like that? There is so... I am saying that, insofar as I am making Spinoza speak because there are, on the contrary, people – imagine that! -- there may very well be people who say: but this is precisely… there would be no poetry without that, there would be no poetry without the variability of the sign, without the associativity of the sign, without the equivocity of the sign. And that's what makes the world a world of light and shadow, and that's the depth (*fond*) of things.

And after all, theologians of negative theology, who were sometimes geniuses, lived in this atmosphere of a world of light and shadow. They even multiplied the words to fix a specific kind (*espèce*), or to approach what they called the "phenomenon of depth". Moreover, they multiplied the words -- in what sense? -- since "depth" already is an equivocal concept, and they had to

indicate the equivocity of the concept "depth", of the word "depth". There was a God of the depth, there was a God of the shadows, and a God of light, and the God of the shadows was a God of wrath, wrath. And the God of light was a God of glory; but the God of wrath, of depth, was even more God, it was a more fundamental God than the God of light who was already "form" to it [God]. And all that will inspire some splendid texts at the edge of mysticism and philosophy, for example, the texts of Jacob Böhme. This will be found in Romantic philosophy, in the very great German Romantic philosophy of the 19th century, in the splendid texts of Schelling where language develops all the way to the end its power of equivocity, in which equivocity is no longer at all grasped from a Spinozist point of view as a defect in language, but on the contrary, as the soul of poetry in language, and the soul of mysticism in language.

So, there, I'm not at all maintaining… I said, well no, Spinoza would not even understand what that means; he would not even understand in the sense... Well, if we told him that, he would say ... There is no point in even saying that to him. Imagine, that doesn't concern him, that doesn't concern him, it's not his problem. He thinks, but why does he think that, that life would not be worth living there, in this kind of muddle, this nocturnal muddle. It's very odd; here we have a philosopher of light.

All, all the philosophers of the 17th century, we will have to ask ourselves -- but I believe that we will not get to this until next time -- try to define these philosophies of the 17th century, so that we feel closer to them, so that we don't have the perpetual impression that Descartes, Malebranche, all that, is over. What did they achieve? What did they not achieve? What made the position of the 17th century no longer possible today, so strong nevertheless, that they offer us things and continue to be currently significant? What happened between the 17th and the 19th century? This is all ..., but what did they achieve? Otherwise, if we don't answer that question, I mean, these are philosophers who will always remain for you, even if you admire them, who will always remain a dead letter. They achieved something that became impossible afterwards, surely not at all because it was out of date, because philosophies are like that, that's how they last, that's how they change. They don't change like that because of a vague whim of a thesis, "I have a thesis", that's… You have to be very young to wake up one morning and say to yourself, "I have an idea". No, it never happens like that; you never have an idea, it doesn't happen like that. So, what was going on in the 17th century that allowed them to develop a certain language which afterwards was no longer ...? [*Deleuze doesn't finish*] Once again, it's not that they were out of fashion.

It is that, in fact, why all these words which have become empty words for us, "clear and distinct", "the clear and distinct idea", "natural light" -- there too then, I am preparing for what we will do in the second semester, on painting -- is it by chance that it's at the same time, in the 17th century, that painters really discover -- I would say, to be very basic -- discover light? Before, was the light not known? Yes, of course it was known. But what we discover in the 17th century, in a very general way -- there, I am telling you things... -- it is indeed a certain independence of light as regards form, in relation to form. Everything happens as if light becomes independent of forms, so that a painting of pure light becomes possible. The famous example, or the extract of this painting of pure light, is known, it's Rembrandt, and even the Late Rembrandt, not… Fine. But Spinoza, I suddenly think that, in a text that I have already pointed out to you, I believe there, the text by Claudel, by Paul Claudel, *The Eye Listens*, the very

beautiful text on Dutch painting, itself makes the connection with Spinoza. Perhaps what these painters do achieve in painting, Spinoza does so in philosophy, that is, what was underlying throughout the 17th century, the enterprise of bringing thought to a kind of pure light.

"Thinking within the light", what does that mean? It sounds so verbal, all that. You understand, if you are open to these somewhat emotional, somewhat sentimental echoes, you can no longer even read a text by Descartes on "the clear and distinct idea" while telling yourself, "clear and distinct," he says it like that in order to say "true". It's not true that he says, "clear and distinct" to say "true". He says "clear and distinct" because he brings along a conception of truth, one that he does not invent. But why, before, were they not speaking of "clear and distinct"? Why does it start with the 17th century? We used to talk about it, "clear and distinct"; you can perhaps find it in Saint Thomas's works, in contrast to "obscure and confused". There is the Cartesian "clear-distinct" couple which is opposed to "obscure-confused". Fine, what does that mean? So, we were harangued so much [about] philosophy being so unfortunate to be caught by... -- and there, I'm only adding one more to everything else – it whined so much due to all the directions that it went through. You understand that "clear and distinct" has been swallowed like that; we tell ourselves: "Good, fine, a Cartesian notion", "clear and distinct", "natural light", fine! But for them, it wasn't like that. For them, it was not a way of saying "true"; it was a way of radically transforming the concept of truth, namely the true, this was what was clear and distinct, that is, the true was what was luminous.

So, it's the same story; notice that it's exactly the same story. I can say Aristotle, so he returns from very far back. Aristotle, how did he define the true? Basically, it doesn't matter, he has a very complicated conception of truth, but Aristotle defined truth by "form". With Descartes, you will still find the word "form," but lo and behold, form has become entirely subordinate, literally, I would say, to intellectual luminosity. As a result, it seems to me, I really did not force things to say that this is the same story as in painting. I mean, the field that 17th century painting will discover, or will promote or invent, it's the technical means to make light independent of forms. The philosophy of the 17th century, in its theory of truth, will define truth by a light, a luminosity, which obviously breaks with Aristotle's formal conception. Ultimately, it is the forms which depend on light; it is no longer light which follows the forms. [*Pause*] There is a guy who compared -- so here, I am making a parenthesis within a parenthesis... it doesn't matter…

A student: It's 11:30.

Deleuze: It is 11:30; I have to run an errand then. I'll just finish this point: there is a guy who compared very, very well, a German critic who compared church interiors, 16th century and 17th century, understanding that the church interior is a common theme; it's a contemporary theme in painting. There are a lot of painters who have created church interiors.[3] So, he compares 16th and 17th versions; it's very, very striking, the distribution of kinds of light inside a church. In the 16th, we see -- here, I am saying very general things; we should look at each particular case -- but quite generally, we could say something like this: in the 16th, the distribution of kinds of light and shadow can be very scholarly; it is at the service of forms, that is, even in the shadows, an object retains its shape.

See what that means? Even in shadow, an object keeps its form; it is very striking in the 16th century. Shadow, in fact, they do not have chiaroscuro yet; the chiaroscuro techniques come in the 17th, it will be part of the 17th; it's not that they were incapable of it [in the 16th]: they are great painters. It's not a question of being able to or not; they have nothing to do with chiaroscuro. Their development is so greatly, it's so greatly a problem of form -- which does not mean simply drawing -- color, light is subordinate, is a treatment of form, shadow as well, which means what? I would say, roughly speaking, which means that this is a space -- and it will be very important for us -- this is a space that must be called "optical-tactile". In fact, if the object in shadow keeps its form, it is obviously through a tactile connection. Do you follow me? And indeed, the entire painting is optical, obviously, since this is painting, but with tactile referents: contour. Hence the reign of the contour, in particular, is a tactile referent in an optical world. So, as is said, this is a tactile-optical space.

What do they do in the 17th? They do one thing, so one might regret… -- you understand, it's here that tastes take on meaning; we can always say: well, I'm sorry, yes, but provided that you know what the topic is; otherwise, tastes at the level of "me, I like, I don't like" do not matter. You have to say what you like and what you don't like -- And we can indeed regret [losing] this tactile-optical world, because the 17th is going to embark on something a little crazy. When we say they are reasonable, that this is the age of rationalism, yes, but rationalism is pure madness. They are going to embark on -- I am saying this about painters for the moment, while being quite ready to consider later if this is not the same for philosophers -- because for painters, they are going to move into ... Listen to me, this enterprise seems prodigious to me: the constitution of an exclusively optical world, that painting drives out its tactile references, that the painting does not pass any more through any tactile reference, this is a crazy idea!

Why is this a crazy idea? At the same time, it's a very reasonable idea, that is, painting is for the eye, so it has no need to flirt with the tactile. With the pure eye, painting will be pure visibility, but precisely what is it that pure visibility makes invisible? This is what makes tactile referents invisible, starting with contours. Painting of light, things will no longer be painted; light will be painted; ultimately, they continue to paint things, sure. But more important than the painted things, there is light. Fine, this can be Rembrandt, this can be Velasquez, this can be many, many [painters], but this great painting known as Classical, in fact, if we use "Classical" in the sense of something well digested, do you realize? Because, after all, no longer painting things in their tactile referents, but painting pure optical space, if I hadn't said all of the above, I might as well tell you, I believe, and maybe you would agree, I might as well tell you, that's what modern abstract painting wanted. Fine, in fact, modern abstract painting wanted to establish -- maybe that's what is happening all the time -- modern abstract painting wanted to establish a purely and exclusively optical world, to eliminate all of the world's tactile references.

Okay, if that's it -- and after all, there are enough statements by Mondrian moving in that direction and others -- if that's it then, what does that mean? Yet they don't paint exactly like Rembrandt; no, they don't paint like Rembrandt. No doubt they are undertaking this initiative on other bases. What has happened in the meantime that causes the initiative to "establish an optical world" to be undertaken on other bases? That doesn't matter; that would take us a lot of time, so we'll see it later.

But I'm just saying, now let's go back to philosophy. And I again am making my plea: when you find "clear and distinct" in Descartes, "natural light", etc., place yourself in the context of the readers of the time. Don't tell yourself that these are ready-made formulas: "ah, yes! Descartes, he is still going to annoy us with 'the clear and distinct idea'", etc., "this is so well known". It's well known because -- we've spent enough time on this; it's like going from comment to comment to comment to comment, everything gets lost. And again, I am saying, you have to be aware that we've added one more [comment] -- But I am telling you, let's take this literally, that is, in the same way as the painters of the 17th claimed to do, claimed to raise painting to the power of a pure optical space without tactile reference, 17th century philosophers claimed to constitute a pure mental space, a purely optical mental space.

That's why we're always told: Descartes, he destroys Aristotle's forms. It was Aristotle, we are told, with the "substantial forms". "Substantial forms", even if you consider the word, even if you don't know a word about what Aristotle means by "substantial forms", this is obviously linked to tactile referents. It is the relationship between form and matter, and all the examples of Aristotle are, at least many of Aristotle's examples, are examples linked to work, namely the form of the bed -- the carpenter who gives form to the bed, taking wood and giving it the form of this or that, the form of the violin, the form of the bed, etc., -- [it's] this activity of information that defines the substance by Aristotle.

It is said that the Greeks were painters. It is said that the Greeks lived in the light. That's wrong, that's wrong, that's wrong. Everything that is said about the Greeks, we can say in advance that it's false, I don't know. [*Laughter*] So they lived in the light? Not at all. The word "eidos" is invoked among them; the word "eïdos", everyone tells us, however, that it's a complicated word, because it means at the same time "form", "essence" and "what is seen" (*le vu*) -- what is seen --, the appearance (*apparition*). It is true that the Greeks invent a certain light, but I insist on this, it is not at all a pure light. The Greeks' artistic space is not at all an optical space; it is still typically a tactile-optical space.

Do you know who will be the first artists to have invented a purely optical space by expelling all the tactile references, if, once again, you agree that the same initiative, apparently, the same one can be undertaken at very, very different levels? Well, it's the Byzantines; you'll have to wait for Byzantium. It's mosaic painting in particular; it's mosaic painting which gives off a pure light, but which does not emit it in some mystical way, for which all the technical processes ensure that light takes on an independence compared to form, that is, form becomes purely optical. An optical form is a form such that, precisely, light is independent of the presupposed form; [form] is born from light.

And it seems to me, we must wait for the Byzantines to have the idea of a pure optical space. I am not at all saying on this matter that the 17th [century] copies the Byzantines, any more than I would say that abstract painting copies the 17th and the Byzantines. Although between Byzantium and abstract painting today, it seems to me that there are extremely disturbing relationships. But, but, but, but, but, what ... For example, in Kandinsky, it is obvious that between abstract painting and Byzantine art, there is a resumption of a kind of tradition very, very ... [*Deleuze does not finish*] And I am saying that they are the ones who invent this. Before

them, I see no pure optical space. So, some strange things have to take place to have this very curious idea.

And I am saying Aristotle..., take the Greeks, let it be Aristotle in philosophy. The form "eidos" is not at all pure optics; essence is not pure vision, it is tactile vision, it is a sight-touch mixture. And from an artistic point of view, if you take the Greek temple, the Greek temple, it is absolutely not pure light. Greek architecture is not at all... Byzantium yes, Byzantine architecture would be an architecture of light; Greek architecture is an optico-tactile, or tactile-optical architecture.

So, fine, well, I am saying the same thing about the problem of truth, and in the end, that's all I want to say. In the 17th century, realize, it's pretty great: what allowed them to do this? So there, I say, it's up to you, on this you can say... "well no, simply, it disgusts me"; you can say that "this painting of light doesn't interest me". But know, at least, why it doesn't interest you. It's because, at that moment, you are beings who do not pose their problems in terms of light. That's your right; at that moment, you will have other painters who suit you. And for philosophers of the 17th, it is the same effect, I tell you, it is the same effect. Here they are projecting thought, the activity of thought, within a mental-optical space. They invent for the mind a pure optical space, therefore, a mental space, of course, but a mental space conceived in an optical way. In this way, Descartes breaks with Aristotle. Because, once again, the "substantial form" in Aristotle is optical-tactile. Descartes's "clear and distinct idea" is, on the contrary, purely optical. Hence the question, what made this discovery of light and pure optical space possible in the 17th century? Hence the importance in the 17th of the problems of optics: Spinoza and his lens grinding for glasses, fine. But for Descartes, one of his scientific works is the *Dioptrics* [Dioptrique].

Furthermore, and in terms of optics, I believe that something is created which is also like one of the secrets of the 17th century. One of the secrets of the 17th century and its philosophies is that science and metaphysics are not in conflict there. They found a balance of science and metaphysics, and there, we must not be in a hurry to say that equilibrium is not good, because something allowed this achievement, this amazing achievement, that science and metaphysics had found a kind of equilibrium and balanced relationship. We're sometimes told, so much nonsense is repeated because, you understand, stupidity is not just when someone says something false; but this is much worse. It's when someone gives a mediocre interpretation of something true. [*Laughter*] So, we acknowledge something true; what's true is that philosophers of the 17th were both great scholars and great philosophers, and it is said, not without melancholy: "well, that moment is long gone". A reasons for this gets assigned, and obviously, the reason that gets assigned is ridiculous. Some maintain that science has become so difficult today that the same person cannot be knowledgeable (*savoir*) in both philosophy and science. This is grotesque; this is absolutely grotesque. This is stupid because you really have to develop a strange idea of 17th century science to believe it was simple. If you think about what they were doing at the time…

But, how do we explain, in fact, that in all the important cases -- even the guys who were not very, very scholarly (*savants*), like Malebranche or Spinoza -- there were two among the great philosophers of the 17th, there are two of them that are extremely scholarly: Descartes who, in

mathematics, is a great creator; in physics he is a great creator, fine. Leibniz, I'm not even talking about him. He's one of the greatest mathematicians who ever existed; in physics, it's amazing what he does, well, these are still extraordinary cases. Fine, but even Malebranche and Spinoza who, I think, have a background -- how to explain this -- that allows them to correspond with, for Spinoza, with people like [Christiaan] Huygens, or be very informed about Huygens's work, and very familiar with the work of the English chemist [Robert] Boyle, have correspondence with Boyle? And you can read the great letter to Boyle; in his correspondence, he speaks of extremely technical problems, and he is indeed perfectly knowledgeable. Could we, in fact, have a correspondence with a contemporary chemist? I think ... I don't know, maybe some of you could; I wouldn't understand what he would be telling me, okay. Okay, could we have...?

But the argument, "it's because science has become so complicated that it takes a lifetime of specialization," seems absolutely stupid to me, you know, so stupid that... Again, if you open a treatise by Huygens, it boggles the mind; you don't get the impression, as they say, "a worthy man (*honnête homme*) is capable of understanding this". [*Laughter*] If you open Leibniz's mathematical writings, don't even go there! You are going to have exactly the same impression as if you are reading a modern math book. Okay, so obviously it's not because science has gotten complicated that... I think it's something else entirely. It is because the 17th century had found, under conditions which it made possible -- and still we would have to determine these conditions -- it is because the 17th century established conditions of a fundamental balance between science and metaphysics that the same individuals could be great scientists and great metaphysicians.

And what was this balance? If I look for its immediate translation, I would say that this balance was located in the development of a "pure optical space" -- of course, I'm exaggerating, but I'm just indicating a direction -- a pure optical space, namely: the constitution of a geometrical optics which, in a certain way, was one of the rallying points of physics and mathematics, and a pure optical space which transformed the status of metaphysics and the whole theory of truth. Thus, pure physical, physical-mathematical optical space, and pure metaphysical optical space. As a result, "clear and distinct"... [*Interruption of recording*] [1:19:46]

Part 3

…the end of a 17th century, or the 17th century's own discovery, is, in fact, currently being questioned. The Age of Enlightenment, it seems to me ultimately, we must keep the expression; it isn't bad... The Enlightenment, the Enlightenment is a kind of inflection of the balance of the 17th century. And indeed, starting from the 18th century, there will be a sort of divorce which will continue to grow between science and metaphysics. That is, the master stroke of the 17th has been achieved forever, and at the same time, it cannot last. It cannot last. So, all I wanted to tell you…

Georges Comtesse: One remark on this is that for everything that speaks of pure optical space, we must not forget either, for example, [for] Descartes, it is the optical space that allows him, this pure optical space, to homogenize the dream with this space. That is, for example, Descartes is creating a science, that he has three incredible dreams that resurface in him, and it's inasmuch as he himself interprets these dreams, that is, makes them pass into this pure space, that the

homogenization of the nocturnal world of dreams with space allows the balance between science and metaphysics. And so, [Deleuze: Quite right] ... [this] allows physical science to continue by repressing for three centuries the science of possible dreams.

Deleuze: Very good, what happiness! very good, very good! Because I am telling myself, even in my concern to extend this philosophy-painting parallel, I am saying, in fact -- so just as I was considering earlier, referring to the interiors of the churches -- the theme of the dream in painting, you have to see how they treat it in the 17th century, the character who dreams, the theme of sleep, meditation etc., precisely, in relation to light; this constantly changes. The meditator of the 17th is not at all the same thing as the meditator of the 16th, nor of the 15th, etc., etc. ... Yes, but your remark is very, very correct. Yes, that's why they didn't have psychoanalysis, see? [*Laughter*] Ah, well, what balance they had achieved, eh! How shameful for us! [*Laughter*] Fine.

A student: I want to recall something very important in terms of discoveries in the 17th century. It is the following: it is the appearance of the world of the infinitely small which was drawn from the observations de Leeuwenhoek, and it is particularly an art to confront the 17th on the microscope where the implications for the study of nature had been the most developed. It is true that it remained marginal. Even in the last century, someone like Cuvier called the microscope "that useless flea-market mirror".

Deleuze: No, but, I'm sorry, you are much more correct than you maintain because if Cuvier does that, on the other hand, the people of the 17th century were not fooled, they were not mistaken. Leibniz was fully into the topic of the microscope.

The student: The entourage, let's say, of Spinoza's followers, for example: the activity was simmering with regard to the observation of ...

Deleuze: That's right, that's right.

The student: ... the observation. For example, in Leeuwenhoek's home, the visits of several personalities were observed, the King of England Charles II, George 1st, Queen Anne, Peter the Great of Russia, who visited him, and the serious technical problem [*inaudible word*] of Leeuwenhoek's microscope was precisely a human problem rather than the problem of lenses, because he worked only with the microscope.

Deleuze: Yes, yes, yes, yes. I am very happy because these two interventions were perfect, because they are really valuable, it seems to me, and indeed, you have just introduced a theme that will no doubt engage us next time, because we have not finished with this story of balance within the 17th, namely, the entire 17th, in fact, is dominated finally by "what is being thought"? It is dominated by a certain thought of infinity, which is absolutely not Greek, which in fact is truly the opposite of Greek thought.

And I'm just saying that the thought of infinity, whatever it may be, I mean, I am saying: the 17th is dominated by a thought of infinity in two senses -- think of Pascal – the infinite in all its orders, namely, in the order of the infinitely large and in the order of the infinitely small. Now, if

I ask the question: how is it possible to think of the infinite in the dual form, both the infinitely large and the infinitely small, that is, this whole Pascalian theme in which then, as well, in which Comtesse's remark would gather all its..., would reverberate within this, including the space of the dream, including all that you want, the answer seems simple to me. I don't understand why yet -- but we will see next time -- the thought of the infinite under all its orders, which brings together all its orders of infinity, which elevates to infinity, under whatever order it might be, it is precisely the deployment of an optical space. That's when the optical space finally frees itself from finite forms, -- I am giving the answer here -- that's why for the Greeks, this wasn't optical space. Greek light was not simply optical. Greek light ultimately was only experienced on bodies, like a kind of caress or aggression in relation to bodies. That is, what matters in Greek light is the contact of light with the body, with the temple, with whatever you want.

But light for itself, necessarily, light for itself is precisely the independence in relation to the finite form. So, the deployment of a purely optical space is at the same time the necessary condition for a thought of infinity, a thought of infinity under all orders, since as he has just said quite correctly, this will be both the question of light at the level of the microscope and the discovery of what they called at that time an infinitely small or else the mental space of the infinitely large, that is, the theology of light. This is what will weave this "philosophy-science" of the 17th century.

So, you understand at that level, to say as well: "Ah! They believed in infinity!" is just idiotic, I mean, truly idiotic; that even pains me. It's true that they believed in infinity. But in what way? They did not believe in infinity because the Church told them to believe in infinity! And when one creates bad history, you understand, when bad history has been written, things get presented like this. For example, at first, it was said that there were conceptions -- I am thinking of very simple books which always express this point of view -- at first, they discovered infinitesimal analysis, but since they weren't, since they weren't as intelligent as we were, they thought it was about the domain of the infinite, and they interpreted it in terms of infinitely small. And then in a second step, [this is] what is called a pre-scientific conception of infinitesimal calculus. And then a second moment would arrive, coming rather late, in which they realized that so-called infinitesimal analysis made no reference to the infinitely small, that it had to be interpreted in strictly finite terms, in terms of sets. Fine, when things get presented like that, nothing is clear at all, I think!

Well, at that point, it's easy; we seem to be saying, well, we have gone beyond the prejudices of the 17th century. Take… If they link the analysis of the infinitesimal to the infinitely small, it is not because they are stupid or insufficiently learned or because they lack scientific data that would allow them to do otherwise. It is by virtue of all the presuppositions which make them discover infinitesimal calculus. These same presuppositions which make them discover infinitesimal calculus cause them to think of infinitesimal calculus in terms of infinitely small since it is inseparable from this optical space. As a result, it's silly to make some..., it must be said rather, well yes, in each era, they had the secret of something, and the secrets do not stop being lost. The secrets of the paintings, the secrets of philosophy, thank God, they never stop getting lost, [but] it's not sad since we have others.

So, starting from our very own secrets, we can find something of the secret of the secrets in the 17th, exactly as in painting when we say: well, but what was that particular painter using as binder (*liant*)? What was he using? It's not clear; what was it? Or what glaze? How did he make his glaze? What was that all about? These secrets must be stated about the 17th century philosophers. So, you must not tell yourself, ah! They believed that infinitesimal calculus was infinitely small! You have to tell yourself something much better. They had the secret of linking it to the infinitely small precisely by the development of a pure optical space. That this is not our problem, that's quite possible, it's quite possible, but that we are still dealing with this problem, and today, that this problem rests on other bases, that's obvious. Fine, I have to go run my errand. Yes? [*Comments inaudible*]

Speak louder, I can't hear! [*Comments inaudible*] Perspective, yes, yes, yes. But there, that's so complicated, you know more than I do about perspective... I would say the same thing, that there are purely optical perspectives, and that the 17th century, the contribution of the 17th century to perspective, it is ultimately the discovery of a purely optical perspective because before, there are also perspectives. The Greek perspective, or the perspective known as the vanishing axis, that still seems to me to be a tactile-optical perspective, not a purely optical one. You know, you, maybe if you give some thought to this, and if you made a presentation the next time, that would be very good, on this: What is a purely optical perspective? Yes, eh? Think about it... Perspective by vanishing point, the vanishing point instead of the vanishing axis, what difference is there between [them]? But we would have to, that would lead us to define... But your remark is correct. I would translate it by saying that the problem of perspective in the 18th century… in the 17th century, must be linked precisely to this development of pure optical space… Yes?

Anne Querrien: [*Comments inaudible*] [Deleuze: I can't hear.] [*Comments inaudible*] [Deleuze: Completely, yeah, completely] It made me think of Nicholas of Cusa [*Comments inaudible*; *these comments apparently address something about Nicholas of Cusa on the planet Mars*]

Deleuze: Absolutely. I wonder there, in fact, Nicholas of Cusa, I was no longer thinking about him, but wouldn't that be a kind of hinge point? There are these hinge-guys, the Renaissance hinge, Classical age, very, very...

Anne Querrien: [*Comments inaudible*]

Deleuze: There, at this astronomical level, there, I don't know enough. But at the astronomical level, that would arise, the constitution of a pure astronomical space would emerge, of a pure optical space in astronomy.

So, we would have to start over again, but all that would be too tiring, because we would already have to start again with Greek astronomy, trying to show how the models of Greek astronomy have tactile referents. I am sure it would be possible. It's not an optical space, their astronomy. Oh, yes! We should do that! Don't you want to do this?... Yes. [*Deleuze laughs*] Okay, well, I'm going to run my errand. Wait for me! [*Pause in the session*; 94:15]

Deleuze: Fine, we're not going to…, we're going to finish quickly, because I can feel your extreme fatigue and tension.

Understand all that, don't you feel we've completed it? I mean, we will have to see, I think, next time, we will have to come back to this theme of infinity -- I haven't gotten to it yet -- but precisely, because there, ontology, the problem of ontology, is directly linked to this question of infinity. And yet again, when we say that -- I don't know, that would really be my only goal, for you to consider all these people really as creators, well yes, if I get to that, yes -- understand that the question is not: is it true or is it false? If I tell myself, hey, I'm going to conceive of the activity of thought as if it occurred in a purely mental optical space, you will tell me, well, try it, we'll see what comes from that! I mean, that's not the question: are they right or aren't they right? The question is, as they say, it must be done! It must be done. (*Il faut le faire*) If they succeed, it will be what we can call a "great moment", in a non-Hegelian sense, that is, something that is neither outdated (*dépassé*), nor surpassable (*dépassable*); it will be a very great moment in the history of thought.

And once again, today, if the attempt is again undertaken, if it happened to be undertaken again, it obviously could not be done on the same basis as in the 17th century. So, I would say that the true disciples of the 17th century today are those who undertake this again, but by quite other means. As a result, we do not even realize that they are, in some ways, Cartesian or Spinozist, etc. But, at the same time, those of you who might react with, "ah well! here I am", what I dream about in order to answer the question, what I dream about is that we stop saying: "Oh, no! I'm not interested", for the sake of another answer that would already be an answer, and not a question, which would consist in saying in advance the reasons why it may not interest someone. It's obvious, for example, that the development of pure optical space is not the main problem for someone who has, for a thousand reasons, who has ties or a tactile sense, in such a way that his problem would be quite different.

Someone pointed out to me earlier that, in fact, what I said about 17th century painting applied above all to Dutch painting, but obviously it did not apply to Italian painting. Italy, there too, like the Greeks, is not a people of light at all. Oddly, on this point, the Netherlands was the great people of light and optics. Strangely! Is it strange? No, not at all strange, I think. It's not that strange. If you think of the Dutch landscapes, it's not strange at all that they're the ones.

In the end, the sun is not light, is it? It's the sun, it's a dirty thing, the sun, because it creates reflections. And, the great light painters have always hated reflections. Take a painter like Cézanne. So then, yes, he is not only a painter of light, but there is a strong light in him. He really learned the lessons of the 17th by other means. But Cézanne precisely, when he speaks of light, it is not at all the sun. Sometimes he talks about the sun, he likes it, but ... Other than that, for him, the secret of light is not in the sun, it is within the gray day. Cézanne's famous texts on the gray day, which is very suitable for the Netherlands, that's the receptacle of light. If it has a receptacle, it's gray day.[4]

Claire Parnet: The sun creates forms?

Deleuze: The sun creates forms, yes, or it creates something else which is no longer form but which is...

Parnet: Is that why Italian painters have a pure architecture?

Deleuze: What I am saying does not apply to Italian painting, but precisely Italian painting, it is not what makes…

A student: [*Inaudible*] …were not interested in light.

Deleuze: Ah yes, there are some who are not interested.

The student: [*Inaudible comment*]

Deleuze: Oh, no, there are a lot of them [who are interested]. [*Pause*] There are a lot of them.

The student: [*Inaudible comments*]

Deleuze: What?

The student: [*Inaudible comments*] … It's not that it doesn't interest them.

Deleuze: It's delicate, it's complex, you see. Fine, so here we go, let's go back to our starting point, but we can go back to the starting point now with more strength, namely I was saying: Spinoza wants to pull us from the world of signs to bring us to what? I was saying – this whole time simply, I was trying to give a more concrete meaning to this -- he wants to draw us from this world of signs which is fundamentally variable, an associated world, an equivocal world, in order to bring us, in fact, to a kind of world of light. In some ways, substance, Spinozist substance is light.

But what does that mean? Is it a matter of making signs clear? No. The signs cannot be clarified since their entire nature, it is in their very nature that they are variable, associative, equivocal. So, it's really a matter diverting oneself away from the world of signs. It's about conquering another world, which is going to be the world of light, that is, the optical world. Finally, at the extreme, it should be said that the signs, no, these are not, these are not the optical space. There may be optical signs. So, what is this, this world, were it only the definition of the sign giving us ...? Imagine a language that would be made of expressions: first, constant expressions; [*Pause*] second, systematic expressions; third and foremost, univocal, univocal expressions, that is, expressions for which each -- I can no longer say each sign, since the sign is within its equivocal essence – thus, for which each term of the expressions, each term would have a sense, and would only have one sense. That would be the world of light. That would be the mental world of light. This would be a language of pure univocity, a language made up of unequivocal expressions while our language is made up of equivocal signs.

A question on this point: even when such problems are given to us, that gives us a jolt! I'd almost like you to have foreseen this jolt, namely, what is this strange mania that grips [Spinoza] in making a geometric presentation? What does he expect from geometry? What does he expect from this process? It is not just something casual (*plaqué*), this process. But then what? What does he want to tell us? It is obvious that for him, even if we limit ourselves to this -- in fact, it is even more complicated than that -- but even if we limit ourselves to this, the language of geometry is an essentially univocal language as opposed to everyday language and contemporary

language. The language of this science is a univocal language. Henceforth, he will succeed in making a metaphysics exposed geometrically. He is horrified by all equivocal expressions.

And once again, does that mean that there is no poetry? On the contrary! He makes a poetry of pure univocity. What is this poetry of pure univocity? It is precisely -- understand, it isn't difficult to understand that there is an amazing creation -- a univocal language is not a language in which there is a meaning fixed once and for all. Think about this: our language is naturally equivocal, that is, every word I use has many meanings. So, if you understand me, it's because at the same time as I speak, you manage to determine the meaning, the sense in which I am using each word. But then, if I dare say, that's our natural or conventional language, but no matter. These are the conditions under which we speak.

As a result, what is it to call for an unequivocal language? Well, it's committing oneself to build it. It doesn't arrive fully created! It's committing oneself to building it, and to create a univocal language, it is not at all to choose one meaning for a word by saying, that will be the only meaning! That would be too easy! What would allow me to set a meaning, by saying: "it must be the only one"? An original meaning, I could always invoke an original meaning and say [that] "the word will only have this original meaning". [There's] not much interest, because it will be a completely arbitrary, conventional decision. It will not prevent the word from continuing to be of such a nature that it will have several possible meanings, even if I neglect the other meanings.

In fact, understand that an extraordinary creation is necessary to invent terms, and to invent meanings such that these terms will only have one meaning, and this meaning will be the only possible meaning of the term, all of this is entirely to be invented. As a result, when Spinoza tells us, I take substance, the word substance, as one meaning, in one and only one meaning, we must not believe that he favors a preexisting meaning of the word substance. The word substance was stated in several senses. What does this mean? It is clear, [in] all the philosophies, it is clear, there were spiritual substances. For example, I take Aristotle; there were purely spiritual substances, and then there were material substances. Moreover, there were beautiful material substances in several different senses, namely: there were substances which had no other material than local. There were local materials and other types of materials.

Or else, in all classical theology, God is substance, creatures also are substances; it cannot be in one and the same sense. As we will say, "God is substance 'eminently'", therefore the word substance is said of God and creatures, but it is said of God and creatures "by analogy", St. Thomas said, that is, in different senses, these meanings being simply analogous. When Spinoza says: "I take substance in one and the same sense" and concludes: "there is only one substance", again, do not think that he is satisfied with isolating one sense of the word substance in order to give preference to it. He undertakes to do something quite different, namely: to invent a meaning of the word substance such that this meaning might be unique, and therefore, that there would only be one thing, that there only be one term that verifies this meaning. So, a language of univocity is not a ready-made language, which excludes equivocity. This is a language to be created starting from our equivocal language and in such a way that it releases you from equivocity.

I'm choosing a very specific text by Spinoza that has been the subject of much comment. At one point in the *Ethics*, Spinoza said -- I am not giving too many references because my dream is so much for you to discover the texts that I quote, through your own reading of the *Ethics;* in any case, [it's] close to the beginning, in the first two books of the *Ethics*, this will make you read at least two of them, if you want to find the text -- in the first two books of *Ethics*, Spinoza says this, a very, very curious, very beautiful expression: "If God ... If God had an understanding and a will" -- if God had an understanding and a will -- "the word 'understanding' and the word 'will' should be understood more or less like the word 'dog' which sometimes designates the barking animal, sometimes the celestial constellation."[5] This is a beautiful text; you must feel that it is at the heart of our problem. "If God had an understanding and a will, the words 'understanding' and 'will' should be understood more or less like the word 'dog' which designates both the barking animal and a celestial constellation", the constellation of the dog.

What is he telling us? -- The text is very rich. -- He is obviously telling us -- a wink, for those who know, but you know that -- for Descartes, for the Cartesians, God has an understanding and a will. The difference between us and God is that in God's case, it's an infinite understanding, while for us, it's a finite understanding. At the level of the will, it's more complicated because our will, according to Descartes, is infinite. So, I am leaving the question of will aside which would take us too far. But in the end, God has an infinite understanding; we only have a finite understanding. From finite to infinity, it's not the same form. I mean, everything changes.

In other words, understanding is a word in Descartes exactly like substance. You find in Descartes, because the same author is not completely aligned on a single level -- I told you earlier [that] Descartes was one of these philosophers of light -- that does not prevent him from remaining a Thomist; he remains a disciple of St. Thomas on a very precise point, namely the analogy of being: substance is stated in several senses. And with Descartes, we can clearly see that substance is stated in three senses. It is stated of God, it is stated of the soul, and it is stated of bodies. So, there are three kinds of substances which are substances only by analogy. It is not in the same sense that God and creatures are substances, and it is not in the same sense that spiritual creatures and bodily creatures are substances. So here, on this point, [while] a Thomism emerges from Descartes, it is entirely located prior to the 17th century on this point. Again, an author is not entirely ... Good.

So, Spinoza says -- there, he marks well ... He says, inevitably, at that time, they will not be able -- and Descartes still belongs to the Middle Ages -- the Spinoza's idea, because Descartes was not able to create or did not know how to create the conditions for a univocal language. To the extent that he grants understanding and will to God, this is inevitable; on this, he remains with a simple analogy. He does not have the means to create univocal language. He does not have the means to reach a univocal expression. We can clearly see what Spinoza wants. For Spinoza, "understanding" can only have one sense, and whether it is the understanding of God or the understanding of man, whether infinite or finite, there Spinoza goes very far. By this, I mean: this is one of the most innovative points in his work. He could have said, an infinite understanding is contradictory, that cannot exist. And he doesn't say that. He says: why yes, an infinite understanding can exist, but if it exists, if there is an infinite understanding, it is exactly in the same sense in which there are finite understandings. In other words, he is going to propose his idea which is very linked to a point of view of immanence, namely, finite understandings are

parts of infinite understanding. And there is an adequacy of the part and the whole. It is in one and the same sense that the word “understanding” is stated: there is only one meaning for the word “understanding”.

Henceforth, what does that mean? If infinite understanding, like the finite understanding, if these have the same meaning, that means a very simple thing: understanding is not part of substance. Understanding is a mode; understanding is a mode of thinking. So, substance has no understanding. The idea of a substance endowed with understanding is contradictory since understanding will be a mode of thinking. A substance can be endowed with thought, it even is necessarily so, but thought and understanding... These are not at all the same. Thought is an attribute of substance, of understanding... You see, that forces him to a kind of terminology that renews many things. I would ask you, why, and with what interest? It is precisely, under such conditions, that he can manage to constitute a language in which, whatever the word used, it will have only one meaning. This is on condition of making a whole system of invention in which this new meaning, the one meaning, is strictly invented, [with] understanding obviously taking on another meaning.

As a result, I can now summarize Spinoza's very project from the point of view of a possible language: to manage to extract our everyday language from its fundamental equivocity and to manage to form univocal expressions. And once again, this involves poetry, creation; this will be a poetry of light. This will be a creation of univocity.

But then, we are still getting nowhere because we had to make this long detour. Well, how are we going to get out of this domain of signs, since I remind you that these signs have three characteristics: variable, associative, and equivocal? At the same time as I say – I’ve stated the characteristics of the sign according to Spinoza, I realize that there is something that I did not say -- the characteristics, these are the characteristics of every sign; every sign is a bit of all that. It is variable, it is associated, and it is equivocal.

But what are the kinds of signs? Are there several kinds of signs? Yes, maybe there are several kinds of signs, that is, how to break with the sign? With the signs, we would have to see their genre, to see if we can break with them. It is not enough to group together their characteristics. And the kinds of signs -- I would just like to end there today, and not even, I just want to indicate them -- because the kinds of signs, it seems to me there as well, by grouping texts together, it's up to you to recreate it; if you come up with another result, that's fine. This is just the problem I’m asking myself here: is it possible to constitute a theory of the sign according to Spinoza? But it seems to me that indeed, apart from distinguishing, apart from having defined the characteristics of the sign, he distinguishes three kinds of signs. Each kind has the three preceding characteristics. These are not the same thing: the three kinds and the three characteristics. There we are.

I would say, what does he call a sign? A first kind of sign is the following situation: I say, the sun is rising, or the sun is a hundred feet away. Here, according to my perception, I attribute a movement to the sun, a size to the sun, a distance to the sun, from me to the sun, etc. Well, I must operate according to the signs. What is a sign? My perception is therefore a sign. What does that mean, my perceptions are signs? My perceptions are signs, what does it mean? In fact,

my perceptions, what are these? These are effects. How does Spinoza define ... It's imprints. He has an entire very simple theory of perception-imprint, namely: a perception, or -- as we saw the last time, I am not returning to this, I am just reminding you -- or an affection, an *affectio*, a perception or an affection, this is the same for him, it is the imprint of an external body on my body. That's a sign. The imprint of an external body on my body is a sign, in other words, a stamp mark in wax. This is a sign. Well, the bodies, the external bodies act on my body in this way. For example: The sun -- external body -- acts on my body under such conditions, that is, according to its imprint, under such conditions that I see it at a particular distance, with a particular size, etc. ...

So, I would say, the sign is the imprint of the external body on mine, that is, it is the effect of an external body, on my body. You notice that, how, what is the cause there? What makes the sun do this on my body? I do not know. I would have to know the sun for itself to know through what cause, and by virtue of what cause, it acts on me this way. But this knowledge, at the point we have reached, I absolutely do not have it. I simply get the visual image, the heat image, the thermal image, etc., of the sun. And I say oh! The sun is hot! And I say Ah! the sun is a round disk, etc., etc. All of this is the imprints of the sun on my body.

In short, in my situation, I only know effects. I only know of effects, and the effects of the imprints on my body which are detached from their cause. I only know of effects separated from their cause. There you have my situation. This is the situation of perception. It's through this, these effects which I perceive, I perceive the sun according to the effect of the sun on my body. I do not know the causes of this effect, that is, I do not know how this imprint is produced. I have the imprint, that's all. We will call this first kind of sign, these signs: imprint-signs.

Let's look for a complex word here, for if we were to make a sort of logical typology of signs, that would be linked with Peirce's [typology], precisely which has nothing to do with it, but it would be all the more interesting to see to what extent Spinoza endures the comparison. I would say, these are indicative signs. And why would I say indicative? Fortunately, because Spinoza uses the word. You will find it in book 2 of the Ethics, "*indicare*". In fact, he tells us, but careful, this is very important, he tells us: "when the sun acts on my body, the imprint it leaves on my body indicates more", not only, but "indicates more the nature of my body affected by the sun than the nature of the sun". It's in this way that the imprint is a sign, separate from its cause. The cause: it is the nature of the sun, but precisely the imprint does not tell me the nature of the cause of the sun; it tells me much more about the nature of the effect, that is, my body, notably, that it is reheatable by the sun.

Take the famous example by Kant in a completely different [text], "The sun melts... hardens the clay, and melts the wax." An admirable example, since you know that it is not an example... I have long believed, I am saying, you know, but no, I had an illumination one day, because I learned in a, in a, as we say, in a dictionary, that a method for making steel, a very old method, used both clay and wax. As a result, I understood Kant's example better -- I seem to be talking about something else but not at all -- Kant tells us, in an example he invokes for entirely other reasons, admire this, it's quite weird! "The sun hardens the clay and melts the wax." It's the living commentary of Spinoza's idea, namely, the imprint informs us much more about the nature of the affected body than about the nature of the affecting body, since in this case, the affecting

body is the sun , but it has two opposite effects depending on the nature of the affected bodies. The wax is constituted in such a way that it melts under the action of the sun while the clay dries and hardens. Fine, so the effect, Spinoza tells us, the imprint, the imprint-sign indicates more the nature of the affected body than the nature of the affecting body. I would say, this is the status of signs that we can call, that we should henceforth call "indicative" signs, indicative signs. Fine, here we have a first group of signs, imprint-signs.

A second group of signs. Understand: already, I am a sad creature. When he spoke of the world of signs that leaves us in the dark, that we don't even know how to live, that we are perpetually panicked, well, that now becomes a bit clearer. We are already influenced by all these things that occur to us. It is as if we were deaf, blind, etc. ... We are influenced by indicative signs, that is, they tell us much more about the states of our body than the nature of things. This is awful! But furthermore, in this state, then, we have effects, and we are separated from any understanding of the causes.

What is left for us to do, because we do not want to accept our misery. We always pretend to be clever, and we will say that we grasp everything anyway! We are going to say that the real reason for things is "the idea of the effect" and that it [the idea] is the one that contains all the secrets. Since we are so limited, since we have no idea of the causes, since we are reduced to the imprints of things on our body, we will brandish the idea of the imprint by saying that is what contains the secret of everything. That is, the sun is made to warm me, the sun is made to warm me, man's insane pride. [*Interruption of recording*] [2:06:11]

… At that point, when you erected this myth of final causes -- I am going quickly here because I am going to give you Spinoza's outline -- you have, you live in a world where you perpetually sense that not only things are created for you, but that someone commands them or they command you yourself as a function of a benefit (*bien*), that the sun says to me: warm yourself in my rays; that God tells me: warm yourself in the sun. In other words, the illusion of final causes introduces you directly into the imperative signs which are the second category of signs.

See how we go from indicative signs to imperative signs. It happens all by itself! And these imperative signs, we have analyzed them during all our previous sessions, this is what type? Adam does not know, he does not understand anything, he ignores the interplay of causes. He is reduced to the effect of the apple on his organism. What is the imprint of the apple on his body? It's because the apple is poisoning him. It breaks down his relations. He sees it as a final cause. He creates a final cause from the idea of effect, and he says: it is God's command, do not eat of the fruit! See, from the indicative sign, you pass to the imperative sign through the illusion of purpose (*finalité*). This is your way out, in this world of signs: Constructing purposes. But how are purposes dangerous? They distribute your commands and forms of obedience. In the world of purposes, you do not stop ordering, commanding or obeying, and both at the same time. And that's the poison of the world, you don't stop obeying, obeying, commanding, commanding, or both at the same time. [*Pause*]

A third and final point: in such a world, once it's said that these signs, each of them, the indicative signs and imperative signs, never cease entering into the regime of variability, into the regime of associativity, etc., this never stops precisely multiplying the meaning of words. So, the

sun, in what sense? It is: is this the fruit? In what sense? Is this in the sense of Adam's fruit? Is it in the sense of fruit, on the contrary, of paradise, of the good fruit? The bad fruit? Are things going to be distinguished by good and bad, by good and evil? etc., etc. What does all that mean? We find ourselves in a world where things and words are constantly and necessarily interpreted.

And interpretation becomes the fundamental activity of understanding precisely because understanding understands nothing about anything. It's a situation, if you will, that is tragic: you interpret when you understand nothing. What a lesson! There has never been such a beautiful critique of interpretation! You interpret; what does it mean to interpret? It basically means that the signs are equivocal. So, you have to interpret well since the signs are equivocal. Well then, we interpret. If you say, if you say the sea (*mer*), well, no, it can't be the sea! Here, well, it must be the mother (*mère*)! See? If you say just anything at all, well, you are interpreting. Why? Because the basis... it's the people of interpretation. It's very simple, you know. These are people who never experience things for their own sake. These are people who have memory, memory; they operate on memory. I mean, something always must remind them of something else.

And there, if there is a miserable life, this is it. This miserable life is really the guys who spend their time... They can't see anything without it reminding them of something. [*Laughter*] This is terrible! Each of us knows [people] like that. I know some. Whatever you say to someone, it reminds them of something. We want to tell him, spare me from your stupid memory (*ta mémoire de con*)!

It's not that I'm not making a case for the theme: everything is new! It's not that! I'm not saying that everything is new, I'm saying: the first lesson of wisdom is to consider something in itself for what it is. It's not whether it's new or not new. It's ... this thing, there, where does it stop? Where does it start? etc. ... But this kind of viscous filament there, through which one thing recalls another thing... You know, I don't know if that has the same effect on you; it makes me think of a catastrophe. There are people who today – well, today, during all eras -- write only like that. Obviously, that makes for a ready-made literature, because it is "associative" literature, once one says that when one thing can always bring up something else, what's left is to unwind the thing, and one quickly creates 500 pages! It's not complicated! At that point, it gets huge, but it's hard, it's hard. It's an odd sort of literature, this literature, yes, of... I don't know what; it is the literature of memory. Never, never has a writer of genius had the slightest memory. I say this even about those to whom we attribute it, I mean even Proust, and above all Proust has never worked on memory.

So, it's odd nonetheless, understand? It's all one: the associative chain and interpretation. You say a particular word. Ah! What other word does that remind you of? Oh! But we would like ... I don't know what you would like. It's not that, it's not that one has to deny that it reminds us of that! Well, obviously, that reminds us, if we place ourselves, if we put ourselves in these conditions, if we put ourselves in these conditions of associativity. Well yes, we can always put ourselves in the most stupid conditions possible! One can even wallow, one can show off the feebleness. You can make a measuring device out of it; that always works. Why wouldn't it work? These associations, they exist! It's a matter simply of knowing what you want. Do we want to escape from it, or do we want to live and die there? We will have time to live and die there because... and then we will die as even more of cretin than when we were born. Well, it's

all, uh ... fine... Breaking associations, that's always been like that, all the reasons for life, and all the reasons for art! And there, in this respect, art and life are strictly the same! If we do not break the associations, well, we grow senile in our corner, it's quite fine! You can grow senile like that for ten, twenty, forty years, as long as you hold on. It's not difficult. You understand?

So, at that point, it's better to jump completely to the end, jump completely to the end, that is, to do Beckett's stroke of genius. To say, okay, fine, but we're going to settle down at the end, that is, when the associations start when, they start to, [*Deleuze bursts out laughing*] they start to slog through one's noggin, so, then er, er, er ... Fine, there, it's very good because that is the final truth of the association. If you take this path, you end up with that, and at that point, Beckett can then give us his great lesson of life and joy, telling us: all that's quite funny! Obviously, but in the end, beware of all those things. I would say the third kind of sign is the "interpretative" signs.

Comtesse: One can [go back] to Rousseau's problem from the last meeting. If Rousseau had only a presentiment of the materialism of the sage, if he only had a presentiment of acquired selection and the composition in the acquired selection, that's perhaps because, and the *Confessions* may bear witness to this, he was precisely within the effectiveness of the traces in which everything reminded him of something else! But [he wasn't] in the selection. The object of present desire only reminds him of the trace object of an old desire, and that goes onward to infinity. The remarkable case is Mademoiselle de Lambercier, the virile instigator, where any woman reminds him of this trace. We can multiply the examples. There would be something between a disjunction between the effectiveness of the memory traces, and the active selection according to events.

Deleuze: Quite right, yeah, yeah, I would say just to qualify this, just from my point of view, you choose the most beautiful text, Rousseau's *Confessions*. From my point of view, it is fascinating, the Rousseau case, because he got away with it while young, and as long as he was young, and as long as he did not crack, it's a very, very impressive case, Rousseau. He escapes from it, because he plays, the associative chains, they play completely on him! But in a way, he dominates them precisely by an art of selection. He builds up situations, so that goes all the way to the buffoon, he is the buffoon. He is, he becomes a kind of buffoon character who is fantastic, who is almost Dostoevskian, all things considered, magnificent. And then that cracks, then that cracks, that cracks with the misfortunes that happen to him, that cracks, and I told you, what seems to me so moving in the *Confessions*, what makes it a great, great book, is the way in which something, I don't remember exactly, but let's admit the first five books, are a kind of hymn to joy, a kind of joy, a joy of living, a kind of enormous laugh in which Rousseau creates his character and shows us the secret of fabricating the Rousseau character in a kind of, not inauthentic, then in a kind of absolute authenticity.

And then, little by little, so it's then that a process of an entirely different kind begins. The associative channels no longer start playing at all, in an art specific to Rousseau who keeps the selection, but there is no longer any selection. And we are really witnessing the formation of a paranoid process which is triggered through all this. And it's like a change of color! From book to book, in the *Confessions*, it's like the shadows come, it gets dark, and it ends in absolute darkness. Here, in this regard, it's a book of, if we were talking about "colors" in the *Confessions*,

it's fantastic how, from a certain moment, everything becomes black, everything becomes... Fine, the rest for the next time. [*End of the session*] [2:17: 51]

Notes

[1] In concert with the translation in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* by Robert Hurley, I have chosen to translate Deleuze's "rapport" as *relation*, since Deleuze is gradually developing an argument, from one lecture to the next, of the importance of differential relations in both philosophical and mathematical terms.
[2] The onomatopoeia to which Deleuze refers is the close resemblance between the word for "bull", *boeuf*, and "bellow", *beugle*. While a "cow", *vache*, may also "bellow", *beugle*, the onomatopoeia is gone.
[3] Deleuze's reference is certainly to Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History*, to whom Deleuze refers in *Francis Bacon. The Logic of Sensation,* trans. Daniel W. Smith (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 190 note 7, and elsewhere.
[4] On grayness in Cézanne, see the final Spinoza session which is also the introduction to the seminar on painting, 31 March 1981.
[5] *See Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p. 79; *Spinoza: Philosophie pratique* p. 89.