



GILLES DELEUZE

Spinoza: The Velocities of Thought

SEMINAR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PARIS,
VINCENNES-ST. DENIS, 1980-1981

LECTURE 5 6 JANUARY 1981

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I

Well, a silence of marble¹... [*Laughter*] So, we are continuing forward very gently because, in order for you to follow your own reading... [*Laughter*] The very idea that this makes you laugh is very, very disturbing... And today, I'd really like to go almost numerically, so that you'll understand the succession of problems. And so, I am saying, first, here we are... First, for today, well... Necessarily, what point have we reached? This will go very quickly, the point we've reached...

In the end, we've vaguely acquired, at the level... You see, over several meetings, we've been in the process of looking into what is that status of modes, since the status of modes is really what constitutes the *Ethics*. Good, and well, we are beginning to perceive, even a bit confusedly, a certain status of what Spinoza calls modes, that is, you or me, or the table, or anything. That is, the mode is what is. It's "be-ing" (*étant*). The status of any "be-ing", in the end, is what? Let's imagine... Because we still don't know if this is true, everything that Spinoza is saying... It's obvious that it's true! It's so beautiful, so deep, it's true! It can't be otherwise; it occurs like he says, things... And how does he say that it occurs? Well, he says that what constitutes a thing is, in the end, an extremely complex aggregate of relations (*rappports*).²

I insist on the necessity of going slowly because at each sentence, we'd almost have say: Ah yes? Well, yes, but it's great what he is saying there. That was already, all that... [*Deleuze does not complete this*] And then, we do sense that it's not true. What he concludes is something absolutely new, something very, very odd. He says: you understand, a body, or a thing, or anything, or an animal, or you, or me, each of us is constituted by an aggregate of relations. Let's call these relations: *constitutive relations*.³ These relations – we saw this, and it was very

¹ This comment may have followed Deleuze opening request for any questions or problems that student may have had.

² Deleuze refers implicitly here to the earlier sessions of the Spinoza seminar, notably to material developed on November 25, December 2, and December 9, 1980 (and possibly earlier; no earlier lectures are available). This reference also corresponds to his discussion in chapter 2 of *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, titled "On the Difference between the *Ethics* and a Morality."

³ In contrast to the translation of *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* by Robert Hurley, I have chosen to translate "ensemble" with *aggregate* rather than *set*, unless the specific context calls for the latter term.



vague – we baptized them according to Spinoza’s very expressions, but we don’t yet know what this means: relations of movement and of rest, and of rest. And between what are these relations established? [Between] relations implying terms. -- We are still remaining entirely vague, for the moment. – [Spinoza] would say: between particles. For us, our vocabulary has been enriched since then, so we could say: these are relations between molecules, and then components of molecules, and finally, we’d also come upon “relations between molecules.” We still don’t know at all where these particles come from. This we haven’t seen; we are proceeding in order. So, I am constituted by an aggregate of so-called constitutive relations, relations of movement and rest that are established between particles.

What does that mean, an aggregate of relations? It means that my constitutive relations are mine, and in what sense? There isn’t any “me” [*moi*] yet. What does “me” mean? So, what is going to define the aggregate of constitutive relations of a particular thing as an aggregate “one”, when I say a body. Here, we have no choice... To some extent what I am calling “my constitutive relations” must never stop constituting each other, and decomposing each other, that is: they never stop passes into one another in both directions, in the direction of a greater complexity, and in the direction of an analysis, a decomposition. And if I can say these are my constitutive relations, it’s because there is this mode of penetration of relations, of interpenetration of relations such that my simplest relations never stop composing between them in order to form my most complex relations, and my most complex relations never stop decomposing one another to the benefit of the simple ones. There’s a kind of circulation that is going to define and that is going to be defined by the aggregate of relations that constitute me.

I am choosing an example from one of Spinoza’s letters, not one to Blyenbergh, but a letters to someone else; I believe that it’s letter 32, it’s the only page from Spinoza in which he... -- well, it’s not 32... wait, yes it is 32 – It’s a text in which he goes quite far in analyzing relations. Yes, it’s 32, a letter to [Henry] Oldenberg.⁴ He takes the example of blood, and he says: Well, classically, we say that blood has two parts, chyle and lymph. Today, we no longer say that, but that’s not important. What 17th century biology calls chyle and lymph isn’t what we call chyle and lymph today, but that’s not serious. Generally, if you will, for a superficial analogy, let’s say that chyle and lymph are sort of like white blood cells and red blood cells. So, fine, blood has two components: chyle and lymph. Understand what that means. And on this point, Spinoza explains... Well, I’d say: chyle and lymph are themselves two systems of relations between particles. These are not simple bodies; there are no simple bodies. Simple bodies are particles, that’s all. But when I qualify an aggregate of particles by saying: that’s some chyle and some lymph, that mean’s I have already defined an aggregate of relations. So, chyle and lymph are already two aggregates of relations. The one and the other are composed, the kind of natures that they compose are in order form a third relation. This third relation is what I call “blood”.

So, if you will, blood will be a body of the second power, if I call chyle and lymph a body of the first power – this is arbitrary because I am beginning there. – I’ll call chyle and lymph bodies of the first power. They are each defined by a relation of movement and rest. These relations agree (*conviennent*). You see what that means: two relations agree when one and the other are directly composed. If they are directly composed, they compose a third, more complex relation. This third, more complex relation we can call a “body of the second power.” This will be blood, my blood. After all, my blood is not my neighbor’s.

⁴ Deleuze discusses this letter and consideration of the part of blood in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, pp. 32-33 (*Spinoza: Philosophie pratique*, pp. 46-48).



In its turn, my blood, a body of the second power, is directly composed with other organic elements. For example, with my tissues that, themselves, are also bodies, the tissues... They are directly composed with tissues, tissue-bodies, in order to yield a body of the third power, specifically: my irrigated muscles – on days that they happen to be! – Are you following me? Etc., etc. I can say that, at the extreme, I am a body of “n” powers. And what guarantees in the end my duration? What guarantees my duration, that is, my persistence... For such a conception of bodies implies that they are going to be defined by persistence. You already see where the theme of duration can be concretely connected. It’s odd how all this really is quite concrete. This is a very simple theory of the body, very certain of itself.

What is persistence? The fact that I persevere, persistence. I persevere in myself. I persevere in myself to the extent that this aggregate of relations of relations that constitutes me is such that the most complex relations never cease passing into the less complex one, and the less complex ones never cease reconstituting the most complex ones. There’s a circulation of relations. And in fact, they never cease being unmade and being remade. For example, I am taking up some very elementary contemporary notions from biology; I never stop recreating bone. That is, bone is a system of relations in movement and rest. You’ll tell me that we really don’t see this moving all that much, except in voluntary movements. But yes, it does; it moves, it moves. It’s a system of relations of movement and rest between particles.

But this relation never stops being undone. I borrow reserves from my bones; I borrow mineral reserves from my bones all the time. We have to imagine bone in duration, but not in spatiality. In spatiality, this is nothing; it’s a skeleton, it’s death. But bone in perseverance, in duration, is simply this: it means that the relation of movement and rest between particles that bone represents never ceasing to be unmade, specifically: I borrow mineral reserves from my bones in order to survive, and being remade, notably: bones borrow nutriment that I absorb from mineral reserves for reconstitution. So, the organism is a phenomenon of duration, much more than of spatiality. And you see, for what I am going to call perseverance, or duration, at least I have a first Spinozian, Spinozist definition of perseverance.

And this is why you will notice – here, I’m making a reference for those of you who followed this moment – in the problems that [Georges] Comtesse had raised [*during the 16 December 1980 meeting*], I was saying: my progression would be to understand, once we’ve said that in Spinoza’s works the expression “tendency to persevere in Being” constantly appears, I was saying: I can only understand “tendency” as arising as a secondary conceptual determination. The idea of perseverance in Spinoza is primary in relation to that of “tendency to persevere.” How perseverance is going to become a “tendency to persevere”, it seems to me, is the way in which we can pose the problem.

But if I had fully understood [that] – we’ll get back to this when I have finished all this – another perspective can be Comtesse’s viewpoint in which he’d tend to say: ah well, no, in *conatus*, in “tending to persevere”, what’s fundamental is “tendency”, and not “perseverance”. That might be one very legitimate viewpoint for a reading that would yield a slightly different reading, I suppose, not the opposite, but slightly different. But for me, if you will, this is how I see it – I don’t know, to each his/her own mode of reading – I understand that in the expression “tending to persevere in Being”, I understand “persevere” before having understood “tendency”. And I am saying, “perseverance”, you indeed see that it’s... it’s as long as an organism lasts, however little it lasts; it’s essentially the fact that it endures. And why does it essentially endure? Because it can only be defined by an aggregate of relations of movements and rest if these relations of movements and rest never cease passing into each other, being decomposed and recomposed. And that’s what perseverance is, this communication of relations.



So, this is still the point that we've reached. But on this topic, you understand that I have just tried to define a kind of perseverance, or, I could say, a kind of "consistency" of each thing. I'd say [that] each thing consists or perseveres to the extent that the relations constituting it never cease passing into each other, that is, in being decomposed from the most complex to the simplest, and in being recomposed from the simplest to the most complex. And there we are! All at once, I have a certain autonomy concerning what I am calling "a thing"; I've defined the "a" of "a thing." In what way is a thing "a/one"? This, it seems to me, is an original definition of "a/one".

You see, in fact, why he has to say that, Spinoza? It's for our joy that he does so! But why does he have to? He has no choice, in a certain way since by defining things, beings, "be-ings" (*étant*) as modes, he has blocked off considering them as substances. So, he cannot define their unity, the unity of each thing, in a substantial way. So, as an outcome, he's going to define [unity] as a system of relations, that is, the opposite of a substance. And his strength is managing so simply, really with a great sobriety, a great simplicity, to tell us what "a/one" might mean at the level of an aggregate of multiple relations. Each thing is constituted through an aggregate of multiple relations. "Ah, fine! But how is it 'a/on'?" This isn't difficult; [it's] a very strict and very rigorous answer: its relations never cease passing into one another, that is, in being decomposed and recomposed. This is how the "a/one" is made of "a thing."

And so, and so, and so, still within this first point, what point have we reached? But this thing bathes within a milieu that is itself modal, not substantial, a modal milieu of other things. There are other things; there isn't just one thing. Why isn't there just a single mode? You've already guessed it: it's because if there were just a single mode, this would be substance. If there were a single "be-ing," this would be Being. There has to be more than a single "be-ing"; there have to be modes, an infinite infinity of modes, since Being is said of the substance... Oh, excuse me: Being is said of "be-ing", Being is said of the mode. But the mode is multiple. So, there are other things, and there are some of these other things that are completely foreign to me, with which I have no dealing, but there are some that act upon me. And these other things are exactly like me: for their own account, they also are systems of relations that pass into one another, which is the way in which the thing, each thing, perseveres. That each thing perseveres is true of all. This isn't just about organisms; it's true of all: the table perseveres. The table also is a system of relations of movements and rest that pass into one another, which is the way in which I am saying "a" table. Fine... So, there are other things that act upon me.

And well, among these things, from my point of view – you see what "my point of view" means? what is my point of view? Why can I speak about my point of view? – We are going to define my point of view: it's the point of view of my perseverance. That is, my point of view is the point of view of the aggregate of relations that compose me and that never cease being decomposed within one another and of each being recomposed with the other. That's what my point of view is. From my point of view, I'll say that certain of these exterior things are good for me – are good, or are good for me, it's the same – and that others are bad for me. Or, with a word still used by Spinoza, that certain of them suit me (*me conviennent*), and that other disagree with me. My mode of living is: "Hey, that suits me... Ah no, that thing disagrees with me."

But what does that mean? These aren't judgments of taste, "that suits me, that disagrees with me". What is a "bad" thing? A "bad" thing is a thing in which the relation decomposes all or part of my constitutive relations. [Pause] That is, it forces my particles to take on an entirely different relation that doesn't correspond to my aggregate. There you have "bad," it's poison! I have the model of poison, here, from the start: poison decomposes one of my constitutive relations; it destroys one of my constitutive relations, and in this way, it is "bad".



You see that, already, one must say, Ah, well yes, we are taking “to decompose” in two senses, since from the point of view of perseverance, the relations that constitute me never cease decomposing and recomposing. But that means: the complex relation passes into the simple relations, and the simple relations again yield the complex relation. Whereas the other [sense of] decomposition, when poison acts on me, there we have a decomposition of a completely different type, notably: one of my relations is destroyed, or else at the extreme, all of my relations are destroyed. That is, my particles take on completely different relations. [Pause] In other words, I get sick, or I die.

So, we have a rather strict definition, even very strict, of “bad”. [Something] is bad... A thing can be said to be bad only from a certain point of view, that is, from the point of view of the body whose relation a thing decomposes. So, when Spinoza said: “Ah well, this isn’t difficult; God didn’t forbid absolutely anything from Adam. God simply revealed to Adam that if Adam ate of the fruit, Adam would be poisoned.” You see what that means in all Spinozist rigor. That means: God revealed to Adam that if he ate of the fruit, one of his relations, or even all of his constitutive relations, would be decomposed. He would no longer be the same Adam. He’d no longer be the same... Like when we undergo an ordeal, or when we’ve consumed a violent poison, and then we say, “Ah no! I won’t be the same anymore!” Now there we have something that’s bad!

And you suddenly understand what it means to be “good”. The good will be attributed to each thing of which one or several relations compose themselves directly – I insist on the importance of “directly” – directly with mine, directly or with few intermediaries. [Pause] For example, here – but perhaps this example will direct us to another, into a subtler analysis later – I breathe, the air is good for me. First, what air? What air? Well, that depends. Let’s say, overall, the air is good for me. What does that mean? It means that the constitutive relation of the air composes itself – I am putting “directly” in quotes – with one of my constitutive relations. What does that mean? In fact, it’s not as simple as that. But you see, nonetheless, what this means... This is so that you feel what “directly” means. This isn’t that simple because what is my constitutive relation in question, in relation to air? It’s the constitutive relation that is going to define my lungs.

In relation to air, this constitutive relation, this relation that I am calling out of convenience “pulmonary”, this is a system of relations of movements and rest between particles. And well, the lungs breathe, and this means they decompose the constitutive relation of air. Why do they decompose it? In order to appropriate for themselves the part of air that suits them, let’s say, so as not to complicate this, oxygen. Because the bronchi are another system of relations of movements and rest that is capable of decomposing the constitutive relation of water in order to extract oxygen from it. But myself, I am not able to. Moreover – here we see that things are extremely individual – everything depends on the state of your lungs. Can you stand a kind of air strongly containing oxygen, with a great proportion of oxygen? There are cases in which you cannot stand this. What does that mean, too much oxygen? Too much oxygen is going to be something strange. It means that in a kind of air too loaded with oxygen, you cannot make – in certain cases, I am saying in certain cases – you cannot make your extraction. You see, this is a whole world of modes that is extremely varied.

But you see what “good” means, in general. What is “bad” is that for which the relation decomposes in the most direct way possible one of my relations. What is “good” is that for which the relation is composed the most directly possible, rather directly, with one of my relations. Very good. The difference between nutriment and poison is there. Arsenic let’s say – I am returning to this example, since there is a text by Spinoza on fruit that acts as poison, another text on blood – Take a poison that decomposes blood. We see how it acts. I was saying, in the state of health, you have chyle-lymph that never stops composing blood, and



blood never stopping to decompose into chyle-lymph, and chyle-lymph recomposing blood. Very good. When you absorb a poison that decomposes blood, there you have the constitutive relation of blood: it's destroyed! For example, an excess of white blood cells, whatever you wish... Anyway... You can invent your own examples.

So, there we are. All this has to be extremely clear because if it isn't quite clear, then it's... [*Deleuze does not finish*] But this is only the summary of where we had arrived on the status of mode. You see, it's quite strong to define a thing as a... really, as a complex of relations. You will tell me: in some ways this goes without saying. This goes without saying, but this implies such a choice. You understand, the whole idea in the back of our minds, notably "the others", all that exists as implied. Other philosophers believed that they could only define the individual as substantial. And Spinoza tells us: well, not at all; the individual is not a substance. There, from Aristotle to Descartes, there is at least one point in common. They all differ over understanding and defining substance, but from Aristotle to Descartes, the agreement is total – including Leibniz after Descartes. Up to Leibniz, traditional philosophy's agreement – I'm not saying there weren't some strange thinkers who had already brought this point into question – considered that we could only define a body with reference to the category of substance, an individual only by substance.

Question: And for Spinoza, can we say that substance or substrata support relations, relations [Deleuze: No!], or else that relations are prior to substance?

Deleuze: No, neither one nor the other. In my view, neither one nor the other. No. There has to be a completely original form of relation, which will be the relation of substance and of modes. But we can only look at that when we pass over into the topic of ontology, since there, it's the *Ethics*. Yes, that's a good question, what will the relation of substance and modes be? But that exceed by far what I'm currently ...

Question: [*Inaudible*]

Deleuze: [Letter] 32. On blood, yes... Yes, a very beautiful letter, in which he talks about the unity of Nature since, at the extreme, there's only one and same Nature, Nature being the infinity of relations that pass into one another. So, that what Nature is, with a capital N.

Good. I am passing on to my second point. This will go quickly. I just said: there are two kinds of decomposition when I say, "a relation is decomposed". There is a decomposition-circulation that never ceases being decomposed, at the same time that my simple relations never cease recomposing complex relations. So, this is a decomposition-recomposition that belongs to perseverance. This is a decomposition-circulation. But we saw that when I say: "poison decomposes one of my relations," it's no longer a matter of that at all. It's a matter of decomposition-destruction. One of my relations is destroyed by the constitutive relation of poison. For example, my blood is defined by a relation, so well... There we are! Do you follow me?

What does it mean, "a relation is destroyed"? Eh? What does that mean? Well, it's quite funny in Spinoza; it's... He doesn't say it, but it's as if he said it. There are things, you have to know them by heart. It would be good to learn the *Ethics* by heart. Learn it by heart! [*Laughter*] Yes! If there are texts that we learn by heart, if there are any of them in philosophy, it's the *Ethics*. Learning Kant by heart makes no sense! It would be useless. Learning Spinoza by heart, that will serve you throughout your life. You tell yourself, in every life circumstance, you tell yourself, "ah good... what proposition does this refer to?" And there will always be one, in Spinoza! So, that can be enormously useful for you.

So, fine! One of my relations is destroyed, so what does that mean? Quite rigorously, that means the following: how can a relation be destroyed? After all, I don't see... And in fact, here we are nonetheless going to make a very important comment, perhaps. A relation... What can be destroyed is the terms of a relation. But where is a relation? How could it be destroyed?



Where is a relation? If I say: Pierre is smaller than Paul, this is a relation; “Pierre is smaller than Paul”, eh? I indeed see that Pierre or Paul can be destroyed, assuming they are themselves not relations. But, “smaller than”, how could this be destroyed, something like that? How could a relation be destroyed?

You see, this is an abyss... [Pause] A relation cannot be destroyed. Why is it that a relation cannot be destroyed? There’s a very simple answer: it’s because, like each of you knows and lives this, a relation, a relation is an eternal truth. An eternal truth cannot be destroyed... $2 + 2 = 4$ is a relation. $2 + 2 = 4$ is a complex of relations, since $2 + 2 = 4$ is the affirmation that there is a relation of equality between two relations: the relation $2 + 2$ and the relation 4. So, this is a relation between two relations. That cannot be destroyed! Eternal truths are indestructible! Pierre and Paul can die, but the fact still remains no less eternally true that Pierre will have been smaller than Paul.

So, what can that mean? Something very simple: that necessarily means – It’s out of convenience that we say that a relation is destroyed, it’s a way of speaking; we really have to speak this way, otherwise we’d get bogged down – But, in reality, this means, “a relation stops being realized”. It’s not destroyed; it stops being realized. This is very important for what Spinoza will call “eternal life,” when he teaches us that we are eternal. What I am in the process of saying is therefore uniquely in order introduce a particular topic about eternity. In fact, when I say, “one of my relations is destroyed,” that solely means and cannot mean anything other than: one of my relations has stopped being realized.

What does it mean to realize a relation? Realizing a relation, this is very simple: a relation is realized when are present, when the terms are presented between which the relation is established with truth. If I say, “smaller than”, I have stated a relation, but this is an empty relation. I realize the relation when I find or present two terms that are, the one and the other, in the relation conforming to the relation “smaller than.” This is why we can create a logic of relations. A logic of relations has always been considered as being distinct from what is called a logic of attribution, the logic of attribution being the relation of quality in substance. I say, “the sky is blue,” at first glance – I am not certain that there is a logic of attribution; maybe there isn’t one – But, at first glance, when I say, “the sky is blue”, I attribute a quality or a predicate to a subject. The subject is the sky; blue is the quality, or the predicate. And how can I say, “the sky is blue”? Here, this is the problem of the logic of attribution.

What does that mean, “how can I say, ‘the sky is blue’”? It means that it doesn’t go without saying. In a certain way, when I say, “the sky is blue”, I am saying “A is B”. It’s strange; how, by what right can I say, “A is B”? This is a problem. I mean that all sorts of logics are logics of attribution, to the extent that this is indeed the problem that they pose. But, understand that when I say, “Peter is smaller than Paul,” “smaller than” is not one of Pierre’s quality. The proof is that Pierre who is smaller than Paul is larger than Jules. The relation is not a quality attributable to the thing. Even at the level of feeling, you indeed sense that this is another domain, the domain of relations. Hence, the possibility of a logic of relations has never ceased historically, in the history of the logics of philosophy, has never ceased historically teasing, tormenting the logic of substance or of attribution.

What do we do about relations from the point of view of a logic of substance? This means that relations are going to pose problems... Once again, I cannot say that “smaller than Pierre” is an attribute or a quality of Paul. This is something else... Irreducibility of “equality” relations... It’s a drama! Henceforth, what do we think? This is what struck a great blow against what could be called substantialism. You understand, on the contrary, that Spinoza would be particularly at ease within a logic of relations since, precisely, he hasn’t defined bodies as substance.



When I have defined bodies as substance, I find myself facing a hell of a problem (*un sacré problème*). How do we think about relations between bodies? At least, Spinoza took upon himself some very strange problems by rejecting that bodies are substances, but as a result, he avoids certain problems. Relations for him are, on the contrary, the domain that goes the most without saying. We are packets of relations; each of us is a packet of relations. So, he's not one to be astonished by relations.

Once again, henceforth, "one of my relations is destroyed," which means, "it stops being realized". What realizes my relations? We saw the answer, still quite insufficient since I have not analyzed this – and it's not for today that I'll be analyzing that. -- In any case, [Spinoza] tells us something for the moment as vague as: what realizes relations, in any case, are particles, more or less complex particles. And what are these particles? You sense then that these are nothing other, at the extreme, than relational supports (*supports de relations*). Obviously, the particles don't have an interiority; they are uniquely relational supports, relational terms, variable relational terms. As a result, we could almost create a very formal logic of the relation in Spinoza. But, in the end, this would be something else...

Well, well, what does that mean? Some particles that realized one of my relations are no longer realizing it. What can that mean? This becomes quite clear! They no longer realize it, obviously, obviously that they no longer realize it. Why do they no longer realize it? They no longer realize it because they have been determined to return under another relation, incompatible with mine. So, they no longer realize my relation; they have taken up another one. And the new relation that they have taken is not compatible, that is, does not circulate with mine. Example: once again, arsenic. Arsenic decomposes my blood. Fine, what does that mean? The particle of my blood, that constituted my blood insofar as they entered into a particular relation – the constitutive relation of my blood, which itself was a relation of movement and rest between particles --, well, there we see that under arsenic's action, these particles are determined to take on another relation. And, the new relation that they have taken on does not circulate with mine, do not compose themselves with mine. And I can say, "Oh, my God, I no longer have any blood!" Shortly after, I die. I've eaten an apple. You see...

Fine; this second comment had the sole purpose of saying, "Careful!" What does it mean, "a relation is destroyed"? Well, that doesn't prevent relations from having eternal truths. But, "a relation is destroyed" means that it is no longer realized. There are no longer any particles to actualize the relation, that is, to furnish terms for the relation. Actualizing the relation, realizing the relation, means furnishing terms for the relation, entirely relative terms, since these terms will be relations in their turn, but other sorts of relations. As a result, every relation is a relation of relations to infinity, the terms being simply the terms relative to a particular level of relation. This is a beautiful vision, a beautiful vision of the world! Substance is missing here, precisely, no more substance in this. There we have my second point. So, when I say out of convenience "one of my relations is decomposed or destroyed", there's no longer any problem. I'll say this out of convenience because it's faster than saying "this relation is no longer realized through particles." Fine, this is ok up to this point, right? Up to this point, it's crystal clear. Very good!

My third comment; this is going to get complicated. This is going to get complicated, and it's not my fault; it's necessary for this to get complicated. It has to get complicated because I am returning to my point of view: what defines my perseverance is the aggregate of communications of relations, notably between my constitutive relations; these never cease communicating. And "these never cease communicating" means that these never cease being decomposed from the most complex to the simplest and being recomposed from the simplest to the most complex. I never cease unmaking my bones and recreating them. There's a bony chronology that's much more important than the bony spatiality.



Well, what does this imply? This system of perseverance or of consistency, what does this imply? It's in this that something funny is implied because – I'm opening a parenthesis – You remember that, in the long introduction that I presented to situate this problem, I spoke of one of Spinoza's doctrines, parallelism [*in the 2 December 1980 session*], and I said some very simple things about parallelism -- I didn't want to consider it for itself – I said some very, very elementary things of the kind: well, you understand, a body is a mode of an attribute of substance, this attribute of substance being extension. A body is a mode of extension.

And, you and me, or even all the things that we know, according to Spinoza, we aren't only bodies. In fact, we are dual modes. We are also souls. And what does that mean, a soul? For Spinoza, it's not difficult, a soul: it's a mode of thought. A body is a mode of extension; a soul is a mode of thought. And we are indissolubly body and soul. Spinoza is even going so far as to say "each thing is animated", that is, each body has a soul.

What does that mean, each body has a soul? It means that for each mode of extension "body" corresponds a mode of thought "soul". So, I am a body in extension, but I am a soul in thought, and thought is an attribute of God no less than extension is an attribute of God. Thus, I am soul and body. You see, you see, as a parenthesis, Spinoza's very beautiful vision, notably, there is no problem of the union of soul and body. Why? Because soul and body are strictly the same thing, under two different attributes. Soul and body are the same modification, in two modes. Soul and body are the same modification of substance, in two modes of different attributes. They are distinguished through the attribute, but this is the same modification. I will call "soul" a modification referring to the attribute "thought" and "body" the same modification referring to the attribute "extension". Hence, [we have] the idea of a parallelism of soul and body. What the body expresses within the attribute "extension," the soul expresses it within the attribute "thought".

If you understand this even in the slightest, hardly do we understand... That's what's so joyous in life: it means that as soon as we understand something, as soon as we've avoided a misunderstanding, we risk falling into another misunderstanding. [*Laughter*] For hardly have we understood this -- that, for Spinoza, soul and body were the same thing, and that body and soul expressed strictly the same thing – and we run the risk of having difficulties all over again. Because we almost want to say: Ah, fine, well since a body is defined through an aggregate of relations of movement and rest, a soul also will have relations of movement and rest... [*Pause*]

Listen to me closely: we really want to say that! Moreover, Spinoza says it sometimes. He says it sometimes: "Well yes indeed, there are parts of the soul as there are parts of the body, and the parts of the soul enter into relations entirely like parts of the body enter into relations." And he was right to say this because one has to speak as simply as possible. There are moments in which one has to speak like that, when this isn't exactly the problem that is being posed. This goes faster; this allows us better to outline another problem. But seriously, in all rigor, why can he not say this? To the point that even if he says it... [*Deleuze does not finish*] So indeed, we are not going to allow ourselves to correct Spinoza and say: here, he's wrong, he's wrong about his own thought. I am saying something entirely different. I am saying: he can seem to be saying that, but he doesn't really say it. He might seem to be saying that for a very simple reason: it's in order to go faster because the real problem he poses within that text is another problem. But, in fact, he cannot say it in all rigor, for a very simple reason – here, you should already provide me the answer in advance – he cannot say it for a very simple reason: it's that movement and rest are modes of extension. These belong to extension. Moreover, I can speak of a movement of the soul, but this is through metaphor... The soul's business is not movement. Movement and rest are a pulsion of bodies.

So, I can say – understand me – I can say: by virtue of parallelism, there must be something within thought that is, to thought, what movement and rest are to extension. But I



cannot say: there is a movement and rest within thought as there is a movement and rest within extension. For movement and rest are not said of thought; this is said of extension. In all rigor, I cannot conclude about movement and rest, about relations of movement and rest such as they are presented within bodies situated within extension, I cannot conclude about them, infer about them, that there are therefore also movements and rest, relations of movement and rest within the soul that is situated within thought. So, even if he says it, even if he seems to say it, he only says it in jest – in the end, you understand me – in order to go quickly when this isn't the problem. When it is the problem, he indeed must say something else.

And what is he going to be able to say? Well, he tells us something very interesting. For I find in the book... [Pause] Which book? In the *Ethics*, book II, proposition 13, scholium (the section is called scholium), I read this: [Pause] "I will say generally" – he specifies – "I say generally," this is a general proposition. What does he say generally? "I say generally that the more a body is suited in relation to others for being active or passive..." "the more a body is suited in relation to others for being active or passive..." Grant me that this means: the more a body is suited to be with others, in relations – with other bodies – in relations of movement and rest. That is, the more a body is suited to undergo the effects of another body and to be the cause of an effect on other bodies. I am active if I act on another body; I am passive if I received the action of another body.

So, according to what we've seen, this aptitude for being active or passive is exactly the aptitude that I have for entering into relations with exterior bodies, relations of movement and rest. Thus, I can transform the sentence without any basic modification: I am saying, in general, that the more a body is apt to have relations of movement and rest with other bodies... "The more its mind (*esprit*)", the more its mind, that is, its soul... The more its mind... -- in fact, for Spinoza, these are identical terms; he prefers to use the Latin term "mind", *mens*, rather than the term *anima* – The more a body is apt to be active or passive, that is, to have relations with others, "the more its mind is apt in relation to other minds to..." he doesn't say to be active or passive; he says, "to form perceptions of several things all at once", to form perceptions of several things all at once. Here, we have a true problem, it seems to me... [Pause]

He tells us formally: that which corresponds to action-passion within the body – or if you prefer, movement-rest... Within the soul, what is this? This is not even action-passion; this is "perception". In all rigor, the more a body... – and this, I believe that it's truly the basis (*fond*) here, I believe that Spinoza is saying the basis of his thought – what corresponds to the aggregate of actions and passions of a body within extension are the perceptions of the soul. So, what corresponds to relations of movement and rest within the body are perceptions of the soul. All at once, we tell ourselves: fine, what is happening? What does that mean?

You see, parallelism doesn't place into relation movement and rest within extension and movement and rest within the soul, but movement and rest within extension – movement and rest being modes of extension – and perception within the soul. As a result, parallelism has nothing to do with a... -- Already, we no longer have any choice, that's what is so good – Parallelism has nothing to do with the way in which we usually interpret it, when we think that there are movements of the soul that correspond to movements of the body.

Spinoza doesn't say that at all. What corresponds to movements of the body are perceptions. You'll tell me: but these perceptions are in movement. Perhaps that will allow us to provide a meaning to a movement proper to the soul, perception... But this is because these are perceptions first. These are not movements first; these are perceptions. That there's a dynamism of perception is something else.

So... But at the same time, I imagine, someone could make an objection to me about this: but haven't you already... meddled with this text? Because the text says something very



simple, it seems to me: “The more my body has relations of movements and rest, through which it enters into relation with exterior bodies, the more it perceives things.” Someone will tell me: this is very simple. This is so simple; this is so simple. That means, well necessarily so, when a body has an effect on mine, I perceive the exterior body. This isn’t more complicated than that, and then, what’s the big deal (*et après*)? This is obvious. The table acts on me; I bump against it; I knock into the table; I perceive the table as colliding with me. Fine, where is the problem? And well, fine, good, the problem is there... What corresponds to a movement-rest within the body, once again, this is a perception within the soul.

Well, this seems so simple, but no! Because this is like earlier, if I have complex relations from the point of view of my body, this is also because I have very simple relations. The complex relation is composed through simpler relations, etc., to infinity. There is a system of circulation. If I have global perceptions that correspond to complex relations, notably, “I perceive the table,” I really must have some elementary perceptions, or simpler ones. What are these elementary perceptions and simpler ones? There will have to be a circuit of communication of perceptions between them, and this circuit of communications will define perseverance in the soul.

What do I mean? Pay attention even more closely, and we are going to rest after, because you are wiped out. Well, sense what this means... Let’s return to blood. And then we will see that it’s indeed a question of something else than perception in the ordinary sense of the term. Chyle and lymph have relations that suit them. What does it mean, “chyle and lymph have relations that suit them”? That means that these relations are directly composed. For what reason are they directly composed? In order to constitute a third relation: blood. [*Pause*] Fine... All these relations insofar as I persevere are realized through particles. If they stopped being realized, I would be destroyed, and my blood would be destroyed. Fine... Imagine an instant, you are a lymph particle. That means [that] you realize a relation, or you enter into realization of a relation which is directly composed with the relation that the particles of chyle realize – or the opposite, I no longer know what I’m saying. Do you follow me?

What does that imply? It’s that chyle has a power to discern lymph, lymph has a power to discern chyle. The particles of chyle and the particles of lymph are united to constitute blood. How would they be united if they didn’t distinguish one another? If chyle had no power of discernment, what would prevent these particles from being united with particles of arsenic, whereas arsenic destroys the constitutive relation of chyle? The particles of chyle and the particles of lymph must have a power of reciprocal discernment. [*Interruption of the recording; end of cassette*]

II

Here we must indeed endow all particles, however small they may be, with a certain power that I call – this is convenient – a power of perception. When two relations are composed, the particles that realize this relation must, under this relation, have the power of discerning the other particles of the other relation with which the first relation is composed. The result of this discernment is that particles of lymph and chyle will go seeking each other out, if nothing prevents them [*Pause*] from joining and composing the blood relation.

In other words, a discernment in thought responds to the particles in extension. The particles, however humble they might be, particles of oxygen, hydrogen, etc. – Spinoza is elaborating a very prodigious chemical thought – the particles are modes of bodies, are modes of extension, granted. Modes of thought are perceptions. Every particle is animated; every particle has a soul; what is the soul of a particle? Is Spinoza here goofing around (*déconner*),



getting delirious, with “everything has a soul”? What does he mean? He means something extremely rigorous, something very, very positivist; I don’t know if it’s true. We’ll see later; we’re going to try to situate this.

But, in any case, he means something very rigorous when he says that everything has a soul. This means: each body, however simple that it might be, even the most elementary particle, you cannot separate it from a power of discernment that constitutes its soul. For example, a hydrogen particle combines with an oxygen particle, or else two hydrogen particles combine with an oxygen particle. No doubt, chemical affinities are the simplest case of molecular discernment. There is a molecular discernment. Well, molecular discernment is what you’ll call a perception, just as you call “mode of extension” molecular movement and rest. Molecular movement and rest are only possible in extension to the extent that, at the same time, a discernment in thought is exerted. Everything is animated; every particle has a soul, that is, each particle discerns. A hydrogen particle doesn’t confuse, literally, doesn’t confuse an oxygen particle with a carbon particle. This is the basis of chemistry.

So, I insist on this because here I am sure that I’m right. This is not at all... Spinoza’s thought is not at all geometric; I believe strongly that it’s a thought... It’s not even a thinking [like] physics (*une pensée physique*). Each time that I read his theory of bodies, I really get the impression of a chemical thinking, a very chemical thinking. This is why in his letters, for those among you who... What would confirm, what would support me factually in saying this, is that in his letters, he has a very long correspondence with a great chemist of the era; he is enormously interested in the chemical composition of the body. You will see; this is a series of letters with an English chemist named [Robert] Boyle, where he speaks considerably of the composition of saltpeter. How is saltpeter constituted, and what is it that creates..., what is a saltpeter particle?

So, in short, I’d say that discernment responds to movement-rest on the side of the body, and it is discernment that constitutes the thing’s soul. You see, this becomes quite simple, saying “every particle, however small it might be, has a soul”; this solely means: within extension, [the soul] moves, it receives movement, and it yields movements; it’s in movement, and in this way, even in thought, it is in perception, it’s in a state of discernment. In other words, how would we say what this is today? No doubt, we’d say lots of things. We could say that it is potentialized, that it’s valorized, that it has valences. That’s what the soul is: it has potentialities, it has affinities. Or even, we would emerge from the domain of chemical affinities in order to say what?

Here, today, I am insisting, and I only do so with considerable repugnance, because I do not at all want to say that Spinoza anticipated things that he couldn’t have anticipated. The precursor theme, lots of people have already stated this, the precursor theme is one of the most dangerous themes ever, and in fact, we realize each time that this is complicated. You know, above all we must not succumb to the idea, “Ah! Evolutionism! It was already present in Empedocles, etc.” These are stupidities in the end. This is not at all what I mean.

But, on the other hand, if I think that, in fact, there are never any precursors, that it’s completely idiotic to try finding people who might have already proposed a kind of evolutionism before Darwin, etc., on the other hand, I strongly believe that a phenomenon occurs in the history of thought that is very, very odd: that someone, with some determined means – in Spinoza’s case, with concepts – discovers something in his era, which in another domain will only be discovered much later and with completely different means. As a result, he isn’t at all a precursor. But there are phenomena of resonances, and resonance doesn’t only occur between different domains during the same era. That can occur between a domain, for example, in the seventeenth century and a domain in the twentieth century.



For, in fact, according to what I am saying, Spinoza fully participates in a theory that – he isn't the only one to support it – this theory of minute perceptions, molecular perceptions. Leibniz, Spinoza's contemporary, will create an admirable theory, and one that's much more developed, much more explicit than Spinoza's, concerning minute perceptions or molecular perceptions. [Pause] Fine... And this, they create this with their philosophical concepts, their mathematical concepts, their chemical concepts of the era. They are not precursors in the least. But I am saying that today, in the twentieth century, an absolutely different domain: we are informed – and we're almost spared nothing about this – about this relatively recent discipline, molecular biology. And molecular biology is famous for its use of a certain information science model. And what does that mean today – so, I'm opening a parenthesis with all this – What does "information science model" in molecular biology mean today? The genetic code is interpreted in terms of information. And in this case, what receives information? What transmits information? The genetic code contains what is called "information" in quotes. This [information] is transmitted through certain protein-type bodies. This [information] is received by bodies, by molecules, etc., that are composed, that compose more and more complex aggregates based on this information.

What does this informative, informational conception of the genetic code imply? It implies this: that at several levels, there is – and this is the very word used by certain authors today – a power of discernment of molecules. Power of discernment goes quite far. Because sometimes it's chemical: a molecule discerns the molecule with which it has chemical affinities. But, sometimes the power of "election-discernment" overflows the chemical affinity, and the entire current theory of enzymes – you see, enzymes, such an important thing from the point of view of genetic code – the enzymes are bodies or substances -- well finally, not substances, so we might remain Spinozist – they are bodies that literally choose something, as is said, a body that is going to be used as their substratum – it matters little in what sense this is taken --: enzyme, substratum. I am taking this solely as an abstract example. And the enzyme has the power to discern its substratum. Moreover, this power of discernment is extraordinary since between two bodies called isomers, let's say between two bodies that are extremely close to each other chemically, the enzyme always elects only one, one of the two isomers and not the other. That's odd, this power of discernment that corresponds to the particle's action.

I'd imagine that Spinoza would say, this is what he'd call the soul. A particle's power of discernment is the soul, or its mind (*esprit*). This isn't important; we can call it something else. We can call it information, for example, why not? That wouldn't be awkward; Spinoza wouldn't mind at all calling that information. This has no importance. At the era, it was called soul; it's a question of words, you understand.

But, don't remember Spinoza as this author that talks to you about soul, quite the contrary. Readers of his era, who said, that Spinoza, what a strange guy, he's completely materialist. So obviously, Spinoza answered, as a counter-move: "Listen, open my book; I never stop talking about the soul or the mind..." -- Obviously he had an interest in not getting noticed – But, what matters is not if someone is talking about the soul or the mind; what matters is what he places beneath the word. I can make declarations about God and still get burned; this is even what happened during the Renaissance, generally. People never stopped talking about God; only what they placed beneath all that, this was what caused the Church to wince in horror, saying: "But what have they done with our God?" I can speak about the soul at great length, I can present one course after another on the soul; everything depends on what I put into this. And I still must have a reason for calling that "soul".

You see what Spinoza's reason was, to wit: if discernment is what responds in thought, in the thought attribute; if that's what responds in the thought attribute, to what is movement and rest in the extension attribute, there is every reason to say: the particle, insofar as it has



rest and movement, refers to extension, but insofar as it discerns, it refers to thought. And the particle, insofar as it refers to thought, is soul. This is a marvel; this is beautiful, so beautiful.

So, this, I am saying it only very quickly because we haven't yet reached it, but what I want to suggest to [Georges] Comtesse is that... My idea would be that it's only to the extent that this theme of discernment appears that we will be able to understand how perseverance is going to become a tendency to persevere, for it's in this way, in fact, that I can say: insofar as [the particle] discerns the particle with which it can be composed, a particle tends to be joined (*s'unir*). Here, the notion of tendency results directly from the particle's power of discernment. The particle tends, within extension, it tends toward something within extension, because it discerns within thought. It's power of discernment that is going to determine movement as a tendency toward movement.

But in the end, here we are, here's the point we've reached. So, there will be this discernment that results in... There is more: this discernment is going to become extremely complicated. I return to my examples. Up until now, when I was speaking of arsenic and blood, I was placing blood aside, that is, on my part. I was saying: arsenic decomposes the constitutive relation of blood. Let's situate ourselves on the side of arsenic. I'm an arsenic particle. – You have a domain here of great richness in imaginary experience – Constitute yourself there, within your imagination, as a particle of this or that, and your point of view is going to change. All of you here, we are all arsenic particles, except some of us. [*Laughter*] You see that there is only one remaining here; we are all arsenic particles. We are managing... And we find ourselves within another person's blood, and there, insofar as being a particle, we find... What do we find? We find other particles that obey a blood relation. So, we're here, fine. And we have the power to decompose, but this is not a global power of decomposing; it's minute. We can imagine two kinds of poisons, one that attacks white blood cells, the other that attacks red blood cells. That must exist within nature, as nature is so rich...

So, in any case, even within relations of decomposition, there is indeed a discernment. I suppose; I don't know anything at all about it. I am imagining, poison – I call it that; I don't dare say "arsenic" because this is a word that exists – Imagine an imaginary word: that poison destroying red blood cells obviously must be recognized. It has to be recognized in the blood. In a certain way, it's a counter-affinity with them. Very good. The power of discernment extends as far as particles' movements and rest extend. It seems that we've gained a lot. Here's what I can say: the actions and reactions of bodies are inseparable from the discernment of souls. And there is no movement and rest within the body without there also being discernment in souls, discernment for good and for ill, for the best and for the worst, for the best in the case of compositions of relations, for the worst in the case of destruction of relations. Particles recognize each other; this is how they are animated, as Spinoza says. Particles recognize each other through the relations, and under these relations, they are realized. There we are...

Hence, I can move on to a fourth point. Once again, this appears to me very close to today's information theory. Simply put, information theory returns, it seems to me, to notions of this kind while giving them an entirely new content thanks, precisely, to techniques of information. And the difference is enormous.

I am passing on to a fourth point of view, unless you'd like a break? [*Beside Deleuze, someone (perhaps Claire Parnet) says: No, no...]* A short break? [No, no] No break? [No, no]... Of course, there are some here that need a break. [*Pause*] So, a short break, ok? A very short break... [*Pause*]

All this, [*Pause, as people get settled*] all this should give us some starting points. I mean by this that I don't want to approach the entirety of the question here, at the moment, but it ought to give us some principles for problems like those of what illness is, or what death is,



for Spinoza, you see, because finally this whole story of modes... We are all modes, that is, we are not beings; we are manners of being. This is what you must not lose sight of.

But, generally, other philosophers... Other philosophers were always quite tormented by Spinoza. In all the history of philosophy, Spinoza is the one, I believe, who sometimes created the most enthusiasm, who created a kind of enthusiasm that, nonetheless, the others didn't produce, and sometimes created the most irritation. And he is irritating because... he irritates, yes... And the people that he irritated greatly, the Cartesians, the Thomists, finally, everyone... At the start, he irritates all of those for whom beings are substances; all of those for whom "be-ings" are necessarily substances, these [philosophers] are eminently irritated by Spinoza. And they are going to challenge him with a kind of diabolical bet. They tell him: "Listen, Spinoza, it's one thing or the other: if you say that beings aren't substances, although you will try to hide it, you are necessarily even saying with this that beings, you and me, are nothing but dreams, God's dreams, that we are imaginary creatures, that we are phantasms. Or else, at the extreme, if you offer us a being, since in any case this isn't a being of substance, you will only have the choice between this and that: either you will make us into kinds of geometrical beings, or else into phantasms from the imagination."

And it's very odd that Leibniz, for example, in his critique of Spinoza, of Spinozism, Leibniz being obsessed by Spinoza as were many thinkers at this period, he never stops saying, sometimes: "You see what Spinoza makes of creatures. He assimilates creatures; he gives them exactly the status of geometrical figures." The geometrical figure, in any case, brings the two together, because if I consider the geometrical figure traced in sand, it's like a phantasm of the imagination. If I consider it in itself, this is a series of necessary consequences that result from axioms, from principles. So, Spinoza is told: by refusing the quality of substance for "be-ings", the status of substance, necessarily you no longer have any choice except between assimilating them to simple geometrical figures or assimilating them to dreams from the imagination. So, from both approaches, you refuse them all their own consistency. Henceforth, we will only either be dreams of the unique substance, or necessary properties resulting from the unique substance.

And Spinoza remains quite calm. He judges that he has found an entirely different path. There is a consistency of modes, and nonetheless, modes are not substances. And this consistency is not substantial; it's a consistency of relations. So, at the point we've reached, you understand, all that was a bit theoretical, [so] what changes practically? Obviously, this is why I am coming to this fourth point, that specifically, what changes practically, well, it's not in the same way. If you present yourself as a manner of being – and this is not a question for reflection --, one has to have a taste for that; it's a matter of sensibility.

There are substantial sensibilities, at that time, those having a substantial sensibility... I dream really of creating a thing on philosophical sensibility. Sensibilities, that's how you'll discover authors that you'll like. Now, I am not trying to tell you, "Be Spinozists", because I could care less. What I do care about is the you discover what you need, that each of you might find authors that you need, that is, authors that have something to say to you, and to whom you have something to say. And I am saying that with this choice, what torments me in philosophy, is this: in the same way that we speak about artistic sensibility, for example, a musical sensibility, etc., and indeed, musical sensibility is undifferentiated. It doesn't only consist in saying, "I love music"; it also means: I'm concerned, strangely, with things that I myself don't understand; I am particularly concerned with a particular [musician], a particular one. Ah, for me, it's... I suppose, for me, it's Mozart... Mozart says something to me. It's odd, this... Because for everyone, that's not it. There are others who will say "no".

In philosophy, it's the same thing, there's a philosophical sensibility, hence someone ... It's a matter of molecules here as well. In this, if we apply everything we just said earlier, fine,



well, it happens that someone's molecules will be attracted, will already in some way be Cartesian... There are Cartesians... Good, I understand, a Cartesian is someone who has indeed read Descartes well and who wrote books on Descartes, but that isn't very interesting. There are Cartesians, nonetheless, at a better level. They consider that Descartes whispers something in the ear to them, something fundamental for life, including the most modern life. Good, I... I take up my example: really, Descartes says nothing to me, nothing, nothing, nothing... He drops from my hands; he pisses me off (*me fait chier*). [Laughter] And nonetheless, I'm not going to say that he's a poor slob; obviously, he's got genius, Descartes. Good, fine, he's got genius; for myself, that's not my concern. He never spoke to me at all. Fine. There we are, so how do we explain these matters of sensibility? Good... Hegel... Hegel? What is that? Good.

What does that mean, these molecular relations? I am making a case here for molecular relations with the authors that you are reading. Find what you like. Never spend a second criticizing something or someone. Never criticize, never, never, never. And if someone criticizes you, you say, "fine, move along", [Laughter] eh? Nothing to be done. Find your molecules. If you don't find your molecules, you cannot even read. That's what reading is: it's finding your very own molecules. They are in books, your cerebral molecules. They are in books, and these books, you have to find them. I find that nothing is sadder for gifted young people, in principle, than growing old without ever having found the books that they really liked, or never finding any, in the end, and then all at once, playing the scholar about all books. That's a funny thing; it makes you bitter, you know, this kind of intellectual bitterness that takes things out against others for your not having been able to find what you loved. So... The air of superiority that one acquires by dint of being stupid... All that is unfortunate. But you've got to have a relation, at the extreme, only with what you love. [Laughter] Good, so...

And so, what relation is there between sensibility in itself and philosophical sensibility? What relation is there as well between sensibility in itself and musical sensibility? When I say, for example, "Ah for me, in music, above all I place...", stupid kinds of expression, idiotic kinds of expression, but that are easy, expressing what people say... When someone tells me, for example, "Above everyone, I place Mozart..." What is it in his sensibility that vibrates to Mozart? What makes me say... and then, this gets extremely differentiated, a particular moment in Mozart, above all, above all the other moments in Mozart... "Ah, the little kettle drums there, ah, the little kettle drums... Now that's music!" It's really odd...

Philosophy is the same. Being Spinozist means... -- That doesn't at all mean having Spinoza's doctrine -- That means having had this feeling, having vibrated to certain texts by Spinoza, saying: Ah yes, nothing more can be said. So, in this, philosophy is part of literature and art in general; it yields exactly the same emotions. So, I am saying, you understand in this story of sensibility, it's obvious that here, it's not... Forget the complicated words, but if you live like a substance, like being, it's a certain manner of living. You say, myself, I feel like a being. There's nothing wrong with that. I'll tell you simply: Good, fine, drop Spinoza; don't read Spinoza... Or stop coming to this course, it's not worth the trouble since... This might be of interest to you then, but very, very exteriorly. You're wasting your time, so your real interest would be to go listen to things about people or listen to people who truly think that they are beings. Once again, that means something; it's an entire sensibility, and even quite varied, since that could perhaps be an Aristotelian sensibility, perhaps a Cartesian sensibility, perhaps a Christian sensibility, all sorts of very different sensibilities.

So, one experiences oneself a bit like beings... So, doing philosophy will mean doing philosophy following your taste. If you experience yourself as a being, henceforth this comes down to saying: "What does being mean?", in the sense of "I am a being." You must get informed about all this. You must read people who have said this. If you have the slightest



emotion when faced with Spinoza, I have a feeling that it's as a function of this: that in your sensibility, there is something in you that makes you tell yourself, even if you aren't thinking about this: "No, I don't experience myself as a being." So, fine... Do I experience myself as a dream? That could happen, but at that point, I'd say: Spinoza is not what you need. If you experience yourself as a dream, there are certainly some great authors that have lived a bit like a dream. You have to find them. I assume there are some great... some great... some great Germans who have truly lived like a dream, some great German Romantics, yes indeed. Go look at them; they're what you need...

You understand, I don't believe... I think about an author that I suppose many among you deeply like. But why, why does Beckett really represent an entire sensibility in our era? He invented this sensibility; he gave it its literary expression. One cannot say that Beckett's characters experience themselves as beings. How do they experience themselves? They don't experience themselves like Spinoza either. It's difficult to say that they're Spinozists. There are so many manners of living unless they experience themselves a bit like a Spinozist, to some extent, I don't know. They don't experience themselves as dreams either.

In any case, I would define the Spinozist sensibility as a sensibility such that I experience myself as a manner of being. I experience myself as a mode, that is, as a manner of being. It's very different between being a being or a manner of being. So, at that point, I can sense that Spinoza has something to tell me, if that interests me, concerning the question: But what does "a manner of being" mean? And what is this, living in a way that's a manner of being? Living as a manner of being? And what is life and death for a manner of being? And what is illness and health for a manner of being? Etc. This must not be the same thing as for a being. It's in this way that all this has practical consequences. So...

Hence my question, and there... Oh... [Pause] All this snapping [of tape recorders, cassettes being changed]. [Laughter] Doesn't yours work? It's broken? [Laughter] [Pause]

I'm trying to create a kind of typology of cases. What might happen that's bad? You recall, in my first point, I had in fact said: What is it that happens that's bad, from my point of view? What happens to me that's bad, in general, is when one of my relations is destroyed. That's something bad because, in fact, that suppresses my perseverance. [Pause]

[The tape recorder snapping continues] But this is hallucinating... [Pause] I have the impression of being in a Target (*Prisunic*). [Laughter] This is straight out of Jerry Lewis... [Laughter] [Parnet: You really think so?] [Pause]

So, yes... I am creating a kind of study of cases with this general formula: what's bad is when one of my relations is destroyed. And here we have the simplest case, to which I won't return because... we already know it well now. Adam and the apple, or arsenic and blood. Quite simple: an exterior body, under its own relation, destroys one of my relations. You see, the expression is quite simple; it's quite precise. So, all or part of my relations are destroyed. There we have a first case of something bad. And my question starts from there: isn't this the simplest case? Isn't there grounds for considering other cases, nonetheless, and more complicated ones?

I'd say, a second case... Imagine this: my relations, in general, are... -- this is very delicate, all that; this is meant to have you sense that, in fact, the second case already bites into the first -- in general, my relations are conserved. All or part, the most of, most of my relations are conserved. But here we are: they've lost their mobility or their communication. This is another case... This can happen... I am telling myself, concretely, this happens: all my relations are conserved generally and from the outside. But they've lost this kind of property that belongs to them insofar as they are relations of movement and rest, notably their property of communicating with one another. We've seen this, and it's why I was insisting so much, in my [point] "two" today, in my second section, on this communication... No, in my [point] "one",



in my starting point today... I was saying, necessarily, relations that compose me are perpetually in communication with each other, since my complex relations never stop being decomposed into the simplest, and the simplest never stop recomposing the most complex. It's even in this way that I have a duration. And here, imagine, most of my relations are conserved. But everything occurs as if they were solidified; they no longer communicate very well, or certain ones no longer communicate with others.

In what way is this interesting? Because that interests me, I don't know why, but... I tell myself: the first case, the apple and arsenic, there, the poison... It was quite simple. I return to my theme, my problem, which was to derive a theory of illness from Spinoza. I'd say, this is a very simple case: it's illness by intoxication. It's illness of intoxication. [Pause] I'd say, these are illnesses of action. These are illnesses of action. In this sense, a toxic body, since its relation does not compose itself with mine, acts upon mine, thus destroys my relation. A foreign body acting on me in bad conditions equates to illness of action, or illness of intoxication. You see, all viral illnesses, bacterial illnesses, etc., are of this type. [Pause]

My second case, it seems to me, is already entirely different. There can be an intervention of bacteria and viruses, but this is no longer the essential. There can be an exterior agent, but this time, this exterior agent is defined less by the fact that it would destroy my relation – it destroys certain ones if necessary, you see that there are fringes between the two cases. -- But it's less this that counts, it's less the relations that it destroys, than the interior communication of my relations that is compromised. If necessary, each relation continues to function, but the phenomena of co-functioning, of metabolism, of transformation of relations with one another no longer occurs. I'd say that for you here, it's an entirely different domain, illnesses of metabolism, or of communication, that affect the communication of relations between them. And at the extreme, understand, I can have -- At the extreme! All these are cases; I'm trying to indicate diverse cases – At the extreme, I am able to have conserved all my relations, but in fact, I am already dead. It's a kind of premature death. Here I am still breathing, fine... My blood circulates, fine... But there is no longer any communication between the circulation of blood and the respiratory circuit; it no longer works, or at least, communication works poorly. The oxygenation of the blood no longer occurs.

Fine, so let's group this... There's a word, in fact, I see... the word among words in modern science, in biology, it's... Which would refer back to this domain of communication of relations that is decomposed and recomposed at the core of my persistence; it's what would be called, today, the interior milieu and metabolism. So, I'll say, this second case of illness are illnesses of interior milieu and metabolism, very different from the others. And this is very interesting because, at the extreme, I was saying... hence, my call for you to read two texts from book IV [of the *Ethics*] that I indicated to you, this so very beautiful text by Spinoza that consists in telling us: "But you know, we can even, at least apparently, stay the same, and in fact, we are already dead." And this question that seemed to be raised by this text, about what is called artificial life support – you maintain a respiratory circuit, but the blood circulation is screwed. The electroencephalogram shows that there's no longer any cerebral communication. You maintain a poor guy; you maintain a cadaver in a living state -- The recent case of Tito, the recent case of Franco, etc. – You maintain kinds of articulated systems that have absolutely nothing living any more, but you maintain them, like that, simply... You maintain each circuit, but there is no longer any metabolism, that is, there is no longer any communication of circuits between them. There you have a second case of illness, it seems to me, entirely... [Deleuze does not complete this]

Third case: the essential aspect of my relations subsists – You see, we are moving into more and more complicated cases – The essential aspect of my relations subsists, at least in appearance, from the point of view of movement and rest. And my second case was: the



relations subsist generally, generally, but they've lost their suppleness, that is, their metabolism or power of communicating, their communications within the interior milieu. Here, I imagine another case: the essential aspect of my relations subsists, apparently, but what is lost is the power of discernment over exterior bodies. [Pause] That is, ... What does this case mean? I am breathing, yes, but I have greater and greater difficulty decomposing air, that is, capturing the oxygen necessary. Another case, you see, my respiratory relation subsists, but it subsists in conditions such that it lacks discernment, and I have greater and greater difficulty uniting myself, literally, uniting myself with the oxygen molecules that I need. In other words what is compromised here are the reactions that result from relations. In fact, relations can orient reactions only through the intermediary of molecular discernment.

I ask myself the question: couldn't we say that here, there's a third group of illnesses, illnesses of intolerance? This would even be an interesting schema of illnesses of intolerance, because what happens when someone has an intolerance, an allergy, for example, to dust, to dust? Or else, what happens in asthmatic breathing? All these are very difficult subjects. Couldn't we say this: my pulmonary relation indeed subsists, but what isn't functioning well is the power of discernment, specifically the discernment of oxygen molecules, the molecular discernment. The oxygen molecules, there's something that snaps inside them. Perhaps I unite myself, even in the air, perhaps my system is sufficiently malfunctioning for me to unite myself, in the air, with molecules that are not precisely oxygen? But this would place us perhaps within another case... In any case, here, this is the reaction; these are illnesses of reaction. This groups all the illnesses that have gained greater and greater importance following discoveries connected to what's been called stress, which are not illnesses of action, or of the intoxication type, but are illnesses of reaction, in which what constitutes the illness is the reaction. You see, this would make a third group of illnesses.

And so, I've kept for the end, obviously, the most beautiful, the most troubling one. Let's go farther still. This time, what's broken is the my very interior, notably... It's a new step. Already at level three, there was an affection of power of discernment, of power of molecular discernment. Here, at the level of this final case, of my fourth case, this is the power of internal discernment that is going to be broken. Not the power of external discernment, but the power of internal discernment. What do I call internal discernment? It means molecules of my body recognize, distinguish molecules... No, excuse me, it means that molecules of my body, under a given relation, distinguish other molecules of my body under a given relation and distinguish them as belonging to a one and same body. This is what we've seen; this is constitutive of persistence. For example, my pulmonary molecules recognize, in a certain way, discern my blood molecules.

So, this time, you see the third case put into play, put into question the power of exterior discernment; here, I am speaking of power of interior discernment, notably: in my organism, under all the relations that compose it, the particles that realize these relations recognize one another. This is the domain of perception, assuming this time that it's this regime. There you have certain molecules, under a given relation, going to engage with other molecules of mine under a relation as foreign ones, as foreign ones from which they are going to decompose the relation. [Pause]

And this is why I invited you to read this second text from book IV about an astonishing thing, something that appears to me very, very strange, in which Spinoza says: but this is what suicide is, that is, he proposes a typically noxious (*maladif*) model of suicide. Here, I believe that he sees something so profound that this touches on points... [Deleuze does not finish] You understand what he is telling us about suicide; he says it's very simple – and here, I didn't need to force the texts; if you read this during vacation, as it was your task, these two texts at least – these two texts on suicide are quite astonishing since this consists in telling us: well, yes,



certain parts of ourselves, under a relation, behave as if they had become the enemy of other parts of ourselves, under other relations. As a result, we witness this astonishing thing: a body for which an entire part is going to tend toward suppressing the others, as if it took literally, if you will, the suicide gesture of, for example, I'm turning my own hand against myself by shooting myself with a revolver or something like that. It's like a rebellion of the parts, of certain parts, that's going to lead to a destruction of all the parts. Never have I thought of suicide in as intense and as molecular a manner.

For, in the end, when we read a text today, I was telling you the last time, we have an entirely different idea. But if Spinoza found only suicide to invoke, it's because the biology of his era didn't give him the means. But today, when medicine speaks to us and discovers this fourth type of illnesses, which is neither of intoxication, nor of metabolism, nor of intolerance, but is called auto-immune illnesses, and which seem precisely to promise a brilliant future, that is, a very great intuition and of discovering all sorts of other maladies that we didn't know very well how to treat, [these] belong precisely to this new category. What are auto-immune illnesses? Well, I was telling you, if we have an immune system, the immune system is defined today as follows: it's precisely molecules, genetic molecules, that have the power to discern other molecules as belonging to my body. This is what biologists currently call precisely something like self-molecules (*molécules du soi*), when [the biologists] begin using almost metaphysical concepts. These are self-molecules since they have for biological function to recognize my component molecules. This is the immune system. So, they are going to sort out component molecules and foreign molecules. They are notably going to bring about phenomena of rejection in grafts: Ah, this, it's not mine, it's not mine, so throw it out!

And I was telling you, suppose that the immune system, in one way or another, is attacked (*atteint*). What happens? There are only two cases possible. What is going to be attacked is the power to repulse foreign molecules. This is one possible case. Or else, what is going to be attacked, and this is going to be even more odd, is going to be the power to recognize its own molecules. There you have my body that no longer recognizes, in certain zones, in certain parts, its own molecules. So, it treats them as intruders, as intruding foreign molecules.

What kind of illness is this? The auto-immune illnesses are illnesses of perception. Biologists currently will say that these are illnesses of information. This constitutes an enormous group of illnesses, enormous right now. One type of relatively known auto-immune illness is multiple sclerosis, which is an extremely serious illness. And it's a very new conception of the illness, and why? Because, at the extreme, this is what? [Georges] Canguilhem devoted a text to this, to these illnesses, but he hasn't yet... It's a text that precedes recent developments on auto-immune illnesses. And he says, what does this come down to? There are a dozen very beautiful pages by Canguilhem where he says, well yes, what does this come down to? This comes down to treating the illness in an entirely new manner, he pretends, notably, the illness as error, illness as genetic error. This is a certain model of illness that is valid for certain illnesses. Illness as genetic error is nonetheless a very interesting concept, which in fact groups together all the current data of biology and information science. The connecting point of biology and information science today is this group of illnesses that can be considered as genetic errors, that is, errors in relation to the genetic code. Either – so here, they are infinite – Either the genetic code itself creates an error, or its transmission creates levels of error. You see that this is already a very, very varied domain.

In any case, illness as error, what does the error consist of? Here, I don't need to force this to say: well yes, for Spinoza, there is indeed an entire type of illnesses that are errors. What does the error consist of? What is affected? It's the system of molecular perceptive discernment. And the illness consists of this: a difficulty of perception, notably, here you have my molecules of discernment beginning to create and multiply errors.



And today, how do we interpret old age? A word for the concept of old age has been formed, given its great biological importance, which is senescence. How is it interpreted? Among the interpretations of senescence, of old age, of the aging process, today one of the most interesting ones is this: it's a hypothesis, like this, but it appears to me one of the most beautiful ones among the specialists of senescence, of the aging process. They say: errors, in the sense of genetic errors, errors of transmission in the information of the genetic code, the cells are constantly created, but these errors simply are compensated. So here, errors and the little disturbances owing to errors of reading of the genetic code are constant. But they say, a cell, well, it has an average of errors, there's an average of possible errors. And then, there's a moment in which a threshold is reached. And it's when the threshold of possible errors is reached that, at that moment, there really is something irreducible, notably a phenomenon of senescence, of aging of the cell, as if it collapsed under the number of its errors. Pathological error is a beautiful concept.

So, you understand, we mustn't exaggerate, eh? When Spinoza said: "But evil is error," he cannot completely mean that. But when it's a philosopher who really created an entire explicit theory of perception, of the minute perception, of the power of discernment of particles, the particles create errors, they no longer recognize each other. And old age would be this crossing over the threshold of a cell's tolerance, of a particle's tolerance, in relation to these errors. So, there we have a fourth type of illnesses, illnesses of error or of perception.

And so, what appear to me very odd, in the text to which I referred you, is the way in which Spinoza brings suicide back to an illness of error, specifically: the entire zone of particles, under given relations no longer recognizes the other particles under their relations as being my own, or being their own, and turns against them. As a result, one would have to say about auto-immune illnesses, literally, that they are organic suicides, [Pause] just like suicides are kinds of psychic auto-immune illnesses. Yes, fine... There you have what I wanted to say about this possible schema that gives us the concept of illness, the status precisely of modes and manners of being.

And so this works out well because – I'm going to stop soon – this works out well because we now nonetheless dispose of a better – how to say this? – a better interpretation grid in order to return entirely to the correspondence between Blyenbergh and Spinoza.⁵ For now that we have access to this aggregate, I remind you of Blyenbergh's immediate reaction, and the whole correspondence, I hope, is going to take on a different meaning for us more concretely. For Blyenbergh, from the point of view of sensibility, this is precisely – I believe that this is someone who profoundly experiences himself – no one is going to make him back down: Blyenbergh does experience himself as a being. And this is why that all of Spinozism at once attracts him as something very, very strange and repulses him quite deeply. And he interrogated Spinoza in a demanding way, on the mode of: Well, come on, what does all that mean? Oh right, you aren't a being? And the entire topic of good and evil, it's here, with his attitude, and on the level of the grid that I proposed to you today that we must resituate this topic.

And on this level, here we have, it seems to me, Blyenbergh making two very strong objections. The two strong objections – you're going to sense that they are completely linked with everything that we discussed today – I'd say, the first one concerns nature in general. It consists of saying: your modal point of view, from the point of view of such a conception of modes, you won't be able to work your way out of this: nature can only be chaos. You

⁵ The shift of topics returns to the discussion in the previous session (16 December 1980) about the question of evil in the correspondence with Blyenbergh. Chapter 3 of *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* also addresses this correspondence and these questions.



remember that Spinoza just defined nature in general as an aggregate of all the relations that are composed and decomposed, not only from my own point of view, but from all points of view.

Blyenbergh's retort, which seems quite interesting: what are you talking about there? This nature, then, is pure chaos! Why is it pure chaos? Because you'll notice that each time a body acts on another, there is always composition and decomposition at the same time. It's not on this level that I could say there is good and bad. Why? Because there necessarily is composition and decomposition, both within each other. If arsenic acts on my body, it's a case of what's bad; it decomposes several of my relations, but why? Because it determines my particles to enter under another relation. With this other relation, arsenic's relation is composed, so there is not only decomposition, there's composition as well, in the case of poisoning. My organism dies, but precisely... [*Interruption of the recording; end of the cassette*]

III

... For example, I am eating, and I say it's good. What am I in the process of eating when I'm eating beef or wheat? I decompose the relation of the particles under which they belong to wheat, and as I say, I incorporate them, that is, I submit them to my own relation. Here as well, there is decomposition and composition. But I never cease decomposing and recomposing; moreover, I can hardly imagine that I could have a composition that wouldn't lead to or have decompositions as its reverse or flip side.

So, nature is the aggregate of decompositions as much as of recompositions. And I could never distinguish pure compositions and decompositions. They exist entirely within each other. So, nature is pure chaos. And in fact, when Spinoza had said, "be careful, there is neither good nor evil," there's good and bad; but there's good and bad – he had specified this – there's good and bad, from my point of view, that is, from the point of view of a determined body. But, from the point of view of nature in general, there's neither good nor evil, but there is neither good nor bad either. Any composition implies decompositions; any decomposition implies compositions. This is chaos! And [Blyenbergh's] objection is very, very strong. How would nature not be chaos?

And there's Blyenbergh's second objection. Blyenbergh says: "This time, fine, I place myself in the point of view of the point of view," that is, of the point of view of a precise body, for example, mine, [where] there's good and bad. What's bad is that which decomposes my relations; what's good is that which is composed with my relations.

So, fine, there's good and bad, from the point of view of a body. He will distinguish arsenic and nourishment. Arsenic, bad; nourishment, good. But, a new objection from Blyenbergh, you'll see that it's very different: that gives no objective content to the notions of vice and virtue. That gives no objective content to the notions of vice and virtue since if you distinguish arsenic and nourishment, this is because one agrees with you and the other doesn't agree with you. And are you going to say that vice is what doesn't agree with you, and that virtue is what agrees with you? In fact, morality has always told us the opposite, to wit: for virtue, a difficult effort was necessary to attain it, that is, it didn't particularly agree with you, and on the contrary, vice could very well agree with me, but that didn't make it any less vice. In other words, morality begins from the moment that one doesn't assimilate vice and virtue into simple tastes.

Hence, Blyenbergh's objection: you only have a criterion of taste to distinguish actions, and you, Spinoza, if you abstain from committing crime, if you abstain from committing crimes, it's solely because they would have a bad taste for you. And in fact, Spinoza himself



had said in an earlier letter: “I abstain from committing crimes because these horrify my nature.” But this is completely immoral! Abstaining from committing crimes because this horrifies your nature is not what morality asks of you. Morality begins from the moment in which it tells you to abstain from committing crimes even if you want to. Because, what assures me that Spinoza’s nature is going to continue to be horrified by committing crimes? Hence, Spinoza’s even stranger statement, what does it mean when, at the end of his correspondence, he says: “If someone saw that committing crimes agreed with his essence, or killing himself did, that person would indeed be wrong not to kill himself or not to commit crime”?

So, both of Blyenbergh’s objections, you see that they are very different and that they are quite strong. And, to understand how Spinoza is going to be able to attempt a response to these objections, I believe that we simply must make a final – after this, I’m done – a final reorganization. This final reorganization is a concrete reorganization because we may get lost in all this; it’s very subtle. It’s easy to understand, but it’s very subtle.

So, let’s return to some examples of evil, and in what way does this indeed concern the same domain about which Spinoza is speaking to us? Concretely... I am choosing three incontestable examples of evil: theft, there we have evil; crime is evil; and an example that runs through all the manuals of morality and theology during that era, adultery. What interests me... I am choosing these three examples because Spinoza chooses them in his correspondence with Blyenbergh, and these are very concrete examples. And all that I am asking in finishing up for today is this: in what way do these – theft, crime, adultery -- concern everything that we’ve discussed today? Listen to what Spinoza tells him: So, what is not good in these? Fine, I am speaking like everyone: this is evil. What is evil in crime? Well, what’s evil, says Spinoza, is quite simple; here, there aren’t many problems. By my act, I decompose the constitutive relations of another body. That is: I kill someone; so, I decompose the constitutive relations of another body. You see, this is interesting for crime because this appears more difficult for theft and adultery. And in fact, it’s obvious that Spinoza has something in mind and that he didn’t choose these examples at random. But whatever the example might be, this works.

Theft; imagine theft. What is evil in theft? We are told that it’s evil, but we cannot believe it if we don’t see what is evil in theft, so we have to see what this evil is. So, nobody else will steal anymore if he sees clearly what the evil is in theft; this is because people don’t see what’s evil in theft. And, you recall Spinoza’s expression. Generally, evil, or what’s bad in any case, consists in one thing: it’s always that a relation is destroyed. A relation is decomposed, a relation is destroyed. And so, in theft, there is indeed a relation that is destroyed. It’s this: how is property defined? We have to do some law. Because property is very interesting for all our problems. Because in all this, these are very concrete problems; substances, modes, etc., these stories are very concrete. Are we substances? Are we modes? Is property a quality? Well, what is property? I am saying this as obscurely as possible. Is it of the kind “the sky is blue”, of the kind “Pierre is smaller than Paul”? Is property an attributable quality, or else is it a relation? And a relation between what and what?

I’m going to tell you; I believe that property is a relation. But I very well imagine some theories of property that would show, or would try to show, that property is a quality attributable to someone. But I don’t believe this; I believe that it’s a relation. It’s a relation between two terms, one term that we’ll call property, another term that we’ll call the property owner. What is this relation? What does this relation of property consist of, if it’s a relation? Property’s relation is very interesting; it would require me a long while to try to define this type of relation that is called property. Once again, this isn’t certain. There are people who will be able to consider property as an attribute, but I’m not certain about this, but in any case, they’re wrong. I wonder if St. Thomas, if theologians don’t consider property as an attribute, but here, then, I haven’t reflected on this, so I’d have to go consult the texts to see.



Fine, but in the end, it doesn't matter; we ourselves don't consider property as an attribute. We consider it as a relation, I mean you and me. And here we are, this relation, fine... For example, here's a text, a text by another philosopher, and he says: there is a right of property. We'd have to study all the property rights in order to see what types of relations are in play in property. Here's a case, a case that I cited to you because it is so moving, a classic case, that constituted jurisprudence from Antiquity. You have... There's an abandoned city. A city is abandoned, and there are two guys that are running toward the city. They're running very, very fast. And one of them touches the door with his fingers, fine. And the other, behind him, shoots an arrow into the door... Not into the first guy, into the door. [Laughter]

A juridical problem: who is the owner? What is the property right here? This is property of non-occupied things, the right of occupation. Over non-occupied things, you have a right of property through occupation. What's going to define occupation? First case, jurisprudence said: you have to touch the thing. We have created our entire empire by planting our flag into lands which, no doubt, were occupied before, but we've forgotten that, [Laughter] and it wasn't occupied by other Europeans. We planted our flag; it was an act of property by right of the first occupant, as it was said. Obviously, that caused problems, but... Fine. Here we have the question: the hand on the door of the city initiates a relation. Conventionally, henceforth this relation is – you see, I'm introducing the idea that there are relations through convention, which will be very important for what follows – there are natural relations and conventional relations. The law, the system of law decides through convention that this relation – which is relation of contiguity, my hand touching the door... Whereas in the other case, the guy who shoots the arrow, there is no relation of contiguity. There's a relation of causality. He fired the arrow, and the arrow is in contiguity with the door when it was planted in it.

To do law and to enjoy doing law means enjoying problems of this kind. Who is the owner? Did the relation arrow-shooter suffice to induce through convention a relation of property or not? You see, being a judge means deciding cases of this kind. It's not easy. Or else, did the sole relation of the hand-door contact induce the conventional property relation? You see that in these cases, a natural relation is selected, a natural relation is chosen, in order to signify a conventional relation: property. So, this is a very beautiful problem, the problem of property from the point of view of a theory of relations.

And, I am just saying, notice how the problem of property, the problem of theft, returns fully within Spinoza's schema: when I steal, I destroy the relation of convention between the thing and its owner. And this is uniquely because I am destroying a relation that I am committing evil. This is a good idea from Spinoza: each time that you destroy a relation, you are doing evil. But you'll tell me, how does one avoid doing evil? When I eat, I am destroying a relation; I am destroying the relations of the beef in order to incorporate the beef molecules within me. [Laughter] Fine, fine, he'll say, ok, ok... Let it go; let it go its own way, along its own path...

And so, adultery? Ah, ah... [Laughter] Everything is explained, it's quite marvelous. And so, this is evil because you decompose a relation. Oh yes? So, if I don't decompose any relation, I can commit adultery. Yes! Because his understanding is limited, Spinoza thinks that this is not possible, that within adultery, in any case, a relation is decomposed. It's not certain; there can be some arrangements made with Spinozism, [Laughter] for what does he mean by decomposing a relation? He means that marriage, and here, he even adds more to it, -- because on one hand, he's a bachelor [Laughter] and, on the other hand, he doesn't really care about it that much – here, he adds more to it in the sense that he takes things literally. He says: "You tell yourself that marriage is the initiation of a sacred relation between the legitimate woman and the husband." This is a relation of convention, he will say: the relation of sacrament is by convention. He wrote the *Theologico-Political Treatise* to relate all this quite well.



But the conventional relations are perfectly founded and, in the end, are founded in natural relations. Fine, this is very important. So, in adultery, what you destroy is the conventional relation that unites one of two partners, or both, to their respective spouse. You destroy a relation. And once again Blyenbergh's objections resound: whatever I do, I am destroying relations, because after all, even love with my legitimate wife destroys relations. What relations? For example, the relation that she had with her mother. Ah... By getting married, I am nonetheless destroying the eminently natural relation that my legitimate wife had with her mother. Am I destroying it, or am I composing it? So fine, we must have the legitimate wife's mother intervene in order to see if this is a composition of relations or if there's a destruction of relations. In each act of life, this isn't complicated, we must take of all that into account. What do I decompose as a relation, and what do I compose as a relation?

You understand what he's getting at. There is going to be a funny thing within the *Ethics*, that occurs constantly: "You don't understand anything in life, and that's what being a manner of being is." When needed, he doesn't tell you anything more: each time that you do something, look, be a little discerning, see what relations you are in the process of decomposing and what relations you are in the process of composing. So, [there's] a kind of prodigious calculus of relations, a prodigious composition-decomposition of relations. And Blyenbergh arrives with his objection: "But everything is simultaneously composition-decomposition, so in any case, you will be within pure chaos because you yourself, to the extent that you consider yourself to be a manner of being, you are only pure chaos, you've reduced yourself to the state of pure chaos". Do you understand?

And here we have Spinoza who's going to answer; here, Spinoza has reached one of his limits. He doesn't like someone treating him like chaos. [*Laughter*] He reaches one of his limits; he's going to say: "No, above all not that." You might be correct on all the other points, he tells Blyenbergh – besides, he doesn't care, but there is a point on which he cannot yield; it's that the *Ethics* is not a pure benediction of chaos; that, to the contrary, the *Ethics* gives us the means to distinguish good and bad; he won't yield on this – and there are two sorts of acts, that is, acts that have as dominant trait to compose relations, and these are good acts, and acts that have as dominant trait to decompose relations, and those ones are bad acts. But how?

Student comment: So, for example, if I steal a book at a supermarket, I am composing a relation, and the theft in that case would be a positive act to the extent that I am composing a relation, then, with the book, which is more interesting than the relation that the book had with the supermarket...

Deleuze: Spinoza would say "no", because the book's relation with the supermarket that is the [book's] legitimate owner has value not only through the nature of the supermarket and of the supermarket's director, but by the sacredness of conventional relations, of symbolic relations. That is, when you committed this act, well, when someone commits this act, [*Laughter*] this abominable act of stealing the book, [*Laughter*] the act is only abominable to the extent that it consists of destroying the integrality of all symbolic relations. Because, afterward, if you're told, "well, ok, you stole a book, and so, eh? What's next for you?" It's all relations... Are there conventional relations that you respect, or is it all conventional relations that you are going to destroy? And there are certain book thieves who, by stealing a book, destroy the aggregate of all conventional relations. There are even some who destroy the aggregate of conventional and natural relations. It's at them that this expression is aimed: whoever steals a book, steals an egg. [*Laughter*] There we are.



So, this is the exact point that we've reached: how is Spinoza going to maintain his position, "there's indeed a distinction between good and bad"? There we are; try to live, until next week.⁶

⁶ Note: The superb work on the transcript by the Paris 8 team -- : Part 1, Thomas Harlay and Jean-Charles Jarrell; Part 2: Véronique Delannay and Jean-Charles Jarrell; and Part 3 : Julien David & Jean-Charles Jarrell -- has greatly facilitated development of the translation, the first time this text has been available in English.

Work on the augmented transcripts and the new translation took place in February 2020.