



GILLES DELEUZE

Spinoza: The Velocities of Thought

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I

... Dutch painting. This text is called “The Eye Listens” [by Paul Claudel] – it’s an awful title, but that doesn’t matter – “The Eye Listens” contains analyses of Rembrandt, Vermeer, that are beautiful, so very, very beautiful. So, just as, this would almost be a transition since Claudel himself in his texts suggests very curious connections between a certain kind of Spinozism and Dutch painting, notably light in Dutch painting. So, it would be interesting if you could get hold of this text. It came out, for those who have this, it came out in the Pléiade edition, in the Claudel volume titled “Works in Prose,” but if you could read it, Claudel’s text, that would make a very nice transition between our two subject his year,¹ a very, very beautiful text. Yes, there are some admirable analyses of Rembrandt. There we are. And so, we can come back to Spinoza. Is it 10:30? [*Answer from someone sitting near him*: Yes]

A participant: Excuse me; would it be possible to ask a question? He doesn’t speak of Stendhal in that text, about “The Night Watch”?

Deleuze: He speaks quite a lot about “The Night Watch” [by Rembrandt].

The participant: It’s not that I am intelligent, but...

Deleuze: Of course, you are! Of course, you are! Of course, you are!

The participant: But do you find that in “The Night Watch,” there is an Amsterdam bourgeois side to it? [There’s] a guy, a figure lying in a corner, yes, there is something that’s... a mysterious, bizarre, out-of-place side alongside the established, Amsterdam bourgeois within this mystery, this aspect...?

Deleuze: Well, yes... No. I don’t have it in front of me. What I have here are two kinds of very, very lovely pages, one having an immensely philosophical sense and that seems to me to say this at one point; it says – you understand what there is that’s essential in painting; it’s that they have become conscious, and it created from this a glorification of Dutch painting, but here, I doubt that he had completely, well, he was no doubt right – it says: the Dutch have become particularly conscious of this: that the work of art, the work insofar as it is an actual,

¹ The second seminar, starting in late March, will be on painting, with the 31 March 1981 seminar providing an overlapping session, concluding discussion with students on Spinoza and then continuing onto the introduction of the painting seminar. The comments that Deleuze makes here about the theme of the accident in Dutch painting connect directly to the opening theme introduced at the 31 March 1981 session.



immediate work, no longer referred to essence, but referred to the accident, the little accident, the way in which a glass is a bit unbalanced, in which a cloth has a fold that indicates that it's been rumpled, in which a piece of fruit is gradually ripening, and it says, well then, this is it; it says, painting truly means relating, right, what one is supposed to reproduce out of the accident.

In fact, I am saying that this is very important, something like that, because if we go far back in time, to the East, I believe there was an entirely different problem because, for the East, the essence-accident categories had no great importance. But if we ourselves say just anything about a Western kind of pseudo-painting, about Western painting, it seems to me that it begins precisely in a kind of somewhat comparable non-painting, with Egyptian bas relief. And what is Egyptian bas relief? With contour, you see, proximity equals form plus depth, the contour outlining the character, and so, this is character that contour really removes from variation. Here, if you will, the figure in Egyptian art, the figure that is as if organized, surrounded by contour, is brought back to essence, essence being removed from variability.

And here, this will mark, it seems to me, all of Western art because even to consider this from the opposite view, I am saying that in the East, the idea of an essence would be beyond appearance; this is not an idea from the East, but this is already an idea indeed at work fundamentally in Egypt, will move into Greek art and, as it is said, will have an impact on all our Western art. And what occurs in all Western art? It is going to realize that the figure or form can no longer be brought back, given the chaos in the world, can no longer be brought back to essence, to Egyptian essence, but must be brought back to accident, the tiny thing that goes wrong, the tiny thing that leans, and I think that this is what has been fundamental in this history, notably you will no longer bring figures back to essence, but rather to accident, to change, to the event and no longer the eternal.

And so, here as well, we realize that things are very complicated because, in my view, what was a decisive factor was Christianity, it was Christianity. In fact, with Christianity, things – this is something that is a source of great joy for me – Christianity never stopped opening up amazing possibilities for atheism, fantastic, because Christianity begins by telling us: why yes, the measure of things, more than essence, is the event. And, in fact, there is a kind of gesture from God, that is, the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, etc. In this series of events, God is no longer thought of as a function of essence; it really is thought of as a function of the event. And starting from this, could this be stopped? Only with difficulty!

This is why I am returning to a theme that I outlined, at the beginning, vaguely about Spinoza, because we are told: well yes, you understand that in painting considered to be Christian, this is quite odd. This cannot be stopped. To the extent the Christ figure and that of God is not brought back to essence, but to events, although these events are highly coded within a sacred history, or according to rules of the Church, they are going to be twisted in all directions. Thus, you will have all the descents from the cross that you like; you'll have a madness for painting, a madness for painting is going to take hold of this, by bringing the figure into all imaginable accidents. You'll have Christs with the head lowered; you'll have Christs with an arm at, as is said, extraordinary Mannerist angles; you're going to have entirely homosexual Christs; you're going to have anything you like because of bringing the figure back to the accident.

As a result, at the heart of this Christian painting, there will arise a veritable joy from what must be called “deformation,” notably the figure brought into the accident; this is deformation. Here, I am using a word when, for example, Cézanne precisely claims a deformation of bodies by distinguishing quite well the deformation from what could be called transformation and also decomposition, the properly pictorial deformation of the body that is neither



transformation nor decomposition. Obviously from the point of view of painting, Christianity was one of the first possibilities.

So, as was applied to the Christ figure, then it goes without saying that this is applied to objects. First this could be applied to all the objects surrounding Christ. But it can also be applied to still life or to fruit in Rembrandt's works, and here, Claudel speaks admirably of the lemon, half peeled, where there is a whorl of lemon (*spire de citron*) – does one say “un” or “une”? [*spire*] [*Answer: Une*] Yes, finally, I don't know, you can fill this in yourself – the whorl of lemon that hangs, creating a spiral here, and that shows half the lemon, the lemon half divided, and the impression that... Or else, Cézanne's apple, we get the impression that there is a force of ripening, etc.

There's a text on Cézanne by [D.H.] Lawrence, the English novelist, that seems to me to be the most beautiful text, finally the most beautiful text that I've read on Cézanne; he also says something very beautiful there which is – you know, Lawrence also painted, he did watercolors, and he was quite involved in his watercolors, and it's about an exhibit of his own watercolors that he wrote something, this very, very beautiful text on Cézanne – and he says: well, yes, painting is difficult – he knew something about this; he didn't consider himself to be a great painter, and he needed to paint – and he said, painting is very difficult, you know, because understanding something pictorially, even for a great painter, this is necessarily very limited. He says, look at Cézanne, for example, what did he grasp? In forty years of painting, in fifty years of painting, I no longer recall, what did he grasp? And Lawrence has a splendid expression, he says: he grasped an apple and one or two vases, and he said: well then, when someone has done that, when someone is a painter and has achieved that in fifty years, one can say that he's quite fortunate.

And in fact, here he becomes quite brilliant; he says: you know Cézanne, in any case, of course, he's a great genius, but for example, pictorially he never grasped women well; first, he was so very tormented in that area, so puritanical, so... he didn't understand. The proof, he says, Lawrence says, and it's true when we see a woman painted by Cézanne, he paints them like apples [*Laughter*], these are apples, Cézanne's women, these are apples, and he says: that worked out well because Cézanne's very own wife, and he painted his wife, she was an apple. And this is what he calls the “apple-y” being (*être pommesque*) of the apple; Cézanne's stroke of genius, says Lawrence, would be to have grasped the “apple-y” being of the apple. So, he applied it, sometimes it worked, onto the woman figure; there were “apple-y” women, his wife was “apple-y”, so that works quite well. And on the other hand, he grasped two or three vases, one or two vases, a few vases, or some vases and pots, and he says, this is fantastic, fantastic. Having said this, that doesn't prevent the rest from being works of genius as well, but, euh, euh, this is the source...

So, we can say that, it seems to me, we can say, here, really of all painters, we can say of all that, of all these people trying to create something, you see, this is why one must be so very, very modest. For me, what Lawrence says is exemplary. If you are a painter and in fifty years, you have grasped an apple within its pictorial reality, well, you can tell yourself, this is great what I've done. So, euh, [there's] Mondrian with his squares, yes, very good... How much time was required for him then to grasp the pictorial being of a square? One might think this to be simple; it's not simple at all... All this is so philosophers might be modest as well. How much time is needed to grasp a tiny bit of a concept? The concept of an apple... If I managed to grasp the concept of an apple philosophically, this would be prodigious, but that wouldn't at all be easy, not at all.

What did Spinoza grasp? He grasped something then, certainly as he understood. [*Pause*] You see this is a speedy transition... [*Laughter*] So, here we are...



Georges Comtesse: There's something written on the link of Cézanne's painting to Paul Klee with [*unclear word*] that is one of Merleau-Ponty's final texts, called "The Eye and the Mind" ["l'Oeil et l'esprit"]. [Deleuze: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes] You see, that could work as transition with, when [Merleau-Ponty] worked on the visible and the invisible... [Deleuze: Yes, yes] on raw being (*être brut*) and the savage mind, and at that point, he began considering questions of painting.

Deleuze: Yes, yes, yes... I'm going to say... What seems quite striking to me is that Cézanne, in general, was the painter *par excellence* for phenomenologists. If we understood this, it's a very small aspect, too technical and without great interest, but if we understand this, perhaps we understand just a bit about Cézanne because what are the most beautiful pages written on Cézanne today? Strangely, these pages don't really appear in art criticism. There's a very good text by Merleau-Ponty; there is a quite beautiful text, so admirable, no, there are two or three texts by [Henri] Maldiney; there are some texts by Erwin Strauss. And they have in common precisely the fact of being phenomenologists. So here there is a linked aspect; it's not at all surprising since phenomenology centers itself on sensation, which is a phenomenology of feeling, and Cézanne is no doubt the one who pushed this practically as well as theoretically, pushed farthest the relation between painting and what he called sensation. So, in this light, I am not surprised that philosophers like Merleau-Ponty and Maldiney had been particularly inspired or had a special relation to Cézanne, yes.

So, we then return to Spinoza... So here, you certainly remember the point that we've reached, which is the following point: we find ourselves facing the two objections from Oldenburg, of... euh, no, excuse me, [*Web Deleuze translation starts here*]² we find ourselves facing Blyenbergh's two objections, and the first concerns the point of view of nature in general. It comes down to saying to Spinoza that it's very nice to explain that every time a body encounters another, there are relations (*rappports*) that compose and relations that decompose, sometimes to the advantage of one of the two bodies, sometimes to the advantage of the other body.³ Fine. But nature itself combines all the relations at once. So, in nature in general, what doesn't stop is the fact that all the time there are compositions and decompositions of relations, all the time since, ultimately, the decompositions of relations are like the flip side of the compositions, or the reverse side. But there is no reason to privilege the composition of relations over the decomposition since the two always go together.

For example: I eat, and I compose my relation with the food I absorb, but this occurs by decomposing the food's own relations. Another example: I am poisoned. Arsenic decomposes my relation, okay, but it composes its own relation with the new relations into which the parts of my body enter under the action of the arsenic. Thus, there is always composition and decomposition at once. So, nature, says Blyenbergh, nature such as you conceive it, is nothing but an immense chaos. You see, what an objection! Spinoza wavers. [*Pause*] What would you answer in his place? Here, this is Blyenbergh's first objection. And well, he answers, [in] the

² The fragmentary nature of the translation available on Web Deleuze, by Timothy Murphy, is due to the corresponding fragmentary original transcription also available there. Specifically, the opening 16 minutes and the final 40 minutes are omitted entirely, and within the remaining 70 minutes, the omissions correspond to about one-half of the session. Hence, the translation presented here is the full session available in English for the first time, and the augmented transcription, based on the excellent original work by Vanessa Duvois and Carmela Chergui (at Paris 8), is also a newly updated French version.

³ In concert with the translation in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* by Robert Hurley, I have chosen to translate Deleuze's "rapport" as *relation*, since Deleuze is gradually developing an argument, from one lecture to the next, of the importance of differential relations in both philosophical and mathematical terms.



answer, you'll see that, according to the cases, it's quite different. In this, Spinoza sees no difficulty, and his reply is very clear. You could answer for him; if you are a Spinozist, you already have the answer in your head.

He answers this: nothing at all. Nothing at all. He says, well then, no, it's not like that, for a simple reason: it's that from the point of view of the whole of nature, one cannot say that there is composition and decomposition at once since, from the point of view of the whole of nature, there are only compositions. There are only compositions of relations. It's really from the point of view of our understanding (*entendement*) that we say: one relation or another is composed to the detriment of another such relation, which must decompose so that the two others can be composed. But it's because we isolate a part of Nature. From the point of view of the complete whole of Nature, there is never anything but relations that are being composed with each other.

And so, I like this reply very much: the decomposition of relations does not exist from the point of view of the whole of nature since the whole of nature embraces all relations, so there are inevitably compositions, full stop, that's it (*un point, c'est tout*). This is good, very satisfying for me. So, if you tell me you aren't convinced, there's no basis for arguing. It means that you aren't Spinozists, that's it. But there's nothing wrong with that! [*Laughter*]... But you are convinced, I can tell. [*Laughter*]

And you understand that this answer is very simple, very clear, very beautiful; it sets up another difficulty: it refers, in fact, to Blyenbergh's second objection. Let us suppose, at the extreme, that he concedes the point on the problem of the whole of nature. So then, let's approach the other aspect: a particular point of view! My particular point of view! That is, the point of view of a precise and fixed relation, actually, what I call me (*moi*), is an aggregate of precise and fixed relations which constitute me. And well, from this point of view, from this point of view, and it's solely from a particular, determinable point of view, you or me, or anything that I can say: yes, there are compositions and decompositions, notably I would say that there is composition when my relation is conserved and composed with another, external relation, but I would say that there is decomposition when the external body acts on me in such a manner that one of my relations, or even many of my relations, are destroyed, in the sense of "to destroy" that we saw at last class, specifically, cease to be realized (*effectués*) by the current parts.

So here, just as from the point of view of nature I was able to say, ah yes, that there are only compositions of relations, as soon as I take a particular determined point of view, I must say: well, yes, there are decompositions which are not to be confused with compositions, hence Blyenbergh's objection here which consists in saying: well, in the end, what you are calling vice and virtue is whatever suits you, and you will call it virtue every time you compose relations, no matter what relations you destroy, and you will call it vice every time that one of your relations is decomposed. In other words, you will call virtue whatever is agreeable to you and vice whatever is not agreeable to you. You will call arsenic wicked because it kills you, fine, because it decomposes you. On the other hand, you will say that food is good. But in the end, this comes down to saying that food is agreeable to you and poison is not agreeable to you. And, when we speak generally of vice and virtue, we appeal to something other than a particular criterion of taste, specifically, what suits me and what doesn't suit me. [*Pause*]

So, this objection, you see, is distinct from the preceding one since it is made in the name of a particular point of view and no longer in the name of the whole of nature. And it is summarized in this line that Blyenbergh constantly repeats, well yes, you reduce morality to a matter of taste. So there, fine, what is Spinoza going to reply? He's going to throw himself into a very, very strange endeavor. He's going to throw himself into an endeavor to show that... He preserves an objective criterion for the distinction of the good from the bad, or of virtue



from vice. [*Throughout this entire paragraph, Deleuze speaks very slowly, deliberately*] He's going to show this then in two texts which, to my knowledge, are the two most astonishing texts, the strangest texts by Spinoza, really, the strangest of texts, to the point that one of them seems incomprehensible – we don't see what he means, I believe – and the other is perhaps comprehensible, but seems very, very bizarre. In the end, everything gets resolved with a marvelous clarity, but we had to go through these two strange texts.⁴

The first [text] is in the Letters to Blyenbergh. And Spinoza wants to show in the letter of the text -- here I must read the letters because it's letter 23 – he wants to show not only that he has a criterion to distinguish vice and virtue, but that this criterion applies in cases that appear very complicated. And that further, this is a criterion of distinction not only for distinguishing vice from virtue, but if one comprehends this criterion well, one can make distinctions in cases of crimes, even those that are not at all similar to one another. I'll read this text which seems quite odd.

He says, so here we are, he says to Blyenbergh: Let's choose two cases and let's choose the same act which really is considered as being extremely bad, a case of matricide, someone killing his mother. And here we have Spinoza's letter 23, "Nero's matricide, insofar as it contained anything positive, was not a crime." You see, insofar as it contained anything positive, what does this mean? You recall, you vaguely see, confusedly, what Spinoza means: Evil isn't anything. We've seen what nuances he gave to this proposition, "evil isn't anything". So, insofar as an act is positive, it cannot be a crime, it cannot be. So, an act as a crime, if it is a crime, it's not so insofar as it contains something positive, it's from another point of view. Very well, we can comprehend it abstractly, and we wonder what he's getting at here.

"Nero's matricide, insofar as it contains something positive, was not a crime. Orestes," - - Nero killed his mother; Orestes also killed his mother – "Orestes was able to accomplish an act which, externally, is the same," – killing his mother -- "Orestes was able to accomplish an act which, externally, is the same, and at the same time, intended to kill his mother." You see, [there's] not only identity of the act of killing his mother, but identity of intention, notably premeditated murder. "Orestes was able to accomplish an act which, externally, is the same, and at the same time, intended to kill his mother, without deserving the same accusation as Nero." Fine, and in fact, for those who recall what they learned at school, we treat Orestes in a different way than we treat Nero, even though both of them killed their mothers intentionally.

"Orestes was able to accomplish an act which, externally, is the same, and at the same time, intended to kill his mother, without deserving the same accusation as Nero. What, therefore, is Nero's crime?" This is where the text gets very bizarre. "What, therefore, is Nero's crime. It consists solely... It consists solely in the fact that, in his act, Nero showed himself to be ungrateful, unmerciful and disobedient." We wonder, what is he trying to... What does he mean? The act is the same, the intention is the same, there is a difference at the level of what? "In his act, Nero showed himself to be ungrateful, unmerciful and disobedient." What is the order? This is neither the intention, nor the act, it's a third determination, it's a third dimension of the act. What dimension? He doesn't say any more; Spinoza concludes here, triumphant – he's really great here -- none of these characteristics expresses anything to do with an essence. So, I reveal myself as unmerciful, ungrateful, and disobedient, none of these characteristics expressing anything to do with an essence.

We don't know what to think, right? Even though, here, we're quite prepared to feel ourselves being Spinozists, we're left wondering, what is he saying? Is this a reply to Blyenbergh? And we say: there's an urgency in this text; we have to get something from this

⁴ Deleuze examines these two texts in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, pp. 35-30; French ed., pp. 50-53.



text, but what? What can one get out of such a text, so bizarre and vague? Ungrateful, unmerciful and disobedient, yes? If Nero's act is bad, it's not because he killed his mother; it's not because he intended to kill her; it's because Nero, in killing his mother, showed himself to be ungrateful, unmerciful and disobedient. And Orestes kills his mother, but is neither ungrateful nor disobedient, so then what does all that mean? Fine.

So, we keep searching, we search, and then, after much searching, since we have to read all of the *Ethics*, we come across Book IV and a text which doesn't appear to have anything to do with... so there, he doesn't leaves us hesitating because of the vagueness; he leaves us hesitating because we get the impression that Spinoza has acquired either a kind of diabolical humor or has gone mad! It's in Book IV, proposition 59, and it's the scholium of proposition 59, and I'm reading slowly with hopes that you will be astounded. This is the scholium. The text of the proposition already does not appear simple. For Spinoza, it involves demonstrating that all the actions to which we are determined through a feeling which is a passion, we can be determined to do them without [the feeling], we can be determined to do them by reason.

All that we are doing impelled by passion, we can do it impelled by pure reason. And we tell ourselves: oh, fine, so in fact, why not kill your mother? If I do it out of passion, I can do it out of reason, right? This is a strange proposition. And the scholium tells us that the demonstration is rather abstract, and we wonder, alright? But we'd really like something a bit concrete. You'll read the text, and the scholium arrives, beginning with: "These things are more clearly explained by an example." And we say, finally, this is what we've been asking for! And it continues, listen to this: "These things are more clearly explained by an example. Thus, the act of beating," [*Deleuze makes a striking gesture and says "PAN"*] – you'll see why I do that; I could strike differently, but according to the letter of the text, this is it [*He makes the gesture, raising his arm*] like that and... I lower it. [*Laughter*]

"Thus, the act of beating, insofar as it is considered physically...", so you see, right? "insofar as it is considered physically and insofar as we attend only to the fact that the man lifts his arm" – lifts his arm – "closes his fist" – lifts his arm, so in order "insofar as we attend only to the fact that the man raises his arm" – ah no, wait! [*Laughter*] lifts his arm [*Laughter*], "closes his fist, and moves his whole arm forcefully up and down" [*We hear a huge BOUM on the table, followed by laughter*], "this is a virtue" – *virtus* – "this is a virtue which is conceived from the structure of the human body." But we must not... we must not take everything literally; you understand in what sense he is taking virtue here; in fact, he does not cheat; it's a realization (*effectuation*) of the power of the body. It's what my body can do. It's one of the things it can do.

This responds to the question that I've already tried to comment on, specifically this question from Spinoza: but we don't even know that the body can do. This is rather something that everyone knows: we know what the human body can do... A dog cannot, right? It can do other things, [*Laughter*] but it cannot do that, so this is something that the human body can do. This makes it part of the *potentiae* of the human body, of this power (*puissance*) in action, it's a power of action. For that very reason, this is what we call virtue. So, there's no problem; we cannot return to this under this initial point.

So, the action of striking insofar as it is considered physically and as we consider it the sole fact "that a man lifts his arm, closes his fist, and moves his whole arm forcefully up and down is a virtue that is conceived through the structure of the human body..." Ok, there's nothing to say. He continues, "Therefore if... Therefore, if a man moved by anger or hate" - - this is not the case here; I'm going to make this action impelled by anger or hate, that is, by a passion [*Deleuze makes a gesture*], I'm doing this onto my mother's head [*a heavy sound*] [*Laughter*]... Well, there's really no reason for laughter [*Laughter*] – "Therefore, if a man moved by anger or hate is determined" -- determined by the passion, this is a... You see the word



there... He uses the word “determination”, “determined” – I tell myself fine, we place it on this side because perhaps that’s the third dimension of action; this is not the same thing, neither action, nor intention. Besides action and intention, there would be determination.

Fine, in any case, “Therefore, if a man moved by anger or hate is determined to close his fist or move his arm, that happens, as we have shown in Part II, that happens because one and the same action can be associated with any images of things whatever.” Here [Spinoza] is in the process of telling us something, but which is something very, very strange. He is in the process of telling us: I call the determination of the action the association, the link, that unites the image of the action with an image of a thing. That is the determination of the action. The determination of the action is the image of a thing to which the image of the act is linked. It’s truly a relation that he himself presents as being like association, only one, a relation of association, “a single and same action can be associated with any image of a thing whatever,” semi-colon, “And consequently, we can be determined to one and the same action, both from those images of things which we conceive confusedly,” [*Deleuze repeats himself here*] “we can be determined to one and the same action, both from those images of things which we conceive confusedly and from those images of things we conceive clearly and distinctly.” [*Pause*] “It is clear as well” – he judges that he is done – “It is clear as well that every desire which arises from a feeling which is a passion would be of no use if men could be guided by reason,” that is, that all the actions that we do, determined by passions, we could just as well do determined by pure reason.

You see what he means here, and what is this introduction of the confused and the distinct? He says -- there it is, what I recall from the letter of the text, and it’s in the letter in the text – he says, he says, “an image of action can be associated with images of very different things. Consequently, the same action, according to its image, can be associated just as well with images of confused things as with images of clear and distinct things.” This is strange; I am saying that this text, if we understand it well, we should touch on something concrete in the way that Spinoza experiences action, experiences problems of action and how he manages these. We say, fine, but what is he, what is he in the process of telling us?

So, we have to come back to the example to extend it; I don’t know, here we have a text that literally requires being extended. We cannot be content reading this and then moving on to the next proposition. So, that’s where I am at, I come back to it: well, I do this [*Deleuze repeats the striking gesture*] and... I bring my fist down on my mother’s head. There’s one case. I am making the same gesture, and with the same violence, I bring my fist down on the head (*membrane*) of a bass drum. [*Pause*] – I am abusing your patience by asking you to consider this example; it’s not my fault. -- Make an objection immediately: It’s not the same gesture. It’s not the same gesture.

But Spinoza suppressed this objection. He replied to it in advance because we cannot agree with him, but he posed the problem in conditions such that this objection could not be valid. In fact, he asks us to consent to an extremely paradoxical analysis of action, as follows: between the action and the object on which it bears, there is a relation which is a relation of association. In fact, if between the action and the object on which it bears, the relation is associative, if it’s a relation of association, obviously Spinoza is quite right, to wit, it’s clearly the same action, whatever the variants might be – an action always includes variants – but it is indeed the same action which, in one case, is associated with my mother’s head, and in the other case, is associated with a bass drum. Thus, the objection is suppressed.

Good, then, let’s try to extend this: what difference is there? What difference is there between these two cases? At the point we’ve reached, we can perceive one [difference], which means that we can very well see what Spinoza means. We already sense what Spinoza means, and what he means is not nothing. – [*The door slams, a student leaves*] So you see, someone just



left. He'll never know! That's disturbing for him, for his life. What's he going to do? – Well, here we are, here we are, I'm just saying, let's come back, let's return now to the criteria; we're going then to see how to grasp hold of the letter of the text, but let's return to the criteria we're sure of, at the point that we've reach in our analysis. What evil is there when... Or what bad is there, to speak as does Spinoza, what bad is there when I do this thing that is a realization of the power (*puissance*) of my body and which, in this sense, is good? What is there that is bad? It's that I decompose a relation. I decompose a relation, specifically, on my mother's head.

You remember a very beautiful text by Beckett perhaps [*Deleuze chuckles*], a text by Beckett [*the novel* Molloy] in which one of Beckett's creations, right, in order to speak with his deaf and blind mother, I don't recall, who only exists in a state of living remains, indeterminate remains, has to smack his mother on the head like that. So, he whacks her head, and so if it's two smacks, that means I don't know what, if it's one smack, if it's three smacks, and so on. The poor old woman cannot stand it anymore, but in the end, he doesn't kill her in this case, but finally, he indeed makes this gesture. So fine, here we are.

What is there that is bad? My mother's head cannot stand it – that is, my mother's head is a relation, it's a relation of movement and rest between particles, like everything – because there, in beating like that on my mother's head, I am destroying the constituent relation of the head, which can be simply expressed, for example, as my mother passing out under my blows, or else she dies. [*Pause*] So, in Spinozist terms, I would say that in this case, I associate my action with the image of a thing whose relation is directly decomposed by this action. Thus, the constitutive relation that I associate there, I am in the process of commenting the text, literally, it seems to me. I associate the image of the act with the image of something whose constituent relation is decomposed by this act. [*Pause*]

And here, you have understood everything when I do this [*Deleuze makes the gesture*] and when I bring my fist down on a gong or on a bass drum, what am I doing? This time, the drumhead is defined how? The drumhead or the gong is defined how, -- I'm saying anything at all – according to the tension of the head? The tension of the drumhead will also be defined by a certain aggregate of relations. A drumhead will have what power of action if it belongs to my power of action? To do that, the drumhead as well, and my mother's head as well, all that has a power of action. It happens that, in the case of the [mother's] head, once again, I decomposed the constitutive relation corresponding to the power of action of the head. In the case of a drumhead, what is its power of action? Let's say that is harmonics. Oh! The gong! I've associated my action with the image of something whose relation was composed directly with this action, that is, I have drawn harmonics out of the drumhead. [*Pause*] You have to understand that because, otherwise, you are going to be lost for all the rest.

What's the difference? It's enormous, enormous. You have to understand that: in one case I associated my action, once again, the image of a thing whose relation is composed directly with the relation of my act, and in the other case, I associated my non-act with the image of a thing whose relation is immediately and directly decomposed by my act. [*Pause*] Ah! You grasp the criterion of the *Ethics* for Spinoza, which is a very, very modest criterion as well, but here, it's not a question... It's a matter of managing as best we can, and here, [Spinoza] gives us a rule. He gives us a rule; you're going to see that results in a rather special kind of life, the way in which Spinoza surely lived. He liked decompositions of relations very much. His biographies, there are two or three biographies of his era that recount his life somewhat. It's said that he adored battles of spiders, that he had them fight each other; he left spiderwebs at his home – yet he was extremely clean – he left spiderwebs, then he caught flies and placed them onto the webs to see what would happen, or else he caused spiders to fight among themselves. He liked doing that; it made him laugh. It was... Yes?



Richard Pinhas: The problem that would be posed would be to know: can you introduce the good and the bad in the form of the decomposition of a relation without immediately including a hierarchy? All that you were saying up to now seemed to exclude this. And, in the case of Orestes that you cited as the second example, can we decompose a relation for the continuation of a relation?

Deleuze: Well, you are getting ahead of me, right? You're going too fast! One must already have understood everything to ask that! That's fine. Hierarchy? For the moment, I'm not introducing hierarchy. I am saying here that the fact is there. Imagine your everyday actions. Well, there are a certain number of them – you're going to see – there are a certain number of them which are characterized by composing themselves directly with an action or rather of associating themselves with an image of a thing or being which is composed directly with the action, and others – I'm not saying that one is any better – this will be, consequently, what we're going to say, and you undertake a type of actions that are associated with images of things whose relation is decomposed by the action. So, out of convenience, we'll call the actions of direct composition "good" and the actions of direct decomposition "bad".

Fine, but here, we are still floundering among many problems. First problem: what is there in the text of the *Ethics* that can cast a glimmer of light for us on the text of the letter? The difference between Orestes and Nero since, in the text of the *Ethics*, it's not a question of Orestes and Nero. And, in the case of Orestes-Nero, it's not like me having taken a privileged example – the fist, the raised arm that comes down either on the head, or on a gong. But, in the letter, it's not a question of that; it's a question of two actions which are both crimes.

So, why is what Nero did something bad while, according to Spinoza, one can't even say that Orestes, in killing his mother, has done something bad? There, nonetheless, at the point we've reached, we also have a little glimmer of light: how can one say such a thing? One can say such a thing as a function of what follows, specifically: we now have the Spinozist method of the analysis of action. The action will be decomposed according to two images; every action will be decomposed according to two images, will be analyzed according to, rather, two dimensions: the image of the act as power of action of the body -- what a body can do -- and the image of the associated thing, that is, of the object on which the act bears. Between the two, there is a relation of association. It's a logic of action. It's not customary, it's not... But perhaps that's how it is: it's a manner of living. [*Pause*]

Let's return to Nero-Orestes: Nero kills his mother. Perhaps she was nasty, perhaps she was annoying, perhaps she killed other people herself. Fine, despite everything, in killing his mother, Nero, despite everything, I'm saying – this is very nuanced as judgment – she might have been a criminal herself, she might have done whatever you like, all sorts of despicable things, behaving badly. That doesn't prevent, as is said, her from being his mother; that doesn't prevent her from being his mother, that is, Nero associated his act directly with the image of a being whose relation would be decomposed by this act: he killed his mother, full stop, that's it. Thus, the relation of primary, direct association is between the act and an image of a thing whose relation is decomposed by this act. Orestes kills his mother because she killed Agamemnon, that is, because she killed her husband, because she killed Orestes's father. In killing his mother, Orestes pursues a sacred vengeance. What does vengeance mean? Spinoza would not say vengeance. According to Spinoza, Orestes associates his act, not with the image of Clytemnestra whose relation will be decomposed by this act, but rather he associates it with the relation of Agamemnon who had been decomposed by Clytemnestra. In killing his mother, Orestes recomposes his relation with the relation of Agamemnon.

Let's take another step forward: in what way is this an answer to the question, to the second objection? Obviously, this is a very strong answer, in any case, because Spinoza is on the process of saying, "yes, fine." On the level of a special point of view, you, me, on the level



of a special point of view, this was the level of the second objection. There is always composition and decomposition of relations at once. Yes, it's true; there is always composition and decomposition at once. Does that mean that the good and the bad are mixed up and become indiscernible? No, replies Spinoza, because at the level of a logic of the particular point of view, there will always be a priority (*primat*). Sometimes the primacy is very complicated, a very nuanced primacy. Sometimes, the composition of relations will be direct and the decomposition indirect; sometimes, on the contrary, the decomposition will be direct and the composition indirect. – No, or the reverse, I don't know; I'm mixed up; you correct it yourself -- And Spinoza tells us: I am calling "good" an action that implements (*opère*) a direct composition of relations even if it implements an indirect decomposition; and I am calling "bad" an action that implements a direct decomposition even if it implements an indirect composition. [Pause]

In other words, there are two types of actions: actions in which the decomposition comes about as if through consequence and not through principle, because the principle is a composition. This has value only for my point of view; from the point of view of nature, everything is composition. It's through this that, in any case, that God knows neither evil, nor the bad. It doesn't even know what "the bad" means. But me, yes, from my point of view, there is good and bad. And that doesn't mean... So, you see, "there is good and bad," says Spinoza, about this objection. There is no good nor bad since there is always at once composition and decomposition. Spinoza's response: "Yes, but from my point of view"; there are sometimes actions that are composed directly and that only bring about decompositions indirectly, and inversely, there are actions which directly decompose and imply compositions only indirectly. This, then, is the criterion of the good and the bad; it's with this that it's necessary to live. What does that mean, "it's with this" that it's necessary to live?... Yes?

A participant: I have the impression that this is a model of an absolute physical, that is, of an absolutely physical movement that would allow us to cancel the symbolic dimension without passing through [*words inaudible*], and do you, in fact, reach the depth of the problem of matricide? I don't know what Spinoza's perspective is when he evokes the problem of matricide, but in the way that you describe it, one gets the impression that the symbolic power of matricide is complete annihilated, that it no longer exists. But is this correct?

Deleuze: The question can mean several things: is it correct in itself, or is it correct in relation to Spinoza? Is it true in itself all that I am saying? That's for you to judge; I don't want to brutalize your consciousness, right? The only question that I can retain is this: is it correct in relation to Spinoza? Given how you ask the question, the answer appears to pose no problem, to wit: Spinoza is an author who, whenever he encounters the problem of a symbolic dimension, continually expunges it, hunts it down, and tries to show that it was a confused idea of the worst imagination.

Georges Comtesse: But nonetheless, in the example of Orestes, if the matricide by Orestes is different from the matricide of Nero, it remains, despite everything, that when Orestes kills his mother, according to Spinoza's interpretation, Orestes's crime is simply the affirmation of the filiation decomposed by the mother. So, we cannot reduce the whole simply to a physical question. This is quite simply the affirmation of a decomposed filiation. Moreover, ...

Deleuze: Filiation, here, you're saying too much with filiation; what is it? Is it a composition of relations, filiation?

Comtesse: Perhaps not...

Deleuze: Ah, well then, this becomes more important. My question is this: for Spinoza, in his works, since we are only reflecting about him, right? How for Spinoza is filiation anything else than a composition of relations?



Comtesse: Well, precisely, this is a mystery.

Deleuze: Spinoza isn't familiar with mystery; you know this as well as I do! There is no mystery for Spinoza.

Comtesse: The fact that he says that it's, that it's a different crime. He can only the crime is different only to the extent that it affirms a good filiation that has been decomposed precisely by the mother. What is this, for example? This refers, for example, to texts in the *Theological-Political Treatise* in which curiously Spinoza insists on the relation of father and son. [Deleuze: Aie, aie, aie] How is it that he insists so much on this privileged relation? Does this simply correspond to something physical? This is a question. And in the example that even you gave, for example, in the Letters to Guillaume de Blyenbergh, precisely the example of the apple, the matter, the story of the apple: in the end, the story of the apple is one way like another to tell us that there's a good father, the one who gives good advice and that there's really an imbecile who doesn't follow the father's good advice. So, for Spinoza, through all his texts, there is a very odd relation of filiation, which is perhaps a relation of filiation, which is perhaps a relation, but can we say that a relation of filiation is physical? [Deleuze coughs] There's a problem here.

Deleuze: Listen...

Claire Parnet: I'd really like to say something as well...

Deleuze: There, your heart, Comtesse, is suffering as much as mine when you are practically in the process of treating substance for Spinoza as a father, yes? [Laughter] When God made a revelation to Adam, to say that this is indeed proof that there is a relation of filiation of the father-son type, in the end, you can say all you want, but you indeed feel that you are broadly leaving the domain of Spinozism, eh? Here, for Spinoza, that never worked like that. So, what I maintain is that if we introduce, one way or another, a symbolic dimension in which, according to which, if I understand well, substance there would be acting paternally in relation to mode, this is a murder of all Spinozism, you know this so well, in the end, it's to tease me that you're saying all this! [Laughter] It's... It's...

It happens, in fact, at that point, we must take, as you refer to them yourself, the pages of the *Theological-Political Treatise*. Each time that he comes upon the idea of a symbolic dimension, he explains that this is a thing for prophets, the men of the symbolic dimension and who interpret the God-mode relation as a relation of the father-son type, in fact, and which calls for signs. It's even in this way that he defines prophetism quite profoundly. Prophetism is the act by which I receive a sign, or I believe that I receive a sign, and by which I emit signs. And the whole theory... There is clearly a theory of the sign in Spinoza. This consists in relating the sign to the most confused understanding and imagination in the world. And in the world, such as it is, according to Spinoza, the very idea of the sign does not exist. There are expressions; there are expression, there are never signs.

As a result, when God – here, I am strongly opposing the interpretation that you suggest of the text of the apple – when God reveals to Adam that the apple will act as a poison, he reveals to him a composition of relations, he reveals to him a physical truth. He doesn't send him a sign at all. He doesn't at all treat Adam as if he were a prophet, for the simple reason that at God's level, there are no prophets. There is no prophet since prophetism exists to the extent that we are not Spinozist, according to Spinoza. It's only to the extent that one comprehends nothing of the substance-mode relation that one invokes signs and that one says "God sent me a sign."

But Spinoza says a thousand times, "God never made any signs; he sends expressions." And what does that mean about expressions that precisely are univocal? He does not send a sign which would refer to a signification or a signifier; it's not a matter of any signifier whatsoever. Any notion, Spinoza says, would truly be "crazy". It [God] expresses itself, that



is, it reveals its relations, and to reveal doesn't at all mean something [like] a mystical act or a symbolic act. Revealing is giving something to be understood. It gives relations to be understood within the understanding of God; it does not give them in the manner of a father giving advice, absolutely not! It gives it in the manner of Nature when it [Nature] presents me with a law, specifically, for example, the apple falls. Well, this is a revelation of God: the apple falls, it's a composition of relations, yes. But, if you want to introduce into Spinoza whatever it might be that exceed this composition of relations, you perhaps are right from your own point of view; allow me to curse you from Spinoza's point of view because at that point, that which is quite legitimate, you are in an atmosphere and in a problematics that have nothing to do, up close or from afar, with Spinoza's... Yes? Euh, excuse me.

Richard Pinhas: I think that, yes, every composition of direct relation is entirely necessary in the sense in which an absolute necessity is implied, in the sense that if [the composition] is not realized, the power of the act is not realized either.

Deleuze: Ah, here, that's more complicated.

Pinhas: There's no choice; I am even excluding any political dimension...

Deleuze: Orestes had no choice... Well, yes he did! Since Nero made a direct decomposition.

Pinhas: And if Orestes didn't kill his mother, he didn't realize relations necessary for the continuation of the aggregate of relations in which he was implicated. We have a schema of "necessary" (in quotes) implication and obligation for the moment in relation to the necessity of the realization of the relation.

Deleuze: From the point of view of the composition?

Pinhas: Yes, completely.

Deleuze: But it isn't necessary that direct compositions occur.

Pinhas: No, but when a particular direct composition is suggested, for example, by an aggregate of modalities between diverse relations, if this composition does not occur, if this direct composition is not realized, that is, if it's necessity, for example, is denied, an even greater decomposition will result, notably, in the case of Orestes quite precisely...

Deleuze: Oh, he would have withdrawn. No, I believe here, you're too much, suddenly, you're too rigorous a Spinozist.

Pinhas: No, but, it's enough, it's ... it's...

Deleuze: We could go all the way there, but I don't think... [*Interruption; end of the cassette*]
Part 2 (duration : 1 :13 :33)

Deleuze: ... He withdraws from his father's affairs; he withdraws from social and worldly life.

Pinhas: So, let's come back to the cases of the very, very simple figures, notably, there's a direct relation that can occur; what happens if one doesn't do it? So, you evoked two cases, either you... Either it's not necessary to leave one's mother and fine, in Orestes's case, that has even more serious consequences, the fact of [*word inaudible*], more serious, not at the level of Orestes, more serious consequences on the level of the becoming of Athens, finally, enormous.

Deleuze: Yes. Well, yes, because the relations are composed; there's a linkage of relations.

Pinhas: The harmonics of your power to compose, in the proper, official sense, the power to execute then, the physical force insofar as being a virtuoso of the drum, the piece of music, euh, the piece of music is missing an awesome harmony...

Deleuze: He will remain with his non-realized eternal truth... Ah, yes, do you mean, do all the relations have to be realized? Then yes, I would agree with Comtesse. If there is an order of filiations in Spinoza, it's obviously not a symbolic order; it's an order that, step by step, results in Nature, since for Spinoza Nature itself is an individual which encompasses all



individuals, well, there is an order of compositions of relations, and it's quite necessary that all the relations be realized. Yes, here, we can say, necessarily, the necessity of Nature is that there will not be relations that are not realized. In fact, everything possible is necessary; everything that is possible is necessary, which means that all relations have been, are, or will be realized.

A woman participant: There's an example...

Deleuze (still answering Pinhas): Ah, with no symbolism, that goes without saying... Yes?

The female participant: There's a rather curious example from [Pierre] Clastres, well, in the chronicle of the Guayaquis Indians, when at one moment, he describes a woman whose child has been killed, and the father learns which person killed the child, and he goes right then to avenge himself against someone else, from that person's family. [Deleuze: Yes] And it's quite curious because it continues like that, let's say, about three or four times, and we don't know where this is taking place, but there comes a moment when that stops, that is, it could well continue, and fine, in a tribe, one could very well think that...

Deleuze: Yes, you're right... That's as if they got to the end of a composition of relations, fine, there it falls, it's going to pick up after, it's quite correct... And it's always like that in relations of association. You give in little by little and then comes a moment when the relation no longer goes through. It's over, it's played out due to use, being moved, it's played out, whereas Spinoza, he's very... What?

Intervention by a participant: [*Inaudible*]

Deleuze: Yes, it is, yes, it is, the relations themselves, it's the relations themselves that have their limits of application, of displacement, these are distinct. So, they no longer have to be realized. The same relation -- Spinoza wouldn't create the Eternal Return -- the same relation will not be realized twice. There is an infinity of infinities of relations. The whole of Nature is the totality of realizations of all possible, and thus necessary, relations. That is what identity is in Spinoza, the absolute identity of the possible and the necessary.

Here, you understand, I alluded to this history of prophetism because I was pushed there. Spinoza says something very simple on this which, besides, will be taken up again by Nietzsche, by all those authors of whom one can say that they are, in this sense, those who have pushed positivism as far as possible. And here, I won't retreat concerning Spinoza even when facing a word like *physicalis*. They went quite far in this direction because, there we are, broadly speaking, there is the idea that they create: they say, okay, there are laws. These laws are laws of Nature. Thus, when one speaks of divine revelation, there is absolutely nothing mysterious, nor religious in that. Divine revelation is the exposition of laws. And you see what Spinoza calls a law: a law is a composition of relations. In a law, you always have a composition of relations, and this is what you call a law. And this is what will be called a "law of nature".

Now, Spinoza says, "people are limited" (*borné*). So, when one is quite limited, and this he says in print in the *Theological-Political Treatise*, when one is quite limited, one doesn't understand laws as laws. So, how does one understand them? I'm told, take a little child in school. The teacher reveals to him: $2 + 2 = 4$, $2 + 2 = 4$. This is typically a composition of relations. You have the relation $2 + 2$, you have the relation 4, and you have, relation of identity between the relation $2 + 2$ and the relation 4. So fine, the little child doesn't understand at all. When you don't understand at all, how do you hear the law? You hear it as an order. You hear it as a commandment. The little child says, oh la la, euh, better not forget that! $2 + 2 = 4$, $2 + 2 = 4$, and he's understood nothing; he understands the law of nature as a moral law. YOU HAVE TO! And if you say anything different, you'll be punished.

Fine, you'll tell me, but this is true, that's how it goes. That's how it goes as a function of our limited understanding. If we were to grasp the laws as what they are, as compositions of relations, and as physical compositions of relations, compositions of bodies, if we were to grasp laws as compositions of relations between bodies, notions as strange as command and



obedience, but would remain completely unknown to us, it's to the extent that we perceive a law that we don't comprehend, that we apprehend it as an order. "You'll do this." God forbade Adam absolutely nothing, Spinoza explains. He revealed a law to him, namely that the apple is composed with a relation that excludes my constitutive relation. Therefore, it's a law of nature, exactly like arsenic induces parts of the blood to take on another relation. Adam comprehends nothing of any of this, and instead of grasping it as a law, he grasps it as one of God's prohibitions.

So, when I grasp things under the form command-obedience, instead of grasping them as compositions of relations, at that very moment, yes, I start saying, "ah, it's the father," "ah, God is like a father", and obviously, I transmit, and also, I demand a sign. This is what the analysis of prophetism is for Spinoza; for Spinoza, I was telling you, the prophet is essentially someone who, not grasping the laws of nature, will just say constantly, "where is the sign that guarantees to me that the order is just?" And in fact, if I don't understand that $2 + 2 = 4$, that this determines a composition of relations, I understand that as an order, "forbidden to say $2 + 2 = 5$." As I comprehend nothing in the law, I demand, on the other hand, a sign in order to be sure that what I am ordered to do, well, is really what I am ordered to do.

So, the prophet is called upon by God, as we are told in the Old Testament. He doesn't understand at all. His first reaction is: "God, give me a sign that it is really you who speaks to me," and then, when the prophet has the sign, he is going to emit signs. This will be the language of signs. And what is the language of signs linked to? Perhaps you are going to understand better what Spinoza means. He really opposes – I believe that it's even one of the strongest points, which would be one of the most modern points in Spinoza – in what sense is he a positivist? Today, we'd say that this is a very, very odd form of logical positivism, and physical, physical-logical. He opposes expression to the sign, why?

He says all the time, God expresses, attributes express, modes express. But precisely, he opposes that to the sign. This is because the sign is always – we'll say in scholarly logical language – the sign is always *equivocal*. There is an equivocity of the sign, that is, that the sign signifies, but it signifies in several senses. [Pause] In contrast, expression is uniquely and completely *univocal*. It's the sense, there is only one single sense of the expression: it's the sense according to which relations are composed. [Pause]

As a result, if I wanted to summarize literally one of the theses of the *Theological-Political Treatise*, I'd say: God expresses, according to Spinoza. God proceeds by expressions and never by signs. There would be as if two languages, a false language that is the language of signs, a true language which is that of expression. The language of expression is that of the composition of relations to infinity. So, all that Spinoza will consent to is the fact that, precisely because we are not philosophers, because our understanding is limited, etc. etc., we always have need of certain signs. Signs are a vital necessity because we comprehend only a very few of the things in the world. So, there's a vital necessity of signs. That's the way Spinoza justifies society. Society is the institution [instauration] of the minimum of signs indispensable to life. So, there are indeed relations of obedience and command. Well yes, if one has knowledge (*connaissance*), there would be no need to obey or command. But it happens that one has a very limited knowledge.

Thus, all one can ask of those who command and obey is not to meddle with knowledge. As a result, all obedience and commandment bearing on knowledge is null and void. This is what Spinoza expresses on a very beautiful page of the *Theological-Political Treatise*, namely that there is only one absolutely inalienable freedom, and that is the freedom of thought, there, in a text which, for his era, is very, very daring. If you will, the two domains, if there is a symbolic domain, it is that of the order of commandment and obedience. That's what the



domain of signs is. The domain of knowledge is another domain, the domain of relations, that is, of univocal expressions. [*End of the Web Deleuze translation*]

Despite everything, why is a minimum of symbolism necessary? A minimum of symbolism is necessary because your knowledge (*connaissance*) is strangely finite, limited, and moreover, you have to live before you've perfected it. But, an immediately consequential path is that any order, any commandment, any obedience within the domain of knowledge is null and void. For the rest, obeying as regards practice, actions, yes oh yes, and after all, the signs of a society, so the social problem will be posed how, the political problem, what is the political regime in which signs are less toxic, that is, infringe less, infringe the least on the power of thought, and create for us the fewest stupidities (*bêtises*) possible, that is, leave all the chances for the free man? And the final answer is that it's democracy in the end [that is] the most satisfying regime. Fine, but this doesn't go any farther (*ça ne dépasse pas ça*).

So, you see, in this sense, yes, I'm correcting somewhat what I just said. I am maintaining that, for Spinoza in the domain of knowledge, any symbolic relation is absolute excluded, rejected, eliminated, the sole permanent dimension of symbolism is prophetic or social signs, and prophetic and social signs, well yes, it's preferably necessary to have the fewest prophetic signs possible. This is necessary because we aren't directed by reason. If we were directed by reason, that is, by the power of thought or of knowing, there would be no need for signs of any sort. So, in this sense, he goes all the way to saying, ah, well yes, Christ is fine, that is, [saying] as a non-Christian, as an Jew excommunicated from his synagogue, he then presents an image of Christ that is rather close to the one Nietzsche presents later. You know, this is a process that consists in imagining, in trying to separate a kind of personality of Christ, the person of Christ independently from the Church.

He says, yes, well yes, Christ is one of the kindest and wisest men who had ever lived on earth. The Churches created something abominable, something quite awful about him, according to Spinoza, but he speaks constantly of Christ – oh, well, not constantly – he speaks occasionally about Christ or about divine understanding. Christ is divine understanding there, in two senses, because it's through Christ that revelation of relations flows, and he'll say this quite willingly, but on the other hand, Christ is straddling two things. It's Christ who creates an economy of the most reasonable signs, in the end, that allow us to live the best. He has a bizarre personal Christianity, Spinoza, something very odd. Finally, all that is complicated.

Good, so there we are, but we haven't finished. What time is it? Noon? Are you tired? A small break? No? No, so I'll stop very soon today.

Georges Comtesse: Would you say that infinitely infinite substance is the expression (*exprimé*) of minimum expressions? [*Pause*]

Deleuze: No, because that would make it – I don't know what you'd say to this but – that would make it, in my view, that would make it, if I take up your very formulation, “substance is the expression (*exprimé*) of expressions,” then, expressions would be, if I understand well, modes, and in fact, modes are expressions. Modes are expressions of substance. And that would contain a danger, I believe; the danger would be to make of substance something dispassionate and... almost passive. So, this formulation, “substance is the expression of expressions,” in my view, could only be presented, it could only be maintained if you become involved at the same time in an analysis of what you are calling “expression” (*exprimé*), in which finally it would be the “expression” (*exprimé*) that would be truly active within expressions. So, that seems dangerous to me because at that point, we'd greatly have to change the spontaneous sense of “expression” (*exprimé*). In listening to you, I get the impression that “it's the expression of expressions” means: that sums up expressions whose substance does not result from modes. It is [substance] that produces modes, so there, it's an “expression” (*exprimé*) that, in the end, would constitute expressions. In this sense, it's possible to say that, yes...



Comtesse: Or that substance might be the inexpressible of signs.

Deleuze: No, because there, once again, if you allow me, I'd say that this is a misinterpretation; that this is would be, contrary to the preceding formulation, this would be an absolute misinterpretation of Spinoza since, for Spinoza, there is no inexpressible by right. There's an inexpressible in fact that solely comes from our limited understanding, but there is no inexpressible by right. God holds back absolutely nothing inexpressible within it. This is the opposite of a negative theology, within all that we've considered right at the start of the [school] year.⁵ Negative theology tells us this quite well, from [Jakob] Böhme to Schelling, you recognize negative theology in this, as we are told: in God, there is a depth that, insofar as being a depth, or better than a depth, a without-depth, according to Jacob Böhme's expression, there's a without-depth that, as such, is inexpressible. And to express itself, God must emerge from this without-depth that continue work it within the depth. There is an entire negative dialectic of negative theology that is quite beautiful, but which is an anti-Spinozism in its pure state. There is absolutely nothing. For negative theology, there is, at the very deepest heart of God, there is something inexpressible that is going to destroy any mysticism, all that.

For Spinoza, by right, that is, if I do not take account of limits of fact of one understanding or another, God is expressed, and its expression is absolutely adequate for its being. There is absolutely no inexpressible in God. It's what Spinoza means in saying knowledge is adequate. Knowledge is adequate to the known, that is, there is nothing in the known that exceeds knowledge.... Yes?⁶

A participant [*This intervention is only partially audible*]: Excuse me, I don't know Spinoza... [*words unclear*] This isn't a very material discourse. I find that it's a frightening, boring and drab positivism; it has nothing liberating. First, I find that this model of the physical, taken in an absolute sense, is utopic, pure and simple. This exists nowhere; I mean, this exists nowhere in nature. These relations obey the least any compositions. This is scholarly utopia in a pure state. This is the neutral world of the laboratory in which one imagines that frogs, that men react through [*words unclear*]. I mean that this is atomistic theory that allows one to throw away all dimensions, whether arbitrary, subjective, or in fact, enigmatic, within language and poetry. For example, when you align Nietzsche with Spinoza in a positivist sense, here I believe nonetheless, that is, in Nietzsche, he takes the risk of dropping, of abandoning also the physical world in which [*words unclear*] in exchange for a completely enigmatic experience through which it's possible to formulate other than politically the relations of being and the living. I wouldn't want to say, but for me, this positivist scholarly side resembles... [*Someone near the microphone whispers, blocking the participant*]: [For] me, it's funny, this seems very material to me] ... excitement there is around biology, for example, the dream of neutral discourse that would allow one to throw away the true dimension, which is the enigma, the problem in fact, with symbolism, the symbolic, is nonetheless something other than commandment, obedience, the order of obedience...

Deleuze: Not for [Spinoza], not for him... Excuse me, but not for him...

The participant: When we reduce the symbolic to the dimension of obedience, I'm sorry, this is a restriction...

Deleuze: Well yes, it's indeed a restriction, a desired one, a very deliberate restriction.

⁵ While there are brief references to theology in the earliest session for the 1980-81, 25 November 1980, there are none to negative theology, which argues for the existence of one or several earlier sessions for which we do not have any recordings.

⁶ The rest of the session will consist of Deleuze's attempt to respond to this disgruntled participant. This is the same participant who earlier asked the brief question about "this is a model of an absolute physical" aspect that would "cancel the symbolic dimension."



The participant: Yes, so for example, in the world of animals, when he discusses animals, it's symbolic. The physical, all that doesn't exist, it's not expressed. Their language, in the end, isn't that at all. In the end, two animals, two wolves fight each other, for example, [*words unclear*] ... Why do these animals within a fight willingly accept an expression of symbolic submission?

Deleuze: There we are, listen to me closely.

The participant [*It's probable that here he is reacting to comments from students seated around him*] Yes, this is of interest. The problem is that it's of metaphysical interest. Here the problem is that there is perhaps a higher interest of the species, which is not expressed, that the physical is capable of accounting for, at least within the domain of the physical.

Deleuze: I'm going to tell you... Wait... [*The participant wants to continue speaking*], wait... What you are saying interests me enormously because this is almost a proof of the usefulness of what we are doing here. So, everything you've just said interests me enormously. You've said quite a lot of things. But, listen to me well; in your turn, I'd like you [to listen] because I am speaking to you quite sincerely.

You tell me, you say, I don't know Spinoza. That suits me fine because my dream would be that this study [of Spinoza], this course might nearly be of use for two kinds of persons simultaneously, those who know Spinoza and those who don't know him at all. So here, this is very good; I'd like there to be many people who haven't ever read Spinoza. I'd like them to start reading him, but only if this is something they'd enjoy. And then, I still need those who know him as well, otherwise, euh... This doesn't prevent us from saying things that, euh... but fine, here we are.

On this basis, you tell me that you, personally, not knowing Spinoza, by listening to me, you trust me, and you tell yourself, ah well yes, if he's saying this, it's because Spinoza must have said this kind of thing. And you tell me, "well then, my impression is that..." and you've said two things in succession: that this is absolutely not liberating – no, you said three things – this is absolutely not liberating; second, it's utopic in the manner of scientific utopia; and third, in the end, this kills the entire truly symbolic dimension, which is not that of the order of commandment, but which is the order of the poetic. So, there we have, overall, your three reactions.

So here, please do not see any insolence from me in what I am going to say to you: among those who are taking this course, it's quite normal that, once again, there are some who have never read any Spinoza. If at the end of, nonetheless, a few hours – this isn't the first time that you've come? Ah, it's the first time? So, euh, fine – But, if you had been coming for several meetings, I'd tell you that this is almost the understanding that we've established together: you come to a course; if whatever the topic is in this course seems to you non-liberating and rather abstract and without great interest, above all, it goes without saying that one must not come back, provided that you might return to listen to me when I change the subject, to see if that suits you. So, I can absolutely not object to anything in your reaction if you say to me, "what you're telling me about Spinoza has a non-liberating effect on me."

On the other hand, I'm going to tell you that it's here that there's a problem for me: it's that everything that I've been saying, all that for me seems extraordinarily liberating, extraordinarily concrete. So, I tell myself, for me, this is non-utopian and liberating to the highest degree. So, I tell myself this is becoming more and more interesting since, you and me, we are made the same, apparently, and for you, this seems stifling and abstract, and for me, this seem very lively, very concrete, very liberating.

I'll take up the last point: lack of poetry, you say. There are so many kinds of poetries, and for me, Spinoza is truly, within philosophy, one of the greatest poets that ever existed. So, it bothers me even more since your own sincere reaction is that this really [is not] poetic. And you invoke the example of animals. So, I tell myself, well yes, there's something that is both



in this case, in our me-you relation, there is something that I failed, something that I wasn't able to have you feel, to communicate to you, this kind of astonishing gust of poetry. Because here we are, what I'd like to say on this: you yourself chose the example of certain animals, saying that nonetheless, even among animals there is a symbolic dimension of behavior, and that doesn't lead to compositions of relations because compositions of relations crush all poetry.

I would just like to have you feel, not at all to persuade you, because... But, for the others, I'm saying, on the contrary, for me, this vision, this composition of relations that seem to me, throughout things, these are relations that are composed or not, or that are decomposed, these seem to me extraordinarily poetic. Since you like the symbolic dimensions of the animal, I am choosing a typical example from the symbolic dimension. Animals threaten each other, and this menace is called symbolic, fine, that is, baring of teeth. Among wolves, there are symbolic dimensions like that. Euh... In all the hierarchical relations, you know that everyone knows this, the hierarchical relations, within all hierarchical relations, so they really don't fight, and there's the male, the elderly male who bares his teeth, hair standing on end, fine... There we have a certain kind of language that seems to be a language of signs. Fine, then, there's a moment in which a battle approaches, about which it's not known very clearly if it's symbolic or if it's already moved into a real stage. And then, there's one of the two males who lays down and presents his belly or presents his neck, and at that moment, the triumphant male departs. And as all the ethologists say, this is typically a symbolic presentation. The animal poses his defeat, avows his defeat by offering the jugular vein. And at that point, he isn't attacked. The triumphant male departs. This indeed seems to be eminently symbolic.

But I'm not saying that Spinoza is right, but you cannot say that he neglects similar phenomena, to the contrary, since his entire conception of relations is created to take account of these. What is the little wolf doing, the one who offers, who lays down and offers his neck? He reveals to the elder male, Spinoza would say, he reveals his entire body within a new relation, a certain relation. Earlier, the little wolf was chasing after the female wolves. The big wolf didn't like that. Fine. What was happening there? If I try to translate into Spinozist terms, I'd say that the confrontation of two bodies occurred within non-composable relations. Let's assume there's a case, a pack of wolves; there's only one male, the leader, who reigns over all the females. The little wolf runs behind the females; it's not going well. There are some relations here that are going to collide. The relations heading toward collision, they will collide really when the two bodies are in contact. Just as the arsenic is ten meters from me, it doesn't decompose me. If I swallow it, it decomposes me. The little wolf, fine, he's right there. The two bodies, the body of the elder male and [the body] of the little wolf are going to collide. This [occurs] from the point of view of a logic of relations that what appears to us to be a language of signs is established: the teeth that get bared, the fur raised, etc., notably, this is exactly of the kind, I come up to someone and I do this [*the gesture of the raised hand*], this is symbolic, this is symbolic.

What is this? I present my body within a certain relation. This is what Spinoza ... And don't tell me it's not like that ... I am trying to make, even if necessary, others than you feel what's deeply poetic in this vision. When the little wolf who does not consider himself the strongest, lies down and offers his jugular vein, admire what in my opinion is very, very poetic that has been done. Suddenly, he presents his whole body within a completely different relation. There has been a kind of change. The little wolf shies away from the confrontation of the two opposing relations; he backs away from this opposition of relations, he lies down, he offers his vein, he presents his body within an eminently composable relation. And that's precisely why the big wolf [acts] -- it isn't at all for reasons, Spinoza would say, it's not at all for symbolic reasons. It's because the little wolf then presents his body in an eminently



composable relation with that of the big wolf that the big wolf does not bite him, so this is a composition. We can call it whatever you want, poetic, lyrical; the relations that are composed form a nature, but the most lyrical nature in the world.

When you only retain the scientific aspect, it is because you cut these compositions of relations from this: that the relations are physically composed according to laws, but that the realization of the relations occurs in concrete bodies, and that these concrete bodies have all kinds of procedures, kinds of appearances (*allures*). What do I call "the appearance" of a body, an eminently poetic notion? The "look" or "appearance" of a body is very typically the aspect under which a body offers itself, that is, in order to present one relation rather than another.

Take a scene, uh, take a love scene, take a scene of seduction; a young girl seduces a young man, or vice versa, you follow me? What could be more poetic? And, if you consider the bodies, if you consider the language of signs which takes place, of course, there are signs which come from our limited understanding, but there is also something else, these are the most superficial (*grossiers*) signs, which aren't the ones that are interesting. It's not these signs ... It's not the winks, it's not, no, it's not that. But, this is what's interesting in the scenes of seduction when they are sincere and lived, it is all these aspects of the body, a whole kind of involuntary dance -- it is never what is voluntary that is interesting -- a trembling of voice, an involuntary glance, whereas if it is a question, as one says so vulgarly, of checking someone out (*faire l'oeil*), that's not interesting; that's not part of a scene of seduction, but, [what's interesting] is, at each moment, the body that changes its aspects.

Because, as the relations are necessarily realized in bodies, they are not realized all alone; that's something we saw. They fundamentally are realized in bodies. I would call -- this isn't a Spinozist term, but he could have said it, uh, because, yes... you are my own Blyenbergh [*Laughter*] -- the aspect of a body, it is the aspect under which the body presents this relation rather than another. And it can be a tiny hip movement, it can be ... See, take the way people say hello; it's very interesting how people say hello. No two people say hello the same way. Saying hello to someone is a good case; saying hello to someone is exactly... well, in Spinozist terms, what is it to say hello to someone? Two bodies are approaching each other, oo la la ... How are they going to receive each other? How are they going to alleviate the shock?

So, there are people who say hello from a distance. This is the schizo hello, [*Laughter*] the schizophrenic hello; it is [*Deleuze gestures, laughter*] "you don't cross this limit," and if necessary, if you are ok, the schizo will reach for your hand like that. [*Laughter*] We must not cross the limit; it would be beyond this body limit [that] relations are no longer composed. The relations are going to be decomposed, so it's very, very, very variable, all these stories.

On the contrary, there are the, the, how would I say, the touchers. The hug, the hello with a hug, [*Laughter*] uh, what might this be? Maniacs, you have to ... [*Laughter*] "Ah, you exist, ah, you're good there, uh ...", or else not, that would be the hysterical hello, that one. The hysterical hello is pure presence. You will never be too much, never sufficiently present. "Touch me, since I am present, you see I am there, I am there, did you see me? I'm here. Yes, you did see me! That is true! Did you see me? but it's me, eh, and it's you!" This is the hysterical hello, you see? [*Laughter*] So you make the choice.

And, it's not just that, it's not just this problem of distance, between bodies. There are problems of the presentation of aspects. I remember a gentleman who always said hello to me, it fascinated me -- I could never find [an explanation] -- He would say hello, it's very curious, he stuck his hand on his hip. It came out of his hip. And, he swiveled on his hip [*Laughter*], and, you had to, uh ... go looking for the hand on his hip, uh ... [*Laughter*] it was like that. [*Deleuze demonstrates the gesture*]

And the people who offer two fingers, that exists, that's well known. There are some admirable pages by Proust on the Prince of Guermantes's greeting, the Prince of Guermantes



who has such a dry and admirable greeting, there, that one steps back because of being afraid of receiving his head right in your stomach, when he greets you, with a kind of exaggerated politeness.

There are the ones who offer demonstrations of such joy that one does not believe them; you tell yourself, but this isn't believable, they cannot be so happy to see me; there's no point in exaggerating this!

And under the theme of hello, what would you have in a Spinozist analysis? You would have several points. A first variable should be taken into account. So, if you tell me that this isn't poetic, I'll explain myself last on this point, the not poetic. But I am saying, there would be at least three variables in the hello, in a Spinozist theory of hello. You would have the approach of bodies: this is why he can say, there is no abstract idea, everything is a question of the not particular, the relations that are composed, it's true, you have the approach of the bodies. How do two bodies approach each other, that is, how do they assess each other, from the point of view of the minute perceptions about which I spoke last time? Do they assess themselves as dangerous? It is obvious that in the schizophrenic universe, any approach to another body is dangerous. Okay, fine, so stay away.

You have this theme, so what is the correct distance between two bodies? This is a first variable. It can vary, depending on the body, depending on all kinds of things. It's a bit like saying there's a good distance for looking, but it's not the same good distance to see yourself, or to see a painting. It is not the same, there are variations in distances depending on the nature of the bodies in relations. So that would be a first type of variable: The distance between the two bodies.

A second type of variable, the aspects under which the meeting of the two bodies occurs. How do they get together? And here, once again, I am calling "aspect" the way in which a body presents itself and, in presenting itself, the profile under which it presents itself, and in presenting itself, presents one relation or another. It is obvious that the little wolf that growls and the little wolf that offers his jugular vein, does not present his body within the same relation. The relation has changed. And I am pleading for the extraordinary mobility of the human body, but also of the animal body, to present aspects at a speed – there, the theme of speed, the Spinozist theme of speed would reappear -- at a multiplied speed, the way in which a body can suddenly change speed, passing from an aspect in which it presents a relation of submission, this is a relation. Submission is always submission to something, to someone; it presents a relation of submission, and it passes into another aspect, where on the contrary, it passes into a relation of provocation.

There again, this is a question, it's connected to the distance of the bodies. For example, a guy comes up to me and says, "What did you say, you want my fist in your mouth? I say, "oh no, no, no, no," and then he walks off. He walks away, and then I play the wise guy, I say "ah, ha, ha, the poor guy," but I don't say it too loudly, "the poor guy, eh, you were afraid, eh?" Then he comes back, and I say, "oh, no ... oo look out." [*Laughter*] You see, perpetually just as the distances are changing, the aspects of the body change.

And finally, the third variable, which relation is composed with which other one? This is very variable; there are no two similar cases. Sometimes it is a particular zone, a particular region of relations, which relation is composed rather than another, all that, just in the meeting of two bodies. So, to finish with this question, let me add: poetic or not? Liberating above all else, so very, very liberating that this is a manner of living. And there is no manner of living that is not liberating. If I understand correctly, when you say it is not liberating, you mean I am having no connection with this for my life. There is nothing wrong with having nothing to do with Spinoza for your life. It just means you'll have someone else to connect with. You'll just connect with others.



But I am saying poetic or not; well, in my opinion, there too one could say that there are two kinds of poetry. Just as I was saying at the beginning [of the course], there is ontology and then there is negative theology; there is a poetry which is really the poetry of light, and then there is a poetry which is the poetry of shadow. Fine. Let's say that we can find other types of poetry. It goes without saying that if Spinoza has a poetry, it's a poetry of harsh light. There are also painters of light and painters of shadow. Rembrandt is a great painter of light. And as Claudel says in the text that I quoted, "what is extraordinary about Rembrandt is that it is the light that separates". That doesn't mean that everything's fine, on the contrary; it's the light that separates. Light can also be what unites, but it turns out that it is light that disintegrates, says Claudel about Rembrandt. You could say that about Spinoza too, it's the light that decomposes in his works. Everything is done in complete light; it is a poetry of harsh light. There is never a shadow in Spinoza.

So, if for you, poetry is fundamentally attached to a symbolic dimension, that is, in shadow, that is, to a dimension where there is always an excess, of the inexpressible over expression, where there is always a plus ultimately or a minus, it is the same, an extra signifier or a missing signifier, it is the same. I'm saying that, right now, quite simply, -- because some of you may be thinking about this -- theories, many theories of the signifier and the symbolic dimension, are theories that interpret all kinds of phenomena in terms of the purest negative theology. I'm not saying it's wrong; it's what it is, so for certain, there's a kind of "Can we love both of them?" Yes, certainly, if, in the name of a third, then, in the name of a third point of view, you can love them both. But, on a certain level, it is obvious that Spinoza is the opposite of this poetry of negative theology, this poetry of the shadow, etc.

To say that there is no poetry, it seems to me very ... For me, there is an immense ... an immense ... So, I would say, at the point that we've reached, one mustn't worry; no one, neither you nor me, is right. You, you tell me, and I have a reaction, fine; and you have a reaction as well, fines, so, what's there to say? I can't upset you; I can't tell you that you are wrong. You tell me: all that creates a heavy, stifling, suffocating, utopian and not poetic effect. Ah ...

The participant objects: The problem is not there; the problem is... [*Words unclear; Deleuze asks someone near him: What time is it? and the answer: 12:30*]

Deleuze: I've deformed, have I? That was not my intention. [*The participant continues with inaudible comments, to which Deleuze responds*]: No, excuse me because here I really must insist on this: at no moment, even if I may have deformed [what you said], I did not make fun of you...

The participant: No, you objectivized [what I said].

Deleuze: Ah, ok, that's nothing.

The participant: That is, it's the same thing: the debate is about this, about objectivation. I want to be very clear about this. You opposed your procedure there; in fact, as things stand (*actuellement*), there are two clans... [*The participant continues speaking, the comment remaining nearly inaudible*] ... but at heart, you have a typical reaction, that I detest...

Deleuze: Is it to me or to Spinoza that you are saying that?

The participant: What's been said surely came from a religious viewpoint.

Deleuze: I never attributed this idea to you... [*The participant continues speaking*] I didn't attribute this idea to you, but it doesn't matter.

The participant: What bothers me is that ultimately the philosophical point of view, the existential point of view and all that, is the typical scholarly point of view, that is, for which the existential relations express themselves, can be expressed in complete neutrality. The harsh light [*perhaps a reference to what Deleuze just said about Spinoza*] can just as well be the light in a laboratory. [*Words not clear; reaction among the audience members*] There is a word that you just did not pick up [*words not clear*], it is the enigma, it is the essence of the enigma. When Nietzsche talks about [*words not clear*], it's not about that. This raw light in my head, one has the impression



that atomic and physical relationships can be decomposed in a rational way. I see very well [*words not clear*] how you are trying to marginalize Spinoza's theory, or rather how you try to marginalize it in relation to yourself. [*words not clear*] You pretend that you can get rid of this monstrous mathematical shackle, including the atypical character of philosophy at that time. Fine. You speak of poeticizing it, by insisting on marginal observations when speaking of Spinoza. For example, you described the animal fighting thing; for example, you described seduction relationships, the kinds of hello, these things. All these are marginal comments compared to [*words not clear*]. The central problem is if in a philosophy such as you [*words not clear*], there is such a mathematical straitjacket in the presentation of discourse, if there is such a mathematical rhetoric, it is, you nonetheless cannot forget this, [cannot] forget to say to what extent that is situated, the scientist making poetry in his laboratory. He will never leave his laboratory, that is, his gaze will never cease being objective, never cease aiming for perfect neutrality. In other words, he separates, the project is a total disengagement from the existential act [*words not clear; Deleuze tries here to speak again*]. There, there, it's Nietzsche that does not disengage; he plunges into this abyss of existence and then there, he returns. And when I was describing to you [*words not clear*], your whole description is deliberately a certain knowledge, a knowledge which can be objectified at any time.

Deleuze: I can only tell you two things very quickly before we are done today; on the one hand, if it is a matter of telling us that Spinoza and Nietzsche are not the same thing, okay. They're not the same thing. To say that there are huge differences between Spinoza and Nietzsche, yes. But you can't blame me for talking about Spinoza rather than Nietzsche. What I protest against, in any case – well, I am protesting as I can -- is the idea that there is the slightest laboratory atmosphere in Spinoza. How is it, and I defend myself especially about what you are saying...

The participant: This story of the spiders, for me, that... [*Words not clear; he continues speaking as Deleuze responds*]

Deleuze: But this story of the spiders, he didn't write it, this story; he didn't write it. It was his amusement...

The participant: But it's ridiculous, this story of the spider. He created a combat between spiders, there in his little room...

Deleuze: Well, he has to have some kind of fun, listen! [*Laughter*] Euh, I am just saying that Spinoza, regarding the question, did --- in fact, this is a reproach that particularly affects me – did I choose certain texts by Spinoza that are, despite everything, marginal texts, and then give to them disproportionate importance? To this, I would answer for everyone that, it seems to me that whatever the geometric device, you suddenly seem to have fully assessed why he used a geometric method. It seems to me at once obvious that he uses a strongly geometric method, but this seems quite complex to see why.

It's a bit like if you told me, when I was returning to my abstract painters, oh well, these abstract painters who create circles, squares, triangles, there's no poetry, there's no life. Yet it turns out that, nonetheless, everyone knows that they are indeed some very great painters, that is, that their squares are not simply squares, in the sense of crudely geometric, but that, by making these geometric squares, they cause something very bizarre to happen, through which this is painting, and not geometry. Well, I would say the same thing about Spinoza, because his geometric method, he applies it to a book in which he talks to us about what from start to finish? In my view, we might say something different, but I believe that the *Ethics* is a book that, from one end to the other, speaks only of life and death, and not life and death in a laboratory, but life and death as we encounter them and as they might befall us.

In this sense, all the texts that I can draw from Spinoza, provided that I'm quoting them, all the texts that I can bring to bear on this problem, "what are the manners of living?", not at



all in the laboratory, but in life and in society as it is, in the open air, that is, in the light, which is not at all the light of laboratories, which is the light of the Netherlands in the 17th century, which is both our light and the light, what manner of living, what manner of dying, that seems to me the opposite of being a marginal problem in Spinoza.

So, when I was acting like a clown, in fact, about something like saying hello, it's because this is no more a clownery than what Spinoza just explained to us about "raising my arm". That's exactly it, the story of raising your arm; it includes as many variables as what I was trying to say about hello, and it has an advantage, which is to show that the composition of relations is not something occurring in the brain of a scientist. It is the relations -- they are not waiting for us to be composed or be decomposed -- that is what occurs in the light of life. And life doesn't stop, and life is precisely this process of composing and decomposing relations.

Spinoza may be wrong, but it would seem unfair to me to make him into a kind of scientist who contemplates people like insects. If he is playing with spiders, this is because he indeed has to relax; we have so many relations on our backs that it's kind of fun to take a look at other people's relations. Yes indeed, yes indeed, but he's not the one writing about spiders. This was a pastime that ... And, on the other hand, a final point, maybe this [story] was false. Maybe this was false; maybe it's not true since we only know that from a third party, a highly suspicious third party, by the way, who didn't like Spinoza, therefore, and who may want to discredit him. So, I was wrong to tell the story because ... [*Pause, sounds of students preparing to leave*]

A woman participant offers a few (inaudible) comments about Nietzsche.

Deleuze: Yes, here, Nietzsche's life, yes, the spiders that he offered himself... [*End of the session, duration 126:50*]⁷

⁷ Note: The excellent transcription, part 1 by Vanessa Duvois and part 2 by Carmela Chergui, greatly facilitated development of the transcription. However, the fragmentary nature of the translation available on Web Deleuze, by Timothy Murphy, is due to the corresponding fragmentary original transcription also available there. The revised transcript and the new translation were completed in March 2020.

Regarding the time markers (in the French transcript) for this session, Frédéric Astier, in his masterful summary of the Deleuze seminars (*Les Cours enregistrés de Gilles Deleuze, 1979-1987* [Sils Maria, 2006], p. 26), seminars offers two distinct groups of time lengths for this session's recording, one group that clearly corresponds to the session above, and a second group that has no reasonable connection to this session unless the session were one lasting more than four hours, which obviously is not the case.