



GILLES DELEUZE

Spinoza: The Velocities of Thought

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I

[*The Web Deleuze translation (and hence transcript) begins 13 minutes into the session, based on the BNF recording*]

[*Deleuze coughing*] Regarding Spinoza's answers to questions that Blyenbergh asked, the first question: do good and evil exist from the point of view of nature? A very simple answer, as we saw: No, neither good nor evil from the point of view of nature, for a very simple reason, that within nature, there are only compositions of relations. Nature is precisely the infinite aggregate of all the compositions of relations (*rapports*).¹

Second question: But from a determined point of view, that is, from the point of view of a particular relation -- since we have seen that, not being substances, ultimately we are bundles of relations -- so, from the point of view of such bundles of relations, you or me, is there good (*du bien*) and evil (*du mal*)? No, but, but, there is good (*du bon*) and bad (*du mauvais*). The good (*bon*) is when my relation is composed with relations that suit me, which suit someone, that is, which are composed directly with him. The bad (*mauvais*) is when one or the totality of my relations is decomposed. I am still insisting on this since it is toward the goal of reaching this ethical link, and that the individual cannot be defined substantially. It's really an aggregate of relations.

So, there is good and bad, but, but, does that mean that there is a criterion for distinguishing between vice and virtue? Notice that from the point of view of nature, there is not. There is neither vice nor virtue from the point of view of nature; once again, there are only relations that are composed. But from my particular point of view, there is indeed a criterion of distinction of vice and virtue, and that is what Spinoza answers to Blyenbergh, a criterion of distinction which is not reduced to my simple taste. I will not call virtue what I like, and I will not call vice what I do not like. There is a criterion of distinction which makes me say: oh yes, what is good in the sense of virtue is what's bad in the sense of vice.

What is this criterion of distinction? Well it's when you act. It turns out, and this is what, it seems to me, is new in Spinoza: it is this analysis, this mode of analysis of action. When you

¹ In concert with the translation in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* by Robert Hurley, I have chosen to translate Deleuze's "rapport" as *relation*, since Deleuze is gradually developing an argument, from one lecture to the next, of the importance of differential relations in both philosophical and mathematical terms.



act, it turns out that your action is associated with the image of a thing. Now, it's one thing or another; the image of the thing associated with your action is such that either your action decomposes the relation of this thing, directly decomposes the relation of this thing, or else is composed directly with the relation of this thing. [Pause] You are involved in an action -- there you have a very solid criterion, and it seems to me very, very new, precisely because it is not a substantial criterion; it is a criterion of relation, it is a criterion of relation.

You commit an action; well, then you will not be looking into the action to see if it is good or bad. In a sense, even any action is good insofar as it expresses a power of action (*puissance*), the power of action of your body, whether it is good in this sense, unless you launch into an action which indeed suppresses, which destroys the relation of your body, that is, into a suicidal action. But, to the extent that it expresses a power of action in your body, it is good. Yet it can be a perverse action, vicious, like the murder by Nero, like Nero killing his mother.

So, in what way is it bad? It's that this action is associated with an image of a thing or of a being, "Clytemnestra," such that this action directly decomposes the relation of the thing.² So, the criterion -- and here I am just summarizing since we saw it in detail the last time -- the criterion, understand, this is a criterion of -- of course, any action simultaneously composes and decomposes relations -- but what tells us this is a practical criterion, it seems very curious to me, specifically, that does not prevent there being a difference. From your point of view, you have only one thing to ask yourself: is the image of something with which your action is associated such that, directly, this thing is decomposed by your action or else such that it is composed, such that its relation is composed with that of your action? In one case, this will be vice; in another case, this will be virtue.

See, in this sense, there is really an objective criterion of good and bad. It's not a matter of taste. And I'm returning to my earlier example, the raised arm, etc. [From 13 January 1980] In fact, it's a vice if you use it to associate it, by associating this action with the image of a thing whose relation will be decomposed, for example, someone whose head you are smacking, and if the same gesture or the supposedly same gesture, you associate it with the image of thing, for example, of a drumhead which vibrates under ... [Deleuze does not finish this], this is a virtue. -- That would have to be relatively, I mean, [it] must not be abstract; if it remains abstract, this means that you are not Spinozist, it's not ... But this is concrete, it is necessary to imagine someone who lives like that; here, this is a question of a lifestyle. -- Only, I suppose this is clear, that you have understood fully. We are not done with difficulties, we are not done with them; new difficulties will obviously arise, namely, there are good and bad, so in this sense, direct compositions or direct decompositions. There is no good nor evil. There is good and bad from my point of view. This good and this bad can be objectively defined. They are not just left to the taste of each individual. Fine.

But then in what way is this not good and evil here? Why isn't it good and evil? Understand, it seems to me once again that, fine, I am stopping for a short moment because, here, I am only summarizing what we saw the last time. Are there any questions? Is this all very clear? [Pause] It's very clear, so perfect, perfect, perfect. So, let's try to make progress within the very terminology of Spinoza. I would like for you to feel here in what sense, for example, a philosopher feels the need to specify at certain times when he has some new criteria for analysis of something. He really must specify it terminologically to create something like location markers for a reader, I really don't know.

So, this relation, what will qualify an action as virtuous or vicious, is its relation association with an image of a thing. For the image of a thing, insofar as it is associated with action, there

² See the references to Nero and to Clytemnestra, in fact, combine two separate examples of crimes, by Nero and by Orestes, presented in detail in the 13 January 1980 session.



needs to be a word; an image of thing as associated with an action will be called an *affection*. The image of a thing as an affection, as associated with an action, is an affection, and of what? Not of action, but my power of action (*puissance*).³ It is an affection -- in Latin, I am giving the Latin word because it will be very important -- you'll see later why -- that's what Spinoza calls "affectio" and is translated, and you must translate it by affection. [Pause] -- So, affection is exactly the image of something associated with an action or, which amounts to the same thing, the determination of my power of action under such or such an action. [Pause]

So, in what sense is there neither good nor evil? In this sense, Spinoza tells us, that I am always as perfect as I can be, I am always as perfect as I can be as a function of the affection, as a function of the affections which determine my power of action. I'm always as perfect as I can be as a function of the conditions that determine my power of action. We are returning - - you have in mind the example because it seems to me a relatively clear one -- so, here is my action, raising my arm and I strike. On this point, there are two cases: it turns out that I hit someone on the head and I knock him out, so I decompose his relation directly; I strike a drumhead which resonates there; I directly compose relations. So, these are two different affections, by calling affection the image of a thing to which the action is linked. [Pause]

Where did this image of a thing come from? Spinoza is very, at the same time, very vague and very precise. For him, this is determinism: that, at a certain moment, my action is associated with such an image of a thing rather than another, and this involves the whole play of causes and effects which results with me as a part of nature. So, there is a whole external determinism which explains in each case that it's this image rather than another. [Pause] And here we have him telling us, in any case, whatever may be the image of a thing to which you associate your action, that is, it's understood, to which you are determined to associate your action, well you are always as perfect as you can be as a function of the affection you have. You see.

What does that mean? Only that we have to... You must sense that there's something there, that we are circling around something very strange. I am always as perfect as I can be as a function of the affection I have. What does that mean? [Here begins the Web Deleuze translation] Spinoza's example even in the letters to Blyenbergh: I am led by a basely sensual appetite. Ah, you see. I am led by a basely sensual appetite. Or else, the other case: I feel a true love, I feel a true love. What are these two cases? It is necessary to try to understand them as a function of the criteria that Spinoza just gave us. A basely sensual appetite, even the mere expression, one feels that it is not good, that it is bad. It is bad, in what sense? When I am led by a basely sensual appetite, what does that mean?

It means that, in this regard, there is an action or a tendency to action, for example, desire. What happens with desire when I am led by a basely sensual appetite? It is the desire of... Fine, what is this desire? It can only be qualified by its association with an image of a thing. [Pause] For example, I desire a bad woman, [Pause; Richard Pinhas suggests: Or several!] or even worse, even worse: several! [Laughter] What does it mean? Fine, we saw a bit of this when he suggested the difference between adultery, all that. Adultery, fine, he's just trying to show -- forget the ridiculous aspect of the examples, but they are not ridiculous, they are examples -- he will try to show that, in this case, what he calls basely sensual, basely sensual appetite, the basely sensual consists in this: that the action, in any case, even, for example, making love, the action is a virtue! Why? Because this is something that my body can do, and don't ever forget

³ In order to distinguish clearly between the two terms used for power, *pouvoir* and *puissance*, I translate the latter as "power of action," which Deleuze will himself emphasize later in the session by using *puissance d'agir*, power of acting.



the theme of power of action. This is in my body's power of action. So, it's a virtue in this sense. This is the expression of a power of action.

And if I just remained here, I would have no means of distinguishing the basely sensual appetite from the most beautiful of loves. But there it is, when there is a basely sensual appetite, why is this? It's because, in fact, I associate my action, or the image of my action, with the image of a thing whose relation is decomposed by this action, in several different ways. In any case, for example, if I am married, in the very example that Spinoza chose, I decompose a relation, the relation of the couple, or if the other person is married, I decompose the relation of the couple. But what's more, in a basely sensual appetite, I decompose all sorts of relations: the basely sensual appetite with its taste, its taste for destruction, for good, we would again returning to the decompositions of relations, a kind of fascination of the decomposition of relations, of the destruction of relations, fine.

On the contrary, in the most beautiful of loves – even here, notice that I don't invoke the mind at all; this would not be Spinozist as a function of parallelism -- I am invoking a love in the case of the most beautiful of loves, a love which is not less corporeal than the most basely sensual love. The difference is, simply, that in the most beautiful of loves -- my action [is] the same, exactly the same -- my physical action, my bodily action, is associated with an image of the thing whose relation is directly combined, directly composed with the relation of my action. It is in this sense that the two individuals, uniting in love, form an individual which has both of them as parts, Spinoza would say. On the contrary, in the basely sensual love, the one destroys the other, the other destroys the one, that is, there is a whole process of decomposition of relations. In short, they make love like they are knocking each other about.

All this is very concrete. It has to function. Only we always come up against this, Spinoza tells us: you don't choose, in the end, the image of the thing with which your action is associated. It engages a whole play of causes and of effects which escape you. Indeed, what is it that occurs for you to grasp this basely sensual love? It's not enough; you cannot say to yourself: Ha! I could do otherwise. Spinoza is not one of those who believes in a will... No, this is a whole determinism which associates the images of things with the actions. [Pause] So, what's more troubling is the expression: I am as perfect as I can be as a function of the affections that I have. That is, if I am dominated by a basely sensual appetite, well then, I am as perfect as I can be, as perfect as it is possible, as perfect as it is in my power (*pouvoir*) to be.

And could I say: I am deprived of (*manque*) a better state? Spinoza seems very firm. In the letters to Blyenbergh, he says: I cannot say that I am deprived of a better state, I cannot even say it because it doesn't make any sense. To say at the moment when I experience a basely sensual appetite -- once again, you will see in the text, if you haven't already seen it, this example which returns, because Blyenbergh clings there to this example; in fact, it is very simple, it is very clear – Well then, when I say, at the moment when I experience a basely sensual appetite, when I say: Ha! I am deprived of true love, if I say it, what does that mean? What does it mean to say to say I am deprived of something? Literally, it doesn't mean anything, absolutely nothing for Spinoza, but nothing!

It means only that my mind compares a state that I have to a state that I don't have; in other words, it is not a real relation; it is a comparison of the mind, a pure comparison of the mind. And Spinoza goes so far as to say: “you might as well say at that moment there that the stone is deprived of sight.” You might as well say at that moment that the stone is deprived of sight. In fact, why wouldn't I compare the stone to a human organism, and in the name of a same comparison of the mind, I would say: the stone doesn't see, therefore it is deprived of sight? And Spinoza said expressly -- I am not looking at the texts because you are reading them, I hope -- Spinoza responds expressly to Blyenbergh: it is just as stupid to speak of the



stone by saying that it is deprived of sight as it would be stupid, at the moment when I experience a basely sensual appetite, to say that I am deprived of a better love.

So then, at this level, you understand, it's very... We get the impression... We listen to Spinoza, and we tell ourselves, nonetheless, that there is something which doesn't work because in his comparison, I make the two judgments. I say of the stone, it can't see, it is deprived of sight; and I say of someone who experiences a basely sensual appetite, that they are deprived of virtue. Are these two propositions, as Spinoza claims, of the same type? It is so apparent that they are not the same, that we can be confident that if Spinoza says to us that they are of the same type, it is because he wants to be provocative. He wants to say to us: I challenge you to tell me the difference between the two propositions. But one feels the difference, we feel it. So, Spinoza's provocation is going to allow us perhaps to find it.

In the two cases, for the two propositions, "the stone (*pierre*) deprived of sight," or "Pierre" -- the name this time -- "deprived of virtue", is the comparison of the mind between two states, a state that I have and a state that I don't have, is the comparison of the mind of the same type? Evidently not! Why? To say that the stone is deprived of sight is, on the whole, to say that nothing in it contains the possibility of seeing, while, when I say he is deprived of true love, it is not a comparison of the same type, since, this time, I don't rule out that at other moments, this being here has experienced something which resembled true love. In other words, the question specifies -- I will go very slowly, even if you have the impression that all this goes without saying -- is a comparison within the same being analogous to a comparison between two beings?

Spinoza tells us... Spinoza doesn't retreat from the problem. He takes the case of the blind man, and he says to us calmly -- but once again, what does he have in mind in saying things like this to us, which are so obviously, how should I say this, inaccurate? -- He says to us: well, the blind man is deprived of nothing! Why? He is as perfect as he can be as a function of the affections that he has. He is deprived of visual images. Fine, to be blind is to be deprived of visual images. It's true. That means that he doesn't see, but neither does the stone see. And he says: there is no difference between the blind man and the stone from this point of view, namely: the one like the other doesn't have visual images. So, it is just as stupid, says Spinoza, it is just as stupid to say that the blind man is deprived of sight as it is to say the stone is deprived of sight. And the blind man, then? Well, he is as perfect as he can be, as a function of what? You see, even so, Spinoza doesn't say to us: as a function of his power of action; he says that the blind man is as perfect as he can be as a function of the affections of his power of action, that is, as a function of the images of which he is capable, as a function of the images of things of which he is capable, which are the true affections of his power of action. So, it would be entirely the same thing as saying: the stone doesn't have sight, as to say: the blind man doesn't have sight.

Blyenbergh begins to understand something here. He begins to understand, nonetheless, that Spinoza, he... And why, why does he make this kind of provocation? And, Blyenbergh, once again, it appears to me a typical example of the extent to which the commentators are mistaken, it seems to me, in saying that Blyenbergh is stupid, because Blyenbergh doesn't get Spinoza wrong. Blyenbergh answers Spinoza immediately by saying: all that is very pretty, but you can only manage it if you insist upon -- he didn't say it in this form, but you will see, the text really comes down to the same thing -- if you insist on a kind of pure instantaneity of the essence. It's interesting as an objection; it is a good objection. Blyenbergh retorts: you cannot assimilate "the blind man not seeing" and "the stone not seeing", you can only make such an assimilation if, at the same time, you pose a kind of pure instantaneity of the essence, namely: there belongs to an essence only the present, instantaneous affection that it experiences insofar as it experiences it. The objection here is very, very strong. If indeed I am saying: there belongs



to my essence only the affection that I experience here and now, then, indeed, I am not deprived of anything. If I am blind, I am not deprived of sight; if I am dominated by a basely sensual appetite, I am not deprived of better love, I am not deprived of anything. There belongs to my essence, indeed, only the affection that I experience here and now.

And Spinoza answers quietly: yes, that's the way it is. This is curious. What is curious? That it's the same man who never stops telling us that the essence is eternal, the singular essences, that is yours, mine, all the essences are eternal. That's a way of saying that the essence doesn't endure. And, in the name of... but, as a matter of fact, there are two manners of not enduring, at first sight: the manner of eternity or the manner of instantaneity. And it is very curious how, slyly, he passes from one to the other. He began by telling us: the essences are eternal, and now he tells us: the essences are instantaneous. There belongs to my essence or, if you like, it becomes a very bizarre position, literally from the text: the essences are eternal, but the belongings of essence are instantaneous; there belongs to my essence only what I experience actually insofar as I experience it actually. And in fact, the expression, understand: the expression "I am as perfect as I can be as a function of the affection which determines my essence," implies this strict instantaneity. [Pause]

[End of Audio Clip]

And here, it's against, it's against this, this is pretty much the high point of the correspondence because a very curious thing is going to happen. [Pause] Spinoza responds to this very violently because he increasingly loses patience with this correspondence. Blyenbergh protests here, he says: but in the end, you cannot define essence by instantaneity, what does this mean? Then it is a pure instantaneity; sometimes you have a basely sensual appetite, sometimes you have a better love, and you will say each time that you are as perfect as you can be there as if in a series of flashes? [Pause] And [Blyenbergh] says, No. In other words, Blyenbergh says to him: "you cannot do away with the phenomenon of duration." There is a duration, and it is precisely according to this duration that you can become better. There is a becoming. It's as a function of this duration that you can become better or worse. When you experience a basely sensual appetite, it is not a pure instantaneity which comes over you. You have to take it in terms of duration, notably: you become worse than you were before. And when a better love forms within you, you become better. There is an irreducibility of duration. In other words, essence cannot be measured in its instantaneous states. [Pause]

And this is curious because Spinoza stops the correspondence. He doesn't answer; on this point, no response from Spinoza. And at just the same time, Blyenbergh does something imprudent, that is, sensing that he has posed an important question to Spinoza, he starts to pose all sorts of questions. He thinks he has caught Spinoza out, and Spinoza tells him to back the fuck off (*l'envoie chier*). He says to him: fine, fine, give me a break, leave me in peace. He cuts the correspondence short; he stops, he won't answer anymore. As a result, then, we can, all that's very dramatic because it can be said: Ah fine, he didn't have anything to answer. [Pause] Well, if he had to respond because... the response that Spinoza could have made, and we are certainly forced to conclude that he could have done it, so if he didn't make it, it is because he did not want to. The response is... it's all in the *Ethics*.

So, just as, on certain points, the correspondence with Blyenbergh goes farther than the *Ethics*, on other points, well... and for a simple reason I think, which is that, above all, Spinoza doesn't want to give Blyenbergh, for reasons which are his own, he above all doesn't want to give Blyenbergh the idea of what this book is, this book of which everyone is speaking at the time, that Spinoza feels the need to hide because he senses that he has a lot to fear. He doesn't want to give Blyenbergh, whom he feels to be an enemy, he doesn't want to give him an idea of what the *Ethics* is. So, he's going to stop; he stops the correspondence. So, we can consider in this respect that he has a response that he doesn't want to give, that he doesn't



want to give because he tells himself: I will still have problems. But it now is up to us to try to reconstitute this answer. [Pause]

Spinoza knows very well that there is duration. You see that we are now in the process of playing with three terms: eternity, instantaneity, duration. What is instantaneity? Eternity, let's say, we don't yet know at all what eternity is in Spinoza, but eternity, I am saying, is the modality of essence. It is the very modality of essence. Let's suppose that the essence is eternal, fine, that is, it isn't subject to time. What does this mean? We don't know. What is instantaneity? Instantaneity is the modality of affection of essence. [Pause] The expression: I am always as perfect as I can be as a function of the affections that I have here and now. [Pause] So, affection is actually an instantaneous cut, and in fact, it is the kind of horizontal relation between an action and an image of a thing. It's as if that would make cuts occur. [Pause]

But that doesn't prevent -- third dimension -- and it's as if we were in the process of constituting the three dimensions of what we could call the sphere. Here I take a word, which is not at all Spinozist, but I select a word which allows us to regroup this, a Husserlian word, the sphere of belonging of essence -- essence is what belongs to it. I believe that Spinoza would say that this sphere of belonging of essence has three dimensions. There is the essence itself, eternal; there are the affections of the essence here and now which are like so many instants, notably, what affects me at this moment; and then there is what? Well, it happens that, and here the terminology is all the more important, Spinoza rigorously distinguishes between *affectio* and *affectus*. It is complicated because there are a lot of translators who translate *affectus-affectio* by affection; all of the translators translate *affectio* by affection. That, that works, but there are lots of translators who translate *affectus* by feeling. On the one hand, this isn't said much, in French, the difference between affection and feeling, and on the other hand, it's a shame, even a slightly more barbaric word would be better. But it would be better, it seems to me, to translate *affectus* by affect, since the word exists in French; this retains at least the same root common to *affectio* and to affect. [The BNF recording is interrupted here; Web Deleuze continues] Therefore Spinoza, if only by his terminology, distinguishes well between the *affectio* and the *affectus*, the affection and the affect.

II

What is it, the affect? Spinoza tells us that it is something that the affection envelops. The affection envelops an affect. [The BNF recording returns here] You recall, the affection is the effect, literally, I'd say -- if I wanted to give it an absolutely rigorous definition -- it is the instantaneous effect of an image of a thing on me. For example, perceptions are affections. The image of things associated with my action is an affection. The affection envelops, implicates, all of these are the words Spinoza constantly uses. To envelope: it is necessary really to take them as material metaphors, that is, that within the affection there is an affect. What is it? And yet, there is a difference in nature between the affect and the affection. The affect is not something dependent on the affection, it is enveloped by the affection, but that's something else. There is a difference in nature between the affects and the affections.

What does my affection, that is, the image of the thing and the effect of this image on me, what does it envelop? What does it envelop? A passage. It envelops a passage or a transition. [Pause] Only it is necessary to take passage-transition in a very strong sense. Why? Because you see, it means it is something other than a comparison of mind. Here, we are no longer in the domain of a comparison of mind. It is not a comparison of the mind in two states. It is a passage or transition enveloped by the affection, by every affection. Every instantaneous affection envelops a passage or transition, transition or passage, to what? What



is this passage, this transition? Once again, [it's] not at all a comparison of the mind. I must add, in order to go more slowly, a lived passage, a lived transition, which obviously doesn't mean conscious. Every state implicates a lived passage or transition.

Passage from what to what, between what and what? And more precisely, however close the two moments of time may be, the two instants that I consider instant A and instant A prime. There is a passage from the preceding (*antérieur*) state to the current (*actuel*) state. The passage from the preceding state to the current state differs in nature with the preceding state and with the current state. There is a specificity of the transition, and it is precisely this that we call duration and that Spinoza calls duration. Duration is the lived passage, the lived transition. What is duration? Never a thing, but the passage from one thing to another. It suffices to add, insofar as it is lived.

When, centuries later, Bergson will make duration into a philosophical concept, it will obviously be with wholly different influences. It will be as a function of itself above all, it will not be under the influence of Spinoza. Nevertheless, I am just pointing out that the Bergsonian use of duration coincides strictly. When Bergson tries to make us understand what he calls duration, he says: you can consider states, psychic states as close together as you want in time, that is, you can consider the state A and the state A prime, as separated by a minute, but just as well by a second, by a thousandth of a second, that is, you can make more and more cuts, increasingly tight, increasingly close to one another. You may well go to infinity, says Bergson, in your decomposition of time, by establishing cuts with increasing rapidity, but you will only ever reach states. And he adds that the states are always of space. The cuts are always spatial. And although you've brought your cuts together very well, you will necessarily let something escape; it is the passage from one cut to another, however small it may be.

Now, what does he call duration? At its simplest, it's the passage from one cut to another; it is the passage from one state to another. The passage from one state to another is not a state. Yes, this isn't strong, but it is of extraordinary... I believe, it's a really profound status of living because henceforth, how can we speak of the passage, the passage from one state to another, without making a state out of it? And this is going to pose problems of expression, of style, of movement; it is going to pose all sorts of problems. And duration is that, it is the lived passage from one state to another insofar as it is irreducible to one state as to the other, insofar as it is irreducible to any state. This is what happens between two cuts. In one sense, duration always occurs behind our backs, it's behind our backs that it happens and between two blinks of the eye. If you will, an approximation of duration, fine: I look at someone, I look at someone, duration is neither here nor there. Duration is... What has happened between the two? Although I would have gone as quickly as I wanted, my duration goes even more quickly, by definition, as if it was affected by a variable coefficient of speed. As quickly as I might go, my duration goes more quickly since however quickly I pass from one state to another, the passage will occur more quickly than me.

So, there is a lived passage from one state to another that is irreducible to the two states. It is this that every affection envelops. I would say: every affection envelops the passage through which we reach it. [*Pause*] And the passage through which we reach it, or equally well, every affection envelops the passage through which we reach it and through which we move away towards another affection, however close the two affections considered may be. So, in order to have my line complete, it would be necessary for me to create a line of three times: A prime, A, A double prime; A is the instantaneous affection, of the present moment, A prime is that of a little while ago, A double prime is what is going to come. Fine, although I have brought them together as closely as possible, there is always something which separates them, namely the phenomenon of passage. Fine, this phenomenon of passage, insofar as it is a lived phenomenon, is duration: this is the third element belonging to essence.



So, I would say, I have a slightly stricter definition of affect; the affect: what affection envelops, what every affection envelops, and which nevertheless is of another nature; this is the passage. This is the lived transition from the preceding state to the current state, or from the current state to the following state. Good, so if you understand all that, for the moment we're creating a kind of decomposition of the three dimensions of the essence, of the three elements belonging to essence: the essence belongs to itself under the form of the eternity; the affection belongs to essence under the form of instantaneity; the affect belongs to the essence under the form of duration.

And the passage is what? What could a passage be? We have to discard the too spatial idea of passage. Every passage is there, and this is going to be the basis of his theory of *affectus*, of his theory of the affect. Every passage is there, and he doesn't say "implicates" – understand that at this level, the words are very, very important -- he will tell us of the affection that it implicates an affect. Every affection implicates, envelops, but the enveloped and the enveloping just don't have the same nature. Every affection, that is, every determinable state at a single moment envelops an affect, a passage. But the passage, I'm not asking what it envelops? It is the enveloped (*enveloppe*); I ask: what does it consist of, what is it? And Spinoza's response, and it's obvious, what it is? It is increase or decrease of my power of action. It is increase or decrease of my power of action, even infinitesimally.

I am choosing two cases. Here I am in a dark room – I mean, I'm developing all of this; it is perhaps useless, I don't know, but it is to persuade you that when you read a philosophical text, it is necessary that you have the most ordinary situations in your head, the most everyday ones -- you are in a dark room. You are as perfect, Spinoza will say, judging from the point of view of affections, you are as perfect as you can be as a function of the affections that you have. Fine, you don't have any, you don't have any visual affections. That's all, there, that's all there is. But you are as perfect as you can be. Suddenly, someone enters and turns on the lights without warning: I am completely dazzled. Because that I took the worst example for me, so no. I'll change it [*Laughter*] because... my mistake. I'm in the dark, and someone arrives softly, all that, and turns on a light. Fine, this is going to be very complicated, this example. Fine, you have your two states which could be very close together in time, the state that I call: dark state, and small b, the lighted state. They can be very close together. I am saying: there is a passage from one to the other, however rapid as that may be, even unconscious, all that, to the point that your whole body, in Spinozist terms -- these are examples of the body -- your whole body has a kind of mobilization of itself, in order to adapt to this new state.

The affect is what? It is the passage. The affection is the dark state and the lighted state; it's two successive affections, in cuts. The passage is the lived transition from one to the other. Notice that, in this case, here there is no physical transition, there is a biological transition, it is your body which makes the transition. What does this mean? The passage is necessarily an increase of power or a decrease of power. Already one must understand -- and it is for this reason that this is so concrete – all this is not determined in advance.

Suppose that, in the dark, you were in deeply in a state of meditation. Your whole body was focused on this extreme meditation; you were getting hold of something. The other brute arrives and turns on the light. If needs be, you are losing an idea that you were going to have. You turn around, you are furious. We'll hold onto this because we will use the same example again. You hate him, even if not for long, but you hate him, you say to him: "Hey!" You hate him. In that case, the passage to the lighted state will have brought you what? A decrease of power. Obviously, if you had looked for your glasses in the dark, there they would have brought you an increase of power. The guy who turned the light on, you say to him: "Thank you very much, I love you." Good. So, we're already saying that, maybe this story of increase and decrease of power of action, this is going to operate in quite variable directions and



variable contexts. But, on the whole, there are directions. If we limit you, one could say, in general, without taking the context into account, if one increases the affections of which you are capable, there is an increase of power of action, if one decreases the affections of which you are capable there is a decrease of power of action. We can say this on the whole, even knowing that it is not always like this.

So, what do I mean? I mean something very simple: it is that every instantaneous affection, Spinoza, you see, how he is very, very odd. He'll say, by virtue of his rigor, he will say: well, yes, every affection is instantaneous, and this is what he responded to Blyenbergh. He didn't want to tell him anything else. And here, one could not say that he distorted his thought; he only gave half of it, he only gave one sphere, one tip. Every affection is instantaneous, he will always say this, and he will always say: I am as perfect as I can be as a function of affections that I have in the instant. It is the sphere of belonging of the instantaneous essence. In this sense, there is neither good nor bad.

But on the other hand, the instantaneous state always envelopes an increase or a decrease of power of action; in this sense there is good and bad. [Pause] As a result, not from the point of view of its state, but from the point of view of its passage, from the point of view of its duration, there is something bad in becoming blind, there is something good in becoming a seer (*voyant*), since it is either decrease of power of action or else increase of power of action. And here it is no longer the domain of a comparison of the mind between two states; it is the domain of the lived passage from one state to another, the lived passage in the affect. As a result, it seems to me that we can understand nothing of the *Ethics*, that is, of the theory of the affects, if we don't keep very much in mind the opposition that Spinoza established between the comparisons between two states of the mind, and the lived passages from one state to another, lived passages that can only be lived in the affects. Hence, here then, there remains for us quite a few things to understand. [Pause] I would not say that the affects signal the decreases or increases of power of action; I would say that affects are the decreases and the increases of lived powers of action, not necessarily conscious once again.

This is, I believe, a very, very... a very, very profound conception of the affect. So, let's give them names in order to better situate ourselves. The affects which are increases of power of action we will call joys. The affects which are decreases of power of action we will call forms of sadness (*tristesses*). And affects are either based on joy, or else based on sadness, hence Spinoza's very rigorous definitions. Sadness is the affect that corresponds to a decrease of power, of my power of action; joy is the affect which corresponds to an increase of my power of action. [Here begins a brief gap in the Web Deleuze translation, of about 1 minute] So fine, why? If we understand this why, I believe that this is all there is left to understand. You will have all the elements in order to see precisely what is under discussion in the *Ethics* from the point of view of affects, once we've said that this is what interests Spinoza, these are affects.

Why is sadness necessarily a decrease of power of action? You see, henceforth, what there is going to be that's so new in Spinoza's tool. In contrast to all morality, this is the perpetual cry of the *Ethics*: this isn't that there's good sadness, but that there's no good sadness. And the entire Spinozist critique of religion will precisely be that, according to him, the mystification of religion is to make us believe that there are good forms of sadness. In terms of power of action, there cannot be any good sadness because all sadness decreases my power of action. But why is sadness a decrease of power of action? Once again, of course, if you understand that, everything will be fine. [Return to the Web Deleuze translation]

Sadness is the affect enveloped by an affection. The affection is what? It is an image of a thing which causes me sadness, which gives me sadness. You see, there we find everything, this terminology is very rigorous. -- I'm repeating; I don't know any more what I was saying. Ah, fine -- The affect of sadness is enveloped by an affection. Affection is what, it is the image



of a thing which gives me sadness. This image can be very imprecise, very confused, eh, it matters little. Here's my question: why does the image of a thing which gives me sadness, why does this image of a thing envelop a decrease of power of action? What is this thing which gives me sadness?

We have at least all of the elements to respond to it; now everything is regrouped. If you have followed me, everything must regroup harmoniously, very harmoniously. The thing which gives me sadness is the thing whose relations don't agree with mine. That is affection. All things whose relations tend to decompose one of my relations or the totality of my relations affect me with sadness. In terms of *affectio* -- you have there a strict correspondence -- in terms of *affectio*, I would say: the thing has relations which are not composed with mine, and which tend to decompose mine. Here I am speaking in terms of *affectio*. In terms of affects, I would say: this thing affects me with sadness, therefore by the same token, in the same way, decreases my power of action. You see I have the double language of instantaneous affections and of affects of passage.

Hence, I return again to my question: why, but why? If we understood why, maybe we would understand everything. What happens? You see that he takes sadness in one sense; they are the two big affective tonalities. These are not two particular cases, sadness and joy; these are the two big affective tonalities, that is, affective in the sense of *affectus*, affect. [Pause] So, we are going to see as two lineages: the lineage based on sadness and the lineage based on joy, that are going to traverse the theory of the affects.

Why does the thing whose relations don't agree with mine, why does it affect me with sadness, that is, decrease my power of action? You see we have a double impression: both that we've understood in advance, and then that we're missing something in order to understand. What happens when something is presented having relations which don't compose with mine? It could be a gust of air. I am going back, I am in the dark, in my room, I am alone, I am left in peace. Someone enters, and he makes me flinch, he knocks on the door, he knocks on the door, and he makes me flinch. Fine, I lose an idea. He enters, and he starts to speak; I have fewer and fewer ideas. I'm affected by sadness, yes, I feel sadness, that is, I've been disturbed. Spinoza will say, the lineage of sadness is what? In response, I hate him; I hate him. I'm saying, "Oh, listen eh? That's enough". This cannot be very serious; it could be a small hate, he irritates me. "Ooo, I cannot have any peace", all that, "I hate him!"

What does it mean, hate? You see, sadness, fine; he said to us, fine, your power of action is decreased, so you experience sadness insofar as your power of acting is decreased. Okay, I hate him: that means that the thing whose relations don't compose with yours, you're tending, this would only be what you have in mind, you're tending toward its destruction. To hate is to want to destroy what threatens to destroy you. This is what hate means, that is, to want, to "want" in quotes, to "want" to decompose what threatens to decompose you. So, sadness engenders hate.

Notice that it engenders joys too. Hate engenders joys, so the two lineages, on one hand sadness, on the other hand joy, are not going to be pure lineages. What are the joys of hate? The joys of hate, as Spinoza says: if you imagine the being that you hate being unhappy, your heart experiences a strange joy. One can even engender passions, and Spinoza does this marvelously. There are joys of hate. Okay, there are joys of hate. But are these joys...? We can at least already say -- and this is going to advance us a lot for later -- that these joys are strangely compensatory, that is, indirect. What is primary in hate, when you have feelings of hate, always look for the sadness at the base, that is, your power of action was impeded, was decreased.

And although you will, if you have a diabolical heart, although you will believe that this heart flourishes in the joys of hate, these joys of hate, as immense as they are, will never get cast out the nasty little sadness of which you are a part; your joys are joys of compensation.



The man of hate, the man of resentment, etc., for Spinoza, is the one for whom all joys are poisoned by the initial sadness, because sadness is in these same joys. In the end, he can only derive from this, he can derive joy only from sadness, the sadness that he experiences himself by virtue of the existence of the other, sadness that he imagines inflicting on the other to please himself, all of this is are pitiful joys, says Spinoza. These are indirect joys. We rediscover our criteria of direct and indirect; you see, it all comes together at this level.

As a result, I return to my question: in the end, then yes, it is necessary to say nonetheless, in what way does an affection, that is the image of something that doesn't agree with my own relations, in what way does this decrease my power of acting? It is both obvious and not. Here is what Spinoza means: suppose that you have a power of action, fine, let's say in general the same, and there, first case you come up against something whose relations don't compose with yours. Second case, on the contrary, you encounter something whose relations compose with your own. Spinoza, in the *Ethics*, uses the Latin term: *occursus*; *occursus* is exactly this case, the encounter. I encounter bodies; my body never stops encountering bodies. Well then, the bodies that it encounters, sometimes have relations which compose, sometimes have relations which don't compose with it.

What happens when I encounter a body whose relation doesn't compose with mine? Well then, here we are: I would say -- and you will see that in book IV of the *Ethics*, this doctrine is very strong; I cannot say that it is absolutely affirmed, but it is very much suggested -- a phenomenon happens which is like a kind of fixation. What does this mean, a fixation? That is, a part of my power of action is entirely devoted to investing and to isolating the trace, on me, of the object which doesn't agree with me. It is as if I tensed my muscles.

Take once again the example: someone that I don't wish to see enters into the room. I say to myself, "Uh oh", and in me occurs something like a kind of investment: a whole part of my power of action is there in order to ward off the effect on me of the object, of the disagreeable object. I invest the trace of the thing on me; I invest the effect of the thing on me. In other words, I try as much as possible to circumscribe the effect, to isolate it; in other words, I devote a part of my power to investing the trace of the thing. Why? Obviously in order to subtract it, to put it at a distance, to avert it. Well, understand that this goes without saying: this quantity of power of action that I've devoted to investing the trace of the disagreeable thing, this is as much of my power of action that is decreased, that is removed from me, that is as if immobilized.

This is what is meant by: my power of action decreases. It is not that I have less power of action, it is that a part of my power of action is subtracted in this sense that it is necessarily allocated to averting the action of the thing. Everything happens as if a whole part of my power of action is no longer at my disposal. This is what the tonality affective sadness is: a part of my power of action serves this unworthy need which consists in warding off the thing, warding off the action of the thing, with as much immobilized power of action. To ward off the thing is to prevent it from destroying my relations; therefore I've toughened my relations; this can be a formidable effort, Spinoza said: how very like lost time, how much it would have been more valuable to avoid this situation. In any event, a part of my power of action is fixed, which is what is meant by a part of my power of action decreases. In fact, a part of my power of action is subtracted from me; it is no longer in my possession. It is invested, it is like a kind of hardening, a hardening of power of action, to the point that it this almost hurts, you see, because of so much lost time!

On the contrary, within joy, well, it is very curious, the experience of joy as Spinoza presents it. For example, I encounter something agreeable, which agrees with my relations, for example, I hear... Let's take an example, the example of music. There are wounding sounds. There are wounding sounds which inspire in me an enormous sadness. What complicates all



this is that there are always people who find these wounding sounds, on the contrary, delicious and harmonious. But this is what makes the joy of life, that is, the relations of love and hate. Because my hate toward the wounding sound is going to be extended to all those who like this wounding sound. So, I go home, I hear these wounding sounds which appear to me as challenges in everything, which really decompose all my relations. They enter my head, they enter my stomach, all that. Fine, my power of action, a whole part of it, is hardened in order to hold at a distance these sounds which penetrate me.

I obtain silence, and I put on the music that I like; everything changes. The music that I like, what does that mean? It means the resonant relations are composed with my relations. And suppose that at that very moment my machine breaks. My machine breaks: I experience hate! -- An objection? [*Laughter*] -- Well, I experience a sadness, a huge sadness. Good, I put on music that I like, there, my whole body, and my soul -- it goes without saying -- compose its relations with the resonant relations. This is what is meant by the music that I like: my power of action is increased.

So, for Spinoza, what interests me in this is that, in the experience of joy, there is never the same thing as in sadness, there is not at all an investment -- and we'll see why -- there is not at all an investment of one hardened part which would mean that a certain quantity of power of action is subtracted from my power (*pouvoir*). That doesn't occur, why? Because when the relations are composed, the two things of which the relations are composed, form a superior individual, a third individual which encompasses and takes them as parts. In other words, with regard to the music that I like, everything happens as if the direct composition of relations -- you see that we are always in the criteria of the direct -- a direct composition of relations is made, in such a way that a third individual is constituted, individual of which I, or the music, are no more than a part. I would say, from now on, that my power of action is in expansion, or that it increases.

Notice the extent to which, if I am choosing these examples, that it is in order to persuade you nonetheless that, when -- and this also goes for Nietzsche -- that when authors speak of power of action, Spinoza of the increase and decrease of power of action, Nietzsche of the will of power (*volonté de puissance*) which also proceeds -- what Nietzsche calls affect, is exactly the same thing as what Spinoza calls affect. It is on this point that Nietzsche is Spinozist, that is, it is the decreases or increases of power of action. Well, they have in mind something which doesn't have anything to do with any conquest of a power (*pouvoir*) whatsoever. No doubt, they will say that the only power (*pouvoir*) is power of action in the end, namely: to increase one's power of action is precisely to compose relations such that the thing and I, which compose the relations, are no more than two sub-individualities of a new individual, a formidable new individual.

I am returning to an example: what distinguishes my basely sensual appetite from my best, most beautiful, love? It is exactly the same! The basely sensual appetite, you know, it's all these expressions, so we can invite it all; it's a joke (*c'est pour rire*) -- but in the end, you don't find it funny -- so it's a joke. So, we can say anything, the sadness, the sadness; after love, the animal is sad. What does... eh? This sadness, what does Spinoza tell us? He would never say this, or else, that it is not worth the effort, there is no reason for me... so, sadness, fine. But there are people who cultivate sadness. Sense, sense this: where does this get us? [There is] this denunciation which is going to run throughout the *Ethics*, namely: there are people who are so devoid of powers of action (*tellement impuissant*) that they are the ones who are dangerous, they are the ones who seize power (*pouvoir*). And they can seize power (*pouvoir*) given how distant are the notions of power of action and of power (*pouvoir*). The people of power (*pouvoir*) are the impotent (*impuissant*) who can only construct their power (*pouvoir*) on the sadness of



others. They need sadness. They need sadness. In fact, they can only reign over slaves, and the slave is precisely the regime of the decrease of power of action.

There are people, right, who can only reign, who only acquire power (*pouvoir*) by way of sadness and by instituting a regime of sadness of the type: “atone”, of the type “hate someone”, and “if you don’t have anyone to hate, hate yourself,” etc., everything that Spinoza diagnoses as a kind of immense culture of sadness, the valorization of sadness, all of which says to you: if you don’t pass by way of sadness, you will not flourish. And, for Spinoza, this is an abomination. And if he writes an *Ethics*, it is in order to say: no! No! Everything you want, everything you want, but not this. So, yes, in fact, good = joy, bad = sadness.

But I am saying, what is... Yes, I was saying, I have a problem there that I’ve lost in... I was saying, we have to see. Distinction... distinction what? [*Students near Deleuze help him find the lecture thread*] Distinction between basely sensual instinct and... Ah, yes, the basely sensual appetite, there we are. The basely sensual appetite, you see now, and the most beautiful of loves, the most beautiful of loves, this is not at all a spiritual thing, but not at all. It is when an encounter works, as one says, when it functions well. What does that mean? It’s functionalism, but a very beautiful functionalism. What does that mean?

But that means that ideally, it is never like this completely because there are always local forms of sadness; Spinoza is not unaware of that, of course, there are always forms of sadness. The question is not if there is or if there isn’t. The question is the value that you give to them, that is, the indulgence that you grant them. The more you grant them indulgence, that is, the more you invest your power of action in order to invest the trace of the thing, the more you will lose power of action.

So, in a happy love, in a love of joy, what happens? You compose a maximum of relations with a maximum of relations of the other, bodily, perceptual, all kinds of natures. Of course, bodily, yes, why not; but perceptive also. Ah yes? We’re going to listen to some music? Fine, let’s listen to some music! In a certain way, one never stops inventing, understand. When I was speaking of a third individual that... of which the two others are no more than parts, it didn’t at all mean that this third individual preexisted. It’s always by composing my relations with other relations and under a particular profile, under a particular aspect, that I invent this third individual of which the other and myself are no more than parts, sub-individuals. Good, well then, that’s it: each time that you proceed by composition of relations and composition of composed relations, you increase your power of action.

On the other hand, the basely sensual appetite, it’s not because it is sensual that it is bad. It is because, fundamentally, it never stops playing on the decomposition of relations. It is really the “Come on, hurt me” kind of thing, the “Make me sad so I can make you sad” thing, [*Laughter*] the domestic squabble, etc. Ha, like we feel good with our little squabble; oh, how good we feel after, that is, little compensatory joys. All that is disgusting, it’s so foul, it’s the most pathetic life in the world. “Ah, I’m going... Come on, let’s get our squabble on; so, a session, ah yes, because it is necessary to hate each other, afterwards we love each other so much more”. Spinoza vomits when... In the end, that makes... He tells himself: what is going on with these crazy people? If they did this, again for themselves, but these are contagious people, these are propagators. They won’t let go of you until they have inoculated you with their sadness. What’s more, they treat you as idiots if you tell them that you don’t understand, that it is not your thing. They tell you that this is the true life. And the more that they wallow in their squabble, their stupidity, their anguish, and all that, their “ooh”, the more that they hold on to you, the more that they inoculate you if they can hold on to you, then they pass it on to you.⁴

⁴ The Web Deleuze transcript notes here: “Gilles Deleuze looks extremely nauseated.”



Claire Parnet: Richard would like you to speak about appetite... [*She laughs as she makes this joking suggestion*]

Deleuze: Of the composition of relations?! [*Laughter*] I've said everything on the composition of relations because, understand, above all... I don't have that much to say because this is really... That doesn't consist in... The misinterpretation would be to believe [it's] "Let's go look for a third individual of which we would only be the parts". Not at all, this does not preexist, nor does the manner in which relations are decomposed. That preexists in Nature since Nature is everything, but from your point of view, it is very complicated. Here we are going to see what problems this poses for Spinoza because all this is very concrete all the same, about manners of living, how does one live? You don't know beforehand which are the relations. [*Interruption of the BNF recording: Web Deleuze continues*]

Part 3 (duration 46 :34, BNF recording)

For example, you are not necessarily going to find your own music. I mean: it is not scientific, in what sense? You don't have a scientific knowledge of relations which would allow you to say: "there is the woman or the man who I must have". [*Return to BNF recording*] We go along feeling our way, we go along blindly, that works, that doesn't work, etc. ... And how to explain that there are people who only get involved with things in which they're aware that it's not going to work out? [*Laughter*] These are the people of sadness, they are the cultivators of sadness, because they think that that it's here, the basis (*fond*) of existence.

Otherwise, the long apprenticeship by which, as a function of the foreboding of my constituent relations, I vaguely apprehend first what agrees with me and what doesn't agree with me. You will tell me: "If this is in order to end up there, this isn't, this isn't strong." Nothing but the expression: "Don't do it, above all, don't do what doesn't agree with you"; no, well, Spinoza's didn't say it first, for starters, ... But the proposition doesn't mean anything, "do what doesn't agree with you", if you take it out of all context, if you bring it as the conclusion of this conception -- that I find very grandiose -- of relations which are composed, etc. How is someone very concrete going to lead his existence in such a manner that he is going to acquire a kind of affection, of affect, or of foreboding of the relations which agree with him, of the relations which don't agree with him, of situations where he must withdraw, of situations where he must engage himself, etc.? It's no longer at all: "one must do this", it is no longer at all the domain of morality. One doesn't have to do anything at all, right, one doesn't have to do anything at all. One must find, one must find one's thing, that is, not at all to withdraw; one must invent the superior individualities into which I can enter as a part, for these individualities do not preexist.

All that I meant... You see in what sense this takes on, I believe, a concrete signification, the two expressions take on a concrete signification, the two expressions: increase in power of action, decrease in power of action. These are the two basic affects. So, if I group together the aggregate -- before asking you, euh, what you think of all this -- if I group together the Spinozist doctrine that we can call ethics, I would say -- good, here, provided that we can use a more complicated term, but this allows me to regroup this -- there is a sphere of belonging of essence. This sphere of belonging for the moment includes -- we'll see that this will get even more complicated -- for the moment includes three dimensions: essence is eternal, essence is eternal, what does it mean? Your essence is eternal, your singular essence, that is, your own essence in particular, what does this mean? For the moment, we can only give one sense to this expression, namely: you are a degree of power of action. You are a degree of power of action: this is what Spinoza means when he says, verbatim: I am a part -- *pars* -- I am a part of the power (*puissance*) of God. I am a part of the power (*puissance*) of God, that means, literally: I am a degree of power of action. Immediate objection: I am a degree of power of action, fine,



but after all: me as a baby, little kid, euh... adult, old man, this is not the same degree of power of action; therefore, it varies, my degree of power of action. Okay, let's leave that aside.

How, why does this degree of power of action have, we'll say, a latitude? Euh, it has a latitude. Ok, but I am saying, on the whole, I am a degree of power of action, and it is in this sense that I am eternal. No one has the same degree of power of action as another. Fine -- you see, we will have need of this later -- at the extreme, this is a quantitative conception of individuation. But it is a special quantity since it is a quantity of power of action. A quantity of power of action, we have always called this an intensity. Fine. It is to this and to this alone that Spinoza assigns the term "eternity". I am a degree of power (*puissance*) of God, that means, I am eternal.

Second sphere of belonging: I have instantaneous affections. We saw this, it is the dimension of instantaneity. According to this dimension, the relations compose or don't compose. [Pause] It is the dimension of *affectio*: composition or decomposition between things. [Pause]

Third sphere of... Third dimension of belonging: the affects, notably, each time that an affection realizes my power of action, and it realizes it as perfectly as it can, as perfectly as is possible. The affection, in fact, that is, the sphere, the belonging 2, realizes my power of action; it realizes my power of action, and it realizes my power of action as perfectly as it can, as a function of the circumstances, according to here and now. It realizes my power here and now, as a function of my relations with things. Within the third dimension, each time an affection realizes my power of action, it doesn't do it without my power of action increasing or decreasing. This is the sphere of the affect. So, my power is an eternal degree; this doesn't prevent it from ceaselessly, within duration, increasing and decreasing. This same power of action, which is eternal in itself, doesn't stop increasing and decreasing, that is varying in duration.

How to understand this, after all? Well, understanding this, after all, is not difficult. If you reflect, I have just said: essence is a degree of power of action, that is: if it is a quantity, it is an intensive quantity. But an intensive quantity is not at all like an extensive quantity. An intensive quantity is inseparable from a threshold, that is, an intensive quantity is fundamentally, in itself, already a difference. The intensive quantity is made of differences. Does Spinoza go so far as to say something like this?

Here, I am opening a parenthesis solely... of pseudo scholarship because it is important since... I can say, I can say that Spinoza, first of all, said explicitly *pars potentiae*, part of power (*puissance*). He says that "our essence is a part of our divine power" (*puissance*). I am saying, it is not a question of forcing the texts. By saying part of power (*puissance*), this is not an extensive part; it is obviously an intensive part. I am still pointing out -- so in the domain of scholarship, but here I need it in order to justify everything that I'm saying -- that in the Scholastics of the Middle Age, the equality of two terms is absolutely current: *gradus* or *pars*, part or degree. Now, the degrees are very special parts, they are intensive parts. Fine, this is the first point.

Second point: I point out that in letter XII to Meyer, a gentleman named [Louis] Meyer, there is a text that we will surely see the next time because it will allow us to draw conclusions on individuality. I point it out from starting now -- and I would like, for the next time, those who have the correspondence of Spinoza to have read the letter to Meyer, which is a famous letter, which is concerned with the infinite -- well then, in this letter, Spinoza develops a very bizarre, very curious geometrical example. And he made this geometrical example the object of all sorts of commentaries, and it looked quite bizarre. And Leibniz, who was himself a very great mathematician, who had knowledge of the letter to Meyer, declared that he particularly admired Spinoza for this geometrical example which showed that Spinoza understood things



that even his contemporaries didn't understand, said Leibniz. So, the text is all the more interesting with Leibniz's benediction.

Here is the figure that Spinoza proposes for our reflection: two circles of which one is inside the other, but above all they are not concentric. You see, eh? – Euh, I would have drag myself over to the board, and I cannot, ... If there were someone in the back and could move up, well, that would be great... Two [non-]concentric circles of which one is inside the other. [Pause; Deleuze directs the student volunteer who is writing on the board] That's perfect, you see now. And then, you mark, would you just mark, the greatest distance and the smallest one, euh... from one circle to the other... That's it... and the smallest... Perfect!⁵

You see, do you understand the figure? Here is what Spinoza tells us. Spinoza tells us something very interesting, it seems to me, he tells us: in the case of this double figure, you cannot say that you don't have a limit or threshold. You have a threshold; you have a limit. You even have two limits: the outer circle, the inner circle, or what comes down to the same thing, the greatest distance from one circle to the other, or the least distance. You have a maximum and a minimum. And he says: consider the sum – here, the Latin text is very important – “consider the sum of the inequalities of distance.”

You see, you trace all the lines, all the segments which go from one circle to the other. You evidently have an infinity of them. Spinoza tells us: “consider the sum of the inequalities of distance.” You understand, he doesn't literally tell us to “consider the sum of the unequal distances,” he doesn't literally tell us to “consider the sum of the unequal distances,” that is, of the segments which go from one circle to the other. He tells us: “the sum of the inequalities of distance,” that is, the sum of the differences, and he says: “it is very curious, this infinity here”. We will see what he means, but I mention this text for the moment because I have a specific idea. He tells us: “it is very curious, this is an infinite sum, the sum of the inequalities of distance is infinite.” He could also have said that the unequal distances are an infinite sum. And yet there is a limit. There is indeed a limit since you have the limit of the large circle and the limit of the small circle.

So, there is something infinite, and yet it is not unlimited. And he says, that is an odd infinity; it is a very special geometrical infinity: it is an infinity that you can say is infinite even though it is not unlimited. And in fact, the space encompassed between the two circles is not unlimited; the space encompassed between the two circles is perfectly limited. Fine, I am just reserving the expression of the letter to Meyer, “the sum of the inequalities of distance”, whereas he could have made the same reasoning by limiting himself to the simpler case, “the sum of unequal distances.”

Why does he want to sum up the differences? For me, it is truly a text which, euh, which is important because it confirms... What does he have in his head that he doesn't say? He needs it by virtue of his problem of essences. Essences are degrees of power of action, but what is a degree of power of action? A degree of power of action is a difference between a maximum and a minimum. It is in this way that it is an intensive quantity. A degree of power of action is a difference in itself. [Interruption of the Web Deleuze French transcription]⁶ You see the extent to which... then, the extent to which we are far from a substantialist vision of beings, of beings... [Anne Querrien indicates that she would like to ask a question]... Yes?

⁵ Although Deleuze says “concentric circles”, he comments on this letter in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, under the alphabetical entry “Infinite” (p.78; French edition, p. 112), where “nonconcentric” is clearly stated.

⁶ There is a gap in the Web Deleuze French transcript, hence in the translation, corresponding to 30 minutes of the session (approximately from minutes 101 to 131).



Anne Querrien [*Her comments are only partly audible*]: ... are inequalities of distance implies each time making a (...) you said earlier that (...) So, we reach the same types of aberrations (...)

Deleuze: Completely, completely, completely, in all aspects there, this text, euh, which seems to refer to something else entirely, refers, it seems to me, to the status then of... of mode to a point... yes, it isn't even through a simple integration that... No, no, you're right...

Querrien: [*Inaudible*]

Deleuze: At the extreme, this would be... in mathematics through a series of so-called local integrations, one has to, euh...

Querrien: [*Inaudible*]

Deleuze: Eh? Me neither, then. [*Laughter*]... Yeah. So, understand, in fact, "sum of inequalities of distance," "every essence and degree of power of action," "each degree of power of action is a difference," "difference between a minimum and a maximum," henceforth, everything comes together quite well: you have essence, degree of power of action, in itself encompassed between two thresholds, and that goes on to infinity, because if you make the abstraction, if you abstract this threshold, this threshold itself is a difference between two thresholds, etc., to infinity. So, it's quite astonishing how... you aren't only a sum of relations, you are, in fact, a sum of, of differences between relations. This is a very strange conception. So, fine, then... You are a degree of eternal power of action, but degree of power of action signifies difference, difference between a maximum and a minimum.

Second belonging of essence: affection realizes your power of action at each moment, that is, between the two limits, between the maximum and the minimum. [*Pause*] Third... And in this sense, in whatever way it realizes your power of action or your essence, affection is as perfect as it can be, it realizes the power of action in such a way that you cannot say: "there is something that isn't realized." [*Pause*] In any event, it realizes it.

Third dimension, yes, but in this very way, the affection that realizes your power of action does not realize it without "reducing or increasing your power of action" within the frame of this threshold, of this maximum and this minimum, sometimes by increasing your power of action, sometimes by decreasing it.

All these ideas that first seemed to be contradicting each other are gathered into a... into a system with an absolute, an absolute rigor. As a result, you do not stop here being a kind of vibration, a vibration with a maximum amplitude, a minimum amplitude, and what are the two extreme moments? What corresponds then in duration to the maximum and the minimum? To the minimum, it's death; to the minimum, it's death. Death is the affection that realizes at the final instant of your duration, that realizes your power of action by reducing it to the maximum. [*Pause*]

The opposite of death is what, the opposite of death? It's joy. It's not birth, since at birth, you are born at the lowest of yourself necessarily; you cannot be worse, right? Euh... So, joy, but a special joy that Spinoza will call with a special name: "beatitude," beatitude that at the same time will be the experience of eternity according to Spinoza. Here, you realize your power of action in such a way that this power of action increases to the maximum. That is, you can translate "to the maximum", well, suddenly, if I come back to "belonging of", I would say: under all relations simultaneously. [*Pause*]

Good... There we are, there we are... But it's necessary that this be quite clear. Do you want to take a bit of a break? Eh? And then, you will say: if there are some unclear things, I'd be happy if we... Because at the point we've reached, here's the point that I've reached: it's good, we are... This is like a theoretical outline. How are we going to manage with it concretely? What are we going to do? That is, based on this, what is ethical life? Fine, so let's take a short break. [*Pause in the BNF recording*]



Deleuze: [*Noise of everyone speaking*] You'll have to lower it down, eh?... [*Noise of chairs, of discussions*] I still see some of you talking there, eh? Fine, then... [*The students keep talking; Georges Comtesse says that he wants to ask a question*] Yeh!... Yeh, but speak up since they are quieting down, eh?

Comtesse: At the very end, at the very end of what you said today, you spoke, you spoke of the ... Of beatitude, [Deleuze: yeah] or, what Spinoza calls in the third book ... In the ... last book of *Ethics*, the glory ... [Deleuze: yeah] or freedom. Now, precisely, beatitude is, in a way, a limit for all the variations of power of action which are determined by affects as the realization of instantaneous affections. But can we say, in this case, since both affects and affections are affects and affections of finite modes as affections of nature, says Spinoza, can we say that the limit of variations in power of action, that is, beatitude, glory or freedom, still belongs to the regime of affects? In other words, can we say that beatitude is literally beyond joy and sadness, in other words, without affect?

Deleuze: Well, I don't know. I do see what I would say to this question and what, I think, Spinoza says and, uh, I feel that the answer is not, is not sufficient in the sense that we can always, uh, try to... In my opinion, Spinoza would say -- and here, I have not yet started this point -- Spinoza would say, on this ... In fact, he distinguishes ... You see, in this system that I tried to present as a system of belonging of essence, things branch out a lot because the dimension of affect, we have seen that it has two poles: affects' decrease in power of action-sadness, and affects' increase in power of action-joy. But, in fact, it does not have just two dimensions, the dimension of affects; it has three of them, it has three. And I think that gives an answer to the question that Comtesse has just asked. Because [for] the affects of decrease or increase in power of action, there Spinoza is formal: these are passions. They're passions. What does it mean? It means: "passion", as in all the terminology of the seventeenth century, is a very simple term which is opposed to "action"; passion is the opposite of action.

So, understand it literally: the affects of increased power of action, that is, of joys, are no less passions than forms of sadness, or decreases. The distinction, at this level, the joy-sadness distinction, is a distinction within passion. There are joyful passions, and there are sad passions. Fine, those are the two kinds of passion affects. Why are even joys passions? Spinoza is very firm: he says -- this is exactly to the letter of Spinoza's text -- he tells us: "It is obligatory because my power to act can increase; although it may increase, I am still not its master. I am not yet master of this power to act." So, increasing power to act tends towards the possession of power of action, but it doesn't yet possess power of action. So, this is a passion.

Now he adds, and this is going to be the third dimension of affect, he adds: "On the other hand, if you suppose" -- but then how can we suppose? This will throw us into a problem, that. -- "If you suppose [there is] someone who is in possession of the power to act, we can no longer say, literally," -- that will cause all kinds of problems for us. -- "Strictly speaking, we can no longer say that his power to act increases: he possesses it to the maximum. Of someone who possesses the maximum power to act, he has exited from the regime of passion; he no longer suffers." Comtesse's question is exactly: "Should we say that he still has affects?" Spinoza seems formal to me: yes, he still has affects, but these affects are no longer passions. He has active affects. What does "active affects" mean? These active affects can only be joys. There we are.

So, you see, the answer is complex. Whoever is in possession of his power to act has affects. Second proposition: these affects are necessarily joys, since they arise from the power to act. Third proposition: these joys are therefore not of the same type as the joys of increasing the power to act, which were passions, eh? There is, therefore, only one kind of sadness, decrease in the power to act, but there are two kinds of affect of joy: passion joys and action



joys. Passion joys are all those which are defined by an increase in the power to act, action joys are all those which are defined as resulting from a possessed power to act.

You will say to me: what does that mean in concrete terms? What are these active joys that are affects? In what way are they affects? Well, these are the affects under which the essence, that is, me or you, I affect myself, it is like an affection of self by self. Affection is passion or passive as long as it is caused by something other than me. I would then say that affect is a passion. When it is I who affects myself, affect is an action.

You will notice that, for those who know Kant, for example, which is unrelated to Spinoza, in Kant's terminology, you find something like this when he very strangely defines, he says: "space is the form in which external objects affect me". And that's how he defines space; it's very curious. He will say: "Space is the form in which external objects affect me. But time is the form in which I affect myself." And Kant is developing a very curious theory of affection of self by self. Fine.

For Spinoza, then, uh ... quite differently, this is not the same problem at all; there are also passive affects and active affects. Passive affects are passions; active affects are the affects by which I affect myself. Why is it in beatitude that I always affect myself? It's because, at that moment -- we'll see this; these are the most complicated things about that which Spinoza calls immortality -- but at the level of beatitude, when I have my power to act, it is that at that moment, I have composed my relations so much, I have acquired such a power of composition of relations there, that I have composed my relations with the whole world, with God himself -- what is most difficult here, that, uh ... this is the final stage, uh ... -- that nothing any longer comes from outside. What reaches me from outside is also what reaches me from inside, and vice versa. There is no longer any difference between the outside and the inside. So, at that moment, all of the affects are active.

And in fact, the third kind of knowledge, which is eternity or beatitude, uh ... how will Spinoza define it? He will define it as the coexistence -- but the inner coexistence -- of three ideas: the idea of me, the idea of the world, and the idea of God. God, the world and me, eh, what more do you want? Euh ... but in such a way that when God affects me, it is I who affect myself through God. Euh ... When I love God ... And conversely, when I love God, it is God who loves himself through me, etc., etc. There is a kind of interiority of the three elements of beatitude (God, the world and me). As a result, all the affects are active. Fine, but this we will see; it is, it belongs to part of a very special experience.

But as for the question posed by Comtesse, I would answer, I would stick to the letter, there, of Spinozist terminology, namely: euh, there is only one kind of sadness, but there are two very different kinds of joys. And you, what would you say? The same thing, right?

Comtesse: Yeh, beatitude consists in affecting oneself by oneself.

Deleuze: That's it. But on the other hand, whatever affects me, it's me that affects me. So, uh ... we are not risking anything there, but precisely that involves something that we have not yet talked about: what is this story ... So, there is no longer only -- we thought we were done: decrease, increase in power to act, it was ... it was uh ... relatively clear; we understood, and lo and behold, there is still something else, namely power of action fully possessed. What is this, this fully possessed power of action? How do we reach this? In such a way that there are active affects. It gets complicated. As a result, my sphere of belonging, you see, gets increasingly richer. Uh, there we are. Are there any other ...? Yes?

A woman participant: [*Comments nearly inaudible*] Isn't there an idea of crisis?

Deleuze: What? An idea of what? [*She repeats*] Crisis! Of crisis? [The participant: Yes] Crisis of what?

The participant: [*Comments nearly inaudible*]



Deleuze: Ah... Euh... I don't understand. With this figure, you are saying, with this figure, everything is the same? [*The "figure" seems to be a reference to the drawing of circles*] [Answer: No] So everything is not the same?

The participant: [*Comments nearly inaudible*]

Deleuze: This is annoying; I cannot even hear; it's, it's not that I don't understand; I just cannot hear, so it's even simpler. Euh... Did someone hear and could you ... euh [*Whisperings in the room*]

Deleuze: This figure ... This figure ... What is said on this figure? Ah, what bothers me about this figure -- I'll tell you; I don't know if this answers you -- what bothers me about this figure is that I have the impression that this is an example which is suitable for several very different levels of Spinoza's thought. It is suitable ... I mean, it is suitable both for the aggregate of all essences, euh ... for all, the aggregate of all essences, and the same figure is also suitable for the analysis of each essence. It's very complicated, I can say that; it's my portrait of mine or of you, or I can say [that] it's all of the portraits of essence. The geometrical problem posed, Anne, it seems to me that it has several aspects. It has an aspect by which it is an infinity which is not infinite through the multitude of parts, that is, a non-numerical infinity. This is the first paradox.

Uh, there are even three paradoxes, it seems to me, and which refer, it seems to me, to three very different themes of Spinozism. And he groups them in this example: it is an infinity which is not constant since it can be double or triple, eh. So, it's an unequal infinity. Second, it is an infinity that has limits since there is a maximum and a minimum. And third, it is a non-numeric infinity.

Anne Querrien: The sum is not finite.

Deleuze: Not only.

Querrien: What?

Deleuze: Not only.

Querrien: But it's, it's the sum. [*Comments nearly inaudible*]

Deleuze: Not only.

Querrien: But the distances, they are, euh...

Deleuze: They aren't finite either, the distance. Each distance is finite.

Querrien: Yes, ok. [*Comments nearly inaudible*] This unequal infinity, is the... [*Comments nearly inaudible*] infinite... [*Comments nearly inaudible*] We can make the operation of cutting...

Deleuze: Okay, okay, okay. And this infinity ... This infinity has a second characteristic. The space between the two circles is limited. Moreover, it is this limit which makes it possible to define the conditions of this infinity. Moreover, this limited space includes an infinity of distances. So, it's an infinity that cannot be said to be unlimited. It is an infinity which refers to boundary conditions.

Third, it is a non-numeric infinity since it is not infinite through the multitude of its parts. Exactly like ... Think, for example, there he says something very strong. He prefers geometry rather than algebra, Spinoza; he does not believe in the future of algebra. But he strongly believes in geometry. Uh ... if you take the ... if you take, for example, an irrational magnitude (*grandeur*) ... Well uh, it's the same case, it's very similar. It's a much simpler case, "an irrational magnitude". There you have themes of infinity properly ... which we will call properly geometric infinities, because infinity does not depend on a number. It is not because there is a number of parts, even greater than any given number, that it is infinite. It is not infinite by the multitude of parts. And all I wanted to say is that these three characteristics, it seems to me, are completely consistent, but refer to three different situations in Spinozism.

Querrien: [*Comments nearly inaudible*]

Deleuze: Yes, yes, but precisely, this is a situation of passage.



Querrien: [*Comments nearly inaudible*] [Deleuze: Yes] [*Comments nearly inaudible*]

Deleuze: You think that... Here, one must force him, eh, Spinoza, because...

Querrien: [*Comments nearly inaudible*] [Deleuze: Yes] [*Comments nearly inaudible*] [Deleuze: Yes] [*Comments nearly inaudible*] [Deleuze: Yes, agreed, on that, I agree. Yes, yes, yes] [*Comments nearly inaudible*]

Deleuze: Yes, but it's... it's just this that I meant by saying that it's not a global integration. It can only be a succession of local integrations there that make, euh... [*He does not complete this*]

Okay, so, listen, huh, listen. This is the point we've reached; I will continue with that ... and then we must finish. Uh! And to come back ... so ... Here we are exactly in the situation, well, uh ... All that, I suppose that you understood it, but here we are, we tell ourselves and ... although I may say all the time, "look out, it's not theory", it nonetheless remains theory.

It's: so, what do we do in life? Well, then, we are born, well, we are born, but again we are not born with a science of relations, we have no science of relations. What will Spinoza even tell us about this? He is going to tell us something very striking, namely what? When you are born, well, you are at the mercy uh ... Fortunately you have parents, right, who protect you a bit. We are at the mercy of encounters. What is it ... There is even a state, there is even a well-known state which can be defined like this: each being is at the mercy there of encounters. This is called the state of nature. In a state of nature, you are at the mercy of encounters. So, you can still live with the idea ... Oh, my God, am I going to encounter, uh ... something that ... whose relations may or may not compose with mine? Notice that, already, this is agony. And the agony is, "oh la la, what's going to happen to me today, huh? This is starting off badly, it's starting off badly". Well. Perpetual risk ...

Because, if you take a precise body, a precise body, within the immensity of nature, a precise body within the immensity of nature all alone, all naked, admire ... or rather don't, uh ... deplore this, because there are obviously fewer bodies whose relations are composed with one's own than bodies whose relations do not agree with one's own. So, this is not ... We are not winners in this whole story of the *Ethics*, we are -- how to say it? -- as other authors would say, "we are thrown into the world". But the state of nature, that means precisely being thrown into the world, namely, uh ... being in those kinds of relations, we tell ourselves ... we are ... we live at the mercy of encounters. You understand, I see something; I tell myself, that may be good to eat, but I say to myself: "oh ... all this may be arsenic." So, from the moment in which we are not, in which we do not have a science of relations and of their combinations, how are we going to manage? This is where Spinoza thinks that the *Ethics* really says something. We will have to ... And, and how are we ... We can then imagine the life problems of modes of existence. I mean, in what way? Well, it's obvious; I think he offers us an outline which is extremely practical.

You perhaps remember that I had specifically invoked Rousseau, [*during the session of 9 December 1980*], as different as he may be from Spinoza, when I told you, well yes! There is a first aspect ... in the end, the problem is this: [*The Web Deleuze translation begins again here*] in contrast to many thinkers of his time, he is one of the philosophers who have said most profoundly: you know, you are born neither reasonable, nor free, nor intelligent. If you become reasonable, if you become free, etc., it is a matter of a becoming. But there is no author who is more indifferent to the problem of freedom as belonging to the nature of man. He thinks that nothing at all belongs to the nature of man. He is an author who thinks everything, really, in terms of becoming. So then, his question is: good, okay, without doubt, what does this mean, becoming reasonable? What does it mean, becoming free, once we admit that we are not? We are not born free; we are not born reasonable. We are born completely at the mercy of encounters, that is, we are born completely at the mercy of decompositions. And



you must understand that this is normal in Spinoza. The authors who think that we are free by nature are the ones who create a certain idea out of nature. I believe we can only say we are “free by nature” if we don't conceive it as a substance, [*Interruption in the BNF recording; Web Deleuze continues*] that is as a relatively independent thing.

If you conceive yourself as a collection of relations, and not at all as a substance, the proposition I am free is plainly devoid of sense. It is not at all that I favor the opposite: it makes no sense, freedom or no freedom. On the other hand, perhaps the question has a sense: How to become free? Similarly, [*Return to the BNF recording*] to be reasonable can be understood if I am defined as a reasonable animal from the point of view of substance; this is the Aristotelian definition which implies that I am a substance. If I am an aggregate of relations, perhaps they are rational relations, but to say that this is reasonable is plainly devoid of all sense. So, if reasonable, free, etc., have a meaning, make any sense at all, it could only be the result of a becoming. Already this is very new. And how [is this possible], once we've said “to be thrown into the world” is precisely to risk at every instant encountering something which decomposes me?

Hence, I was saying: there is a first aspect of reason. The first effort of reason, I believe, is very odd in Spinoza; it is a kind of extraordinarily exploratory effort. And there you can't say that it is insufficient because he encounters concrete explorations. It is all a kind of apprenticeship in order to evaluate or have signs; I did indeed say signs, to organize or to find signs that tell me a little of which relations agree with me and which relations don't agree with me. It is necessary to try; it is necessary to experiment, to try... -- And my own experience, I cannot really transmit it because perhaps it doesn't agree with another's -- notably, it is like a kind of exploration so that each of us discovers at the same time what he likes and what he supports.

Good, it is a little like this, if you will, that we live when we take medication. When you take medications, you must find your doses, your way there. You have to make selections, and the prescription of the doctor will not be sufficient. It will come in handy. But, there is something which goes beyond a simple science, or a simple application of science. You have to find your thing. It is like an apprenticeship in music, finding at the same time what agrees with you, what you are capable of doing.

All this is already what Spinoza will call – and I believe it will be the first aspect of reason -- a kind of double aspect, selecting-composing, to select, selection, composition, that is, to manage to find by experimenting those relations with which mine compose, and drawing from them the consequences, that is: at any cost, flee as best as I can -- I can't totally, I can't completely -- but flee as much, to the maximum, the encounter with relations which don't agree with me, and compose to the maximum, be composed to the maximum with the relations which agree with me. Here again, this seems, this seems, I would say, this is the first determination of freedom or of reason. So Rousseau's theme, what he himself called “the materialism of the wise man”, you remember when I spoke a little of this idea of Rousseau's, very, very curious, a kind of art of composing situations, this art of composing situations that consists above all of withdrawing from situations which don't agree with you, of entering into situations which agree with you, and all that. This is the first effort of reason.

But, on this point, I insist, at this level, we have no previous knowledge, we have no preexisting knowledge, we don't have scientific knowledge. It is not about science. It is really about living experimentation; it is about apprenticeship. And I never stop deceiving myself, I never stop jumping into situations which don't agree with me, I never stop etc., etc. And little by little a kind of beginning of wisdom gets outlined, which comes down to what? Which comes down to what Spinoza was saying from the beginning, but the fact that each might know a little, has a vague idea of what he is capable of, once it's said that the incapable people



are not incapable people, these are people who rush into what they are not capable of, and then who drop what they are capable of.

But, Spinoza asks: What can a body do, what can a body do? It doesn't mean a body in general; it means: yours, mine, euh, of what are you capable? It is this kind of experimentation with capacity, trying to experiment with capacity, and at the same time constructing it, at the same time that one experiments with it. This is very, very concrete. And we don't have prior knowledge. I don't know, euh, fine... There are domains of what am I capable. Who can say, here, I'm not... euh, in both directions, there are people who are too modest who say: "Ah, I am not capable of it" in the sense of "I will not succeed", and then there are the people too sure of themselves, who say: "Ha that, such a nasty thing, I am not capable of it", but they could perhaps do it, we don't know. No one knows what he is capable of.

I think that, for example, the things in the *belle époque* of existentialism, as it was nonetheless very much connected to the end of the war, to the concentration camps etc., there was a theme that [Karl] Jaspers had launched, and which was a theme, it seems to me, which was very profound: he defined, distinguished two types of situation, limit situations, what he called limit situations, and simple everyday situations. He said: limit situations could befall us at any time. These are precisely situations which we can't anticipate, we cannot anticipate them. If you will, someone... someone who hasn't been tortured, and what does that mean to say... He has no idea if he will hold out or if he won't hold out. If need be, the most courageous guys collapse, and the guys that one would have thought of, in some way, as pathetic, they hold out marvelously. One doesn't know.

The limit situation is really a situation such as this, I learn at the last moment, sometimes too late, what I was capable of, what I was capable of, for better or worse. But we can't say in advance. It is too easy to say: "Oh that, me, I would never do it!" And inversely. So, we all pass our time doing things like that, and then... But what we are really capable of, we pass right by it. So many people die without knowing and will never know what they were capable of, once again, within what's awful as within what's very good. Fine, these are surprises; it is necessary to surprise oneself. We tell ourselves: "Oh look! I would never have believed that I would have done it." People, you know, have great skill (*beaucoup d'art*), they have great skill.

Generally, we always speak of the manner – here, this is some very complicated for Spinozism -- because we always speak of the manner in which people destroy themselves, but I believe that, finally, it's... it's... it is according to speeches too. There are people who destroy themselves, it's... it's, it's sad, it is always a very sad spectacle, and then it is annoying! They, but they also have a kind of prudence, the cunning of people! This is funny, the cunning of people because there are a lot of people who destroy themselves over points which, precisely, they themselves have no need of. So, obviously, they are losers because in the end, you understand, yeah, I suppose, fine: at the limit, someone who truly renders himself impotent, this is someone who doesn't really have the desire to do it, it's not their thing. In other words, for him, this is a very secondary relation; making a move (*bouger*) is a very secondary relation. Good, he manages to put himself in states where he can no longer move, in a certain way he has what he wanted since he set upon a secondary relation.

It is very different when someone destroys himself in what he himself experiences as being his principal constituent relations. If running doesn't interest you a lot, you can always smoke a lot, hey. [Laughter] So, we will say to you: "You are destroying yourself." Well, then, fine, I myself would be satisfied to settle down on a small chair, eh? On the other hand, it would be better like this, I would have peace, very well! So, I'm destroying myself? No, not really. Obviously, I am destroying myself because if I can no longer move at all, in the end, I risk dying of it, yes, because of the problems of another sort that I would not have foreseen. Oh yes, this is annoying. But you see, even in the, euh, experiments, even in the things, there



is self-destruction, there are tricks which imply a whole calculus of relations. One can very well destroy oneself over a point which is not essential for the person himself and try to keep the essential. Oh, all this is complex. It is complex. People are sly, you don't know to what extent you are all sly, everyone, everybody. So, fine, there we are.

I am calling reason, or effort of reason, *conatus* of reason, effort of reason, this tendency to select, to choose relations, this apprenticeship of the relations which are composed or which are not composed. And I am indeed saying: as you have no prior science, you understand what Spinoza means: science, you are perhaps going to arrive at a science of relations. But what will it be? A strange sort of science. It won't be a theoretical science. The theory will perhaps be a part, but it will be a science in the sense of vital science. You will perhaps reach a science of relations, but you won't absolutely have it. For the moment, you can only guide yourself by signs. And the sign – we've seen this, and there will be a moment the next time to return to look at this more closely – this is a crazily ambiguous language. The language of signs is the language of the equivocal, of equivocality. A sign always has several senses. So, what doesn't suit me under one relation, is suitable for me under another relation. Ah, that one doesn't suit me, but this one does. This is the language, and it's here that Spinoza will always define the sign, including within it all sorts of signs through "equivocality." The sign is the equivocal expression: I manage as best I can.

And the signs are what? It is the signs of language which are fundamentally ambiguous, according to Spinoza. On one hand, they are the signs of language, and on the other hand, the signs of God, prophetic signs, and on the other hand, the signs of society: rewards, punishments, etc. Prophetic signs, social signs, linguistic signs are the three great types of signs. And each time, this is the language of equivocality.

And, we are forced to start off from there, to pass through there, in order to construct our apprenticeship, that is, what? In order to select our joys, eliminate our forms of sadness, that is, to make headway in a kind of apprehension of the relations which are composed, to reach an approximate knowledge (*connaissance*) through signs of the relations which agree with me and of the relations which don't agree with me.

So, the first effort of reason, you see, is exactly to do everything in my power (*pouvoir*) in order to increase my power of acting, that is, in order to experience passive joys, in order to experience of the passion joys. The passion joys are what increase my power of acting as a function of still equivocal signs in which I don't possess this power of action (*puissance*). Do you see?

So, the question which I have come to is: so fine, supposing that this is how it is, that there is this moment of long apprenticeship, how can I pass, how can this long apprenticeship lead me to a more certain stage, where I am more certain of myself, that is, where I become reasonable, where I become free? How can this be done? We will see next time. [145 :25]⁷

⁷ Note: Despite missing the opening 13 minutes and a 30-minute gap in the second half of the session, the Web Deleuze transcript provides the basis for Simon Duffy's excellent translation for Web Deleuze. The augmented transcript here is based on the transcription work by the Paris 8 team, Denis Lemarchand (Parts 1 and 2) and Raphaëlle Morel d'Arleux (Part 3), serving as the means to augment the Duffy translation. All revision work took place in March 2020.