

Gilles Deleuze – The Deleuze Seminars (deleuze.cla.purdue.edu), summaries: Charles J. Stivale

Summary Descriptions, Spinoza. Velocities of Thought, 1980-1981

“Spinoza: The Velocities of Thought” is a 15-lecture seminar given from November 1980 to March 1981. There is some uncertainty regarding the seminar’s initial date since the extant recordings start only with the December 2, 1980, session. In this seminar, Deleuze revisits his examination of Baruch Spinoza’s philosophy, having previously published one books on Spinoza: *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (*Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*, 1968), and as he presents the seminar, he is in the process of revising his 1970 guide to Spinoza as *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (*Spinoza – Philosophie pratique*, 1970, 2nd ed. 1981). Given that the majority of these lectures correspond to the latter title’s publication, these sessions were clearly informed by this new editorial preparation. On The Deleuze Seminars site, we provide as the opening session Deleuze’s discussion of the theme of “continuous variation” and Spinoza from February 2, 1978.

Session 0, January 24, 1978 – Affect and Idea

Deleuze pauses in his discussion of continuous variation (during the development of *A Thousand Plateaus*) to bring up a related question: what is an idea and affect in Spinoza? Given Spinoza’s important place in *A Thousand Plateaus* (cf. plateau 10 on becoming), this shift does not entirely constitute a detour. Referring primarily to books II and III of the *Ethics*, Deleuze’s approach is deliberately terminological, first distinguishing between the Latin terms *affectio* and *affectus*, “affect” corresponding to the latter, *affectus*, whereas “affection” (*sentiment*, feeling) corresponding to *affectio*. As for “idea”, for Spinoza this is simply a mode of thought which represents something, the objective reality, while in contrast, affect is any mode of thought which does not represent anything, non-representational, but with a primacy of the idea over the affect. Whereas our everyday life is not made up solely of ideas succeeding each other, a regime of continuous variation operates perpetually, a force of existing (*vis existendi*) or power (*puissance*) of action (*potentia agendi*). This continuous variation for Spinoza means to exist, one’s power of acting increasing or decreasing, rendering more or less joy depending on the extent to which the power of acting is inhibited or enhanced, with continuous variation occurring in this ongoing process of increase-diminition. In terms of ideas, one never ceases passing from one degree of perfection to another, a melodic line of continuous variation defining affect as it connects to ideas as well as in its distinction from ideas. For Spinoza, there are three sorts of ideas: affection (*affectio*) ideas (opposed to *affectus*); notions; and essence ideas, each corresponding to a different level of knowledge. The affection-idea is a first kind of knowledge (*connaissance*), the lowest kind, i.e. knowledge of things only by their effects, i.e., “inadequate ideas” or representations of effects without their causes. Deleuze shifts toward Spinoza’s next level, ethics as a problem of power (*puissance*), not duty, and of notion-ideas where escape occurs from the world of passions, no longer the mixture of two bodies, but rather the internal agreement or disagreement of the characteristic relations of the two bodies. By striving to experience affects of joy as a springboard that makes us form the idea of what is common, joyful, to the affecting body and the affected body, leading to greater intelligence. At the third level, there are singular essences, the essence-idea as passage to the world of essence, knowledge

of one's singular essence and God's singular essence and the singular essence of things. And in this third kind of knowledge, all bodies agree with each other in a world of pure intensities, a mystical point of beatitude or active affect, or auto-affect.

Session 1, November 25, 1980

With no transcripts or recordings preceding this session, its brevity suggests that even this one is not complete. Deleuze begins by discussing the extent to which seventeenth-century philosophy seems compromised with God and argues that philosophy seized on the theme of God to free concepts from prior constraints and that Spinoza was the philosopher who went too far and too fast, for whom God serves as a philosophical concept. In contrast to Leibniz's vision of divine understanding dominated by the calculation of chess, Deleuze notes the danger arose for Spinoza in treating God as immanent (versus emanative) cause, i.e., no longer distinguishing cause and effect. Deleuze follows Spinoza's *Ethics* and how he frees the immanent cause of all subordination to the causal process, establishing a veritable plane of immanence for the great causal sequence. Given that this fixed plane implied a certain mode of life, Spinoza was damned and isolated and forced to endure an illiterate comprehension of his works. Deleuze concludes by describing the geometric methods in the *Ethics*, its interconnections of definitions, axioms, theorems and corollaries in continuous connections to concepts.

Session 2, December 2, 1980

Emphasizing Spinoza's "lightning thought" in the *Ethics* (especially book V), Deleuze indicates that while the speeds in the early books are relative, the use of "scolies" alongside propositions, proofs and corollaries also introduces discontinuous affects in contrast to the continuous chain of propositions. Then, Deleuze insists that to discuss Spinoza, one should understand where Spinoza starts, not with Being as Being, or with God, but with the *attributes*, i.e., the constituent elements of substance. Locating Spinoza's philosophical "cries" in the *scolies*, notably "we do not know what the body can do", Deleuze emphasizes that Spinoza discussed the soul and its relation to the body, but then returning to the basic ontological proposition of Being, Deleuze states that, first, our only two known attributes are of God, namely extension and thought, and second, "I" am not substance in the same sense as God is substance, "substance" hence being an equivocal term. Yet, given Spinoza's implication that what there is other than Being *qua* Being is that of which Being is expressed, *l'étant* or the existent (be-ing), which is not substance, Spinoza's world emerges as anti-hierarchical: all be-ings as equal. Moreover, we are *modes* or manners of being within the immanence of all manners of being, and consequently, I am two through the attributes I implicate, but I am one through the substance that envelops me. In this light, Deleuze distinguishes between an ethics and a morality, the latter being inseparable from a hierarchy of values, whereas since no morality exists for "everything being equal", it corresponds to an ethics. In this, philosophy's task as ethics is to reach the knowledge of the body and consciousness of the soul which escapes our natural knowledge and consciousness. Hence, Spinoza's book is *Ethics*, not *Ontology*, and Deleuze shifts the focus to consider the question of morality implying the position of something superior to Being by discussing the question of evil from an historical perspective. He first traces the tradition of philosophers as blissful optimists as well as evil's two forms, misfortune and wickedness, also drawing on Nicholas of Cusa, who introduces the philosopher as idiot, i.e., without knowledge and

possessing only the faculty of reason, a natural light. Then tracing this through Descartes's *cogito*, Deleuze considers the theme of the idiot at its climax in Russia with Dostoyevsky. After returning to the Greeks' view, for whom evil is necessarily nothing, Deleuze considers Spinoza who also says "evil is nothing", the wicked man as someone in error, and Deleuze refers to Spinoza's treatment of the question of evil in letters with William de Bleynergh, thereby presenting a different viewpoint than the path of "Good is the One above Being". Spinoza's view is that while there's neither good nor evil, there is some good and some bad, hence the link between ethics and ontology, ethics as speed taking us quickly to ontology, i.e., to life within Being, implying an ethical difference between the distinction with good-evil. For Spinoza, from the ethical point of view, the wicked is not one who judges badly (as is the case for morality) but is one who is false, not in judgement, but as the inadequacy of the idea of the thing, i.e., of the thing's manner of being in itself, as authentic. Deleuze maintains that this perspective is opposite the judgment system, more akin to a world of "tests" (*épreuves*) as in assaying a coin, enduring the acid as authentic gold. So, Deleuze's task is to examine the authentic-inauthentic distinction in contrast to the distinction of good-evil.

Session 3, December 9, 1980

With the plan of study as Spinoza's project of a pure ontology as an *Ethics*, not morality, Deleuze reviews the steps outlined in the previous session: an ontology presenting itself as the position of an absolutely infinite and unique substance, Being insofar as it is Being, with be-ings, existents, as manners of being or *modes*, hence *ethology* as a practical science of existent manners, in contrast to morality which recalls us to essence by means of values, as the enterprise of judging. Through criteria for morality as distinct from ethics, Deleuze links ethics to ontology since existents are within Being as the world of immanence, and deepens the distinction of each kind of discourse in terms of ontology, the system of judgment and Spinoza's immanent discourse of ethics. Deleuze refers to "quantitative individuation" developed by nineteenth-century German philosophers (Fichte, Schelling) basing the quantity on what be-ings can do just as the ethicist, i.e., Spinoza, defines man, body and soul. In contrast, moralists define a be-ing by its essence, "by right" (*en droit*). Deleuze defines be-ing, all existents, as linked to a quantitative scale via that of which they are capable, i.e., more or less *puissance*, "power of action". Referring to Nicholas of Cusa, Deleuze names the term derived from Latin, *possest*, indicating what a thing can do in action. To clarify the thing's intensity replacing its essence, Deleuze provides an historical framework for the theory of natural right (that which conforms to essence), through the traditions of Antiquity and Christianity, with four basic propositions in each tradition. Summing up, Deleuze states that whereas the first four propositions he outlined form the basis of the juridical development of a moral world vision, the latter four (from Hobbes) provide the juridical conception of ethics, and Spinoza takes up this conception of natural right. As for the qualitative polarity of modes of existence, manners of being, each existent is a degree on a scale of power of action for Spinoza. Hence, the "strong man" for Spinoza is one whose mode of existence stands in contrast to modes of existence that he calls "the slave" or "the impotent" as well as "the tyrant". Deleuze focuses on linking the two aspects: whereas the first proposition refers to the power of action-act, the second proposition refers to that which realizes the power of action, i.e., affect, with passion derived from sadness and joy as two basic affects. Both sadness and joy realize a power of action; if sadness does so, then one's power diminishes,

whereas if joy does so, then one's power increases, a theory that Spinoza develops on several levels.

Session 4, December 16, 1980

Deleuze continues to develop question of ontology as regards morality versus ethics and Spinoza's fundamental aspect of the power of action, while also answering several students' questions, notably two questions from Georges Comtesse. Deleuze then points out a question implicit in the seminar's focus on ontology: in what sense must ontology entail a political philosophy? Deleuze describes briefly the importance of Spinoza's political writings within the context of Dutch politics, and to Comtesse's contention that Spinoza necessarily developed the problem of the State, Deleuze argues that this is a question of instituting a political hierarchy, describing Spinoza's distinction from Hobbes, notably political relation as one of obedience and not of exercising power of action. Returning to Spinoza's ontology, Deleuze provides background regarding the concept of "equal Being" in relation to hierarchy, then announces his focus on how the problem of evil arises as focal topic from the point of view of ethics. Suggesting two unreconciled ways of addressing this problem -- on one hand, the view "evil is nothing"; on the other hand, if there is no evil but only Being, then Good is also nothing -- Deleuze addresses the status of evil relying on Spinoza's letters (four each) exchanged with Willem van Blyenbergh. For Spinoza, the problem of evil, Deleuze argues, is at the heart of the *Ethics*, and yet is not considered in the *Ethics*. Deleuze examines the exchange of letters in detail, his point being that one constantly puts oneself in impossible situations, hence, ethics is an art of action, of selecting at the level of each situation, but not as morality suggests, "acting for the best". Then Deleuze contrasts Spinoza's perspective on this point to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's, seeking resonance between the two authors. Turning to a second point on the status of evil, Deleuze outlines Blyenbergh's three objections to Spinoza's position: first, that vice and virtue would then be a matter of taste; second, all morality would become a matter of experience; third, crime may become a virtue for someone who finds it tasteful. Starting to explain their exchange, Deleuze shifts focus here, returning to Spinoza's distinctions on the problem of illness, with the session's recording ending abruptly before the end.

Session 5, January 6, 1981

Deleuze describes the ongoing work as research into the "status of modes" which constitute Spinoza's *Ethics*, i.e., of any "be-ing" (*étant*), or the aggregate of relations that constitutes a mode, a thing, hence "constitutive relations". These relations may occur between particles or molecules, relations of rest and motion, and Deleuze examines this term, "aggregate of relations" as constitutive relations belonging to "me", relations in constant processes of constitution and decomposition. Moreover, as Spinoza defines things, be-ings (*étants*) as modes, not as substances, he cannot define their unity substantially, so that unity is rather a system of multiple relations, with the "bad" acting to destroy my constitutive relations, the "good" attributed to things composing themselves in relations with mine. Deleuze then names two kinds of decomposition of relations: a ceaseless decomposition-circulation and a sudden decomposition-destruction (e.g., for poison). For Spinoza, we are packets of relations, and what realizes relations are more or less complex particles, i.e., relational supports, but in furnishing relative

terms for relations, each relation extends to infinity, while the terms are relative to a particular level of relation. With constitutive relations in ceaseless communication and ceaseless decomposition and then recomposition, (implying the body as a mode of extension, connected to a soul as a mode of thought), Deleuze sees this parallelism of soul and body, suggesting movement and rest within a body's extension correspond also to "perceptions" within the soul. After pointing to phenomena of resonance in Spinoza's thought (e.g., with Leibniz's theory of tiny perceptions), Deleuze shifts towards modes or manners of being as a matter of sensibility, occurring through molecular relations, about which Deleuze explores practical questions of what would health and illness be for a manner of being via a typology of cases (three in all). Finally, Deleuze returns to the Spinoza-Blyenbergh correspondence on the topic of good and evil, and Blyenbergh's two strong objections that Deleuze discusses in detail, with Spinoza's responses. However, to clarify Spinoza's replies, Deleuze proposes an additional concrete reorganization via three examples of evil in Spinoza's era -- theft, crime, and adultery -- that Spinoza offers in his letters to Blyenbergh. As for Blyenbergh's objection regarding the pure chaos for the calculus of relations, Spinoza will not yield on how good acts compose relations while bad acts decompose them, a distinction to which Deleuze will return.

Session 6, January 13, 1981

Given Deleuze's evident preparation for the Painting seminar, he opens the session on matters regarding Spinozism in relation to light in Dutch painting and other aspects of imagery. Then, returning to Spinoza versus Blyenbergh, Deleuze reviews Blyenbergh's two objections -- Spinoza's view of nature leads to nature conceived as chaos; from this particular point of view, vice and virtue ultimately correspond to a particular criterion of taste (that which is or is not agreeable to me). Spinoza's response is located in two texts that Deleuze examines in detail (as well as in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, pp. 35-40), one in a letter to Blyenbergh, the other in a scholium of the *Ethics*, Book IV, proposition 59. Deleuze outlines the two dimensions of the Spinozist method of analysis of action, but is interrupted by several questions leading away from his development (from Georges Comtesse, then Richard Pinhas), after which Deleuze summarizes one of Spinoza's theses from the *Theological-Political Treatise*, that God proceeds by expressions and never signs, with the language of signs as a false language, the language of expression as true. For Spinoza, the domain of signs or symbolic domain is of the order of commandment and obedience while the domain of knowledge (*connaissance*), of thought, is the domain of relation, i.e., univocal expressions. However, if one takes no account of one understanding or another, then God is expressed, and God's expression is absolutely adequate for God's being. An unnamed participant then intervenes (at about minute 93) professing to know nothing of Spinoza and yet voicing energetic objections, with Deleuze involved for the rest of the session in successive responses, a model of his careful analysis of and respect for the participant's remarks while remaining unyielding in terms of this presentation of Spinoza's thought (in fact, Deleuze describes the participant as "my own Blyenbergh"). When the participant accuses Deleuze of deforming Spinoza and of "objectivizing" the participant, Deleuze reacts more forcefully, but allows the participant to continue his objections at some length. For Deleuze, whatever the references, Spinoza discusses the composition of relations in the light of life, the process of composing of decomposing relations.

Session 7, January 20, 1981

Again addressing Spinoza's answers to Blyenbergh's two main objections, Deleuze reviews the criteria of the distinction of vice and virtue, indicating that the image of a thing associated with an action is an *affection* (Latin, *affectio*), i.e., the determination of my power of action (*puissance*) under a particular action and that, in any event, one is as perfect as one can be as a function of the affections of one's power of action. Deleuze points out that faced with Blyenbergh's response – that essence can only be measured through its duration, e.g., one becoming better or worse --, Spinoza stops the correspondence, with his response located in the *Ethics*, about which Spinoza must remain careful not to expose key aspects. Deleuze proposes to reconstitute Spinoza's answer, first regarding duration of which Spinoza is indeed aware and through which he distinguishes between affection (*affectus*) and affect (*affectio*). Deleuze likens Spinoza's concept of duration to Bergson's use of duration, every affection enveloping the passage through which we reach it, infinitely, and Deleuze calls this the decomposition of three dimensions of the essence which, first, belongs to itself under the form of eternity; then, second, affection belongs to essence under the form of instantaneity; and third, affect belongs to the essence under the form of duration. As for the passage (the basis for Spinoza's theory of affect), it consists of being an increase or decrease of a power of action, sadness derived from things whose relations do not agree with mine, while joy increases power in agreement with my relations. Suggesting that these perspectives raise problems for Spinoza regarding manners of living, Deleuze turns to concrete matters that distinguish morality – what one must do – and ethics, and he examines successive aspects of the dimensions of “belonging of essence”, resulting in our being a kind of vibration within this amplitude, the extremes of which are the minimum (death) and maximum (joy, or “beatitude”). To a question from Georges Comtesse whether one can consider beatitude as beyond joy and sadness, without affect, Deleuze says that Spinoza calls these affects “passions” and then develops Spinoza's distinctions between passive and active affects and his belief that at the level of beatitude, one composes relations with the world and with God as well as oneself, with no difference between outside and inside. After responding to a student's question, Deleuze returns to ethics, noting Spinoza's belief that each being is at the mercy of encounters, of the risk of decompositions, as the state of nature, for which the *Ethics* offers a practical outline. Hence, this first aspect of reason for Spinoza – selecting, experimenting with relations that compose with one's relations, avoiding those that do not – is an apprenticeship in finding signs alerting one to relations as well as to what one is capable of doing, without previous knowledge. The signs that one must find constitute an ambiguous language, one of equivocity, with the goal of increasing one's power of acting, to experience passive joys, and to reach a more certain stage of greater reason and freedom, a stage that Deleuze proposes to consider in the next session.

Session 8, January 27, 1981

Although Deleuze continues the discussion about the signs that arise in existence, he shifts midway through this session to material related to painting. Deleuze insists that for Spinoza, everything from birth separates us from innate ideas such that the conquest of what is innate is what mobilizes all lives. Deleuze also considers a modern problem that arises in Spinoza, a general semiology that Deleuze associates with Saussure as well as C.S. Peirce and about which

Spinoza offers three characteristics, each of which contains both an extreme dimension (a relation with God) and a daily dimension that Deleuze outlines. He associates this to what Spinoza calls the first kind of knowledge, i.e., life according to signs. Considering Spinoza a philosopher of light not concerning himself with shadow, Deleuze shifts toward contemporary painters who discover light (hence, toward material for the following seminar on painting), linking Spinoza to this enterprise of “thinking within light” through painting. After examining philosophical aspects corresponding to traits in 17th- and 18th-century painting, Deleuze points to the importance of the development of infinitesimal analysis and infinitesimal calculus in this era, and also emphasizes that the 18th-century problem of perspective must be linked to the 17th-century development of pure optical space. Deleuze then returns to the starting point regarding Spinoza’s desire to pull us from the world of equivocal signs toward a world of light, a world ultimately of univocal expressions, asking what the kinds of signs are. To break with them, one needs to see their genres, and Spinoza proposes three kinds of signs corresponding to the three preceding characteristics, that Deleuze outlines: the imprint of an external body on my body, imprint-signs, or an “indicative” sign; “imperative” signs which one reaches through the illusion of purposes (*finalités*), which distribute commands and forms of obedience; third, in a world where words are constantly and necessarily interpreted, are “interpretive” signs, to which Deleuze proposes to return in the next session.

Session 9, February 3, 1981

Addressing, on one hand, the world of signs, or state of affairs, in which I can only know myself through affections I experience, within darkness and confusion, Deleuze indicates three characteristics (variability, associativity, equivocality) and three kinds of signs (indicative, imperative, interpretive). As the goal is to arrive at a world of univocity, no longer with equivocal signs, but rather a world of univocal, luminous expressions, with certain rules set in advance, the question remains how to escape the confusion of the world of signs, the first effort of reason. After reviewing the three kinds of sign – perception (indicative), fictions based on final causes (imperative), abstraction (interpretations) --, Deleuze derives a fourth sign: while affections (*affectios*) are always the instantaneous cut, *affectus* or affect is the increase or decrease of power of action (*puissance*), i.e., the passage from one affection to another, hence the vector sign of joy or sadness, leading Deleuze to consider how vector signs might enable an escape from the world of signs. For Spinoza, to get out of the world of signs, one ceaselessly increases power of action through encounters with bodies that are suitable, but one also leaves the realm of passions, i.e. the simple perception of the external body’s effect on mine. Hence, the next step is Spinoza’s second effort of reason, a process of learning, i.e., organizing the encounter, examples of which Deleuze considers. At this level, one’s ideas are necessarily adequate, and they always result from active affects, i.e., expression of my power of action, hence a world of univocity. Spinoza calls the ideas of composition of relations “common notions”, with a tradition going back to the Stoics, “common” in the sense of a domain of knowledge that is united with life. Deleuze says that what’s most interesting are the least universal or the more precise common notions, e.g., between a body and my own, through which we raise ourselves toward the more universal, and where common notions express themselves between one and the sense in each body. However, a third step is needed to raise oneself from common notions to knowledge of singular essences of everything. For Spinoza, the former are

springboards to reach the latter, and with this point in mind, Deleuze summarizes Spinoza's distinction of three kinds of knowledge: first, the aggregate of affections and affects-passions resulting from it, i.e., the world of signs; second, the aggregate of univocal common notions and the active affects resulting from them; third, a knowledge or intuition of essences which, like the second kind, constitutes the world of univocity. Deleuze concludes with Spinoza's definition of a general idea of man, by the composed relations likely to suit all men, i.e., a composition of relations of all men that would be the ideal society, and Deleuze indicates that the status of these three dimensions will be the problem for the next session.

Session 10, February 10, 1981

After responding to a student's comment, Deleuze returns to the relation between ethics and ontology, particularly an ethical analysis of Spinoza's conception of the individual and individuation formed on three dimensions. Deleuze then addresses the distinction between simple and composed bodies which, for Spinoza, links to the whole of nature, composed of all bodies, to infinity. Declaring that the session will henceforth be very technical, a practical exercise to consider the simplest bodies, Deleuze considers these as composed solely as movement and rest, speed and slowness, while "composed bodies" are distinguished by other aspects, e.g. shape (*figure*) and magnitude (*grandeur*). Following Spinoza's text, Deleuze returns to the starting point: the composed body with its large number of parts, while simple bodies proceeding by infinities such that a particular infinity of simple bodies *has* shape and magnitude, more or less large. Clearly, such relations of infinities emerge from Spinoza as geometrist, and to provide background, Deleuze considers aspects of the Greek origins of mathematics, reaching the conclusion that the infinite appears to be geometric reality itself, and number is always subject to the discovery not only of magnitude, but of the infinite in magnitude. From responses to a question on mathematical distinctions, Deleuze proceeds to the theory of ratios in Euclid, then the Hindu-Arab mathematical tradition, then ideal number theory in Plato, the purpose of this development being to explain why simple bodies have no shapes or magnitudes because they proceed through infinities, i.e., through infinitely minute terms. Yet, as such terms correspond to expression as non-formed elements, with speed and slowness also as differentials, Deleuze insists on the relational character of infinity and infinite sets, and then points to "the strangest proposition" from seventeenth-century philosophy, that "actual infinity" exists, meaning there is infinity in action, i.e., distinguished from the finite and the indefinite. After a brief shift to Kant's view on the infinity of diameters, linked to his understanding of the synthesis of time, Deleuze addresses aspects of infinity vis-à-vis the indefinite in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century mathematics, then returns to the seventeenth century by citing Leibniz's *Of The Radical Origin of Things*, the exposition of the so-called cosmological proof of God's existence. Pointing out that seventeenth-century philosophy implies a mutation of the cogito, "I think", into a kind of "I think space" with time considered secondary, Deleuze describes this as the two branches in mathematics, the "Greek theme" (magnitudes greater than numbers) and the "Indian theme" (the independent number compared to the magnitudes). Deleuze then attempts to swerve back to this digression's point of departure, seventeenth century thought of "actual infinity", but the session ends without him managing to return to Spinoza.

Session 11, February 17, 1981

Deleuze summarizes the previous session, his analysis of the different dimensions of individuality through the presence of the infinite in seventeenth-century philosophy, a way of providing concrete aspects of an infinitist conception of the individual. In Spinoza, the individual is relation, or a whole plane of composition, *compositio*; the individual is also power of action, *potentia*; and third, the individual is an intrinsic mode, and through these aspects, the individual is not substance, but rather a relation. Deleuze argues that it is only in the seventeenth century that the relation is thought independent of its terms, precisely through the development of infinitesimal calculus, and Deleuze points out the equilibrium point reached in the seventeenth century between the infinite and the finite was through a new theory of relations. His first question is how the individual is a relation, i.e., the limit at the level of the finite individual. While proposing some thought experiments regarding the three terms (infinity, relation, limit), the students' lack of interest leads him, first, to discuss the logic of relations within the history of philosophy (e.g. Bertrand Russell), then to shift to the theme of the individual as power of action and the effort or tendency toward a limit, i.e., *puissance*. Regarding the term "limit", Deleuze returns to Greek era, and after a brief terminological debate with Georges Comtesse, Deleuze provides an example of the conception of limit from the Stoics, concluding that the Stoics' term *tonos*, or contracted effort defining the thing, is necessary to the thing itself. After providing a second example from Neo-Platonism, namely Plotinus's *The Enneads* (specifically IV, book 5), to which he compares the end of Plato's book six of *The Republic* to *The Ennead* IV, Deleuze turns to a third example, Byzantine art, and then summarizes his outline of limits: a contour-limit that is a tension-limit; then, a space-limit and a spatialization-limit; then a light-color limit, as well as a *terminus* limit. Deleuze concludes that the dynamic limit is spatializing while the contour-limit supposes a measured space. With these successive developments in mind, Deleuze returns to specific points in Spinoza and then concludes by pointing out that the first group of notions discussed, relation and infinity, is linked to the second group, power of action-limits, since limit is the limit of the relation, with a constant intersection of both sets of notions. Finally, through both groups, the individual is designated as an *intrinsic mode*, a notion that Deleuze attributes to Duns Scotus, and he proposes to pursue this at the next session.

Session 12, March 10, 1981

Starting this session with development of the three strata of the individual and details of a logic of the relation, Deleuze first emphasizes the importance of the individual's extensible parts of which it is composed, i.e., of simple bodies, recalling his previous discussion of "the actual infinite" as well as the previous session's discussion of shape and magnitude. Deleuze examines more closely the nature of things infinitely minute in 17th-century thought, i.e., modal matter of pure exteriority reacting on each other. To distinguish these infinite sets, Deleuze considers the second layer of individuality, the particular relation (*rapport*) realized by an infinite set occurring through movement and rest, speed and slowness. Deleuze relates Martial Gueroult's hypothesis that this relation constitutes a vibration to 17th century physics (e.g., the pendulum), concluding that the model cannot work as vibration but can work in terms of mathematics of the era, hence the importance of fractional, algebraic and differential relations for Spinoza's era. Deleuze considers these successively with the third, differential step, the relation between its terms determined as well as tending toward a limit and argues that this corresponds to Spinoza's reference to relations of movement and rest. Moreover, the infinite sets are distinct due to their

different powers, i.e., they can be at a higher power than other ones, hence the definition of the second layer of the individual as the differential relation that defines the power (*puissance*). Hence, at a third level, the relations of movement and rest only express a singular essence, and to assess what the singular essence is, Deleuze argues that for Spinoza, “existence” requires a very rigorous determination that Deleuze contrasts to Leibniz’s. To develop Spinoza’s position, he comments on a text from Spinoza’s early work, the *Short Treatise*, notably that bodies exist within extension, and naming the body’s shape a “mode of attribute”, Spinoza maintains that essences are singular (not to be confused with the existent). Deleuze suggests that besides shapes, another mode of distinction is the degree, or *gradus*, also called “intensive quantity”, to which Deleuze adds the terminological distinctions of “quality” and “magnitude” or extensive quantity composed of parts, to which Deleuze brings in Duns Scotus on “intrinsic modes”. Addressing the distinction between intensive and extensive quantity, Deleuze argues that extensive quantity can only be thought of within space according to a kind of duration, while intensive quantity has non-additive magnitudes, a multiplicity within the moment, a synthesis of the instant. Deleuze also suggests that they consider the question of eternity, but he asks students for questions regarding Spinoza’s conception of individuality. To a first question regarding biogenetism and types of preformation in the 17th century, Deleuze explains (and seems to announce already aspect of “the fold”) the mechanism of development or “explication” (enveloped parts being unfolded), something enveloped in the seed, then shifts to discuss the later theory of epigenesis (development via new formations), from undifferentiated to differentiations. As for preformationism, one finds the theme of the actual infinite and the infinitely minute applied to living matter, hence corresponding the symbolic system of the era. Moreover, maintaining that Spinoza should be viewed within the context of this symbolic system, Deleuze parses specific terms (part; totality; unity) before returning to Spinoza’s sense of singular essences and the degree of power, finally providing two senses of the word “part” (extensive and intensive). In dialogue with Georges Comtesse, Deleuze justifies deliberately limiting his analysis to Spinoza, objecting to Comtesse’s critique, and in closing, he proposes to continue with Spinoza’s claims regarding the experience of eternity and also Spinoza’s ontological view.

Session 13, March 17, 1981

While having intended this to be the final session on Spinoza, he hopes to draw conclusions, first, on Spinoza’s perspectives on individuality, and second, on the relationship between ontology and an ethics. For the first point, he reviews the three dimensions of individuality (an infinity of extensive parts; relations of movement and rest; expression of a degree of power of action [*puissance*] and relations constituting one’s singular essence) and notes the harmony between these three dimensions and what Spinoza calls “three kinds of knowledge”: first, the set of inadequate ideas (passive affections and affects that result); second, a knowledge of relations, of their composition and decomposition, adequate knowledge; third, an intuitive kind of knowledge of essences, on which relations depend, knowledge of the degrees of one’s powers of action (*puissance*). However, as some individuals never rise above the first dimension, Deleuze considers when oppositions arise and concludes that this concerns the individual existence here and now, for example, opposition arising as a function of extensive parts, but even when, at death, there are no terms left to realize the relation, an eternal truth remains independent of its

terms, an actuality of the essence as an intensive part, a degree of power of action. With this suggestion of a double eternity, Deleuze locates the experience of feeling eternal in authors like D.H. Lawrence and Edward Boys, and Deleuze provides two concrete cases, one regarding an individual who remains solely in the first knowledge, and a second one who gains insight within the second knowledge. After summarizing the dimensions of the individual, Deleuze suggests that for Spinoza, the first individual at death loses the extensive parts whereas in the second case, having reached adequate ideas and active affects, the individual's loss at death is a relatively small part. Then linking this to the question of the eternal, of the soul's immortality, Deleuze reviews a text in which this is addressed, notably Plato's *Phaedo*, while for Spinoza, he opposed eternity to immortality but not as a matter of before and after (as in previous cases). Rather, he considers that one experience being eternal at the same time as being mortal, i.e., the eternal as the intensive parts, the degree of power, differing from the "in time" extensive parts, hence an immortality of coexistence but not of succession. During the rest of the session (the final hour), students pose questions regarding various points, with Deleuze providing successive explanations regarding Spinoza's view of death, e.g., Richard Pinhas's description of artistic creation as a kind of unfolding and realizing; Comtesse's objections to death coming from the outside; another student's question about what is missing should one reach the third kind of knowledge, to which Deleuze points out that the second kind of knowledge grants one understanding about relations that compose and decompose, but not about the singular nature or essence of each individual, i.e., about the question of passing to the third level. To Pinhas's query whether one can be a Spinozist who remains happily in the second kind of knowledge, Deleuze replies that since, for Spinoza, God cannot be treated as a simple common notion, God necessarily is the idea of a being both infinite and singular, but also that one could opt for a truncated Spinozism, believing there are only relations but not essences. After debating aspects of what Deleuze calls Pinhas's "mutant Spinozism" regarding the artist's relation to common notion vis-à-vis essences, Deleuze suggests an outline for two kinds of Spinozism, a "restricted Spinozism" (second kind of knowledge) and "integral Spinozism" (all the way to the third kind of knowledge). To another student's query about Spinoza's distinction of morality in terms of life as progress or as actualization of extensive parts, Deleuze responds that morality is necessarily a judgment system, and that for Spinoza, people who only want to spread sadness are judging themselves, such that Spinoza rejects morality, whereas he talks about a kind of physico-chemical test, a self-experimentation, like a gold piece testing itself, according to the affects it has. Deleuze recalls Spinoza's great trinity of judgment to be the tyrant, the priest (or the "man of anguish") and the slave, and then notes that at the next session, he will provide a "conclusion of conclusions" regarding judgment as well as ontology.

[NB: An edited version of this session was prepared for the Gallimard release of the audio CD, "Gilles Deleuze, Spinoza : immortalité et éternité" (2003) and, as such, can be considered an exemplary session, at least from the post-seminar perspectives of the CD editors, Claire Parnet and Richard Pinhas.]

Session 14, March 24, 1981

Insisting that this is the final session on Spinoza, Deleuze begins with the question of how Spinoza can say that any affection is an affection of essence, situating this discussion within 17th century distinctions and explaining that for Spinoza, passions and even inadequate ideas belong

to essence no less than adequate ideas, yet with a difference. Deleuze reviews the occurrence of inadequate ideas from which a passion-affect emerges, concluding that as long as one exists, a relation of movement and rest is realized by the extensive parts that belong to an individual according to this relation. Deleuze concludes that since affection is the idea of an effect, then one's extensive parts necessarily encounter each other constantly and are defined by the relation of movement and rest, with an affection being the reception of the effect, or "I perceive". To this kinetic formulation, Deleuze adds the dynamic version, one being defined through a power of being affected, and there is no moment in which one's power of being affected is not fulfilled. Deleuze considers "every affection is affection of essence" insofar as the essence has an infinity of extensive parts belonging to it according to such a relation. Then, as one rises to the next levels, one has adequate perceptions and active affects, and these also are affections of essence, but with the difference that they come from the inside, i.e., essence as it expresses itself in a relation. For 80 minutes within the session, student questions alternate with Deleuze's responses, notably on the inside-outside distinctions, and then continuing with his development on the relation of ethics and ontology, Deleuze asserts that Spinoza is the only philosopher to have realized philosophy as ontology. He briefly digresses to considers writers and artists linked to a cult of the sun or light as these connect to Spinoza, and then returning to the question of ontology, notably to nine propositions in book I of the *Ethics*, Deleuze asks what is really new in Spinoza. His response introduces a Greek term, *hen panta*, as a cry of philosophy, the "One All", which resounds an essence across all philosophy, specifically "pantheism" (One-All-God) with Deleuze situating Spinoza at the confluence of the purest pantheism with philosophy and arguing that what is new in Spinoza is the statement that the same attributes in the same form are stated regarding God and regarding things. Deleuze explains what Spinoza means is that we humans know only two infinite forms, thought and extension, the soul as a manner of thinking, the body as a mode of extension. From this, Spinoza develops a doctrine according to which these same forms of infinity attributed to God also belong to finite things, in distinct ways, i.e., forms stated "in relation" and yet stated of unequal terms, hence a community of forms, *hen panta*, "the One All Things". After linking this to different traditions, Deleuze concludes that to liberate this Being from its neutrality, Spinoza affirms that this Being is the real, Nature, the same Being that is stated regarding all be-ings (*étants*) of God and creatures, an equality of Being for unequal essences. With this, says Deleuze, ontology begins and also ends.

Spinoza, Session 15, March 31, 1981 / Painting and the Question of Concepts, Session 1

Having hoped to finish the Spinoza sessions two weeks earlier, Deleuze ends it by addressing students' questions (for nearly an hour) and then later introducing the seminar on "Painting and the Question of Concepts." The questions posed concern: how the third kind of knowledge relates to the relation of artistic states of creativity, i.e., the knowledge of the self as knowledge of power of action, and vice versa. Deleuze reviews Spinoza's three-step path in the *Ethics*, from apparent condemnation to the first level of inadequate ideas toward successive levels on a path: first, related to the passions (sad and joyful) and increasing the power of action with joyful passions; encountering bodies that agree with one's own, leading one to form common notions; following the second step, the formation of a third body having composed relations, hence active affects resulting from common notions; then, with this build-up of active affects overlaid with new ideas and new states, emergence of auto-affections. To other questions, Deleuze suggests

that there is an element of play or improvisation in the composition of relations, and he suggests that “timing”, or *kairos* from Greek, the correct moment, has a function in this procedure. As the 17th century was a century of gamblers, everyone including Spinoza, says Deleuze, was interested in games and chance, corresponding to the birth of calculating probabilities, but however strong the certainty of the third kind of knowledge might be, the possibility of collapse or catastrophe still exists. The theme of catastrophe provides the link to the Seminar on Painting. (See the Painting session 1 summary for the session’s second half).

Session 15, Spinoza/Session 1, Painting and the Question of Concepts, March 31, 1981

Foremost in Deleuze’s initial presentation is the importance of the “concept”, for example, color as “concept”, thereby foreshadowing the concept’s importance in developing the broader theme of “what is philosophy?”. He immediately raises the importance of the catastrophe in painting and its affect in the act of painting itself, the painting of imbalance, the relation of catastrophe and the birth of color. Referring to different painters and theorists (Caudel, Goethe, Klee, Turner, Ruskin, Cézanne, Van Gogh, Francis Bacon), he links the question of catastrophe to the previous discussion of affects such that color emerges from chaos. In particular, he emphasizes Joachim Gasquet’s book on Cézanne and the emergence of chaos-catastrophe as pre-pictorial, seen in Cézanne’s letters. Deleuze responds to a student’s remark by briefly connecting these perspectives in terms of Kant’s theory of the sublime.

Continuing with Cézanne, Deleuze emphasizes the first moment of “chaos-abyss” following which color would emerge, but he also reflects on possible failure of this emergence, and he reflects at great length on the color scale emerging, or greyness in non-emergence. However, Deleuze is cautious here, discussing kinds of grey in Kandinsky, and then Deleuze announces a detour, to reflect on painting’s relation to time and painting operating a synthesis of time. Here he comes to his second text, from Paul Klee on the grey point, but also on chaos and the emergence of color. This emergence constitutes the beginning of the world, also present in music, but feeling blocked, Deleuze shifts to another painter, Francis Bacon’s interviews, painters’ struggles with clichés, and then pursues a reading from Bacon to create a bridge to the next session. This reading yields several notions, especially that of the diagram as germinal chaos, similar for Cézanne and Klee, the tension towards a pre-pictorial condition. Here, Deleuze can point to starting points for each painter (Turner’s 1830 diagram; Van Gogh’s diagram; Klee’s black-and-white grey point as matrix for all colors), and he considers when Bacon found his diagram, indicating this notion -- this history of the catastrophe and of the seed in the act of painting, that is, the notion of the diagram – as the first step of the seminar’s analysis.