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Seminar on Spinoza: The Velocities of Thought

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Part 1

[*Sounds from the room, for around thirty seconds*] Would you be so kind as to close the door there? There's a door open, a door open ... [*Pause*] Okay, so ... So, you see, we have a problem, because we're holding two pieces of... two ends of a chain. I mean, at one end of the chain, we have the world of signs. Now, this world of signs, I tried to show how, according to Spinoza, things are going quite badly. And this world of signs is really a state of affairs (*état de fait*). We are born into this world. You will notice that it's not clear why, finally, tradition calls a certain number of philosophers after Descartes, they are called Cartesians, in which Leibniz is Cartesian, in which Spinoza, even more strongly, is Cartesian. We look for [this reason] rather in vain, because the already obvious thing is that there is no possibility of a ... -- I say this for those who know Descartes a little -- there is no possibility of a cogito, in [Spinoza]. There is no possibility of grasping hold of a thinking being.

In fact, we are in a world of signs, and what does that mean? Well, that means, among other things, that I can only know myself through the affections that I experience, that is, by the imprint of the bodies on mine. It's a state of absolute confusion; there is no cogito, there is no extraction of thought or of a thinking substance. So I am, really, up to my neck in this night, in this night of signs. And, at the last meeting, I spent most of our time solely trying to define this world of signs, which is therefore a state of affairs, or if you prefer -- he will say as well, Spinoza – it's the state of nature. But the state of nature, there, this must be taken in a very broad sense; this is not the old state, the state of the ages, the state of a very long ago, of what once was. This is our state of affairs. In fact, we live among signs; we don't stop calling out for them; we don't stop sending them, and all this within a darkness and confusion that defines the fact, our state of affairs.

And this whole world of signs, with all the characteristics, at the same time, the characteristics proper to all the signs and the kinds of signs... I remind you: the characteristics proper to all the signs, these are: variability, associativity, equivocity. The kinds of signs are indications -- indicative signs, indications – imperatives, and interpretations. We live in a world of interpretations, imperatives and indicatives. [*Pause*] Fine.

At the other end of the chain, what do we have? We have in a way the goal, or the ideal, that Spinoza offers us, and such that... We cannot yet fully grasp it, but at least we grasp it, we are beginning to grasp it through one aspect, namely, arriving at a world of univocity, a world which would no longer be that of always equivocal signs, but a world of univocal expressions, where what is said, is said in one and the same sense for everything about which it's said.

In contrast to obscure and confused signs, I might as well call it the world of luminous expressions. We have seen the role of light in this, that language is light. We have seen the whole theme of the seventeenth [century] in this respect, this kind of optical world of light. Notice that already, when I say: "arriving at a language of univocity", I am posing a little bit more than a simple question because if that is what I am proposing, the question itself gives me certain rules. I mean, it's not about creating univocal expressions out of ones that hadn't been so because things never work like that. There are signs or expressions that are fundamentally condemned to equivocity.

Let's take two examples. I am asking the question: "Does God have an understanding?" And I remain at the level of the question, of the analysis of the question; I do not pretend to answer. I can already specify, at the level of this question "Does God have an understanding?", I can already say: if it has an understanding, this is not in the same sense as man has one. Why? For the simple reason that if God has an understanding, this is an infinite understanding that differs in nature from ours. If God has an understanding, then I cannot escape the following consequence, namely, that the word "understanding" is expressed with two meanings, at least with two meanings. When this is said of God and when this is said of man, this is not expressed in the same sense. So, from the point of view of a Spinozist rule, the matter is already judged: God cannot have an understanding. If man has an understanding, God does not. Fine. You see that already, just the question, asking the question about univocity is already enough to eliminate a certain type of expression.

Second question: is God substance? Here it's more complicated. If I say: is God substance? ... -- I am still trying to develop the question, not to answer it, eh? without answering it. I am trying to develop the question -- If God is substance, it's one thing or another: either man also is substance, or else man will not be substance. I'm continuing to develop [this]. Suppose that God is substance, and man too. In that case, substance is an ambiguous word, since it cannot be with the same sense that God is substance and that man is substance. Why can't it be the same way? It cannot be with the same sense because God will be said to be substance as it is uncreated, as was said at that time, "insofar as it is the cause of itself", whereas man will be substance within his own status as a creature. So, substance will be expressed in two ways, of uncreated being and of the creature.

Moreover, this will be expressed in three senses, of the bodily creature and of the thinking creature. Henceforth, I can say -- you see, just by analyzing the question --, if God is substance, with my rule of univocity, with my rule of univocity, I must say: if God is substance ... -- I don't know anything yet, but we are assuming God is substance -- it will be necessary in that case, if there is univocity, it will be necessary in that case that the man is not so. So, just the question of univocity -- just the question insofar as being a question -- univocity allows me to set certain rules in advance. That does not prevent us from not being so greatly advanced since we are

holding on to the two ends [of the chain] once again: the world of signs, which defines our state of affairs -- obscure signs, our desire, and why this desire, where does this desire come from? -- our desire to accede to a world of luminous expressions, a world of univocity. But the more I turn toward signs, the less I see the possibility of getting away from them. How might one escape from this world of signs which defines confusion, which defines obscurity, or which defines the very original conception, there, that Spinoza creates of the inadequate, with his three very formidable capstones: the indicative, the imperative, the interpretative?

So, there, we are blocked; we are blocked. We cannot advance, so that in your reading of Spinoza, you have to say: well, then, how he can, how he can move forward? What means does he have? I mean, there are times when you don't have a choice. Once again, we are faced with something that's a dead end. We are locked into the world of signs. So, you see, you can say to yourself, there is always a way out. You can say to yourself, "Well, very well, you just have to get used to it. Let's stay in the world of signs!" But, once again, the entire seventeenth century provided a critique of the world of signs. Why did this century critique the world of signs? No doubt because the Middle Ages, and even the Renaissance, developed magnificent, not even theories, magnificent practical theories of signs, and the reaction, the reaction of the seventeenth century, was this critique of signs, to oppose it with the purely optical laws of the clear and distinct idea, of the luminous idea.

So fine, and Spinoza belongs to that. So how does he get out of this? So, I only see one way. We say to ourselves, well, there would only be one way -- it's if we had forgotten something -- in the world of signs. It would be necessary -- that's the ideal, you understand --, we would get out if ... -- under the conditions of this problem --, we would get out if we had forgotten a fourth type of sign, notably, if there were rather bizarre signs, in the world of signs, which give us not the certainty, but the possibility of getting out of signs. These would be some strange signs. [*Pause*] So if ... if we could play with these signs, of course, they would still be equivocal; these signs would be completely equivocal since, on the one hand, they would be fully part of the world of signs, but on the other hand, they would give us a kind of possibility to get out of the world of signs, if we knew how to use them, if we knew how to use them. Well then, I get the impression that constantly in Spinozism, in Spinoza, there is a kind of functionalism; what interests him is really the functions, how things can work. So, signs, which by their function, which by their nature would be signs, this would be quite paradoxical: by their nature, they would be signs, but by their function, they could bring us out of the world of signs.

And what did we forget then? Let's find out, if I tell myself that we forgot something. You sense that we have forgotten something, that this world of signs, in fact, it does not close on itself, as I presented it. Indeed, what did I say about these signs? Well, I said, there are three kinds. In fact, you sense that there are going to be four. Fortunately! Fortunately, otherwise, otherwise we would be condemned to the first kind of knowledge. What a drama, then.

This world of signs, I said: these are indications, on the one hand. What are the indications? You remember, there you just have to pay close attention; it's not difficult, all that, but we just need to pay attention. The indications are the effects of an external body on mine; it's the imprint of an external body on mine. It's the trace, it's the imprint. And that's what Spinoza calls affections,

affectio, or ideas, or perceptions. [*Pause*] These are perceptions, for example, the imprint of the sun on my body, when I say "oh, it's hot!" [*Pause*]

A second type of signs, the imperatives. We have seen how they emerge from perceptions, in the form of final causes. This time, the final causes are in the realm of the imagination. These are, as was said in the Middle Ages, creatures of imagination, or fictions. A second kind of signs are fictions, based on final causes.

A third type of signs: interpretations. This time, it's abstractions, interpretations. I abstract an idea of a mountain, and I say, "God is the highest of mountains, it is the mountain of mountains". It's a pure abstract. You see, perception, fiction, abstraction.

What have I forgotten? Perceptions, I said, these are -- if needs be, in the rigor of Spinozist terminology -- these are perceptions; it's the same as affections, *affectio*, or ideas. But you remember that there was something else, and that in the previous meetings, I indeed distinguished, in the very terms of Spinoza, *affectios* and *affectus*. *Affectio* is therefore the idea ... -- or perceptions, this is the same – it's the idea of the imprint of an external body on mine. At every instant, I have affections; only, as soon as I turn my head, my affection changes. So, affection is always the instantaneous cut.

And I said: there is affect, *affectus*, what is it? I can say of any affection, at a given moment -- the affections that I experience at a given moment, you remember, there, the terminology of Spinoza is very strict, but if you cannot recall it, you cannot understand -- at any moment, the affections that I experience at this time realize -- realize -- my power of action (*puissance*). My power of action is realized under and through the affections which I experience at one moment or another. That's a very clear proposition. But henceforth, that does not prevent any affection, at a given moment, if I introduce the dimension of duration, from realizing my power of action, but it does not realize my power of action without causing it to vary within certain bounds, specifically: my power of action is realized by affections anyway, as perfectly as it can be anyway, but in such a way that sometimes this power is diminished compared to the previous state, and sometimes this power is increased compared to the previous state.

And what Spinoza calls affect, in contrast with affection, is the increase or decrease, that is, the passage. Affect is the passage from one affection to another affection, but affect is not an *affectio*; it's not an affection. It is the passage from one affection to another, once it's said that this passage envelops, implies, either an increase in my power of action or a decrease in my power of action, which in any case is realized through affection, to a particular degree. This has to be very, very clear. If you understand that -- before being sure that it is clear, that is, that ... – I'll start over again if this is not very clear because, otherwise, you can no longer understand anything, I believe. I'll add this: henceforth, we've taken hold of our fourth kind of sign. We do not know what use it will be for us, but I can see that I had neglected a fourth type of sign.

Let's go back to my *affectios*. These are indicative signs. Let's try to clarify. Indicative signs, that means effects of a body on mine. It indicates, it indicates, in part, the nature of the external body, and in large part, the nature of my affected body. [*Pause*] Fine. Any affection is as perfect as it can be. In other words, what Spinoza... This perfection, what is it? It's the quantity of reality,

says Spinoza, the quantity of reality that it envelops. All affection envelops a quantity of reality. You see, it's true that the sun has such a particular effect on my body. So, it is certainly false when, from this effect, I draw conclusions about the nature of the sun, but on the other hand, it is true that it has such a particular effect on my body. This affection, insofar as being true, is defined by a quantity of reality. To use simple mathematical terms, one might say there that this is a scalar quantity. It's worth what it's worth, there you go. There are quantities of reality. An affection has more or less reality.

When I go on to the *affectus*, the passage, that is, increase in power of action or decrease in power of action, this is not at all a quantity of reality, there. What is this? It's much more what one could be called a vector quantity. Increase in power of action, decrease in power of action are two vectors. The rule of vector quantity is not at all the same as the rule of scalar quantity. So, we've gotten hold of something here. The fourth kind of sign, that I had neglected, is the vector signs. Increases in power of action or decreases in power of action, that is, *affectus*, affects, are signs. Signs of what? The *affectus* are signs of the increase or the decrease in power of action. What are the *affectus*? At least, the basic *affectus*, the basic affects, as we have seen, are joy and sadness; joy equals increase in power of action, sadness equals decrease in power of action, these are the two vectors. Well, I would say sadness and joy are the vector signs. Is this okay?

So, we have made a little progress, but it will be useful for us because we only have one question left; obviously it will be complicated. The question that remains to us is: well, fine, well, how can vector signs, assuming they can, allow us to get out of the world of signs? And in fact, I believe very strongly here that for Spinoza, if there were not this fourth type of sign, these increases and decreases in power of action, we would be condemned to the inadequate; we would be condemned there, you realize; we would be condemned to this dark world, this nocturnal world, there, of affections. And henceforth, imperatives, and... If it weren't for joy and sadness, it's strange: it's as if joy and sadness, increases and decreases in power of action -- maybe not the two ...--, but it's as if, in the dark world of signs, in the nocturnal world of signs, as if the affects were already like little glimmers of light, little lights like that, like kinds of glow worms. Fine.

This may be what will open us up to the optical world. Joy and sadness? Probably not, probably not both. No doubt there is a bad vector, there is a ... If these are vector signs, joy and sadness, there is a vector that pushes us back into the world of signs, it would be fine. And then a vector – it's a question of getting onto this vector, as we say, getting onto a vector -- there would be two vectors, so, you see: a vector, like this [*Deleuze makes a gesture in one direction*], and then a vector like that [*Deleuze makes a gesture in another direction*]. There is one that pushes us back into the world of signs, and there is one that makes us spurt forth -- or that can do so, it's not sure ...--, which contains a chance of getting us out of the world of signs. You feel in advance that this good vector is joy. There we are.

So, that's precisely where I am; we have made a bit of progress, nonetheless. That's precisely where I am: and how, how does this vector operate? So here, I am making a very solemn, very heartfelt appeal, because… I'll start all over again if this is not very, very clear. I mean, as everything else depends on this point, I don't want to move on if... I mean, here's exactly what must occur, that you have understood, that I stated very clearly the ways in which affects are a

fourth kind of sign. If you did not understand this, I'll start over again. [*Pause*] Is this okay? ... Yes? ... Yes? ... So, I'll continue. Fine… fine, fine, fine… And you do understand all that, right? [*Pause*] No, I'm not at all saying that in order... But I'm surprised because this seems very difficult to me. If you're okay with that, then it's fine... Good! Well there, I find that... So, [Spinoza] tells us, at this point, he tells us things that will become extremely simple. He says to us: here we are, you understand, in the life, well, what do you have to do? To this first... So, for the moment, this is exactly where I am: trying to sketch the steps of exiting from the world of signs. We're still in it, right? We haven't gotten out of it.

We have an idea: ah, yes, if I put myself on that vector, maybe I will get out, but how, and why? And how to get onto this vector? Well, suppose I do this by virtue of a particularly gifted nature. Suppose that... It's not that complicated from a certain point of view; you will even think, I hope, that these are things that a whole philosophical tradition has always said, for example, since Epicurus. It is indeed a fairly Epicurean tradition, but in a sense, in the true sense of Epicurus, which is not at all to say "go have fun", which is to say much more: to invite us toward a process of selection, which consists first of all of a kind of bias: "no, I will not be made to believe that there is something good in sadness! All sadness is bad!" So, you can tell me, okay, I'm not an idiot, that's something I can understand, that sadness is inevitable, just like death, like suffering, yes. But every time I see someone trying to persuade me that there is something good, useful or fruitful in sadness, I will smell an enemy in him, not just of myself, but of the human race. That is, I will smell a tyrant in him, or the tyrant's ally, because only the tyrant needs sadness to assert his power. Fine.

And, that was already it, Epicurus... I mean, that was already the denunciation of the tyrant for Epicurus, it was already Epicurus's denunciation of religion. Well here, Spinoza is very, very much the disciple of Epicurus, and this tradition, it had not stopped... There is a tradition that is quite disparaged in the history of philosophy, but which stands out by its great authors, which passes by Lucretius, finally which... So, fine.

So, this first step, what is it about? It is really a question of selection, of selecting joys as much as it is in me, as much as it is in me. What does this mean? This means, well yes, there are many inevitable kinds of sadness, but once again, I understand what an inevitable sadness means. Someone I love dies is sadness, inevitable sadness; it happens, I can't help it. On the other hand, there where I can, I cause -- how would I say this – I cause this sadness to swell up, to swell up to infinity, summing it up and then re-summing up the sadness, smearing myself with it, wallowing into it, that's something I can do, that I can do. It's even the vector of sadness that invites me to do that, to create this very bizarre kind of summation in which the more that goes badly, the more I experience, in the end, a strange joy. Hey, I've just said, the more I experience a strange joy… the more it goes badly, the more that I experience a strange joy; that means that it's not as simple as I was saying earlier, my selection.

And here, that's the whole of Book III of the *Ethics* which seems to me extraordinarily clever in this sense. If it were simply a matter of selecting joys, eliminating sadness as much as I can, it would already be something. But for Spinoza, this would not be, this would not be a true art of living. Why? Because there are not two pure lines, this is where it becomes important, and all of book III shows this very well. There are not two pure lines, a line of sadness and a line of joy.

There is not a line where sadness is linked with sadness, and a line where joy is linked with joy. Why? Because the lines of sadness are themselves punctuated by joys of a certain kind. The lines of joy are themselves punctuated by sadness of some kind. Only, what matters -- you see, we are almost comforted --, what matters is that the joys intervening on the lines of sadness are not at all of the same nature as the joys intervening on the lines of joy.

What is the difference? The line of sadness is basically a decrease in the power of acting,[1] and you can understand why; this is very, here, it's very mathematical, almost. This is really the geometric method in Spinoza. In fact, sadness is the decrease in the power of acting. When do I experience an affect reducing the power to act? When the affection that I feel on my body is the imprint of a body that does not suit mine. A body that is not suitable with mine diminishes my power of acting; I am affected by sadness, *affectus*; my affect is through sadness. Immediately, from this, we can conclude what hate is. Hatred is the effort that I make henceforth, by virtue of my power of action, to destroy the object that affects me with sadness. When you are affected by sadness, you seek to destroy the object that affects you in this way. You will say that you hate this object which does not suit you.

Suppose you manage to destroy this object; henceforth, to eliminate your sadness, well, from then on, you experience a joy. Spinoza goes so far as to create a theorem, thus titled: "He who imagines the cause of his sadness destroyed, rejoices", in the form "eh, well this one, I got it! " A joy! Notice then that there, on the line of sadness, you have a line of sadness: sadness, hatred, then many other things, there is a joy that intervenes: joy of imagining or of acting to have it destroyed, the object that causes sadness. But this is a very weird joy. It's a dirty little joy. [*Interruption of the recording*] [34:55]

Part 2

… namely, in fact, we are so complicated, we are composed in such a complex way that it may very well be that a joy affects me in certain parts of myself, but that the same object that gives joy in some parts of me gives me sadness in other parts. I would say that the joys which intervene on the lines of sadness are necessarily indirect joys, or partial joys.

On the other hand, the same demonstration for the line of joy, what is the line of joy? It's everything that interconnects starting from my encounter with a body that suits mine. Suppose the body that suits mine, so this body that suits mine, I love it. Just as hatred arose from sadness, so love arises from joy. [*Pause*] So you have a line of joy there: joy, love for the thing that gives you joy, etc. This time, what are these joys of a different nature than the joys that intervened on the lines of sadness? These are all the more joys as they will be direct and complete, as opposed to the compensatory joys, indirect and partial, which intervened on the line of hatred. They will be direct and complete, that is, you will experience joy for the thing itself. Your power of action will increase. You remember -- I won't go back over that -- what Spinoza means with the increase or decrease in power of action? Well, I'll go back over it very quickly, if you did not have it in mind: literally it's the increase and decrease in power of action, joy and sadness, since in one case, that of joy, the power of the external thing that suits you propels your power of action, that is, it increases, relatively, while in the other case, that of sadness, the encounter with the thing that does not agree with you will invest your power of action, which is entirely

immobilized to repel the thing, and this fixed, immobilized power of action is as if withdrawn from you, hence your power of action decreases. So, there you have the two vectors: increase, decrease.

So, you see that what Spinoza invites us into, as a disciple of Epicure, is really a selection of, the selection of the two lines. And, that there are inevitable sorrows, once again ... For example, something one loves dies, something one loves dies, oh well, it's sad... And it does not mean, Spinoza is not saying, "don't worry about it". No, but it must be taken as an inevitable sadness. The only kinds of sadness allowed or conserved on the lines of joy are the kinds of sadness that you experience as inevitable. Fine, so, there it is: this is what I called the first effort of reason before there was even reason. It's to get oneself aboard this vector of increased power of action How does one get onto this vector? We have an answer: by selecting joys, by selecting the lines of joys. And this is a very complicated art.

How does one make this selection? Spinoza gave us an answer, and I said that this answer foreshadows a theme that we will then find in Rousseau, namely, the first effort of reason as selective art, and which consists of a very simple practical rule: know what you are capable of, that is, avoid putting yourself in situations that will be poisonous for you. And I believe that when [Spinoza] says "what can a body do?", when he proposes this question, that means among other things that ... It doesn't mean that…, among other things, that means: But look at your life, you just don't stop, you don't stop putting yourself into situations that you, precisely and personally, cannot stand. And indeed, in this sense, you create them, your own sorrows. Well, not always, but you add to them, compared to the inevitable kinds of sadness of the world; you always add to them. That's what Spinoza's idea is: sadness, in the end, is inevitable. But that's not what humanity dies from. Starting from inevitable kinds of sadness, humanity dies from what is added onto them. This is a kind of fabrication of sadness, a fantastic factory of sadness, really. And there are institutions for generating sadness, TV, all that, right? ... Fine, there are [sadness] devices, and it requires that there be sadness devices. There are sadness devices because all power needs sadness. There is no joyful power.

Okay, [*Pause*] so, you see, fine, here we are. But where does this take us? How does that get us out of signs? Fine, I select my joys, okay, but I'm not getting away from signs. This is still a vector sign. I can just say that I accommodate it better. How is this a little glimmer of light breaking through the darkness of signs? There we have the second step of reason. So, on my selected line of joy -- and again, this is not a recipe, right, you have to find them; my own joys are not my neighbor's joys. Fine ... [You] have to find them. -- You will say to me: but your joys might annoy someone else. No! If you understood the first step, no. They can't annoy someone else, because my own joys that annoy someone else are the joys of lines of hate. Whereas if I have selected from my lines of joy, in the end, I succeed, but I don't bother anyone. I cannot. I mean, that's not my business, because bothering someone and the joy of bothering someone is very much related to lines of hate. Fine, but still, we are not moving fast enough. Okay, okay, let's say, let's suppose, okay...

So, where does it take me? This is the second aspect of reason. Suppose that ... Notice, right, I mean, I didn't cheat! I stayed absolutely within the data of the world of signs, namely: I only know a body through the effects it has on mine, I only know other bodies through the effects

they have on mine. So, I stay within the realm of *affectio*. As long as I only know bodies through the effects they have on mine, I stay within the realm of passive affections -- no, not ... that's idiotic! --, I remain within the domain of affections and the corresponding affects; whether it is a decrease in power of action but also an increase in power of action, the corresponding affects are passive. They are passions, in fact, since they refer to the external effects of an external body on mine. So, it's a passion. The joy I have just selected is no less a passion than the kinds of sadness. These are the two vectors of passion.

Well, then, I am saying: the second aspect of reason, suppose that ... -- but that assumes the first aspect --, suppose that you nevertheless succeeded relatively -- since you cannot absolutely succeed, there are inevitable sorrows --, suppose you have been relatively successful in selecting joys, that you have done well in creating your line of joy -- so, of course, it can always be broken, wham! illness, death, loss of the loved one, etc., the loved ones, well, all that. A line can always be completely interrupted, ravaged; it's a shame, it's a shame, but that's how it is, there we are ... -- And suppose that ... You see, it's not a straight line, it's a line entirely, really, it passes between things, right?... It goes along, it breaks, it continues, it resumes. But, like worms, you stubbornly seek your line of joy,[2] which means something other than seeking pleasure. What does that mean, after all? That means: you are seeking your encounter with bodies that suit you, be it the sun or the loved one… or stamp collections, anything whatsoever, if that's it, what matters to you. [*Laughter*] Okay, [*Pause*] then, so you don't stop increasing your power of action, but you stay within passion.

So, this is where there is a small leap and, no doubt, a variable threshold for each person. It's as if Spinoza said to us: Well, you see, think a little bit, because ... or rather, don't think; rediscover your life. For each of us, there is a moment when this accumulation of power of action -- it has increased, one's power of action, through a thousand detours, there, by selecting one's line of joy --, well, everything happens as if, at a certain level x, since it's variable for each person, in a certain way, we could say that this guy acquired and possesses his power, that is, it's been increased so well, he has so successfully increased the power of action -- the passive affect – that we might say that he comes into possession of this power of action. He has it, or is so close to having it, very close to having it, but he has it; we can say, basically, say that he has it.

What does all that mean? Here we have another point where you must pay close attention. It means that he gets out of the realm of passions. That means he gets out of the realm of passions, and what does that mean, getting out of the realm of passions? The realm of passions, you remember, must be defined exactly like this: there is passion, my affects are passions as long as my affections are mere perception... are, in the encounter I create with others body, are the simple perception of the effect of the external body on mine. [*Pause*] As long as I know bodies through the effect that the external body has on me, as long as I know the bodies in this way, I can say that my affections are inadequate, and that my affects are passions, whether joys or sorrows. So, when I say everything happens as if, at the end of the selection of this line of joy, I reached a point, a variable threshold for each of us, where I can say: Ah, that guy, he possesses it, his power of action, how do I recognize this, that someone possesses? By anything: his way of walking, his way of being gentle, his way of getting angry when he is... I don't know what... his charm... I don't know; these are not very reasonable things through which I recognize that; it's through some sort of agreement with himself. [*Pause*]

So, fine, what was I saying, yes... So, when I say: well there, now my power of action, I grasp it, that means -- if that means something -- that means that I no longer know bodies through the simple effect that an external body has on mine, since that was the domain of passion; that was the domain of joys and sorrows, all that. As long as I did not yet possess my power of action, my power of action simply increased or decreased, but I did not yet possess it. When I possess it, something must have changed. So, what has changed? And moreover, it's this something that has changed that will allow me to define this term more seriously: what does "possessing one's power of action" mean? What could have changed? So, we have to start again, there... I have as a reference point: well then, this is a state, this second state, it's a state in which I no longer know the external bodies simply through the effect that they have on my own body, through the imprint they have on mine. By what other means could I know them?

So, with this, we must all be experiencing an illumination. Yes indeed, we already know this! We already know this because we talked about it previously. What else do I have as a possibility? I no longer know bodies through the effect they have on my own, but, but, but, I know them as the relations that constitute them, insofar as these relations combine with the relations that constitute me. What I grasp hold of is no longer the effects of a body on mine; it's a composition of relations between a body and my own, a huge difference, an immense, immense difference.[3]

You will ask me, what is this knowledge? In reading Spinoza, one might think that this is very abstract. So, does that mean doing math? That could mean this: it may mean doing math, but this goes so much farther than math. I'll choose two examples: when can I say, "I know how to dance," or "I know how to swim"? These examples, they are not in the letter of the *Ethics*, they are not... but he could have used them, he could have indeed used them -- "I can swim in a Dutch canal", "I am swimming in Amsterdam", "I'm going to dance on Saturday evening in Amsterdam" -- fine, what does it mean, "I know how to swim, I know how to dance", if I know how to? What does it mean, say, what does it mean " I don't know how to swim", or "I don't know how very well"? "Ah, are you coming to swim?" "No, I don't know how to very well, I'm afraid of drowning ..."

Well, you understand, this is not math. Someone who doesn't know how to swim is someone who understands nothing about what? He understands nothing about the movement of a wave, he understands nothing about the movement of a wave. What does this mean? He understands nothing about the movement of the wave. He enters the water... First of all, he enters the water badly, eh? – I'm talking about this because I swim very, very badly, so… [*Laughter*] – "He enters the water badly", what does this mean? You understand, we are constantly reduced to what? To waiting, to waiting with... -- At the same moment, it rushes, in my mouth -- waiting with... If I am waiting, I'm sure to be sad! Oh, hold on, isn't waiting a basic motive of sadness? Each time I wait, I'm already done. I'm already done, I get sad, right? So fine, of course, never wait. You can wait within space. Why might waiting in space matter? You can be there like a statue (*borne*); one can always wait… But, in another sense, don't wait, no... Don't wait for anything, because ... Spinoza also says things... Have no hope...

And at the same time, for Spinoza, this is the opposite of a desperate world, but hope... This is completely the core. This is analysis of the core. You will always find in hope a core of sadness,

the conspiracy of sadness. The joy of hope is the conspiracy of sadness, that is, this is bad joy. Fine, but finally, I enter the water, so that gets me wet... Then, with that happening, I curl up. Wham! I get a wave in the face, well, oh there, I start to yell, I start choking... Another wave comes, good, right in the… It knocks me out, all that. [*Laughter*] I roll around -- grotesquely, as well -- then, there's the sadness of being ridiculous, added on top of that. [*Laughter*]

What have I done? I lived along a rhythm in which I was perpetually waiting for the effect of the external body on mine -- while calling the sea a "body", right? -- Fine, there we are, I was waiting for the effect. So, in fact, I could have joys there ... I had some small joys: "Oh that's so funny!" [*Laughter*] "Oh, did you see, did you see the beautiful wave, there?", I got it, I got it! This time, it didn't knock me out...". [*Laughter*] Very good. And we all go through that and learning anything at all is an analysis of what it means to learn. That's what learning is. But what is the process of learning (*apprentissage*)? [It's] when, little by little, you are going to make selections, selecting what? Well, knowing how to swim, what is it? It is knowing that a body has its aspects. This really is going to be organizing the encounter. Learning is always organizing the encounter. Specifically, there are never bad encounters; these are encounters at full force (*de plein fouet*). When you get into the water, you have to know, I guess... But still you have to... There are people who will never get there; but in their case, they simply have to keep from going to the beach. [*Laughter*] It's very simple. They have only to keep themselves from getting into an impossible situation. It's not bad not knowing how to swim; it's only bad on the beach. It's not bad not knowing how to dance, except in one place: at dance halls. If you put yourself in an impossible situation -- you can't dance, and at the same time, an obscure stubborn impulse makes you want to piss everyone off and go to the dance hall anyway -- [*Laughter*] this is a disaster! So in this, there is going to be a culture of sadness; you will make others pay for having accompanied them to the dance hall, and it will be revenge there and then, it will be the world of revenge, you will be behaving like a real bully, you will... [*Deleuze doesn't finish*]

There is an admirable, admirable short story by Chekhov. It's in a small Russian district -- I don't remember it; this just comes to my mind -- and there is a bitter little official, all that, quite bitter, and he goes to the ball given by the district general, and his wife made herself beautiful. And he already says to himself en route there, he says to himself: "Oh... she is beautiful ...", and he feels more and more shabby, more and more pathetic. And she is beautiful, she is beautiful anyway... But, far from that giving him a kind of pride, any joy, it fills him with hatred: "You are so beautiful, you bitch, you're so beautiful...". [*Laughter*] And he goes to the ball, and he realizes that his wife there is glowing. She is glowing not at all for bad or shameful or inexpressible reasons, but because she is happy, she is happy for one evening. So, he says to himself there in his corner: "You, I will not let you get away with this". [*Someone asks Deleuze to speak up; general laughter*] Yes, but a story like that, which is very intimate... [*Laughter*] So, there he says to himself: "You're going to see, you're going to see...". So, she has been transformed, she has been transformed. Then he says to her, "Come over here, I have something to say to you ...", which he says to her in a panic, him, all panicky, "This can't continue..." He says to her: "You flirted with the captain, there...", [*Laughter*] and she says: "No, no... ". She doesn't even know who the captain is, she has done nothing, done nothing at all. "Yes you did, yes you did!"... and he begins to raise his voice, and in her turn in a panic, she says to him: "No, no, no scene, don't make a scene". "Ah well", he says, "well, let's go now!" She said, "I'm begging you; I'm begging you, I never asked you anything in my life, let me stay another hour". So, he has her now, he has

her now, and he says: "No, no, no, I'm going to make a scene". [*Laughter*] She leaves, she leaves, and as she walks, he puts himself a little behind her, and she is crying. And he is a little bit behind, and he looks at her, and as she walks, her silhouette collapses, and he discovers joy, an intense joy: "I got her, I got her, I got her". So obviously, this is Chekhov's world, it's never very... He never misses, Chekhov. And, this is the same Chekhov... Anyway, never mind.

Fine, well, you see, you see, I was saying that about dancing, but to know how to do something is not knowing mathematics; I would say it is much more, it is living mathematics. To know how to swim is first to know how to present to the wave the aspect of one's body under which this body combines in its movement with the movement of the wave. You see? [*Pause*] For a magnificent writer, what does it mean to be a sea captain, a good captain? A good captain... -- I am thinking of such an admirable author, because I read some of his works again not long ago, Polish-English, who is [Joseph] Conrad. In Conrad's novels, you have all the storms possible, since he was a sailor by trade, and he draws his work from it. There are all the storms possible which, we learn from reading Conrad, that these are extraordinarily diverse. Depending on the nature of the storm, a good captain is one who, depending on the storm, places his boat at the best speed and in the best position vis-à-vis the wave so that the wave's movement and the boat's movement are composed with each other, instead of the wave's movement decomposing the boat's movement.

Knowing how to dance is the same thing. To know how to dance is precisely to present one's body following the aspect in which, in terms of dance, it composes itself with the body of the male or woman partner. This is usually what we call a rhythm. Fine, if this is a mathematics of rhythm, no one has anything against it; it's not doing math. So, it is really about grasping things no longer by the effect they have on my body, while waiting for this effect, but about seizing things within the compositions of relations between them and my body. When you reach this life skill (*savoir-vivre*), you can say: "I possess my power of action". Before, you could only say one thing: "I'm leaning towards increasing my power of action."

At that point, you no longer see so many things, so many objects. That was at the time of inadequate affections; that was at the first moment when you were seeing objects. In this second moment, you see nothing other than relations and compositions of relations to infinity; that is, a loved one, a woman or a man, you are no longer in the state in which you say to yourself… [*Deleuze does not finish*]. And in a way, the other thing can do nothing against you. In a certain way, you are invulnerable – taking into account what I said, that there are always inevitable sorrows – to some extent, you are invulnerable. Because even if you die, even if a very good swimmer dies, his or her death is not in the same way that a bad swimmer would die. He or she dies in a kind of, I guess, a kind of... well, that's where the expression, "Well yes, it was inevitable," takes on meaning. He or she dies in some sort of accord with him/herself. The life has not been a waste. This is important, after all.

So, it's always disturbing to die; sadness, it's sad, it's always sad. But there are many ways to die happy, without making others pay for it first. It's terrible, people who die while making others pay for it. So no; in this, no, no. Here it occurs much better, the swimmer who did not spot a particularly devious incoming wave arrive, and dies in a kind of -- I assume, I assume -- does he die, there in a kind of astonishment? "Oh, oh well, that's the one, then!" [*Laughter*] Okay, he

says to himself, "oh well yes". The captain who mistakes his storm, he has a kind of serenity which means that he remains the last on board, not out of duty, but better to look at this thing, as if it were a matter of ripping forth a final secret about the composition of the relations. This is no longer a man, it's no longer a woman; what is it? It is not that this has become impersonal; on the contrary, this remains extraordinarily personal; it's a personality that has completely changed its meaning.

I see someone walking in; I no longer see him as a delimited object. I see him as an aggregate of mobile relations, that is, Spinoza will say: "a proportion of rest and movement, of speed and slowness". And I recognize him by this proportion that I do not confuse with any other proportion. So, my favorite dancer, what is my favorite dancer? -- I say "my" to point out that this is an example, right, this is a very general example. -- What is the favorite dancer, if there is a favorite dancer, I don't know. If there is a favorite dancer, it is precisely the dancer whose relations of speed and slowness are composed most naturally, most directly, most immediately with mine, and I might have a favorite dancer perhaps, just as I have a favorite sea – s-e-a --, there where this is best composed.[4] And now we have the world turning into a composition of composition of composition of infinite relations. And now we have no individuality getting lost, since each relation, each proportion of movement and rest has its style, which makes me say, then: "Well yes, that's so-and-so", "that's *that* thing", "Ah yes, this is the Atlantic, it is not the Mediterranean", "Ah yes, it's this, it's not that". But you see, I am no longer waiting on the effect of a body on mine; I grasp hold of a body as an aggregate of relations, and I can only grasp hold of a body as an aggregate of relations when I am already able to compose my relations with that body's.

Why are we then holding onto something solid here? Why does this not occur with sadness? It can't work with sadness. If I limit myself to the lines of sadness, I will never pass into this second state of the composition of relations. Why? Here, for a childish reason, you see: there is sadness when I encounter a body which does not agree with mine; so, of course, there are always relations that get composed, but not with mine! Mine, on the contrary, is destroyed. So, starting from a sadness, I could never lift myself up. From a sadness-passion, I could never lift myself up to the notion of a composition of relations, except very abstractly, namely: that this body which does not suit me, that is, which destroys my own relations, is composed with other bodies. But it will not do so with mine. So, starting from a sadness, I cannot raise myself up to the idea of common relations between the external body and mine, since sadness is the effect of a body which, precisely, is not suitable with mine. Whereas, starting from the joys-passions, I can raise myself up because, precisely, the joys-passions increase my power of action. I can raise myself up through a kind of leap, a leap, to this understanding of something in common, which is a composed relation, between the external body and my own, and at that moment, when I raise myself up, everything changes: I possess my power of action. You understand? [*Pause*]

So, whatever you learn, that's it, I think... To learn is always to penetrate into the... There is only this: you never learn abstractly. So, in a sense, joy must win. In what sense? It has to win in propelling us to this level at which what I grasp hold of is no longer the effects of a body on mine, but the composed relations between a body and my own. You see that I am no longer in the realm of *affectio*. There we are; I had a first realm, *affectio*, as I defined it: the encounter of a

body, an effect of an external body on mine, from which affects flow -- *affectus* -- , which are passions. Now I'm on a whole new level: compositions of relations and composed relations.

What results from this? Well, it's enough to understand two more points. When I arrive at compositions of relations and composed relations, at that point, my ideas are necessarily adequate, are necessarily adequate: [that's the] first point to understand. Why? Second point to understand: ideas always result from affects, but this time, these affects are no longer passions, that is, increases or decreases in the power of acting. These affects are from actions. These are active affects. The affects that result from an adequate idea are active affects, action-affects, that is, expressions of my power of action, and no longer increases or decreases in this power of action. So, the second state of reason is this: conquest of relations and compositions of relations from which active affects result, which can only be joys from then on.

Uh… [Time for] a break! You think about this, because you will tell me if there are things that you do not understand. So, there are two problems here: why [are there] adequate ideas, and what is it ... yes, why is that the domain of the adequate? You sense that we have already entered a world of univocity. Okay, think about it; I'm going to go ask about next week, about what's going on. [*Interruption, short break in the session*] [1:12:07]

We were lost in signs. Earlier, in fact, we were given over to perceptions, in the sense of perception being the idea of the effect of an external body on mine. Now, where have we reached? Well, this is a completely different kind of idea. In a sense, it is no longer the domain of perceptions; it's a domain... and yet, it is not a domain of abstraction at all. We've now reached the idea of compositions of relations between the two bodies, one of which is mine, one of which is an external body, and the other of which is mine. And my question is: why is this idea clear and distinct, and necessarily adequate? If we indeed answer the question, we will make another leap forward. We keep leaping forward. These ideas about composition of relations which, therefore, differ completely from ideas of effect, why do they differ from the ideas of effect? Because they give us the cause of the effects. If a body has a particular effect on mine, it is indeed because, in its relations, it composes itself with mine, with my relations, or else decomposes my relations. If arsenic has a particular taste, and the apple has a particular taste, it's indeed because arsenic breaks down some of my relations. Fine, understand.

So, I possess the cause: the cause of the effects of a body on mine is the nature of the composition of the relations between two bodies, or of the act by which the external body breaks down my relations. This is the cause. If the inadequate idea was an idea of an effect separate from its cause, namely I receive the effect and I have no idea of the cause, we can see that this new type of idea is necessarily adequate. What is Spinoza going to call it? Once again, the other ideas are signs. What name, is there a name, in Spinoza, that allows us to recognize this? Yes! He gives a very interesting name; we will see why... He calls these ideas of compositions of relations, he calls them *common notions*.[5]

Common notions, you see, the term doesn't sound like much. On the one hand, it has a tradition in philosophy, but for other philosophers, it means something else. For example, it goes back to the Stoics. The Stoics were already talking about common notions. But generally, these were concepts common to all minds. In Spinoza, common notions will be very common to all minds --

and still, we will see with what nuances --, but that is not the essential meaning of the common notion. In fact, it is not initially common to everyone's mind; this is only so by means of consequence. But it is said to be common; why?

Let's take a common notion, so here let's return to a very specific example so that you understand that it's not just... It can be a matter of science, but it can also be a matter of practical life. In my examples, dancing, swimming, it was a very practical matter of life, and yet there was knowledge (*un savoir*) involved. This is a domain of knowledge, but knowledge that is united with life. Let's take a more scientific example. [*Pause*] There's a body I call chyle, c-h-y-l-e. This is a body that I call chyle. There is another body that I call lymph. There is a third body that I call blood. These are bodies, all these are bodies that are part of my composition, chyle, lymph, blood. I'm reminding you.[6] I have already said that in the seventeenth century, in the biology of the seventeenth, chyle and lymph do not correspond to what is called, today, chyle and lymph, but correspond much more to what are called white blood cells and red blood cells. That is, chyle and lymph are components of the blood.

Chyle is therefore defined by a certain relation of movement and rest, speed and slowness, likewise lymph. They compose their relations to form blood. Blood is the composed relation of, let's say, chyle and lymph. There are other relations, but it doesn't matter; let me stick to the simplest example. So, there is a composed relation. What is the composed relation common to? It is common to the components -- to the component parts --, and to the composed whole. There is a relation that causes chyle and the lymph to be parts of blood, and blood to be the whole of chyle and lymph. It's this same relation in which chyle and lymph are composed in order to form blood, and in which blood is decomposed in order yield chyle and lymph. I would say that this composed relation is literally common to the whole and to the parts. It is like a law of the composition of relations: there is a relation in a composition; there is a relation common to the whole, that is, to the blood, and to the parts, that is, to chyle and lymph. You see... Henceforth, the common notion is not simply common because [it's] common to all minds, I mean endowed with objectivity, invariability, etc. It is common, above all, because it is common to the part and to the whole. There, Spinoza completely transforms the traditional sense of common notion. It is common to the part and to the whole.

In other words, [concerning] the common notion, I would say that the two characteristics of the common notion are that it expresses the cause, first characteristic; second characteristic, it is common to the part and to the whole. Henceforth, it cannot be inadequate. There, this is mathematical: it cannot be inadequate, since an inadequate idea is the idea of an effect separate from its cause, on the one hand, and it is the idea of a part separate from the whole to which it belongs. Common notions... Just as the first kind of affections were necessarily inadequate ideas, common notions are necessarily adequate notions. Hence: the affects which result from common notions are affect-actions; these are active joys. As a result, to finish this point, I must make a kind of warning. The theory of common notions is introduced in the *Ethics* in Book II. And, in book II -- if you read book II, as you surely will --, you will be surprised; you will have the impression there of being a bit lost in relation to... [*Interruption of the recording*] [1:21:45]

Part 3

... because that corresponds rather poorly to all that I have just told you. I mean in the presentation in book II of the *Ethics*, Spinoza begins with what he himself calls the most universal common notions, that is, the idea of that in which all bodies agree. All bodies agree in that they are in extension (*étendue*); in this, they agree that they have movement and rest. But if you continue... Why does he start there, I wonder? Well, in a way, it's almost... It's sad, but he can't do otherwise. I say "it's sad" because it makes things very abstract; one gets the impression that common notions, then, are very general considerations, very... entirely general. These are not precise relations at all, "all the bodies are in extension...", it isn't... He is forced to do it, because here he makes a kind of logical deduction of common notions.

So, by making his logical deduction from common notions, he is forced to start with the most universal ones, in which it is necessary to have patience, because if you go on to the next proposition, you see that it is a question of common notions, now no longer common to all bodies, but common to "at least two bodies". I would almost say: this is the one that counts. Do not rely on the order of the text; you have to start with something. He has important reasons that make him begin with the most universal common notions. But this is not where the common notions are operative. The most universal common notions leave us floating. What's interesting are the two-bodied common notions, that is, the least universal common notions, or the most precise common notions.

Why is that what's important? For example, between the body of the sea... Moreover, I'm clarifying: the two-bodied notion common, where one of them is mine – otherwise, I wouldn't form the common notion; I can only form the common notion because one of the bodies that comes under the common notion is my body; otherwise it would be absolutely abstract – so, in fact, the least universal common notions hold the secret of all common notions. As a result, he is right to start with this order. As he makes a deduction from common notions, he is right to start with the most universal, but the whole practical sense of common notions is in the reverse order, to start from the least universal. What is interesting in life is the common notions at the level of "another body and mine", because it's through those common notions that we can raise ourselves up little by little to the most universal common notions. You understand?

Confirmation of this would simply be required, that it's indeed the least universal common notions which are first of all more important. Well, if you go to book V [of the *Ethics*], you will see that in book V, Spinoza no longer chooses the deductive order of common notions but chooses the real order. We start by forming the least universal common notions, that is, those that suit a body and my own, and from there, we raise ourselves up toward more and more general and more and more universal common notions. So, fine, is that all? So, you see, this second effort of reason is common notions and active joys.

Have we exhausted everything? There we have gotten out of the world of signs. Why? This is almost the conclusion I wanted to reach today. Now, you understand, yes? I only have to draw some conclusions: a common notion is necessarily univocal. We are completely out of the equivocity of the sign. When you've reached the domain of compositions of relations, you have reached univocity. Why are these common notions necessarily univocal expressions? For a very

simple reason: once again, they are common because they are common to at least two bodies. Henceforth, being common to at least two bodies, they express themselves in one and the same sense of the other body and mine. They cannot express themselves in several senses. And the most universal common notions are expressed of all bodies, right, but they can only be expressed in one and the same sense. There cannot be equivocity at the level of common notions for a simple reason: it's that equivocity tells me that the same thing, the same term, the same notion is not expressed in the same sense for the part and for the whole, for this and for that. On the contrary, common notions can only have a single sense. [*Pause*]

So, this world we were looking for from the start, it almost seems... I'm going too fast in a way because this is a result of what we've said. There is no longer any problem at this level. We will see that there are other problems, but there is no problem [here]. If you have understood what a common concept is, for example, the movement of the wave and the movement of my body insofar as they compose each other, this is an absolutely univocal concept. Only the bad swimmer is equivocal; only the bad dancer is equivocal. The good dancer is a univocal expression. Necessarily so: this is the world of light. Is it only that? No! A final effort... What would a final effort be? We haven't reached everything yet. What else is there? You see, I already have two levels: the bodies envisioned within the effects they have on each other; that's what inadequate affection is. A second level: the bodies envisaged in the relations that are composed; that's what the common notion or the adequate idea is.

Have I said everything about what there is in the world? No, I haven't said… I haven't expressed a term that constantly occurs in Spinoza, namely: essences, bodies envisaged in their essences. Ah, that will be very important for our future. So, isn't the common notion the idea of an essence? No, it couldn't be! What is a common notion? There, you'll allow me a quick terminological parenthesis because, once again, I so fully believe that in philosophy, there is a very... very simple terminology, but that if you do not have it, you cannot understand. It is very unfortunate to confuse two things. It is very unfortunate to confuse terminologically what is called an abstract idea and what is called a general idea. The difference is very important.

The abstract idea is a funny thing, to the point that nobody knows if there is one. This is not in Spinoza here, but I need it for Spinoza; these are remarks on terminology. Nobody knows if that exists, something like an abstract idea. What would it be? If there is one, what would it be? I will give an example; let's consider some examples: you see, I have my glasses here on the sheet of paper. I ... I'm extracting ... -- they're on the sheet of paper, right? – I'm extracting my glasses from the sheet of paper. Is this an abstraction? [*Laughter*] You laugh, and you say to me: obviously not, it's not an abstraction. For even with your glasses sitting on the sheet of paper, there was a so-called "real" distinction between your glasses and the sheet of paper, and not a distinction through reason. So there, I'm not making an abstraction, I'm making a separation. Is this okay? Yes.

An upper level... [*noise from sheet of paper*] -- my glasses were separable from the sheet of paper. A second level: what could we call a selection? I am making a selection, and no longer a separation... [*noise from a sheet of paper*] There we have a sheet of paper; I take it for itself. You see? These are practical exercises in philosophy. I'd dream, and then we would have to... That's how they did it in the Middle Ages, you see. They did their courses like that, and then there

were... the students who spoke on very specific issues, it was great, so... There were the riots, there was all that... [*Laughter*]

So, here we have my sheet of paper; a sheet of paper has a front and a back, a frontside and a reverse side. I cannot separate them. I could separate my glasses and the sheet of paper; I cannot separate the front and back of the page. You follow me? On the other hand, I can select them. What does “selecting” mean? [It’s] placing myself in the optical state in which I strictly see only one side, like that. I’ll have selected either the back or the front. Ha, if I hold it like that... you see there... Well, yes, I haven’t selected! Might I say that such a selection... For there are a lot of authors -- it's funny, these things -- there are a lot of authors who do... -- it doesn't matter, huh – who create a pure misunderstanding out of abstraction. They understand abstraction as being a selection of the front and back. This is idiotic; that’s not an abstraction. Why? Because the front and back are given as inseparable within the thing, the sheet of paper, but in my representation, they can be given separately. My representation can give me the front and back distinctly, separately. I would say: there is no abstraction.

That gives us at least a very strict definition of abstraction: we can only use the word abstraction when we speak of an operation that consists of separating through thought what is inseparable in the representation. I don't see any other possible definition of abstraction. If you separate through thought what is inseparable in the representation itself, at that point, you make an abstraction. You follow me? So, when you selected the front, or the back, you did not make any abstraction since this is given separately in your representation, or it is separately presentable in your representation. When would you create an abstraction? Once again, we do not know if an abstraction exists, but in any case, I just know that if it exists, it must meet this criterion: you separate through thought what is given as inseparable or unseparated in the representation.

Oh well, this is difficult! I’m choosing an example. I say: "an extension without movement” ... It's suspicious, right? I'm not sure; is this an abstraction? An immobile extension... Can I really imagine an immobile extension, or else does the movement belong to extension? If movement and extension are inseparable in the representation, when I say, "an immobile extension", I am making an abstraction. Let's choose a safer example: "an extended color". I know that color implies extension, color implies extension. If I say, "a non-extended color", I am separating through thought something that is not separable in the representation. A non-extended color would be an abstraction, okay? Are there any non-extended colors? Perhaps, I don't know, I don't know; it's very complicated. In any case, that would be an abstraction. As a result, an abstraction, in the strict sense of the word, "to separate through thought what is given as one within representation", "to create two through thought what is given as one in representation", that kind of thing creates doubts, and more than doubts, for many philosophers.

As a result, you will hear many philosophers saying: "there is no abstract idea", "there is no abstract idea, and there cannot be any because an abstract idea is contradictory”. You see that this position of denying abstract ideas and the possibility of abstract ideas just consists in taking strictly the definition of abstraction. You will not be able to think as separate something that is not separable in representation. As a result, authors like Hume, like all that are called English empiricists, Berkeley, Hume, still others, and many moderns, completely deny the existence and the possibility of the existence of abstract ideas. So, what do they mean? Their thesis is

understandable only if they add: "Be careful, there are no abstract ideas, but there are general ideas". That's why these are very different, abstract and general.

Because a general idea, what is it? You'll see that it's completely different. "Abstract" meant the nature of certain assumed ideas; "general" doesn't refer to a kind of idea. It's a function; it's a function that some ideas, or all ideas, can take on. It's a function. What does that mean, a function? An abstraction, if it exists, is something, something abstract. What is a generality? It's not some thing; it's a relation, it's a relation that suits several things. A general idea is the idea of a relation that suits several things. We will understand the difference; there I... -- At least, let all that teach you something -- What would the abstract idea of a triangle be? The abstract idea of a triangle would be the idea of a triangle which is neither straight, nor, er... nor, er... I don't know what, I don't know what... you see... Or an angle that is neither straight, obtuse, nor acute. That would be the pure idea of an angle. As Berkeley already said, show me such an angle... So obviously, by saying "show it to me", he was not embarrassed since, by definition, it's not demonstrable, an abstract idea. But he meant "it makes absolutely no sense". When you talk about the idea of an angle, no sense! There is no angle that isn't straight, acute, or obtuse. So, [we have] negation of abstract ideas.

That doesn't prevent there being general ideas. What is the general idea? There is no abstract idea of the triangle. The triangle is always this or that, but a triangle, whatever it is, has its three angles: the sum of its three angles equal to two right angles. A + B + C = two right angles. What is that? It's not some thing; it's a relation. This relation is suitable for all triangles, whatever they might be. Spinoza would say: "This is the common notion of triangles; this is the relation common to all triangles; it is the composed relation of all triangles." It's a general idea; it's not an abstract idea. There is no abstract idea of a triangle; on the other hand, there is a general idea of the triangle, it is the composed relation that is suitable for all triangles: A + B + C = two right angles. And A + B + C = two right angles, it is not the idea of a triangle; it's the idea of a relation, you know, it's the idea of a relation realized through all the triangles.

In other words, there are no abstract ideas; there are only specific ideas that can have general functions. "General" is the function that a particular idea can assume when it consists in a composed relation common to several specific ideas. The composed relation common to several specific ideas is the general idea. It's general through its function, not through its nature. You understand?

Well, I would say about Spinoza's common notions, these are above all not abstract ideas, and in fact, in Spinoza, you find... -- He has this in common with the purest empiricists -- you find quite explicitly a radical critique of the abstract idea; this even gives him a laugh, the hypothesis of abstract ideas; he finds it grotesque! And you can perhaps see why: for him, he feels this quite deeply; for him, the abstract idea is a return to equivocal language. Equivocal language proceeds by abstraction, by pseudo abstraction, but in fact, there is no abstraction. So, here Spinoza can oppose quite explicitly, in Book II, common notions to what he calls transcendental terms, transcendental terms being precisely abstract ideas. So, fine. [*Pause*]

Why did I go through this parenthesis? Well, a common notion, as far as it goes, it does not yet give us an idea of the essence of bodies. In fact, what it gives us is a composed relation which is

suitable for a certain number of bodies, just as “A + B + C” is suitable for all triangular bodies. But in this way, and he says it formally in a demonstration in book II, the common notion does not state the essence of anything, since the essence of a thing is, on the contrary, the singular power of action of such thing, and not the common relation between two things.

So, this means that the third step is to raise oneself from common notions to the knowledge of the singular essences of everything. And by "singular essence" -- above all, there is no need to reintroduce an abstraction either -- that is why he says "singular". It’s in its individuality, in its singularity that each thing has an essence, and its essence is its degree of power of action taken within itself. It’s its power of action as such. And that goes beyond common notions, so as a result, we still need take another type of idea to grasp the essences. Quite simply, what Spinoza is going to strive to show is that, starting from common notions, common notions are springboards to reach knowledge of the essences. At that moment, I myself grasp, in my essence, external bodies in their essences, and substance -- that is, God -- in its essence. At that point, my knowledge no longer proceeds by common notions; it proceeds by singular essences.

And when you find in Spinoza's terminology the distinction of three kinds of knowledge, you see that it addresses some very precise things that we can summarize now, specifically:

The first kind -- if I group these -- the first kind of knowledge will be the aggregate of affections and affects-passions which result from it, that is, the world of signs.

The second kind of knowledge, called reason, will be the aggregate of univocal common notions and the active affects that result from them. How do we move from the first kind to the second? As we have seen, here I am only doing a recap; we saw it in great detail: it’s by getting oneself onto the joy vector, the increase in power of action.

Third, what Spinoza calls third kind of knowledge or intuition, this time, it’s the knowledge of essences. A subsidiary question: how do we move from common notions to essences? That’s what we will only be able to see at the very end. In any case, the second kind and the third kind are necessarily adequate, are adequate kinds of knowledge, in contrast to the first kind, and in this way, they constitute the world of univocity.

So, I will quickly finish on this: it is a very curious conception that we’ve reached. In book V, which is the most difficult one, and surely the most beautiful book, which indeed will float in the essences, will bob along in the realm of pure essences, in book V, Spinoza tells us some very strange things, in which there are -- I explained to you that, it seems to me, that this book changes rhythm, all that, has very curious speeds, accelerations, intuitions that proceed like bolts of lightning, a very different tone from other books -- well, he says... fairly constantly, he refers to his mysterious expression: "from now on, we are experiencing,… from now on, we are experiencing that we are eternal". And in commentaries on Spinoza, that has a lot... many [readers] have done extensive research on what this experience is, "from now on", that each person experiences in the second and third kind of knowledge, in which it would be eternal.

What is this eternity of Spinoza? I just want ... -- I can't go into the details right now --, I just want to refer to the theorems of book V, 38-40, I believe -- ah but, I don't have the reference --

yes, it’s 38-40, where he tells us something, well, which seems to me quite enjoyable for us, for each of our eternities. He says: you understand, here it is, it's about, it's about knowing what you're going to do, what you're doing in your life, he says. He says: there are people, ultimately, the great majority of them, who are occupied with affections and affects of the first kind. Oddly enough, he uses the term there: "pars minima", the smallest part, and "pars maxima", the largest part. So, it's like, there, a proportion he's trying to express. There are people, and well, most of them are occupied with affections of the first kind and affects of the first kind. He says: "well those people, obviously..."

What does he mean? That really proceeds at full speed! He says, "Well, those people, yes, they run little risk of feeling eternal…” But do they? [It’s] not sure, not entirely sure, that they do. And he adds this expression, which seems to me a mystery, but a very, very luminous mystery; he says: "on the other hand, the people who will have led their lives in such a way that they will have fulfilled the greatest part of themselves", "maxima pars", -- not all! -- Why not all? Not all, as we have seen, because there are inevitable sorrows, because everyone is mortal, all that... But they will have organized and composed their lives in such a way that they will have fulfilled the major part of themselves with common notions and ideas of essences, that is, affections of the second and third kind. These people are such, he says, that when they die, it’s very little of themselves that dies with them. Oh, how odd; this is splendid! Very, very beautiful! Beautiful! It is the smallest part of themselves that will die with them because they have fulfilled the greatest part of themselves with affections and affects that, precisely, escape death. What did he mean?

Of course, we are right to speak of a kind of mystical experience, a kind of non-religious experience, on which Book V ends. But it is a mystic, once again, it is a mystic of light. I mean, this story of an experimentation of eternity from now on consists in saying: but, from now on, you can act so that the greatest part of yourself is realized, so that the greatest part of your power of action is realized through common notions and ideas of essences. And at that point, well of course, you will die, you will die like everyone else, and even like everyone else, you will be very sad to die, but what will die from you and what will be sad in you about dying will ultimately be the smallest part of you.

Strange… We sense... Here, I don't even want to go any further because it's... There is nothing more to say. You have to see if this works for you, if this means something for you. If that doesn't mean anything, you can just drop it; all the rest of Spinozism is still valuable. But this is what he wants us to feel by [saying]: "we experience that we are eternal", that is, eternity is a matter of experimentation. I don’t think he means it’s about a given experience; he means, this is a matter of active experimentation. If you've reached the second kind of knowledge or the third kind, then you've built... you've built your own eternity, as a lived eternity. Okay, let's say...

But all this, where I want to conclude for the next time, is that henceforth, an individual, whatever it is, is composed of three levels, and this will then reinitiate all our problems concerning univocity, equivocity, and we will only have this to do in order finally to understand the relationships between ethics and ontology, which will bring us to the end. The three levels I see... I am saying: you or me, or the table -- since there are no abstract ideas -- the table is this table. For man, there is no abstract idea of man; it’s this one or that one. There are simply general ideas of man. What is a general idea of man? You see the difference.

The definition of man -- "man is a reasonable animal" – that's an abstract idea. Spinoza will never define man as a reasonable animal. How will he define man? By the composed relation likely to suit all men, in other words, by a collectivity. This is the way he gets into politics. He would say very well: there is no definition of man except political, since the relation to which all particular men as particular men, the relation as such that can suit all particular men as particular, that's the general idea of man. But if you are looking for an abstract essence, no. Essences are not abstract. Essence is the essence of Peter or of Paul, Spinoza repeats all the time. There is no abstract essence; there is no essence of man. On the other hand, there is a composition of relations of all men. This would be the ideal society. In fact, there aren't even any of them, since... why men? Because they were led away... If they were led away by the second and third kind [of knowledge], there would be a community of all men. There is no community of men, because we always have one foot in the first kind [of knowledge], and even worse, both feet, [*Laughter*] and then until then, within the first kind... So, there aren't any, there just aren't. That's why societies are needed. And societies are the means through which, one way or another, we manage within the first kind. Fine.

But you see, there are singular essences, you, me, this table, it has a singular essence, the little cat, the dog, anything has a singular essence, everything, everything. This is the deepest core of an individual. Second level: there are relations, relations of movement and rest, of speed and slowness. At the same time, these relations are constitutive sometimes of an individual, sometimes between two individuals. When they are between two individuals, it's not serious; they are always both at the same time, they are always both between individuals and constitutive of an individual. I mean: a relation will be constitutive of blood, and this same relation will be between chyle and lymph. As every individual is composed, is infinitely composed, it is the same thing to say: a relation is between two individuals, or to say, a relationship is constitutive of a third individual. So, the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness are the second dimension of every individual. So, you are not only a singular essence, you are an aggregate of relations of movement and rest, of different speed and slowness. You, Peter, there are different relations from those that compose Paul. Simply, Pierre and Paul can compose themselves between each other, compose their relations; at that point, they form a third individuality. Fine.

And what else? There are the affections, the passive affections that happen to me. They are inevitable. The first kind indeed has a domain, but this domain, to what dimension of the individual does it refer? To this, this time: that an individual has a very large number... -- he says it like that --, a very large number of parts, "plurime partes", *plurime partes*, word for word: a very large number of parts. Every individual is composed, that is, has a very large number of parts, which themselves constitute sub-individualities, etc., etc., ad infinitum. So, I have an infinity of parts that compose me, which enter into my composition.

What creates the unity of everything? I would say that the very large number of parts which constitute me, which belong to me, belong to me in such or such a relation -- the relations that compose me --, and the relation or the relations that compose me express my essence. But I can say that the individual has three dimensions in Spinoza: the extensive parts which belong to him or her - in parentheses, under a particular relation -- the second dimension: the relations that characterize him or her; third dimension: the singular essence that corresponds to him or her.

Well, this is where we are, and the problem, the problem for next time, will be exactly: what is this status of the three dimensions? What does that mean, these three dimensions that happen to us there? Well, I have parts; these parts enter into certain relations; these relations correspond to essences, to an essence. Fine, but what, then? What is the status of the extensive parts? The status of the relations, we have seen, right, but then again, the two ends... This time, it's the two ends of the chain that are missing. We have seen the status of the relations, the common notions. But the status of the parts that compose us? You understand, it's very strange; they are constantly renewed, they are never the same. I am saying "these are my parts" solely to the extent that they realize my relations. They only belong to me within a particular relation. So, if they change, other parts reach me, which is like saying: I am constantly renewing my cells, my molecules, etc. ... What defines them as mine are the relations that constitute me. As long as parts enter into those relations, they are "my" parts. But where do these parts come from? This is going to be a very curious problem.

This is why in book two of the *Ethics*, Spinoza feels the need to cut the order of his proofs to make a physico-biological presentation regarding his own doctrine of "what a body is," and what a body is as a function of the three dimensions: the parts that belong to it, the relations that compose it, the singular essence that will constitute its power of action.

Which we'll see next week since there's no vacation. [*Pause*] Well, thank you very much. [*Noises from students*] [*End of the session*] [2:02:45]

Notes [N.B. All notes established in 2023]

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[1] Deleuze employs the terms *puissance* and *puissance d'agir*, that I translate respectively as "power of action" and "power of acting," as synonymous. With reference to Spinoza, these terms stand in contrast to *pouvoir*, power.
[2] The word for "worms", "vers", can also mean "lines of verse", and although Deleuze probably means "worms," since he earlier used the words "vers luisants", or "glowworms", the ambiguity is nonetheless of interest, especially in the context of discussion of equivocity and univocity.
[3] In concert with the translation in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* by Robert Hurley, I have chosen to translate Deleuze's "rapport" as *relation*, since Deleuze is gradually developing an argument, from one lecture to the next, of the importance of differential relations in both philosophical and mathematical terms.
[4] Deleuze spells *mer*, sea, in order to avoid confusion with the homophone *mère*, mother.
[5] On common notions, see *Spinoza: Practical philosophy*, pp. 126-132.
[6] For these terms, see the session on Spinoza of January 6, 1981.