

TEMPORALITY AND BELIEF:
TIME OF THE POLITICAL FROM
THE PERSPECTIVE OF AN ETHICS OF IMMANENCE IN THE
PHILOSOPHY OF DELEUZE

A Ph.D. Dissertation

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Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
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January 2012

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ABSTRACT

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The political as object of philosophy is conventionally caught up, vis-à-vis philosophy, in its status as object. They are together but held apart in that the relation between the political and the philosophical tasks is one in which philosophy assumes the function of reflection upon the conditions of the political, while the political itself can be said to be romanticized in this amorous distance between the two. The philosophy of Deleuze (and Guattari) which is considered in this study as a forceful break with and turning away from this precise attitude which both weakens thought and strips the political off of its vital force, is often criticized in contemporary philosophical studies as being apolitical. This situation is considered here as a consequence of the contemporary understanding of the domain of the political as a universal given of a certain order. To challenge this conception, Deleuze's philosophy is reconsidered first in relation to Spinoza in terms of the ethics of immanence, and then in relation to Bergson in terms of temporality in order to determine the specificity of his thinking of politics both in relation to an in difference from both. It is suggested here that once the political is subjected to such a treatment by Deleuze, it assumes a direction of change in that this divergence can no longer be contained within the contemporary understanding of the political but requires thinking of politics in another way.

Keywords : Ethics, Temporality, Immanence, Political, Deleuze, Spinoza, Bergson

ÖZET

ZAMANSALLIK VE İNANÇ: DELEUZE'ÜN FELSEFESİNDE İÇKİN ETİK AÇISINDAN SİYASALIN ZAMANI

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Felsefenin nesnesi olarak siyasal, geleneksel olarak, felsefe karşısında bu nesne konumuna hapsedilmiştir. Yanyana ama birbirinden ayrı tutulan iki alan olarak, siyasal ve felsefi meseleler arasındaki ilişki felsefenin siyasalın koşulları üzerine düşünmekle yetindiği, siyasalın ise bu iki alan arasındaki sevecen mesafede romantize edildiği bir ilişkiden ibaret kalmaktadır. Bu çalışmada hem düşünceyi zayıflatan hem de siyasal hayati güçlerinden sıyrarak bu tutumdan şiddetli bir kopuş ve bu tavrın reddedilişi olarak ileri sürülen Deleuze'ün (ve Guattari'nin) felsefesi, güncel felsefe çalışmalarında ise genellikle apolitik olmakla eleştirilmektedir. Bu durum burada siyasalın belli bir evrensel olarak kabul edildiği günümüz politika anlayışının sonucu olarak ele alınmaktadır. Bu anlayışa karşıt olarak, Deleuze'ün felsefesi öncelikle içkin etik anlamında Spinoza'ya ilişkin olarak, daha sonra da zamansallık anlamında Bergson'a ilişkin olarak yeniden düşünülmekte, bu iki düşünürü kıyasla ve onlardan farklılaştığı noktalara dayanarak Deleuze'ün politika düşüncesinin özgünlüğü ileri sürülmektedir. Bu çalışmada Deleuze tarafından ele alındığı şekliyle siyasalın bir yön değişimi getirdiğini ve bu şekliyle günümüz siyaset anlayışıyla kavranamayacağını, bunun yerine siyasetin başka bir şekilde düşünülmesi gerektirdiğini göstermek amaçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Etik, Zamansallık, İçkinlik, Siyasal, Deleuze, Spinoza, Bergson.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this study, I focus on the implications of an ethics of immanence for the politics of Deleuze's philosophy. When I first embarked upon this study, my main point of focus was the temporality of immanent ethics in the perspective of Deleuze readership with a focus on what would precisely imply individual responsibility but I gradually came to concentrate on the political implications, since what is at stake with immanent ethics is primarily the matter of time which immediately implies not only a singular form of sociality but a distinct and singular thought of history and of the political as well. Therefore what struck me as inevitable in the philosophy of Deleuze was the the passage from the ethical to the political and the question of the passage itself. This shift of emphasis can be observed within the whole of Deleuzian literature as well, as from *Difference and Repetition* (1994) onwards, one finds the trajectory of a thought which becomes increasingly political but in a very singular sense. The summit of Deleuze's politics is to be found in the works co-authored by Félix Guattari and especially in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1988), where one is

confronted with an incredible play of forces which seem to go in all directions at once and in unforeseeable speeds. The title itself (*Mille Plateaux*) implies a sense of quantity which can no longer be pinned down as an ordinary number but a sweeping movement that traverses as many plateaus at once, a truly “nomad” philosophy which traverses continuously the lines between philosophy and non-philosophy, seizing and creating passages and pathways along the way as if in a movement of reshuffling whereby the scenery not only of philosophy but of the world changes dramatically. Deleuze and Guattari (1994) call this a “geo-philosophy,” since thinking is a relating in a certain manner to territory and the earth and not just a matter of establishing an appropriate relationship between subject and object. What interests me most in taking up this study is how this “immediate” passage from the ethical to the political takes place *in Deleuze’s thought of immanence* (because I assume that this passage is inevitable in whatever philosophy) but mostly with an emphasis on the difference of Deleuze’s politics from our contemporary understanding of the political. Thus it is primarily an issue of immanent ethics versus politics and the implications of immanence for the thought of the political.

My hypothesis is that, after a Deleuzian treatment of ethics, that is, once ethics is made into an issue of immanence in the way Deleuze does, the domain of the political requires a change of direction. It is the assumption of this thesis that despite claims to a so-called post-modernity and the challenges to the thought of universality, politics itself, determined by modern conceptions of democracy, freedom and human rights, remains itself a universal of a certain order that is challenged by current political events as we witness them today. In this context, a

Deleuzian politics is often criticized in contemporary critical and philosophical studies as falling short of answering to the demands of a truly political engagement. I suggest that politics, understood as we understand it today within what could be called a “western democratic” legacy that is globalized with the development of capitalism and is itself taken to be universal, is itself subjected to an essential critical treatment in the work of Deleuze – and Guattari – and requires a whole new conception of the domain of the political if its true powers are to be acknowledged.

The problem with contemporary discussions on politics can be summarized in two general points. Without, however, claiming any exhaustive definition, I want to state these two points that interest this study as follows: The one involves the setting up of (given) hierarchies and making judgment. The other involves what could be called the exteriorization and a “futuring” of politics. In the first case, politics is taken to be a matter of determining who is right and wrong, or who is just and who is not, which then comes to determine the given situation by measuring up the political space and ranking the elements accordingly. In this case, it should be said that the political forces are somewhat “domesticated” according to their proximity/distance to certain criteria such as *violence* that come to be determined and recalled arbitrarily to serve the relevant rankings. In the second case, we can talk of a “generalization” of politics where politics itself becomes *the* problem in a world that has gone wrong, or a society which has taken the wrong turn, a system which has degenerated and is in need of fixing. In this case, we can say that politics is in a way “exteriorized”, in that it is considered as a domain that needs to be “accessed” in a movement that requires a leap from the quotidian into the political and from the present into the future. Thus,

politics itself becomes this general and abstract notion that is cut off from material conditions and situations and remains in need of a particular agency to “make it happen.” Within this approach the present is already in the making of the past, constituted in the image of this past and can only anticipate a phantom future which can but be a projection of this past, and is cut off from its power to relate to truly “new” forces. I suggest that from the point of view of a Deleuzian politics these two points cease to be relevant, politics no longer assumes the assignment of right and wrong parties beforehand and is no longer set up as a task of/for the “future” in the precise sense that is mentioned above.

Deleuze readership in contemporary studies, in this sense, can be said to be separated into two strains between those who see a true political force in his thought and those who either dismiss the political element, considering the whole of his philosophy as apolitical or “optimistic”, or else subject it to a “correction.” It is indeed a matter of how philosophy itself is conceived that has a determining role in the way a Deleuzian politics is itself understood. It is by breaking with the traditional concept of philosophy, that is, the break with the image of thought, that Deleuze’s philosophy becomes necessarily political. The break with the image of thought is first of all the rejection of the traditional philosophical task of the search for the truth that would propose solutions to given problems, and instead making philosophy itself a matter of confrontation with determined material conditions. In this regard, we could say that Deleuze traces his own genealogy back to the Stoics and includes therein Lucretius, Spinoza, Nietzsche, Bergson, Artaud among others. This break finds its most common expression in Deleuze’s thought in the distinction set up between

morality and ethics.

The distinction between ethics and morality that runs through Deleuze's full body of work also determines the point of departure for the present study, which aims to elaborate this distinction between what could again be called two methods of distinction – ethical evaluation versus moral judgment – through the relevant conceptions of temporality they engender in order to primarily explain immanence and then its transforming effects on the time and domain of the political. To this end, the present study is divided into three chapters in order to lay out the set of relevant concepts that will help me re-consider the question of an immanent ethics and the temporality engendered therein. The second chapter on Deleuze and Spinoza focuses on immanence and explores the ways in which Deleuze bases his concept of immanence on Spinoza's philosophy but also the ways in which he diverges from this conception especially with regard to the political implications. The third chapter on Deleuze and Bergson focuses on time and, again, the ways in which Bergson's conception of time shapes Deleuze's thinking of temporality and the ways in which Deleuze diverges, again, with regard to the political implications. In the fourth chapter I problematize politics itself as a given universal that grounds the contemporary discussions on politics, especially in relation to the critiques directed at the political aspect of Deleuze's philosophy. In the concluding part, I focus on the time of the political and how this particular time positions Deleuzian politics in a critical, even incompatible relation to the *universal* domain of the political in that it involves a complete reversal of direction.

CHAPTER II

DELEUZE AND SPINOZA

Even though this distinction between ethics and morality runs through the whole of Deleuze's thought, in this study I turn to Deleuze's account of Spinoza in seeking to effectively distinguish between an immanent conception of ethics and morality. Spinoza has been a true influence on many thinkers which include Nietzsche, Freud, Marx and even Hegel among others. Historically, Spinoza is often listed among the rationalists, but is considered an 'anomaly' (Negri, 1982) in the history of philosophy by thinkers like Antonio Negri and Alberto Toscano, as well as Eric Alliez, not to mention Deleuze. "Anomaly" actually proves to be a well-coined term, especially when one considers that Spinoza has been the focal point of many controversies regarding the school he belonged to, since he has been identified as an atheist, a materialist, an idealist or a pantheist depending on how one wanted to view or attack him. As Toscano mentions (2005), in his time Spinoza was actually seen as an atheist of the worst sort; one that did not simply deny the existence of God, but, as Yirmiyahu Yovel (1990) puts it, identified the world with God:

The identification of God with the world implies a more profound rejection of Judaism and Christianity than ordinary atheism. Spinoza does not contend that there is no God, or that only the inferior natural world exists. Such a contention is itself steeped in a Christian worldview. Spinoza contends, on the contrary; that by virtue of identifying the world with God, immanent reality itself acquires divine status.

The term “anomaly” affirms Spinoza’s rather exceptional and controversial place in the history of philosophy together with those thinkers who voice an almost animal-like cry or even scream that take them out of this history and place them in an untimely philosophical plane. The question of the politics of Spinoza, or rather how his ethics and ontology give into a certain politics, the question of “how politics amplifies or interferes with the expression and affirmation of power, both at the ontological and ethical level” (Toscano, 2005) is a question that is becoming increasingly studied in contemporary thought, especially as regards the questions of “sociality” and “democracy” in thinkers such as Negri, Toscano, Pierre Macherey and Etienne Balibar. The recent popularity of Spinoza with such thinkers rests especially with Spinoza’s particular and original place with regard to the question of politics, since in the Spinozist view this becomes a question of the structure of collectivities and of power, as well as freedom which takes on a whole other aspect in Spinoza. Spinoza’s question that is at the same time ethical and political, “why do people fight for their own servitude as if it were their freedom?” constitutes the focal point of this interest, where politics is seen as the domain of struggle for emancipation and freedom. But the terms in which this question is taken up in Deleuze diverges significantly from the contemporary scene in general. We see that the contemporary treatment of both Spinoza and Deleuze testifies to a sort of re-

evaluation of these two thinkers whereby Deleuzian (or Deleuzo-Guattarian) politics that embraces Spinoza rather in terms of desire tends to be put aside in favor of a more power-based approach to Spinoza that puts emphasis on the creation of a political collectivity (“a corporeal-affective organization of society”) as a “solution” to the “problem” of politics (Montag, 2008). I undertake this issue extensively in the third chapter, but one such example would be Toscano who, in the conclusion of his essay on Spinozism, criticizes the Deleuzian approach to Spinoza in terms of missing the challenges introduced by the political dimension and goes on to say: “In other words, what happens to the plane of immanence when it is fully socialized? (...) When we realize that the striving of reason as the art of organizing encounters can ultimately not rest with the isolated free man, but that the formation of a ‘totality of compatible relations’ is a political task, perhaps the political task *par excellence*?” (Toscano, 2005: 4). I will return to this question at the end of the study as an exemplary instance of the contemporary challenges presented by a Deleuzian politics, in order to argue that it is perhaps our contemporary conception of politics that constitutes a kind of blind spot when we are confronted with the question of politics in Deleuze.

Spinozist ethics and politics inevitably impose the re-consideration of freedom and what it means to be free. Men are not born free in the Spinozist conception and freedom is not an a-historical or supra-historical concept that would come to determine a certain politics from the outside. It is on the contrary, fundamentally tied up with the illusions of a particular historical context and, as Balibar (2008) sets forth in *Spinoza and Politics*, it is inseparable from the questions of democracy, true faith

and philosophy which find themselves united by this single common interest that is freedom. In this regard, Spinoza's philosophical research will be into the distinction of adequate knowledge from inadequate knowledge so that true faith can be freed from the language of revelation and from common opinion with regard to God, and that true knowledge can be freed from common opinion with regard to the power relations that define the political as well as the social field. Politics and faith become the object of philosophical research insofar as philosophical research itself becomes a process of "becoming free." As Balibar explains, in his lifetime Spinoza's closest allies were the Dutch ruling elite who called themselves the "freedom party" and defended the civil liberties as did Spinoza; yet Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* was a sharp critique against the politics of this same elite and was received very badly among the public in general and this same group in particular. This had to do primarily with his critique of this group's self positioning *vis-à-vis* freedom. "How could freedom be identified with the politics of a particular group and its 'universal' interest? (...) [Spinoza] elaborated an implicit critique of the illusion that sustained them in their conviction that they were fighting for a just cause" (Balibar, 2008: 2). This passage elucidates the material conditions that Spinoza found himself in and which led to his questioning of the notion of freedom in relation to his own conditions of existence. The abstract notion of freedom which does not bare its foundation on existence but serves as a justification of a whatever cause erases itself in the very suppression of the necessity of thinking. As Jean-Luc Nancy (1994) mentions in *The Experience of Freedom*, civil liberties which constitute as many *freedoms*, in the words of Nancy, "do not grasp the stakes of 'freedom'" but only negatively condition daily life, and in relation to evil. Freedom conceived thus,

remains an empty shell, a vacant form that is defined but by this vacancy:

But if freedom is to be verified as the essential fact of existence, and consequently as the fact of the very meaning of existence, then this vacancy would be nothing other than the vacancy of meaning: not only the vacancy of the meanings of existence, whose entire metaphysical program our history has exhausted, but the vacancy of this *freedom of meaning* in whose absence existence is only survival, history is only the course of things, and thinking, if there is still room to pronounce this word, remains only intellectual agitation (Nancy, 1994: 2).

Both Balibar and Nancy address the question of freedom on the point where politics, philosophy and faith intersect: the language of revelation that forms common opinion, the freedoms that delimit political space, and thinking which remains subservient to common opinion itself. This space that is constituted through the agreement between these three domains makes of freedom a matter of interest and this interest in turn comes to be the measuring rod that determines the limits of philosophy, politics and faith itself. Time itself is then the backdrop of the course of events, the contract that assures the agreement in common sense, not what measures but that which serves as the foundation for the already measured. The already measured is maintained in an order of morality where the notion of evil keeps re-setting up the criteria to keep a certain notion of violence and a certain notion of transgression at bay; accompanied by the image of thought that remains content with a semblance of movement, conditioned not by material conditions of existence but by abstract determinations. Spinoza, according to Deleuze, is the philosopher that breaks with this tradition in perhaps the most radical manner, in that we start with the modes of existence, that is, not from first principles but in the middle. And freedom becomes strangely a matter of necessity, the necessity of acting according to one's

nature. In this context, mode of existence is this acting according to one's nature. So now we need to look at how this is no longer the order of morality but the breaking through of immanence.

2.1. Ethics versus morality

Deleuze, throughout his work, takes morality as a “doctrine of judgment” as opposed to both a “system of cruelty” (1998) that is affirmed in the works of Nietzsche and Artaud and an immanent ethics that finds its peak in Spinoza. The doctrine of judgment always refers to universal values and to external, transcendent principles such as good vs. evil, vice vs. virtue and, as such, is opposed to justice as it is understood from the point of view of an immanent ethics. Justice conceived in an immanent ethics is a concept that stands opposed to judgment that belongs to the moral order and that ranks parties according to their proximity/distance to such and such values and principles. Justice can only be at issue when it is a question of an immanent system of evaluation whereby things/acts are distinguished and evaluated *according to the mode of existence they imply*. But the question of the mode of existence is a very difficult one, because in order to be able to talk about a difference between ethics and morality, one would have to first ensure that one positions oneself within what Deleuze calls a “plane of immanence.” When I say “first,” this does not imply a chronological anteriority but a primary condition that should not be taken as an originary evolutionary phase. The creation of a true philosophical plane of immanence is what Deleuze finds to be fulfilled best in Spinoza:

Spinoza, the infinite becoming-philosopher: he showed, drew up, and thought the ‘best’ plane of immanence – that is, the purest, the one that does not hand itself over to the transcendent or restore any transcendent, the one that inspires the fewest illusions, bad feelings, and erroneous perceptions (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 60).

Morality is based on the interpretation of signs as imperatives whereas ethics is concerned with expressions and power: “The entire *Ethics* presents itself as a theory of power, in opposition to morality as a theory of obligations” (Deleuze, 1988b). In making this distinction between ethics and morality, we cannot remain content to put morality on the side of transcendence and judgment, and ethics on the side of immanence and justice, and evaluate the former as “bad” and the latter as “good”, for an immanent ethics demands a work of creation and precludes the possibility of taking recourse to pre-established criteria. That is, each time we are engaged and confronted with a problem of organization and composition of relations (a certain sociality); and the criteria with which to ask what sort of composition we find ourselves faced with corresponds to the mode of distinction that we take up; for we cannot take for granted the compositions that are already handed down to us but have to challenge and re-compose as we go along. By composition of relations, we understand that we do not start with given units or unities but with dynamic processes which may or may not come to exist in a certain harmony for a certain period of time. This is how we avoid starting with the object or the subject or even with God. This is how Spinoza’s politics sets itself apart; what constitutes a society are individuals in a precise sense, in that an individual itself is a set of relations and not an atomic unity and that it is not the individual that determines the compositions but the relations themselves that, through their composition, make up an individual.

As part of the question addressed by Toscano (2005) to Deleuze in relation to Spinoza that I mentioned earlier, that the “formation of a ‘totality of compatible relations’ is a political task, perhaps the political task *par excellence*,” corresponds to just this problem of composition and organization. Here, I will provide an alternative formulation of the problem, based on the temporality that a given “political task” would imply. So once again, we need to establish how we can lay out a composition of relations on a plane of immanence.

2.2. Immanence

In Deleuze’s work, the concept of immanence functions as a philosophical tool against the return of abstractions and the problem of origins that, Deleuze says, have taken hold of what is called modernism, which he describes as a weak, reactive period (Deleuze, 2003).¹ A philosophy of immanence is not a philosophy of origins and finality but a philosophy of movement, of “in-between.” A philosophy that does not “reflect upon”, but that reintroduces movement into thought, that is *itself* the movement, and a movement of creation. “It does not suffice to say: concepts move. It is still necessary to create concepts capable of intellectual movement. Similarly, it does not suffice to make Chinese shadows, one has to construct images capable of auto-movement” (Deleuze, 2003). So it is primarily in relation to movement that we are to understand immanence. As I mentioned earlier, it is Spinoza who draws up the best plane of immanence and who, in that regard, is the “Prince” and “Christ” of

¹ Translations from this text are mine.

philosophy, according to Deleuze – and Guattari (1994). It is he who drew up the “best” plane. To cite *Expressionism in Philosophy*: “Immanence is the very vertigo of philosophy, and is inseparable from the concept of expression (from the double immanence of expression in what expresses itself, and of what is expressed in its expression)” (Deleuze, 1992: 180). Yet Deleuze does make one reservation with regard to Spinoza in his essay entitled “Immanence: A Life”; that even Spinoza’s conception of the passage from one sensation to another “still appeals to consciousness” (2001: 26). Thus, even if Spinoza provides the “best” plane, there is still a problem, if we follow Deleuze. I will now work through Deleuze’s account of Spinoza’s system of immanence. Deleuze assigns great significance to this theory, but it is important to see how he adopts and diverges at the same time from this system. This is achieved both by a certain re-working of temporality in the sense of Bergson, but also by a shift of emphasis from sad and joyful passions as the organizing principle of compositions to *desire* that destabilizes the harmony that is aimed at in Spinoza’s philosophy.² It is a principal of conjunction that guides Spinoza’s system in both its ethical and political aspects whereas, with Deleuze, it is desire that sets loose all sorts of disjunctions that come to constitute the destabilizing force of both the ethical and the political. In this sense, the question of passage from one state to another which is guided by a certain principle of harmonious organization in Spinoza’s system, loses this precise direction in Deleuze in order to go wildly in all directions at once.

² In the context of Spinoza, when I say harmony I do not mean a pre-established harmony in the sense of Leibniz, nor a harmony that would spring from the order of nature but as the will to organize one’s encounters in such a way that one seeks to enter into relations which agree with one’s own.

What immanence is and to what extent a “pure immanence” is – if ever – possible, or when one talks of immanence is it always of a *pure* immanence are questions that would need to be asked. The plane of immanence, or THE plane of immanence, is

(T)hat which must be thought and that which cannot be thought. It is the non-thought within thought. (...) It is the most intimate in thought and yet the absolute outside –an outside more distant than any external world because it is an inside deeper than any internal world: it is immanence, (...) the incessant to-ing and fro-ing of the plane, infinite movement” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 59).

The question of immanence is a question of movement, but it is thus also the relationship between the inside and the outside, of limits and thresholds, and passage. When taken as a matter of movement and of passage, the question of the relationship of immanence to transcendence and to consciousness is shifted. We no longer start by asking what consciousness is and where it originates but posit infinite movement and try to understand the conditions under which consciousness comes to define this movement. Consciousness comes after movement, if not chronologically, it comes after as a matter of fact and it is only after the fact that it can come to define this field. That is, it is only if immanence is considered immanent to consciousness that consciousness can assume a determining function, in which case we cannot talk of pure immanence. Deleuze defines his philosophy as transcendental empiricism. It is important to consider the distinction he makes between the transcendent and the transcendental because, as he says, the transcendent is not the transcendental (Deleuze, 2001). When we speak of immanence we are speaking of a transcendental field, without however assigning any transcendent. To assign a transcendent would mean to define the transcendental field by a consciousness whereby a subject and its

object are simultaneously produced outside this transcendental field as transcendentals. In the context of transcendental empiricism, consciousness is co-extensive with the transcendental but does not define it, thus is not transcendent, and neither are subject and object. If consciousness is conceived as co-extensive with the field, as that which traverses the transcendental field at infinite speed, nothing is able to reveal it as consciousness (Deleuze, 2001). Therefore consciousness could be said to traverse the transcendental field at infinite speed and as such never arrives to produce a subject and object that would come to determine it from the outside, nothing would be transcendent to it. It is an a-subjective, pre-reflexive, immediate consciousness that is at issue, one that does not come to reveal itself as the consciousness of a subject, the Absolute, Being or God. When, in *What is Philosophy*, Deleuze and Guattari (1994) talk of the “illusion of transcendence” as one of the four illusions that populate the plane of immanence, they are claiming that immanence is most often subjected to something other than itself – necessarily a concept – in the form of immanence *to* something. Which is to say that, transcendence, in Deleuze’s view, arises only as an *effect* from the plane of immanence itself and it is never the cause of itself. This is what is understood by “illusion”: taking an effect of the plane as the cause of itself. We might say, Hegelian immanence may be one such example, where immanence is immanent *to* History, to the Spirit, to the Absolute and ultimately folds back upon itself, rediscovering this transcendence within itself. Whereas, Spinozist immanence presents an immanence that is not immanent to something. As Deleuze notes: “Absolute immanence is in itself: it is not in something, *to* something; it does not depend on an object or belong to a subject. In Spinoza, immanence is not immanence *to* substance; rather, substance and modes are in immanence” (2001: 26). Thus, the

transcendental field which corresponds to a pure plane of immanence cannot be defined by consciousness, and does not produce a subject and object outside this field. We will come back to the distinction between substance, modes and attributes but in order to make the previous point clearer, suffice it to say for the moment that substance that constitutes God in Spinoza is not a creator God that conceives of man in the image of Himself with a will that makes things be, but is an immanent cause insofar as substance (God) remains in its modes (ways of being or creatures) and attributes (thought and extension being two of an infinity of attributes) as much as in itself. God is in its modes just as much as modes are in God and God possesses all attributes equally. Immanent causality means that the cause of all things does not stand above the caused and that creatures cannot be hierarchized according to their proximity to their cause. This concept of immanent causality wildly destabilizes the traditional concept of God, in that Creator and creature become confused, the hierarchy between attributes (that is the superiority of thought to extension) is effaced. This is what constituted the essential cause of the controversy surrounding Spinoza in his time; a God defying the idea of God.

In *Expressionism in Philosophy*, Deleuze (1992) puts forth the difference between emanative and immanent cause. Emanation is the theory of the First Principle or God as First Principle. This theory sets up a hierarchy in Being, whereby beings emanating from the First Principle are said to be less perfect, less divine, the further one descends in the hierarchy. In terms of participation, a problem that Deleuze traces back to Plato, in the emanative view, “true activity comes from what is participated; what participates is only an effect.” Thus the participated remains

“above” participation as the emanative cause, as “donative Virtue,” it does not remain in the effect it produces (Deleuze, 1992). The existence of the effect is always determined with regard to the cause it came from: “the cause appears as the Good within a perspective of transcendent finality” (Deleuze, 1992: 172). Furthermore, the emanative cause is superior to all emanating things, necessarily beyond being, such that it appears as the One-above-being. This is an issue Deleuze (1990) deals with extensively in *The Logic of Sense*, in the appendix entitled “The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy.” He explains that the purpose of Plato’s theory of Ideas is to select and choose through the method of division. But the purpose of this division is not the division of genus into species but to distinguish good and bad copies, to hierarchize beings in a descending order, according to their degree of participation in the first principle – that is, Goodness, Justness and so on. A distinction of the true pretender from the false, the pure from the impure, the authentic from the inauthentic, in order to select lineages:

To participate is, at best, to rank second. The celebrated Neoplatonic triad of the “Unparticipated,” the participated, and the participant follows from this. One could express it in the following manner as well: the foundation, the object aspired to, and the pretender; the father, the daughter, and the fiance. The foundation is that which possesses something in a primary way; it relinquishes it to be participated in, giving it to the suitor, who possesses only secondarily and insofar as he has been able to pass the test of foundation. The participated is what the unparticipated possesses primarily. The unparticipated gives it out for participation, it offers the participated to the participants: Justice, the quality of being just, and the just men. Undoubtedly, one must distinguish all sorts of degrees, an entire hierarchy, in this elective participation. Is there not a possessor of the third or fourth rank, and on to an infinity of degradation culminating in the one who possesses no more than a simulacrum, a mirage – the one who himself is a mirage and simulacrum? (Deleuze, 1990: 255)

Thus even the most just of men can only rank second, as the participated (the quality of being just) is *handed out* to the participants in a non-mutual relationship. We have mentioned above that in Spinoza's conception of immanent causality God is in the world as much as the world is in God. Whereas in Plato's case which illustrates the working of emanative causality, the world is not as much in God as God is in the world. Indeed, this division that takes place in Plato's theory can only take place through the circular logic of myth. This circular logic is also the paradigm of all foundation, since in order to make a judgment as regards the distinction between true and false pretenders to a foundation, a myth has to be set up. In Plato's case, this involves the memory of the Ideas souls possessed before their incarnation. Those which possess the most vivid memory are thus better positioned vis-à-vis the foundation, whereas the most forgetful find themselves in the bottom of the list.

Deleuze says that emanative and immanent cause have a common characteristic which is that both of them produce while remaining in themselves. But the difference that lies between them is that, in the case of immanence, the effect remains in the immanent cause, as much as the immanent cause remains in itself: "it is the same being that remains in itself in the cause, and in which the effect remains as in another thing" (Deleuze, 1992: 172); such that, when we move from cause to effect we can no longer talk of a hierarchy of beings or of degradation, going toward the less perfect or less divine. This does not mean that there is no distinction of essence between cause and effect, but that in the case of immanent cause, this distinction implies an equality of being. The second point of difference between emanative and immanent cause is that in immanent causality there is no remote causation, to use

Deleuze's term, so that all beings are everywhere equally close, each depending directly on God. This is why, when Deleuze speaks of Spinozist immanence, he frequently calls it "pure ontology": "not only is being equal in itself, but it is seen to be equally present in all beings" (Deleuze, 1992: 173). This is how univocity that has the following formula, is a fundamental, necessary element of immanence: that being is said in the same way of all beings. I later take up the issue of univocity separately. But Deleuze remarks that morality cannot be made from the point of view of ontology, since it implies a One that is superior to being, the One above being through which it can judge all beings as well as Being itself in the name of this superior being (Deleuze, "On Spinoza").

2.3. Immanence as a life

We will say of pure immanence that it is A LIFE, and nothing else. It is not immanence to life, but the immanent that is in nothing is itself a life. A life is the immanence of immanence, absolute immanence: it is complete power, complete bliss. It is to the degree that he goes beyond the aporias of the subject and the object that Johann Fichte, in his last philosophy, presents the transcendental field as *a life*, no longer dependent on a Being or submitted to an Act – it is an absolute immediate consciousness whose very activity no longer refers to a being but is ceaselessly posed in a life. The transcendental field then becomes a genuine plane of immanence that reintroduces Spinozism into the heart of the philosophical process. (...) The transcendental field is defined by a plane of immanence, and the plane of immanence by a life (Deleuze, 2001: 28).

Immanence as *a life*, but not immanent *to* life. So what is *a life*? Deleuze gives the example of the character in a story by Charles Dickens, where a disreputable, wicked man, not really liked by anyone around him, on his death bed encounters a sudden

bliss in his state in between life and death. At the point where he is almost dying, the least sign of life awakens a sense of respect and love amongst those taking care of him as long as he is in this same state. But as soon as he regains strength, comes back to life, as soon as he finds himself back among the living, both he himself and those around him turn cold again. In the brief moment where life loses its individuality and gives way to *singularity*, to a singular essence that is *a* life, immanence becomes as if crystallized. Deleuze and Guattari thus note: “What violence must be exerted on thought for us to become capable of thinking; what violence of an infinite movement that, at the same time, takes from us our power to say “I”?” (1994: 55). Once again, we find ourselves confronted with the question of an in-between, of a passage – that between life and death. But the question remains, what is to be understood by this life and this death if immanence is not immanence *to* life? How are we to distinguish this life that is immanence in itself from the individual and/or universal life that is opposed to individual/universal death? What happens in the life of the individual such that at a given moment we can no longer speak of his/her individuality but singularity? A singularity such as a certain shade of green under a certain light at a certain time of the day. We are again confronted with the question of compositions: what makes *a* life beyond the simple universal opposition between life and death? And if we can speak of *a* life, what becomes of death? It was necessary for Deleuze to go through Spinoza because it is in Spinoza that he finds the artist of compositions. What is a composition and in turn, what is a decomposition? And how does a philosophy of immanence function? One that accommodates God as substance, but one that nevertheless brings on an extreme solitude to the thinker amongst its contemporaries both Jewish and Christian, leading to his

excommunication from the Jewish community of his time and milieu. It is not surprising that the first chapter of *Practical Philosophy*, “Life of Spinoza,” is biographical, for Deleuze sees the “life” of Spinoza in his thought: “In Spinoza’s thought, life is not an idea, a matter of theory. It is a way of being, one and the same eternal mode in all its attributes” (1988b: 13). This, I think, is a very important point, for it cautions us against thinking Spinoza’s philosophy as a philosophy *about* life. In fact, it presents itself as the very refusal of philosophy as a “reflecting upon”. As Alliez (2004) says in “Spinoza au-delà de Marx,” Spinoza is the point where “philosophy, maybe for the first time, denies itself as the science of mediation.” So a double challenge: life as something other than a matter of theory, and theory as something other than a “reflection upon”, or as Deleuze and Guattari put it in *What is Philosophy*, something other than reflection, than communication and than contemplation, which are merely illusions of the plane of immanence (1994: 49). For, as we mentioned earlier, illusion is exactly this, an effect arising from the plane of immanence. Spinoza’s thought engenders a resistance to these effects. This is how Deleuze is able to say that Spinoza’s method which he calls the “geometric method”, “ceases to be a method of intellectual exposition; it is no longer a means of professorial presentation but rather a method of *invention*” (1988b: 13). If we are to trace a similarity here with Bergson’s “method of intuition” that is taken up in the later stages in this study, it is this *resistance* implied in conceiving of thought as creation, as invention and even as a certain *athleticism* against the conception of thought as reflection which actually amounts both in Spinoza and Bergson to nothing but a natural tendency of the mind, a convenience, but nothing more. Another reason to think again the place of violence and death, since going against natural tendency

implies that the relation between the outside and the inside, of the passage and thresholds, is one of continuous transgression. Deleuze and Guattari make the following note in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*:

After all, is not Spinoza's *Ethics* the great book of the Body without Organs? The attributes are types or genres of BwO's, substances, powers, zero intensities as matrices of production. The modes are everything that comes to pass: waves and vibrations, migrations, thresholds and gradients, intensities produced in a given type of substance starting from a given matrix" (1998: 153).

That said, pure immanence as a life does not take the form of a stage or phase in the thought of Deleuze (and Guattari), whereas we will shortly see that in Spinoza's thought of immanence there is a becoming-rational which implies a consciousness that goes in a certain direction, the direction of adequate knowledge. And in that sense, we could say that a "progress" is involved, whereas in Deleuze's conception, there is no unidirectional implication that would engender phases. Even though this "progress" that could be sensed in Spinoza does not come to assign a hierarchy between beings or attributes, it does make a difference in terms of politics, in that the force of the political for Spinoza would lie precisely here, in the becoming-rational, whereas Deleuze goes towards another direction where becoming can in no way be restricted to a becoming-rational. If anything, the force of the political lies in the other direction, in a becoming-mad of forces and in no way implying any phase but engendering at all times a permanent risk of being subsumed or appropriated.

2.4. Composition/decomposition – affect/affection – parallelism

As I mentioned above, life is a matter of composition and decomposition in Spinoza's philosophy and in giving an account of how Deleuze conceives of this matter, I will try to emphasize how immanence in Spinoza's thought implies a certain conception of temporality. This has some affinity with Bergson's account but the point in which Deleuze diverges concerns a complication or rather a radicalizing of this temporality. Spinoza starts with relations of composition. For him, nature consists only of relations of composition. The notions of Good and Evil are replaced in Spinoza "the immoralist" by good and bad. As Deleuze says, what made Spinozism an object of scandal in his time was not only the combination of atheism and pantheism in his philosophy which denies the existence of a moral, transcendent, creator God, but his denunciation of "consciousness," of "values," and of "sad passions" (1988b). So, a devaluation of all values, similar to Nietzsche who himself was very much inspired by Spinoza. Good and bad are evaluated according to the sort of composition that the encounter of two bodies brings about. If an encounter between my body and another increases my degree of power, then we will say of that encounter that it is a good encounter. But if it gives way to a decrease in my degree of power, we will say that the encounter is bad. A good encounter is one that is joyful, one that increases my joy, like in the case of running into someone I like; and a bad encounter, like in the case of my eating an apple and getting a stomach ache, is an encounter that increases my sadness. So it is in terms of joyful and sad passions that my encounters are characterized as good and bad. The essential point is that, there is always passage from one degree of power (joy or sadness) to another degree

of power (sadness or joy). It is this change in the degree of power, or degree of perfection, that renders me capable of saying whether an encounter is good or bad. So, a first point is passage or variation, which implies a certain duration that has to be taken into account. Because it is only from the perspective of duration that we can determine whether a variation has taken place and in what direction. But things are not that simple, for if an encounter is an encounter between two bodies, what is to be understood by body? A body itself is to be understood as a localization of certain relations, it is itself a locus of encounter and its relation is one of motion and rest. Each body has a certain relation of motion and rest that is specific to it. The body, in Spinoza, constitutes the backbone of his *Ethics*. It is through what he does to the body that we can get to the heart of ethics. Hence, the famous question: *What can a body do?* Deleuze remarks that the question of the structure of a body and the question “what can a body do” are equivalent from a Spinozist perspective: “A body’s structure is the composition of its relation. What a body can do corresponds to the nature and limits of its capacity to be affected” (1992: 218). Thus, a body is always already a multiplicity and good and bad are defined primarily in terms of agreement and disagreement of one body with another. That is to say, since agreement and disagreement arise in relation to a body’s capacity to be affected, we need to speak of continuous variation. It is not the nature of the body that conditions its capacity for affection but the capacity for affection that determines the relations of composition and decomposition that make up the nature of the body. It is continuous variation which makes of the body a multiplicity. Or in other words, “the distinction between ‘individuals’ does not arise through the formal boundaries between modes but a thing’s ability to produce an effect or to be affected” (Ruddick, 2010). Modes

being modes of being or creatures, we still do not distinguish them according to their formal boundaries or to their genus and species, but according to their capabilities, their power to act. A continuous variation in the power to act, “and this is what means to exist” (Deleuze, "On Spinoza"). *Ethics*, in these terms, constitutes a “typology of immanent modes of existence”, as that which overthrows Morality as the system of Judgment (Deleuze, 1988b: 23). A typology based on the variations of affects. “A horse, a fish, a man, or even two men compared one with the other, do not have the same capacity to be affected: they are not affected by the same things, or not affected by the same things in the same way” (Deleuze, 1992: 217). Distinction according to the capacity of being affected acts as a roll of the dice that has the power to re-distribute sorts with each roll. Since the capacity of being affected varies with time, each time a new distribution of sorts, a new constellation of events and a new multiplicity with new powers. Each time a change of cartography, a tectonic movement that makes surfaces move about, with the potential of being effected to the point where the given hierarchies become unrecognizable. This potential is perhaps effectuated in a most radical degree in Deleuze and Guattari’s *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* where philosophy itself becomes a philosophy of affects which, instead of measuring components as distinct entities, creates and re-creates multiplicities in an endless play between sense and non-sense. From the circumstances brought together in specific constellations rise new circumstances for new multiplicities.

But we need to clarify what is to be understood by affection and affect, two principal concepts of Spinoza’s. Affection corresponds to what Spinoza calls *affectio* and

affect, to *affectus*. Affect, first of all, is not an idea. Idea corresponds to a representational mode of thought and affect, to a non-representational mode of thought:

The *affectio* refers to a state of the affected body and implies the presence of the affecting body, whereas the *affectus* refers to the passage from one state to another, taking into account the correlative variation of the affecting bodies. Hence there is a difference in nature between the *image affections* or *ideas* and the *feeling affects*, although the feeling affects may be presented as a particular type of ideas or affections (Deleuze, 1988b: 49).

If I desire something, love or hate something, the affect implies the idea of what I desire, the object of my love or hate, which is representational in character; but my desire, love or hate itself does not represent anything. Although my idea of this object is a very confused one, it still has primacy over the affect. That is, the representational mode of thinking has a logical and chronological primacy over the non-representational mode of thought, because in order to love something it is necessary that I have an idea of this "something." But it should be noted that in no way does this involve the reduction of affect to idea:

That the affect presupposes the idea above all does not mean that it is reduced to the idea or a combination of ideas. We must proceed from the following point, that idea and affect are two kinds of modes of thought which differ in nature, which are irreducible to one another but simply taken up in a relation such that affect presupposes an idea, however confused it may be (Deleuze, "On Spinoza").

But it is important to keep in mind that every idea, being the idea of something, is itself something. The idea as something in itself has a reality of its own which is its formal reality, its intrinsic character. There is also an objective reality of the idea

which is its relation to the thing it represents and which makes up its extrinsic character. In his lectures on Spinoza, Deleuze gives the example of the difference between the idea of God and the idea of a frog. In terms of objective reality, since they don't represent the same thing, they have different objective realities. But since the formal reality or intrinsic perfection of God is infinitely greater than that of the frog, which is a finite being, their formal realities are also different (Deleuze, "On Spinoza"). Thus the idea of God, insofar as it represents God, is the idea of this something which is God and, in terms of extrinsic character, it is different from the idea of the frog which represents the frog. But the idea of God is itself something and in that sense, enjoys an infinitely greater degree of perfection than that of the frog, which is also something in itself, but with a lesser degree of perfection. In this sense, we have a continuous succession of ideas and a continuous variation of affects. Deleuze, in his lecture, describes this account of Spinoza as a beautiful representation of existence, of existence in the street (I see Pierre and I'm sad, I run into Paul and he's charming and I'm filled with joy and so on); he says:

It's necessary to imagine Spinoza strolling about, and he truly lives existence as this kind of continuous variation: to the extent that an idea replaces another, I never cease to pass from one degree of perfection to another, however miniscule the difference, and this kind of melodic line of continuous variation will define affect (*affectus*) in its correlation with ideas and at the same time in its difference in nature from ideas" (Deleuze, "On Spinoza").

It should be noted that *affectus* or affect does not arise out of a comparison of ideas or does not depend on them because between them, there is a difference of nature.

It is certain that the affect implies an image or idea, and follows from the latter as from its cause (*Ethics II*, ax.3). But it is not confined to the image or

idea; it is of another nature, being purely transitive, and not indicative or representative, since it is experienced in a lived duration that involves the difference between two states (Deleuze, 1988b: 49).

Joy and sadness, which constitute the fundamental passions, determine the increase or decrease in my power to act. When I am affected by joy, my power to act increases or I pass to a greater degree of perfection and when I'm affected by sadness I experience a decrease in my power to act or pass to a lesser degree of perfection. Now these are called "passions" because they depend on external causes, like running into Paul or Pierre. Even the affects I experience as joy are passions because they are based on my confused idea of the external object of encounter. It still means I cannot conceive of myself and my encounter *adequately*. "Even though our power of acting has increased materially, we will remain passive, separated from our power, so long as we are not formally in control of it" (Deleuze, 1988b: 50). To conceive of my actions adequately would mean that my experience of joy is a very special one, one that would be termed *blessedness*,

(S)ince they are no longer defined by an increase increase of our perfection or power of acting but by the full, formal possession of that power or perfection. (...) They appear to conquer and extend themselves within duration, like the passive joys, but in fact they are eternal and are no longer explained by duration; they no longer imply transitions and passages, but express themselves and one another in an eternal mode, together with the adequate ideas from which they issue (Deleuze, 1988b: 51).³

³ The sad passions have a fundamental part to play in Spinoza's political thought. It is the point at which the moral question and the political question become one. Hence, the question: "why do men fight for their servitude as stubbornly as though it were their salvation?" (in *Theologico-Political Treatise*, preface). This is the question Deleuze and Guattari take up again in *Anti-Oedipus*: "why is it that people come to desire their own oppression?" The question on the flip side of the coin being: "how does it happen that people who have power [*pouvoir*], in whatever domain, need to affect us in a sad way?" (Deleuze, G. *Lectures on Spinoza*) The despot and the priest have this in common, according to Spinoza, that they both depend on and want the sadness of their subjects. The latter question seems to have an obvious answer in Spinoza: because sad passions decrease my power to act, because they involve the separation of myself from my power to act. This is how the immanent mode of existence immediately becomes a political issue. But

Affectus as continuous variation, is not an idea and is not affect but affection: “it is a state of a body insofar as it is subject to the action of another body” (Deleuze, "On Spinoza"). But actually *affectus* constitutes an idea of a certain sort. It constitutes the first of the three types of ideas, that is, an affection-idea, and occupies the lowest place in the hierarchy of ideas because it takes part in what Spinoza calls “inadequate ideas.” The other two types are notions and essence-ideas, essence-ideas being on the top of the hierarchy. Deleuze gives the example of the sun on the body when one says “I feel the sun on my body.” This effect or action that is produced by one body on another (the body of the sun on my body) is called affection and it is always a material mixture of bodies that is involved. As Deleuze says in the same passage, this effect pertains more to the affected body than it does to the affecting body. Affection characterizes more the nature of the body thus modified than the modifying body. Thus my body would not be affected by the sun in the same way as a the body of a fly would be affected, as I do not perceive the sun in the same way that the fly does. So this constitutes the lowest type of idea, because my knowledge of this type of idea is a knowledge of the effect and not of the cause. I do not know the composition of my body, nor do I know the composition of the sun. I am also ignorant of the type of

this does not explain the former question. This is not a question to answer within the framework of this study, but its form interests us in the way that the question is posed in terms of a problem of desire. Not as the desire of a subject, or conscious individual – because in an immanent conception, even though it would be too far-fetched to say that there is no subject, the subject is *not* primary, but an effect – but as a problem of desire *itself*. To replace the term “subject” by other terms such as “multitude”, or “masses” etc. does not quite suffice to circumvent the problem. This is a well known point but one which nevertheless seems to be missed or ignored when it comes to re-considering Deleuzian politics in contemporary studies. The domain of the political taken as a problem of desire can hardly answer to the demands of a conception of politics taken as “project” or “task.” For if we are not to take the problem of politics as a problem of failed individuals or masses, or of “innocent dupes” (Susan Ruddick, “The Politics of Affect”), we need to take into account just as much the perverse desire that “fights for its own servitude as if it were their freedom.” This, for us, is a problem of the *time* of the political, insofar as it is a problem of *passage* from one state to another.

relation that is involved when my body is thus modified by this other body; I have only an inadequate idea of it. I do not perceive my body in a composition with the body of the sun, and instead make of the sun an external image. An idea that is confused, a passion of the mind that knows only the effect.

These affections are not representative, that is why we cannot talk of a comparison of ideas when it is a matter of passage from one state to another. But since they depend on chance encounters between bodies, that is, since they do not involve my knowledge of the cause, I tend to interpret them as an external occurrences, as the effects of an external body on mine. According to Deleuze's reading of Spinoza, this is how most people live the greater part of their lives, if they are not philosophers! Since affections involve a continuous succession of states, a passage from one state to another, these affections "are not separable from the duration that attaches them to the preceding state and makes them tend towards the next state. These continual durations or variations are called 'affects'" (Deleuze, 1988b: 48-49). This is the passage from affection to affect. Affections involve both the nature of the modified and the modifying body, but mostly that of the modified. They involve but a confused idea of the encounter and are therefore inadequate, and they are not separable from durations that are affects, that constitute a continuous variation in the degree of power or perfection. As long as we depend on inadequate ideas, we live unwisely because we do not know what a body is capable of, unless we take it as an ensemble of relations, as a matter of composition. But even inadequate ideas have something positive about them. An inadequate idea "involves the lowest degree of our power of understanding, without being explained by it, and indicates its own

cause without expressing it” (Deleuze, 1988b: 75). Spinoza calls this lowest degree imagination; when I have such inadequate ideas, my mind is said to imagine. Yet we still have an indication of the cause, therefore even if we are for the most part condemned to have inadequate ideas (man is not born reasonable in Spinoza; as Deleuze says, we can only talk of a “becoming reasonable”), we are still able to form adequate ideas, that is we can still form the second type of knowledge. And that is common notions. Deleuze notes that “the form of the idea is not sought in a psychological consciousness but in a logical power that surpasses consciousness; the material idea is not sought in a representative content but in an expressive content, an epistemological material through which the idea refers to other ideas and to the idea of God” (1988b: 75). Under these conditions, to account for a change of mind, for example, would need to be based on a whole other plane than psychology that would precisely involve a comparison of ideas. It would have to involve an account of the passage from one state to another, of the “in-between.” In Spinoza we pass from affection-ideas to common notions by virtue of our capacity to be affected.

A common notion constitutes the step where the body is grasped as a composite. Each body is the locus of encounter and characterized by a relation of motion and rest,

When the relations corresponding to two bodies adapt themselves to one another, the two bodies form a composite body having a greater power, a whole present in its parts (e.g., chyle and lymph as parts of the blood, cf. *Letter XXXII*, to Oldenburg). In short, a common notion is the representation of a composition between two or more bodies, and a unity of this composition. Its meaning is more biological than mathematical: it expresses the relations of agreement or composition between existing bodies. It is only secondarily that common notions are common to minds – more or less so,

since they are common only to minds whose bodies are affected by the composition and the unity of composition in question (Deleuze, 1988b: 54-55).

I mentioned above that passions cuts us from our power to act, they decrease our degree of power or perfection. Yet, while joyful passions lead us to a greater degree of power, sad passions lead to the opposite direction. Thus, as Deleuze says, since we are not born reasonable and for the most part can have only inadequate ideas owing to our nature, the question becomes one of knowing how to form adequate ideas, that is, how to be affected in such a way as to experience active affections. Put in other words, the question becomes one of organizing encounters in such a way that we can get hold of our power to act, for it is possible to accumulate joyful passions indefinitely without ever arriving at adequate knowledge. There are passive joys and active joys and in order to arrive at adequate knowledge, the affections should have myself as their cause. That is what makes them active. The difference between active and passive joys is one of reason. While passive joys *agree with* reason, active joys are *born of* reason (Deleuze, 1992 – Deleuze’s emphasis). But we know that man is not born reasonable. Reason is precisely this “effort to organize encounters in such a way that we are affected by a maximum of joyful passions. (...) (R)reason is the power of understanding, the power of action belonging to the soul” (Deleuze, 1992: 274). Reason is already a becoming reasonable. Reason is not there at the start as a guarantee of adequate knowledge. The effort of the mind, or rather, a power that surpasses consciousness is what makes one pass from inadequate to adequate knowledge and this capacity for being affected is what occasions becoming reasonable.

Common notions are ideas of similarity between compositions of two bodies. Deleuze (1992) gives a detailed account of common notions in *Expressionism in Philosophy* in the chapter on common notions. If a body's composition agrees with the composition of another body entirely, that is, if all relations of a body agree with all relations of another body, they are said to have a similarity of composition. From the most general point of view, Nature as a whole presents this similarity. But with bodies agreeing less and less, one comes to the point where there appears to be no resemblance between them, such that none of their constitutive relations can be directly combined. Nevertheless, from the most general point of view, that is, from the point of view of Nature, they still have something in common, a similarity of composition because it is only relations that change in Nature and the passage from one body to another occurs by a change of relation between their parts. These present what is common to all things in Nature and are universal common notions – but not transcendental! Common notions are necessarily adequate because they are ideas that no longer depend on chance encounters, but are explained by our power of thinking. Universal notions, by virtue of making us understand the disagreements between bodies, have this positive aspect of allowing us to make thought experiments. By universality, we are not to understand abstract generalities. For common notions serve precisely to eschew this type of universality. As Deleuze says, these are not transcendental terms such as “being”, nor are they universal notions such as genera and species, and as such, they are not abstract ideas. An abstract idea is inadequate because:

In the first place it retains only gross sensible differences between things: we choose a sensible characteristic that is easily imagined; we distinguish objects

possessing it from those that do not; we identify all those possessing it; as for minor differences, we pass over these, precisely because objects become confused once their number exceeds the capacity of our imagination. Second, a sensible differential characteristic is extremely variable: it is accidental, depending on the way objects affect each of us in chance encounters (Deleuze, 1992: 277).

The difference between understanding and imagination is that imagination is this aspect of the mind that is content with inadequate ideas. They are what express our impotence and express but common sense. As Deleuze remarks, common notions should be understood not only as an attack against common sense but also against the Aristotelian tradition that is the first known source of the genus/species characterization. With the Spinozist method, you draw up a list of affects instead of sensible forms and functions. Or as Deleuze says, “structures.” The structure of a body is, as has been mentioned earlier, “the composition of its relation. What a body can do corresponds to the nature and limits of its capacity to be affected.” Deleuze, in his lectures on Spinoza, gives the example of a race horse and a draft horse which obviously pertain to the same species. Yet they do not have the same capacities to be affected. If one were to draw a list of affects, one would in fact have to say that “a draft horse is closer to an ox than to a racehorse” (Deleuze, 1992). So if we were to make a classification of animals or nature from the point of view of structure, of the body’s composition, of its capacity of being affected, we would come up with an entirely different schema. As mentioned earlier, this actually presents a very forceful idea of multiplicity since one’s capacity of being affected is not only different from an other’s capacity of being affected, but can undergo variation from one moment to another. In that sense, each body is a multiplicity through and through and it does

present a challenge to Spinoza's philosophy itself, while at the same time constituting one of its most powerful aspects. The power lies in the potential for always new alliances between bodies. The challenge it presents is the dissolution of the same alliances – but always into new ones. Deleuze, in his philosophy, transforms the said challenge by making disjunction itself a force in its own right.

And before going into a more detailed account of composition and decomposition, we come to the third and highest kind of knowledge, that is, knowledge of singular essences. Singular essences are power, or rather, degrees of power, or as Deleuze says, thresholds of intensity. It is in this sense that there is identity of power and action. Common notions and constitutive relations still pertain to the extensive parts of the body. "My body is composed of an infinity of parts extended to the infinite, and these parts enter into such and such relations which correspond to my essence but are not confused with my essence" (Deleuze, "webdeleuze"). Deleuze calls these intensive qualities, which means that I do not attain most adequate knowledge without understanding my essence insofar as it is an intensive quality. What makes them singular is that, even though we may all be humans, everyone has a different threshold of intensity that characterizes his/her singularity. This point will take on more importance as I reconsider the issue of power in Spinoza.

To return to the the relation of agreement and disagreement, what is to be understood by that? What is composition and decomposition in Spinoza? How does the moral question become a physical one? We said we are for the most part condemned to inadequate ideas because by nature our minds or consciousness is, as Deleuze says,

the locus of an illusion. We tend to confuse the order of causality with the order of effects and take effects as causes. But in Spinoza what happens is:

Each body in extension, each idea or each mind in thought are constituted by the characteristic relations that subsume the parts of that body, the parts of that idea. When a body ‘encounters’ another body, or an idea another idea, it happens that two relations sometimes combine to form a more powerful whole, and sometimes one decomposes the other, destroying the cohesion of its parts. (...) The order of causes is therefore an order of composition and decomposition of relations, which infinitely affects all of nature” (Deleuze, 1988b: 19).

There are always relations of compositions and decompositions. It is always a question of the encounter. What happens when one body encounters another? What happens when Adam’s body encounters the body of the apple, two bodies which have incompatible relations? Even in the case of incompatibility, actually we have to talk of compositions because it is compositions which are primary. In nature, there are only compositions or relations that agree. When Adam eats the apple, the apple “*will determine the parts of Adam’s body* (and paralleling this, the idea of the fruit will determine parts of his mind) *to enter into new relations that no longer agree with his essence*” (Deleuze, 1988b: 22. Emphasis Deleuze’s). So the apple has a poisoning effect for Adam. When Adam’s body’s characteristic relation is thus decomposed we say that the encounter is bad. Thus, what agrees with the relation of our body is good, and what does not is bad. But Adam, since he’s ignorant, thinks that God has given him a moral command in the form of a prohibition. Deleuze remarks that Spinoza reminds that, whereas the ordinary meaning of law is simply a command, and can only be said of a relation of obedience, it has been so confused with the law of nature that the philosopher must not speak of natural laws, but of

eternal truths (1988b: 23). This is what is understood by language of revelation. But, as Deleuze says, law actually takes the place of knowledge only in those who are incapable of knowledge because of their mode of existence. Theology, by basing the foundation of knowledge on Scripture, has been the source of the “history of a *long error* whereby command is mistaken for something to be understood, obedience for knowledge itself, and Being for a *Fiat*” (Deleuze, 1988b: 24, Emphases not mine). So good and bad, beyond Good and Evil. We said that it is compositions, or relations that agree that are primary in Nature. We can thus say that laws of composition are also laws of decomposition (Deleuze, 1992). It is when relations that agree do not coincide with the preservation of a *particular* relation that decomposition occurs (Deleuze, 1988b: 33). When a relation decomposes the characteristic relation of a body, its relation of motion and rest, it is said to be bad for that body. In that sense good and bad are relative and partial. It is only with regard to a certain relation that we can say that an encounter is good or bad. And on a second level, good is said of the individual who can organize his encounters so as to compose compatible relations, relations that agree, that increase his/her degree of power. And bad, for the individual whose mode of existence involves servility, weakness, whose encounters are subjected to chance and who remains subject to his/her encounters instead of organizing them. And since these relations themselves undergo changes during a life time, in the case of illness for example, they can be modified in such a way that a part of us behaves like a poison, turning against the other parts and decomposing them (Deleuze, 1988b). “(I)llness or other circumstances can alter these relations to such an extent that one wonders if it is the same individual who goes on living; in this sense, there are dead persons who do not wait for the transformation of their

body into a corpse” (Deleuze, 1988b: 34). But even in the case of poison or illness, we are still talking of a composition, because in that case part of our body enters into a new relation that combines with the poison or agrees with the illness. “(A) poison can be a food for part of the thing considered” (Deleuze, 1988b: 126). Thus, death occurs when the body’s most constituent relation is destroyed. Spinoza gives the following definition regarding death: “I understand the body to die when its parts are so disposed that they acquire a different relation of motion and rest” (Deleuze, 1988b: 32). But we must note that Deleuze remarks that there is no moral harmony in Spinoza’s conception, when we say that everything is composition. It is because of the nature of two different orders that pertain to relations and bodies that destruction occurs. The order of relations and the order of bodies do not always meet in an encounter of agreement

Relations combine *according to laws*; but existing bodies, being themselves composed of extensive parts, meet *bit by bit*. So parts of one of the bodies may be determined to take on a new relation imposed by some law while losing that relation through which they belonged to the body” (Deleuze, 1992: 237. Emphasis Deleuze’s).

We have said that in Spinoza death need not be in the form of turning into a corpse. This point is discussed more in detail in the chapter on Bergson. But the point here is that this is how death becomes a moral issue. In nature there is no moral harmony and the occurrence of death is not strictly reserved for the point where one becomes a corpse. Even worse may be the death that occurs whilst one is living. We may ask what is the death that does not involve a corpse. One of the many forms that may take the mode of existence involving impotence, servility, weakness. Not all, but it is a matter of degree and distinction. The importance of distinction here comes to rely

on the fact that the definition of death does not involve a given opposite of movement. If Spinoza's thought is defined by and defines itself as movement, such that it is a thought of relations of movement and rest, death is understood to be but a modification of that relation and not the end movement, the ultimate point where it would turn into negation. Movement and rest do not come to occupy the two poles of a relation, and we do not have sufficient time to appropriate them since relations are what change, and our minds and bodies alike are but themselves defined in terms of relations. Thus the criteria for death involves the new conditions that are taken up by a relation. And in Spinoza there is a certain immortality, there is a life that extends beyond life and a death that extends beyond death. But we need to take account of how Spinoza conceives this system. So we need to go through what substance, attribute, mode and essence are, and how they relate to one another without giving way to transcendence. And I will try to give an account of the way in which Deleuze goes perhaps one step further, or maybe yet again changes direction in order to "solve" the problem of consciousness, which he says still seems to play a part in the Spinozist system, even though this consciousness does not come to determine the transcendental field so as to make it into a system of transcendence.

2.5. Substance – attribute – mode – essence

To begin with, "God expresses himself in his attributes, and attributes express themselves in dependent modes; this is how the order of Nature manifests God" (Deleuze, 1992: 59). Substance, that is God, or Being as Being is indivisible and

absolutely infinite; “in its attributes, insofar as they constitute an infinity; in essence, insofar as each essence in an attribute is infinite” (Deleuze, 1992: 28). Deleuze remarks that one of the novelties of Spinoza was that he introduced into the idea of infinity various distinctions as regards these terms, which we will come to a little bit later. By modes of God’s attributes we are to understand finite things, or beings and God possesses an infinity of attributes, of which we know only two; thought and extension. Thus all finite things in nature constitute the modes and it is important to remember that, although there is an *infinity* of attributes, the finite or infinite intellect (Pierre Macherey (2008) says that Spinoza’s definition does not allow this distinction to arise) perceives only thought and extension. Deleuze posits the distinction between substance, attribute and essence in terms of expression in the following way: “substance which expresses itself, the attribute which expresses, and the essence which is expressed” (1992: 27).

A mode’s essence is its capacity to be affected, or in other words, its power to act. In this sense, power, action, essence are identical because the capacity of being affected remains the same in each mode. Even in the case of being acted upon, as opposed to active affections, we can say that a mode is at any time all that it can be, it never lacks anything, because affections vary inversely in relation to each other but each time the sum remains constant and effective. That is, a mode has no power that is not actual (Deleuze, 1992: 93).

Now in Spinoza’s conception, God, lacking nothing, does not have a “need” to produce or is not a creator God but is “expressive” in its nature. Thus, his production is a necessary production, because as such, it does not arise from a lack of reality or perfection in the world. Deleuze says that this is not the representation of a ready-made God but an “unfolding of divinity, a logical and genetic constitution of divine substance” (1992: 99). God has an infinite power of existence which means that his

capacity to be affected, or his power is also infinite. Power being necessarily effective, he necessarily exercises this infinite capacity of being affected, but not through a cause other than himself. The attributes express both his essence and his existence and God acts “in” the attributes:

The things produced have no existence outside the attributes that contain them. Attributes are univocal conditions of God’s existence, and also of his action. Attributes are univocal or common forms, predicated, in the same form, of creatures and creator, products and producer, formally constituting the essence of one, formally containing the essence of the others. The principle of necessary production thus reflects a double univocity. A univocity of cause: God is cause of all things in the same sense as he is cause of himself. A univocity of attributes: God produces through and in the same attributes that constitute his essence (Deleuze, 1992: 102-103).

What Deleuze calls parallelism in Spinoza’s system (a term which is coined by Leibniz but which, according to Deleuze, suits Spinoza better), essentially refers to the relation between attributes and modes, and constitutes a principal element of immanence by virtue of introducing a novel conception of causality, or in Deleuze’s words, immanent causality: “One may indeed call ‘parallel’ two things or two series of things which bear to each other a constant relation, such that there is nothing in one to which there corresponds nothing in the other, while all real causality between them is excluded” (1992: 107). This parallelism serves to do away with a tradition that has come to be defined by the primacy of the mind or the soul over the body. According to this tradition when the mind acts, the body is acted upon; and in turn, when the body acts, the mind is acted upon (Deleuze, 1988b). That is, an act of the body can be or rather is the cause of an effect in the body. But in the Spinozist conception, the finite modes that pertain to one attribute (the attribute of thought, for example) cannot act upon or cannot cause an effect on the finite modes that pertain to

another attribute (the attribute of extension, for example). That is, there can be no primacy of one series over another. “According to the Ethics, on the contrary, what is an action in the mind is necessarily an action in the body as well, and what is a passion in the body is necessarily a passion in the mind” (Deleuze, 1988b: 18). All *attributes* express the one and same substance and it is through their expression that God is said to produce things. Modes are a determination of substance and they depend on the attributes and they all designate God. Substance is expressed in the attributes and attributes are expressed in the modes (finite things). It is always a question of expression and re-expression; that is why Deleuze says that its logic seems to be one of duplication (1992). The modes and attributes constitute two series or two orders. God produces all things concomitantly in all attributes, attributes which are distinct and absolutely irreducible to one another, as well as being equal to one another. But no attribute is the cause of another. And God produces all things in the same order in each attribute so that the relation between modes of different attributes is one of correspondence:

But because attributes are really distinct this correspondence, or identity of order, excludes any causal action of one on another. Because the attributes are all equal, there is an identity of connection between modes differing in attribute. Because attributes constitute one and the same substance, modes that differ in attribute form one and the same modification (Deleuze, 1992: 110).

This constitutes, as Pierre Macherey (2008) says in “The Problem of the Attributes,” “the thesis of the identity of the attributes in the substance within which they are unified while remaining really distinct.” Macherey cites Spinoza’s proposition which is as follows: “The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and

connection of things” (*Ethics II*, Proposition 7), and stresses that what we are *not* to understand from this proposition, is that there exists a relationship of agreement between the two series of thought and extension: “In fact, if in this statement the word ‘ideas’ does indeed designate the modes of the attribute of thought, the word ‘things’ (*res*) absolutely does not – in a restrictive way – designate the modes of the attribute of extension but the modes of any attribute at all, *including thought itself*: ideas are just as much ‘things’ as any other affection of substance” (2008. Emphases not mine). This makes clearer the notion of univocity, how being is said in one and the same way of all beings. And as Macherey remarks, it happens without the positing of a pre-established harmony.

This gives us a kind of illustration of how substance, in Deleuze’s words, “descends” into the attributes, to arrive at its final determination as modes, which in turn are expressed as modifications of substance. Between mode and modification, the difference is that a modification is an affection of substance, whereas mode is an affection of the attributes. Deleuze says that mode is to be understood formally, and modification ontologically. Modes pertaining to different attributes express the same modification, they are all modifications of the same substance, “but this modification has no existence outside the modes expressing it in different attributes” (Deleuze, 1988b: 11). Thus modes express one and the same substance which makes up for their identity in being, but differ only in their attributes. Deleuze (1992) notes that it is through this identity of being that Spinoza does away with a transcendent God that would intervene to make a term in a series agree with a term in the other. It is not only a transcendent, emanative conception of God that Spinoza thus rejects, but the

principle on which rests morality is also overturned. As Deleuze says in *Practical Philosophy*, the significance of the question “what can a body do” is intimately linked with this causal parallelism: “It is a matter of showing that the body surpasses the knowledge that we have of it, *and that thought likewise surpasses the consciousness that we have of it*” (Deleuze, 1988b: 18. Emphasis Deleuze’s). Morality thus loses its stronghold, that is, a consciousness that is master of thought and body. This is how we pass from a language of imperatives or a theory of obligations to an immanent ethics of power. Thus, the problem of the passage from one sensation to another that still implies consciousness in Spinoza does not arise at this point of the analysis. We need to go back to how the said passage occurs.

We have said that attributes are intensities or matrices of production, that God expresses himself in the attributes, which express themselves in finite modes and what is produced have no existence outside the attributes that contain them. We said that they are univocal forms that are predicated, in the same form, of producer and produced, creator and creatures, etc. There is no hierarchy between them, yet they are strictly irreducible to one another, and distinct. There is no primacy of thought over extension or vice versa. So the attributes being equal in Substance, this is also what is called Univocity. Now, there is an infinity of attributes of which we know only two, that is, thought and extension. Macherey (2008), in his article entitled “The Problem of the Attributes,” gives an excellent account of how Spinoza’s system poses a singular challenge in terms of the relation between substance and attributes (and in what way this is “abused” in Hegel, in his critique of Spinoza whereby he says that Spinoza’s system ends up ultimately being but a failed Cartesianism). The challenge

especially concerns the “passage” from substance to attributes, which Macherey explains against Hegel’s chronological interpretation of the said passage. In relation to God’s being “cause of himself,” he says:

(It) is nothing but the process within which substance engenders itself on the basis of the ‘essences’ that constitute it, on which existence is established: this movement leads to the moment in which it produces substance, as the product of its activity, as the result of its own determination. From this point of view, Spinozist substance has nothing to do with the Being of Eleatics: in its immanent life – whereas Hegel does not cease to speak of ‘dead substance’ – it is a movement toward self, affirmation of self, quite the contrary of an unreal content that should seek its forms outside of itself (Macherey, 2008).

Macherey (2008) quotes Spinoza’s definition of God which is as follows (*Ethics I*, Definition 6): “By God I understand a being absolutely infinite, i.e., a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence.” He says that the movement of the definition of God must be understood genetically and causally (this is also what Deleuze says), because it determines its object necessarily precisely by producing it, the attributes constituting the forms of this determination. Thus, as Macherey says,

(S)ubstance appears, then, in its real process, and the discourse of this objective genesis does not express an empty knowledge to which the formal precondition of a combinatory would be reduced, but actively expresses the actual movement of its object, in some sense its concrete history (2008).

That is, as he goes on to say, substance or God is not an immediate absolute, but one that must be deduced, even if from himself. In Deleuze’s words, “*Ethics*, as much as the *Treatise on the Intellect*, stresses the necessity of a minimum of time before arriving at the Absolute” (1988b: 112). In another passage, Deleuze again says that

the Spinozist method does not start from the idea of God, but arrives there “as quickly as possible” (1988b: 84). This is how we get to adequate knowledge. “The true idea, insofar as it expresses its cause, becomes an adequate idea and gives us a genetic definition” (Deleuze, 1988b: 84). This point is one that has to be thought together with the problem of the introduction of movement to thought. As has been mentioned before, not making Chinese shadows, but creating the movement itself. A true idea determines its object by necessarily producing it. It does not need to look for proof in existing things, or it does not make of its object a transcendent. It is through this double movement that univocity is achieved: not starting by God (since it would then be a matter of first principle) but arriving there as quickly as possible on the one hand and, on the other, conceiving of this as an adequate idea so that God remains the expressed as much as that which expresses. The relation of expression which constitutes a continuous movement of folding avoids the falling back into transcendence or emanation.

Thus, as Macherey explains, we cannot speak of a priority of substance to attributes, nor can we speak of a priority of attributes to substance. Furthermore, substance and attributes must be thought as identical. “There is no more or less being or reality in substance than its attributes, but there is exactly as much, or at least this is what one might say if this reality could be measured quantitatively” (Macherey, 2008). Thus Macherey makes the following three points:

- 1) the attributes express substance; this absolutely does not mean that they represent it in the form of a predicate, a property, or a name. Rather, it means that they constitute it, in what can be called its concrete being.
- 2) the attributes are included within substance, and, just as much, it is

included in them; they are not at all external and arbitrary manifestations, dependent on the free will of an intellect that would reflect it according to its own categories.

3) attributes and substances are inseparable in that they cannot be conceived without one another, outside of one another, and this reciprocal dependence expresses nothing but the fact of their real unity (2008).

Thus the distinction between the attributes and substance arises as a distinction of reason, and not of nature. This is a point that must be made by keeping in mind that there are an infinity of attributes which are irreducible to one another and independent. There can be no term-to-term communication between them. No one attribute can act upon the other or be acted upon. If one omits this fact, then it appears as though thought and extension, as the only two attributes, designated their content in an extrinsic – and Cartesian – manner, which is absolutely not the case with Spinoza. In this context, an essential point made by Macherey and which is also taken up extensively in Deleuze is the problem of number in relation to the attributes. If one poses the problem of the infinity of attributes from a numerical point of view, one is immediately faced with the risk of missing how the passage from substance to attributes actually occurs. If one takes the infinite series as a numerical succession, then the passage appears to be gradual and progressive. Macherey presents us with an apparent contradiction in Spinoza, and then goes on to demonstrate how this is actually not a contradiction: on the one hand, Spinoza states that two attributes have nothing in common (fundamental characteristic of parallelism); and on the other, that in Nature there cannot be two or more substances of the same nature or attribute (propositions 2 and 5). The problem consists in thinking, in this case, the unity of substance as an arithmetic unity, as the One. This would mean thinking of substance

as a being, whereas the unity of substance is such that it is not a being, but “it is everything that exists and can be understood, which thus has its cause only in itself. (...) It is this infinitely diverse reality that includes all the attributes, and that expresses itself in their unity” (Macharey, 2008). The one substance expressing and containing an “infinitely diverse reality.” This is how the unity of substance should be understood, as a true multiplicity as being not outside but inside substance. And a multiplicity that can no longer be expressed numerically. In this conception neither the One, nor the infinite can be represented numerically; “the infinite is not a number to the extent that it cannot be represented by the imagination” (Macharey, 2008). In other words, its to be taken as a movement. A true multiplicity.

We come to the final but no less fundamental point that Macherey makes with regard to causal parallelism. The interest in Macherey lies in the fact that his account demonstrates excellently how parallelism works in Spinoza. I want to make this issue as clear as possible with regard to Spinoza, in order to account for the divergence that I suggest occurs in Deleuze. All attributes being in substance, the relation between substance and attributes is not one of temporal genesis, and neither is it a relation of parts to whole. The attributes do not complement each other, and do not reciprocally determine each other and they do not finally come together to compose a complete system. Attributes do not form parts that then on constitute a unity together, because

(I)f this were so, the attributes would be defined in relation to one another by their reciprocal lack: they could no longer from then on be conceived each through itself, because they would be limited in their own nature by something else. Yet an attribute – for example, extension – could be limited

only by itself, which is absurd since it is infinite in its own kind (Macherey, 2008).

The idea of the infinite, in the attributes (in kind), as well as in substance (absolutely) as it is found in Spinoza, does not admit of any divisibility, since it evades numerical representation: “substance is entirely in each of its attributes (since it is identical to them), just as all extension is also in every glass of water, or all thought is in every idea” (Macherey, 2008). If it were divisible into parts, which only then on come to form a unity, we would end up with a mechanistic presentation and we would have to derive that there is some sort of agreement between parts; so the relation of parts to whole and the view of temporal genesis would have to follow from it. And one would no longer be able to say of the attributes that they were irreducible to one another, and as Macherey points out, their identity to substance would be compromised:

Then the attributes would no longer be essences infinite in their own kind and thus not able to be limited by anything, but would be degrees of reality, necessarily unequal, and positioned in relation to one another within the framework of a progressive hierarchy that would integrate them all together into the absolute (2008).

And when we say of substance that it is unique, the same logic applies. Macherey says that when we say substance is unique it is because of the imagination’s tendency to fiction, that when we say it is unique it is not even the consequence of the reality of substance but the consequence of our imagination. At this point, I want to return to the remark that I have made earlier concerning the common characteristic of the methods of Spinoza and Bergson, that neither of them constitute “proper” methods in

the conventional sense. Macherey says that Spinoza's method, that is *more geometrico*, is precisely something other than a method; it is only when one thinks in terms of conventional method which "submits the presentation of the true to the precondition of an order according to the schema of a necessarily abstract reflection" (2008) that one is preoccupied with the questions in the order of "which comes first?" or "are attributes more simple than substance?" But as Macherey says, and in accordance with what Deleuze understands by immanent philosophy, such questions do not have any relevance for Spinoza's method. It is no longer a matter of origins and finality, but of movement, of another reasoning which destabilizes the relationship between the inside and the outside since at each moment it has to go against its own grain in order to produce movement.

As regards the problem of number, it occupies a very essential place in the context of distinction, which Deleuze takes up very extensively in *Expressionism in Philosophy*. The problem relates to Spinoza's question as to how two things in general can be distinguished on the one hand, and how two substances can be distinguished on the other. Following Deleuze, numerical distinction can only apply to modes pertaining to the same attribute and in no way applies to substance, that is, since substance is infinite, numerical distinction cannot be used to distinguish between substances. The essential point is that numerical distinction only applies to finite things, or existing modes: "the composite nature of their parts, their limitation by other things of the same nature, their determination from outside themselves" (Deleuze, 1992: 33). In the case of finite modes, what we are talking about is a division into parts and it is only in modes that a division takes place, thus it can only be applied to modes. On

the other hand, if one conceives of attribute, extension for example, as subject to numerical distinction, one would have to assume that it were “measurable and composed of finite parts into which one supposes it convertible” (Deleuze, 1992: 33). Thus numerical distinction is not real distinction, and attributes being “really distinct,” they do not admit of numerical distinction, which means that there is only one substance for all attributes. “Two things are really distinct when they are so *conceived* – that is, ‘one without the aid of the other,’ in such a way that we *conceive* one while denying everything belonging to the *concept* of the other” (Deleuze, 1992: 35. Emphases not mine). If one were to extend real distinction to the real division between modes, one would have to take real distinction as a potential numerical distinction, and this is impossible because real distinction is not numerical. In this light, the infinity of attributes must be affirmed, because otherwise the numerical distinction that is applied to attributes would have to turn back on the absolute and we would end up with as many substances as the number of attributes. On the other hand, according to the other argument that Deleuze puts forth in the same chapter, if we were to divide substance in this way, according to the attributes, substance would be understood as genus and attributes as specific differences and the conventional relationship between genus and species would apply to the difference between substance and attributes. Whereas:

(T)here can be no necessity of existence in a substance of the same ‘species’ as an attribute – a specific difference determines only the possible existence of objects corresponding to it within the genus. So substance is once more reduced to the mere possibility of existence, with attributes being nothing but an *indication*, a *sign*, of such possible existence” (Deleuze, 1992: 36. Emphases Deleuze’s).

When all numerical distinction is thus excluded from real distinction, real distinction “becomes capable of expressing difference within Being” (Deleuze, 1992: 39). Therefore we must say of real distinction that it is purely qualitative.

A few other points need to be mentioned with regard to distinction, and the relationship between the Absolute and finite beings. Substance, as Deleuze says, is the “absolute identity of all qualities, absolutely infinite power” of existing in all forms and of thinking all forms (1992: 198). Attributes are “infinite forms or qualities, and as such indivisible,” (Deleuze, 1992:198) which means the the finite things is neither substantial like substance nor qualitative like attributes. But what is their status, and as essences are singular, how are we to understand their singularity? We need to begin by what is to be understood by essence and existence in order to get to singular essences. Deleuze states in *Practical Philosophy* that every essence is the essence of something with which it has a relation of reciprocity and that from this reciprocity follow three consequences (1988b: 64): 1) There are not several substances of the same attribute, 2) There is a radical distinction of essence between substance and the modes (for, while the modes can neither be nor be conceived without substance, conversely substance can very well be and be conceived without the modes; and finally, 3) The non-existing modes are not possibilities in the intellect of God. In *Expressionism in Philosophy*, in the chapter “Modal Essence: The Passage from Infinite to Finite,” Deleuze says that what constitutes a mode’s essence is not a logical possibility but a physical reality, or a *res physica*, that is, “a modal essence, *qua* essence, has an existence. *A modal essence has an existence distinct from that of*

the corresponding mode” (Deleuze, 1992: 192. Emphases not mine). Even if the mode itself does not exist, its essence exists; such that there is such a thing as a nonexistent mode in Spinoza, which does *not* mean that the essence is a possible and which does *not* mean that this nonexistent mode tends toward existence. It is rather “an object whose idea is necessarily comprised in the idea of God, just as its essence is necessarily contained in an attribute” (Deleuze, 1992: 193). Deleuze further explains that modal essences, just like existing modes, have efficient causes, that is, a mode’s essence is neither the cause of a mode’s existence nor is it the cause of its own existence. The relationship between existence and essence is such that essence necessarily exists but this, by virtue of its cause; and existence necessarily accompanies essence, only by virtue of the latter’s cause. Thus existence “is not thereby included or involved in essence, but added to it. It is not added to it as a really distinct actuality, but only as a sort of ultimate determination resulting from the essence’s cause” (Deleuze, 1992: 194). The essences come together in a relationship of agreement, and all having God as their cause, they form an infinite whole. Now the problem that arises is one that pertains to the singularity of these essences, or the question of individuation, or yet in other words, the question of the passage from the infinite to finite. This is what Deleuze calls extrinsic individuation which I like to think of like the passage from the virtual to the actual in Deleuzian terminology, that is considered in detail in the chapter on Bergson. Returning to Spinoza, extrinsic distinction takes place through duration. At this point Deleuze takes up Spinoza’s example of the white wall, which is somewhat what we are to understand by the attribute of extension. He gives the same example both in *Expressionism in philosophy* (1992: 196) and in his lectures on Spinoza. Then on this

white wall we draw two figures of Pierre and Paul, but unless we draw them nothing exists on it. This is how bodies in extension exist, and can be distinguished according to their parts, their shapes, etc. The essential point is that when talk of the singularity of essence, we should say that there is an essence of existing bodies that is distinct from their existence. Pierre and Paul both have essences that are distinct from their existences and there are nonexistent modes, which means an essence can exist without however having a corresponding existence. But the singularity of essence means that it should be possible to distinguish something on the white wall before the figures are traced. So we must say that “modes exist in the attribute in two ways; on the one hand they exist insofar as they are comprised and contained in the attribute; and on the other, insofar as it is said that they have duration” (Deleuze, "On Spinoza"). Therefore, we should be able to distinguish something on the white wall, without any figure being traced. When we distinguish two figures that are traced on the wall, we distinguish them by their extrinsic determinations. Whereas, in order to distinguish something on the white wall without the figures being traced, we resort to intrinsic determinations: the degrees of whiteness, intensities of whiteness. This is an absolutely other mode of distinction and it involves degrees of intensity which are not to be confused with the distinction of shapes that involves magnitude or length, and is what Deleuze calls intrinsic distinction. These degrees are, following Deleuze, distinct from quality (the white) and extensive quantity (magnitude or length), and are intensive quantities. “Infinite quantity is infinite, and the system of essences an actually infinite series. We are here dealing with infinity ‘through a cause’” (Deleuze, 1992: 197). This testifies to the modal essences’ co-existence and agreement in the attribute that contains them, but their singularity is a matter of

intrinsic determination. That is, their distinction from one another takes place by way of intensive quantities, each one of them being an “irreducible degree, necessarily apprehended as a singular unity” (Deleuze, 1992: 198). So how does this passage from the Absolute to finite modes occur? As we said, the finite is neither substantial nor qualitative, but modal or/and quantitative.

Each substantial quality has intensive modal quantity, itself infinite, which actually divides into an infinity of intrinsic modes. These intrinsic modes, contained together as a whole in an attribute, are the intensive parts of the attribute itself. And they are thereby parts of God’s power, within the attribute that contains them. It is in this sense, as we have already seen, that modes of a divine attribute necessarily participate in God’s power: their essence is itself part of God’s power, is an intensive part, or a degree of that power (Deleuze, 1992: 199).

This point actually is the heart of the notion of expression. To recapitulate, there are three expressions that correspond to substance. First, and that which corresponds to the constitution of substance: “*Substance first of all expresses itself in itself*” (Deleuze, 1992: 185) and is qualitative; substance expresses itself in its qualitatively distinct attributes – which corresponds to the movement of “complication”, each of which expresses the essence of substance. “(S)ubstance ‘complicates’ its attributes, each attribute explicates the essence of substance, and substance explicates itself through all its attributes. Second: “*Substance expresses itself to itself*” (Deleuze, 1992: 185). As Deleuze says, substance, by expressing itself to itself, expresses itself in the idea of God which includes all attributes. Substance expressing itself means God understands himself. God’s power of thinking which corresponds to the idea of God, is equal to his power of existing which corresponds to the attributes. Third: “*Substance re-expresses itself, attributes in their turn express themselves in modes*”

(Deleuze, 1992: 185), relates to the passage to modes. God, as he understands himself, cannot understand himself without producing an infinity of things, since the power of thinking and the power of existing are equal. And he understands all he produces. “All modes are thus expressive, as are the ideas corresponding to those modes. Attributes ‘complicate’ the essences of modes, and explicate themselves through them, just as the Idea of God comprises all ideas and explicates itself through them” (Deleuze, 1992: 185). Now Deleuze says of this third expression that it is quantitative but as having two forms; its form is intensive with regard to the essences of modes, and extensive when modes pass into existence.

In this view, the passage from the Absolute to the finite, or from the infinite to finite things does not occur by way of degradation, or by analogy. If it were the case, we would have to find a quantitative equivalent for the infinity of substance and then the “descent” to the finite modes would imply a quantitative “decrease” and a hierarchy among beings thus conceived. But this is not the case. The crucial point is that it is made clear here that the passage, *a* passage does not occur between quantities, that is between what can be called numerical multiplicities. A passage always occurs between intensities. That is, we pass from the Absolute to finite modes that are extrinsically determined as numerical multiplicities (magnitude or length) not by way of translation, but by virtue of the introduction of nonnumerical multiplicities. That the essence of finite modes that pertains to their existence as they are contained in their attribute involves two modes of distinction means precisely this: the extrinsic distinction is to distinguish them in their existence, and in the case of existing modes, existence is a matter of duration – so even in that case we cannot distinguish things

by their formal boundaries. And intrinsic distinction comes to testify to the fact that passage from one to the other is not a matter of numbers but of movement that cannot be translated into numbers. This process has an affinity with the process of differentiation and actualization in Deleuze. Intrinsic distinction seems to correspond to what Deleuze understands by differentiation, that is differences in virtuality or the virtual as the infinite plane of difference which co-exists with and has as much reality as the actual. Finite things being quantitative, differentiation, that is the passage into actuality, takes place as individuation. But this, I leave to a further point where I discuss the virtual and the actual in relation to Bergson. What is crucial at this point is that the passage is conceived as a movement and for that, one and the same thing – that is the essence of a mode or finite thing – is presented as having a double aspect by virtue of the difference between the existence of the essence itself and the existence of the finite thing itself. One that pertains to quantity which makes of it a quantitative multiplicity that divides into an infinity of modes and this is how modes are determined in extension by their parts, shape, etc. And another aspect pertaining to the existence of the essence, which is how we are to understand that there is such a thing as nonexistent mode in Spinoza. The essence does not come into being by simply taking on extension on itself, as if “forced” by a tendency to existence from the outside, or from a transcendent being. For, then it would be nothing but a possibility in its nonexistent state, a possibility of the existence of an essence. But it has just as much reality and we are always and already within the domain of intensities and the passage can only be accounted for by movement, if we are to talk of immanence. The same should be said of substance which also presents this at least double character with regard to the passage. This is what is to be

understood when Deleuze says, as stated above, that “each substantial quality has intensive modal quantity, itself infinite, which actually divides into an infinity of intrinsic modes” (1992: 198). Always two faces to one and the same concept in order to ward off transcendence. Or rather, two directions.

Another point has to be made with regard to the coming into existence of modes, for it is yet again a matter of duration and passage. This also corresponds to the conception of individuality in Spinoza, for by individual we are to understand a finite being composed of an infinity of simple bodies in a certain complex relation. What we are to understand by simple parts here is things that have neither essence or existence of their own, which relate to each other but extrinsically, but which come to constitute existence; “to exist is to actually have an infinity of extensive parts” (Deleuze, 1992: 207). Thus, Deleuze says, when we say a mode exists in the attribute of Extension we mean that an infinity of simple bodies that correspond to its essence actually belong to it. This happens through their taking on a given relation of movement and rest. As we said existence is determined through duration, so that a mode is said to exist as long as that certain relation endures. And here we find, on another level, the previously discussed distinction between essence and existence. Individuals are thus collections of simple bodies according to the relations they enter and they correspond to different degrees of power. Depending on the relation, extensive parts correspond to one modal essence or another, and compose the existence of the respective mode; thus a mode that comes into existence finds itself in a constant state of alteration but as long as the relation endures, that mode will continue to exist. As such, as regards existence, there are three elements:

(A) *singular essence*, which is a degree of power or intensity; a *particular existence*, always composed of an infinity of extensive parts; and an *individual form* that is the characteristic or expressive relation which corresponds eternally to the mode's essence, but through which also an infinity of parts are temporarily related to that essence (Deleuze, 1992: 209).

“It must then be recognized that a modal essence (a degree of power) expresses itself eternally in a certain relation, with its various different levels. But the mode does not come into existence until an infinity of extensive parts are actually determined to enter this relation” (Deleuze, 1992: 208). Thus extensive parts continuously form and un-form infinite changing wholes which are themselves subject to constant alteration, through the relations in which they enter. We have before mentioned that a mode's existence does not flow from its essence, is not caused by it but accompanies it. So in order to account for the movement by which a mode comes into existence, Deleuze says that we have to think of mechanical laws, according to which extensive parts take on a specific determination which make them enter this or that relation. And even though the infinite wholes change all the time, the whole of these wholes remains fixed, in the sense that its total proportion of movement and rest remains unchanged. The amount of movement of the infinite whole remaining the same, the relation of movement and rest that occurs between the extensive parts that form individual bodies changes constantly (Deleuze, 1992: 210). Since the coming into existence and ceasing to exist are determined by the same rules, this is another sense in which we say that rules of composition and decomposition are the same. Each relation thus composed expresses an essence because, as has been mentioned above, these relations are what constitute the modes and their coming into existence, and

even though a mode may not have real existence, it may have an essence that exists in its own right – the case of nonexistent modes. Therefore, in Deleuze’s words, “these eternal laws in no way affect the eternal truth of each relation: each relation has an eternal truth, insofar as an essence expresses itself in it” (1992: 211). Therefore two different orders correspond to the relation between essences and the composition/decomposition of relations. The actualization of a relation is determined by the said mechanical laws, and the relation between essences is determined by another order which pertains solely to essences. It is also with regard to the status of essences that we can talk of a certain *immortality* in Spinoza. When a death occurs, this means that the specific, constituent relation of the body has decomposed, it no longer subsumes its extensive parts. But since these extensive parts entertain no relation of causality with essence, since the relation between them did not flow from the relevant essence in the first place, the essence of that relation which ceases to be continues to exist in its full reality. The essence of that body, before the body came into existence as a finite mode, already had “never presented the least tendency to come into existence” (Deleuze, 1992: 249). But once it comes to exist, it takes on a perseverance to exist. This is what is called *conatus* in Spinoza. Once a body comes into existence, it attempts to stay there. But this does not determine in any way the status of the essence. “But this *conatus* is only the state such an essence is determined to take on in existence, insofar as the essence determines neither existence itself, nor the duration of existence” (Deleuze, 1992: 249). Thus death, or the end of duration, says nothing about the essence. If a body perseveres longer than another, it cannot be said that it is more perfect, for the duration is an indefinite period. “Lacking nothing while the mode does not yet exist, the essence is deprived

of nothing when it ceases to exist” (Deleuze, 1992: 249).

Once again, we see how finite things, individual bodies are determined by their characteristic relation of movement and rest, which makes of them a nonnumerical multiplicity. Their existence is a matter of duration, and duration is the criterion for the distinction among existing modes themselves. Deleuze says that we must understand by duration “as having a relation with a certain extrinsically distinct time and place” (1992: 212). And a very crucial point is that “each existing mode explicates the attribute in the relation that characterizes it, in a way extrinsically distinct from other ways in other relations. An existing mode is thus no less expressive than its essence, but is so in another manner” (Deleuze, 1992: 214). What is involved here is actually the question of existence put in terms of a becoming. Duration serves to ensure just that. A becoming, and not formal boundaries or qualities, through which beings are determined in a relationship of immanence to Being. It is in terms of duration that one becomes free or servile, reasonable or unwise, good or bad. As Deleuze says in his lectures on Spinoza:

When you experience a basely sensual appetite it is not a pure instantaneity which comes over you. It is necessary to take it in terms of duration, that is: you become worse than you were before. And when a better love forms in you, of course you become better. There is an irreducibility of duration. In other words, the essence cannot be measured in its instantaneous states (Deleuze, "On Spinoza")

Regarding the concept of duration, Deleuze makes it clear that Bergson’s use of duration – which will be taken up extensively in the chapter on Bergson – strictly coincides with Spinoza’s, for it refers to the same understanding of passage as

transition and specifically as *lived* transition. Thus, it is in a very specific sense that Deleuze says their respective uses coincide. The difference between duration and instantaneity is as follows: Instantaneity refers to affection, it is, as Deleuze says, “the modality of affection of essence” (Deleuze, "On Spinoza"). Essences are eternal but their modality of affection, the affections that I constantly have are but instants, or “instantaneous cuts.” The difference between affect and affection is then what brings us to duration. Affection is an effect, and it is what envelops the affect which is a state in which I find myself according to the passions that I have; affect is thus precisely what is understood by passage or transition. “Every instantaneous affection envelops a passage or transition” (Deleuze, "On Spinoza"). A transition from one state to another. However close be the temporal distance between the two instants, there is a passage and its nature is different from both preceding and current states. This is what is to be understood by lived passage. In Bergson too, this is precisely the situation. The instantaneous cuts, however rapidly one makes them, however little a time there be between two cuts, is a state; and as Deleuze remarks in relation to Bergson, states are always of space. But duration is not a state, the passage is not a state. It is what it is, lived transition. But Deleuze reminds that the problem of passing from one state to another, without making of it a state, opens up a host of problems with Spinoza. In Deleuze, affection and affects continue to play a fundamental part but it seems that a fundamental shift occurs when he, as regards his own philosophy, no longer speaks in terms of joy and sadness in the way that Spinoza does. It is as though it were precisely joy and sadness which act as value poles that inhibit the passage and keep it from effectively occurring as pure passage, assigning the possible directions that could take a value that does not necessarily

coincide with the mode of existence at stake. This seems to impose a limit on duration where it can no longer assume its own right, its own value without the distinction between sadness and joy.

2.6. Politics of freedom

This brings us to a crucial aspect of Spinoza's thought, that is, the theme of *necessity*, and points to the fundamental gap between his system and the Cartesian view:

Not only is real distinction no longer referred to numerically distinguished *possible* substances, but modal distinction, in its turn, is no longer referred to accidents as *contingent* determinations. In Descartes a certain contingency of modes echoes the simple possibility of substances. It's all very well for Descartes to insist that accidents are not real, but substantial reality still has accidents. To be produced, modes require something other than the substance to which they relate – either another substance that impresses them in the first, or God who creates the first along with all that depends on it. Spinoza's view is quite different: there is no more a contingency of modes in relation to substance than a possibility of substance in relation to attributes. Everything is necessary, either from its essence or from its cause: Necessity is the only affection of Being, the only modality (Deleuze, 1992: 38).

Now necessity is of crucial importance for the political import of Spinoza's system. Man, aside from not being born reasonable, is not born free according to Spinoza, and within his system there is no way of finding a foundation for free will, or a subject endowed with free will. I want to refer to Ruddick's article in which she cites Spinoza in *Ethics II 3* (P35, S): "men are deceived in that they think themselves free, an opinion which consists simply in the fact that they are conscious of their actions and ignorant of the causes by which those actions are determined" (Ruddick, 2010).

But as is the case with reason, we can talk of a “becoming free.” Again we will have to re-consider how this passage exactly occurs, for it is a problem of sensations and the passage from one state to another, to recall Deleuze. As Ruddick mentions in her article which focuses particularly on the difference of interpretation of Spinozist politics between Negri and Deleuze, “as we operate within a social field that prefigures our constitution as individuals, it is a fiction to insist on our mere ability to act on our passions as evidence of our freedom or free will. Freedom, to the extent that it exists, must be arrived at by other means” (Ruddick, 2010). Since, men necessarily act according to their nature, freedom actually becomes a becoming-free with the attainment of adequate knowledge concerning this nature. In this sense, it involves the breaking with what could be called another illusion, the illusion of free will. For what we are to understand by attainment of adequate knowledge does not necessarily have to be a state of active joy. Ruddick briefly but clearly makes a mention of this point in her article. The path to adequate knowledge actually implies the exploration of our passions in a way as to do away with the clouding of sad passions. But it does not necessarily involve the containment or avoidance of the pathos, in her words (Ruddick, 2010). It does not mean that a person on the path of becoming-reasonable is a merry person. And it does not mean that such a person would have somewhat overcome his essence. But it would mean that for such a person freedom itself would be a philosophical and political question since investigation is the investigation of one’s own capabilities. Freedom would not entail the enjoying of a “state of freedom” (since there is no such state), but would be the effort of becoming-free itself. This rejection of the concept of free will is perhaps one of the most essential points of Spinoza’s politics that Deleuze takes up as the

problem of the desire of the people who will their own repression.

In order to elaborate further on this last point, I will give a brief account of the formation of the social body in Spinoza's thought. The formation of society is a collaborative act whereby men come to unite their powers in order to form a higher body with a greater power to act. The state of nature refers to the state of the individual that presents a fragile situation in which the individual continuously risks decomposition when it encounters other forces that may subsume him/her. Thus, in the civil state, the individual enhances its power to act with the alliances it makes with other individuals and acquires a relative protection from the risk of destruction. As Deleuze (1992: 267) explains in *Expressionism in Philosophy*, the civil state is very much like the state of reason, in that it seeks to attain this higher level but different from it, in that it is formed not through reason itself but through the need of protection from the state of nature, the need of persevering in existence. On the other hand, while reason seeks to organize its relations in such a way that naturally combine with one another, in the civil state or the City, individuals renounce their natural rights. The relations thus combined are no longer natural, reasonable relations, since men are not reasonable and are forced into this "contract." The civil state thus reflects the combinational aspect of Spinoza's thought of the social and, as Ruddick mentions, it is "the logical outcome of the relational nature of our being in the world, although this course of action is by no means guaranteed" (2010: 25). However, when I mentioned "contract" above, this does not mean that the civil state succeeds the state of nature or that the individual pre-exists society. Since for Spinoza, what defines an individual is its capacity of being affected, the individual

can be anything from things to animals to nature as a whole. Following the formulation of Ruddick, since this social field is already the state in which the individual finds itself, Spinoza's conception of politics opens up a path to discover ways to enhance our power to act by creating and entering into new collaborations and enhance our relation with the world. But the point at which Deleuze takes the thought of the political in Spinoza's philosophy in a completely different direction than a host of contemporary thinkers is again the issue of passions. If we were to try and make an evaluation based on sad and joyful passions we would have a hard time explaining how sad passions can just as much have a transforming effect, and not just in catastrophic instances in the life of societies but a revolutionary aspect too. We would also have a hard time explaining the relevant parts played by these passions in each society, in each multiplicity that comes into being, since by definition, they include an infinity of parts. And Ruddick mentions that the will to avoid sad passions may seem to lead us away from understanding what happens to our societies in cases such as racism, sexism or other types of oppression. But she adds that this is not the case with Spinoza, since a subject is not posited in the way a Cartesian subject endowed with rationality is posited in theories which take recourse to rationalism and since there are no transcendent principles that come to determine the field of the social from the outside. Individuals not being reasonable, we cannot assume a society to be neither evil nor dupe when it engenders various sorts of oppression. It is only through ignorance of the causes that we are led to react in a certain manner and it is by a process of becoming that implies a passage from sad passions to active joys that we can achieve a better understanding, that is, by passing from inadequate knowledge to common notions. But this passage itself is once again the problematic.

As we mentioned above, Ruddick emphasizes that it is not an avoidance of sad passions so much as the search for a deeper understanding that motivates the ethics of Spinoza and it is precisely this that constitutes becoming reasonable. She contrasts the works of Negri and Deleuze in that regard. While Negri takes this passage from one type of passions to another as the task to be achieved for a politically effective collaboration to occur, Ruddick says that he thus ignores other possible forms of struggle and falls short of answering to the challenges brought about by the heterogeneity of a multiplicity.

Ruddick (2010) also considers the passage from inadequate ideas to common notions as the point at which Deleuze diverges from Spinoza's philosophy since, she remarks, common notions involve recognition, whereas Deleuze's break with the image of thought already in *Difference in Repetition*, as we mentioned earlier, is the moment he breaks with recognition itself as a philosophical movement. But it is the creation of the new that is retained in Deleuze as the essential problem of thought, how thought itself achieves the movement whereby the passage from non-thought to thought occurs. The genetic definition of the idea, that is. Thus when Deleuze and also Deleuze and Guattari make the the question "*how is it that people come to desire their own oppression?*" the heart of the matter concerning the ethical, social and political at once, it is desire that becomes the key concept. It is desire that invests the social field and not desire in the form of a will to something but a desire that brings with it all sorts of perversions. It is this investigation into the perversions of desire, in Ruddick's words, that pull Deleuze and Guattari's collaborative work in a direction that unleashes the political power of perversion itself. The reconsideration

of the place of violence in Deleuze's (and Guattari's) philosophy in its relation to the political is taken up in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER III

DELEUZE AND BERGSON

The interest in Bergson, for the purposes of the present study, lies primarily in the idea of virtuality that Deleuze develops based almost solely on Bergson's philosophy of time. With Spinoza, the emphasis was on the fundamentality of the notion of immanence for a novel conception of ethics, especially as regards the criterion for the evaluation and distinction of acts within an immanent system and the movement of thought itself. In themselves these provide the tools to take a closer look at how Deleuze actually keeps the Spinozist elements mentioned in the previous chapter and makes them shine in his philosophy but by giving it a formidable twist, with significant implications for the status of the political. With Bergson, what puts him perhaps on the same philosophical plane with Spinoza would be, in the first place, a similar distaste for common sense and an attack carried out against conventional reason as the ground and guarantee of morality. But his singularity would lie in his concepts of duration and virtuality. With Bergson, it is especially as regards the criteria for evaluation and distinction in terms of the event that is taken up in this part

of the study. This is a point where we can again trace a substitution of concepts on the part of Deleuze in relation to Spinoza. Whereas, in Spinoza's conception, philosophical ideas refer back to essences, with Bergson we move closer to the event as what the ideas bare upon. What concerns this study here is, more precisely, the time of the event, or the measuring of the event in and through time. For this end, I will go through three essential concepts in relation to the Bergsonian influence and their respective roles in the conception of virtuality: Duration, Memory and Multiplicity. The concept of virtuality is a recurrent theme in Deleuze's work from *Difference and Repetition* through to *A Thousand Plateaus* and *What is Philosophy?* with Guattari. Indeed one could say that it constitutes one of the essential forces that gives this thought a sort of "reserve" which it can claim without exhausting. This "claiming without exhausting" that is achieved by Deleuzian philosophy, is itself what the very concept of virtuality refers to, and one of the most original and powerful aspects of this thought. But first of all, I want to look at how Bergson, in his turn, breaks with the image of thought as an act against the domination of common sense that is for him a problem common to both philosophy and science. His break, in an affinity with Spinoza's geometrical method, involves the re-thinking of the conditions of the genesis of thought and goes by the name "the method of intuition."

3.1. Method of Intuition

The work of Bergson, which had been particularly neglected in the history of philosophy after having enjoyed some popularity in the beginning of the twentieth century – until Deleuze brought it back to light, is a fundamental critique against the well-established habits of thinking that have dominated western metaphysics. What typifies this sort of thinking for Bergson is a certain dualism that has idealism and realism as its two poles, where the former reduces matter to representation and the latter makes matter into a thing which produces in us representations but is of a different nature than these representations (Bergson, 1990⁴). And in his preface to *Matière et Mémoire*, Bergson summarizes his project as considering matter before the dissociation made by idealism and realism between its existence and its appearance (Bergson, 1990). Whether between idealism and realism, or rationalism and empiricism it is the same dualisms at work which Bergson sees as the natural inclination of intelligence and it is against this current that he puts forward “intuition” as a method to upset the habitual ways of thinking that finds its culmination in conventional metaphysics. This is not to say that neither Bergson nor Deleuze situate themselves outside the field of metaphysics but both strive for an *other* metaphysics that would no longer be the metaphysics of identity or essence for example. Thus, one could say that Deleuze, rather than envisaging the practice of philosophy as an overcoming of conventional metaphysics, situates his work as a “reversal of Platonism” which is one of the essential projects set forth in the *Logic of Sense*. The concept of simulacrum which serves to this end is nevertheless

⁴ Translations mine.

abandoned in the later works, but the re-working of metaphysics remains an essential aspect of the overall project, as can be seen in the last work co-authored by Deleuze and Guattari: *What is Philosophy?* Amidst this picture, we could generalize western metaphysics (something Deleuze himself has avoided) without nevertheless claiming to exhaust it, as that system of thought which deals with being, identity and essence, the question of origins and operates through binary oppositions whether in a dialectic or non-dialectic fashion. Thus there is a certain hierarchy that finds itself re-affirmed as long as the fundamental questions of metaphysics remain intact. Bergson's as well as Deleuze's enterprises consist in such a confrontation of this hierarchy by shaking the long-established grounds of metaphysics, that could be referred to as a set of habits in terms of thought as process. Bergson undertakes his project in an essential tension with scientific thought which he regards as perhaps weighing too heavily upon philosophy and itself lacking the metaphysical component. Where these two philosophers come together or where Deleuze finds a fundamental originality in Bergson is the point where these grounds are shaken by a re-considering of the temporality that is at work in a certain habit of thinking which culminates in that which is called western metaphysics and which can be characterized as "analytical." Thus, against the conventional methods of metaphysics, Bergson puts forth the above mentioned "method of intuition" which is essentially linked up with three kinds of acts, as Deleuze states in *Bergsonism*: the creation and stating of problems; distinction between genuine differences in kind; and finally, time as different in kind than space, that is, the dissociation of space and time (Deleuze, 1988a).

In order to see what is actually meant by “intuition” and how it stands opposed to the methods of metaphysics in the conventional sense, I will first discuss the three points above together with three fundamental Bergsonian concepts: duration, memory and multiplicity, which will all serve as focal points for the elaboration of the notion of virtuality.

In the fourth chapter of *Matière et Mémoire*, Bergson (1990), in order to formulate this method, points to the shortcomings of metaphysics in terms of the duality between empiricism and idealism or dogmatism and says that both these schools of thought depart from a common misconception. In fact they share the misconception that what they call “fact” or “pure experience” is not “the reality which appears as such to immediate intuition”, but actually a construct, the result of the all too human adaptation of human intelligence to certain practical necessities of corporeal life and the satisfaction of needs (Bergson, 1990). This amounts to the reduction not only of “fact” or “object”, properly speaking, to what we ultimately make of them but also the reduction of pure experience to properly *human* experience. In other words, from our partial knowledge of a given object of experience, by means of synthesis, we reduce the given object to a general and abstract idea of it and go on to subsume objects in artificial categories based on arbitrary resemblances which have no immediate connection to their objects other than what we here and there perceive of them. Thus since philosophy, in its conventional exercise, thinks it parts from experience proper and goes to construct false arrangements from the fragments that are taken to be its parts, Bergson defines the genuine task of philosophy as “to seek experience at its source” (1990: 205) *above* what he calls the “decisive turn” which

determines it as human experience. The search for experience at its source therefore necessitates the broadening of experience itself to go beyond the human or the subject in general.

According to the account given by Bergson in this fourth chapter of *Matière et Mémoire*, in the conventional train of thought adopted by empiricism and dogmatism, for living unity is substituted an artificial unity thus reconstituted. For empiricism attaches itself too much to the terms of the relations and cannot account for the relations themselves which come to unite these terms. Dogmatism goes a bit further in that it discovers the said difficulties in empiricism but, accepting these discontinuous and detached phenomena, contends with uniting them in a synthesis which ends up being necessarily arbitrary (Bergson, 1990). It is departing from this point that Bergson comes to the Kantian critique and the Kantian theory of knowledge, which constitutes one of the principal issues in *Matière et Mémoire*: for him, it is under such circumstances that Kant's critical philosophy which holds all knowledge to be relative and things as such to be inaccessible to the mind comes to say the last word and it is here that Bergson thinks the regular working of philosophy should be forced to be taken a step further instead of renouncing the claim to absolute knowledge. In order to briefly recall the Kantian point of view, I resort to Keith Ansell-Pearson's article entitled "Beyond the Human Condition" (2007), where he states the three possibilities in the Kantian theory of knowledge in the following way: "(i) the mind is determined by external things; (ii) things are determined by the mind itself; and (iii) between the mind and things we have to suppose a mysterious agreement or pre-established harmony." In this case, mind and

matter are in need of this third term, pre-established harmony, in order to assume a connection between the two which have to be first taken as cut off from each other only to be able to bind them again. This kind of conception of the intellect and matter, for Bergson, constitutes the essential shortcoming of Kantian epistemology.

Bergson has faith in absolute knowledge and the ways to get there, but believes that philosophy lacks the necessary method which would be able to go beyond our human tendency which is primarily utilitarian, and therefore remains content to accept that all knowledge is relative. It is indeed here that lies the source of badly stated problems, one such problem being Kantian theory itself which itself has dealt exhaustively with the illusions of thought but has remained there without taking the necessary last step. In the words of Deleuze, Kant deals with the conditions of “possible experience” whereas Bergson is concerned with the conditions of “real experience.” Bergson asserts that it is only through countering this human tendency of the intelligence that one can reach adequate or absolute knowledge, the knowledge of things in their immediate reality. Absolute knowledge would thus be that kind of knowledge one could grasp without having to go through detached phenomena cut off from their true relations but would provide for a genuine understanding of the vital relations themselves. It is in this sense that Bergson calls this kind of philosophy a philosophy of “precision”: the creation of singular concepts for singular objects of experience (Marrati, 2005). This privileging of singularity is best illustrated by Bergson’s famous question: “Why at this moment rather than at another?” (1990: 55), a point to be dealt with further when discussing the concept of duration. This

other tendency would then be intuition, countering a tendency with another tendency which, contrary to what the term might immediately denote, Deleuze calls “one of the most fully developed methods in philosophy” (1988a: 13).

The question of how intuition, which at first impression appears to have no other content than some vague feeling or some instinctual tendency, can come to be a rigorous philosophical method is the one Deleuze embarks upon in the first chapter of *Bergsonism*. Indeed, as Deleuze remarks, Bergson himself writes that he has hesitated before finally deciding to adopt this term “intuition.” As such it is itself an experience, a “lived act” as Deleuze calls it and already denotes a virtual multiplicity, consisting of different ways that could be taken up and actualized according to necessity but one which would be no less rigorous than the methods of science. An important aspect to be mentioned is that Bergson contests the primacy of language and mediation in philosophy and in his quest for immediate knowledge, sets forth this method as one that does not take representation as its given. This means that we start by changing the ground on which we think, a change of perspective, an act of forgetting what we think is given. The ground in question is the ground set by metaphysics and determined by the natural inclination of human intelligence. Therefore the method of intuition would in some sort involve a “counter-intuitive” detour and would have to think itself in its differentiation from what it claims to leave behind.

The method of intuition has three essential rules which have been related above in relation to three kinds of acts: the creation and stating of problems; distinction

between genuine differences in kind; and the dissociation of space and time. Deleuze states these rules in the following way: 1. apply the test of true and false to problems themselves (Deleuze, 1988a: 15). 2. struggle against illusion, rediscover the true differences in kind (Deleuze, 1988a: 21) and 3. state problems and solve them in terms of time rather than space (Deleuze, 1988a: 31).

As to the first rule, Deleuze states that an initial illusion regards the assumption that the categories of true and false relate only to solutions and not to problems as such. The construction of problems is a matter of creation, since Bergson sees creation as having a direct bearing on reality, and it is in this sense that Deleuze says that “the becoming conscious of that activity is like the conquest of freedom” (1988a: 16). In that sense, the construction of a problem always involves more than uncovering what was already there, it is an invention. This does not mean solutions count for nothing but rather that a question always gets the solution it deserves. What Bergson did was to free the problem from being determined by its possibility or impossibility of being solved and to allow for what Deleuze calls an “intrinsic determination” of the problem. The problem as such gains an importance that is completely its own. Indeed, Deleuze says, in his lecture course on Bergson’s *Creative Evolution*, that “the living is essentially a being that has problems and resolves them at each instant” (Bergson, 1922: 74). And it is in this sense that Bergson mentions freedom, which rather becomes a folding upon itself of the resolving of problems, in other words, becoming conscious of this activity.

There are two kinds of false problems: in the first place, “nonexistent problems” involving the confusion of the “more” with the “less” and, in the second place, “badly stated questions” grounded on badly analyzed composites. The first instance, the case of “nonexistent problems” is exemplified by the long established metaphysical question “why is there something rather than nothing?” or all questions of the type “why is there this rather than that?” It is important to note that Bergson’s theory of knowledge or epistemology does not just remain so but becomes one of ontology as this question of something rather than nothing, as Bergson puts it, is based upon the false assumption that first there was nothing, or that nonbeing preceded being, or that order came to replace a primary state of disorder. This is nothing but a “retrograde movement of the true” (Deleuze, 1988a: 18), a retroactive movement that projects itself back and reduces Being to a possibility: an instance of negation.

The second instance, that of badly stated problems involves “badly analyzed composites” which actually consist of the grouping together of things that *differ in kind*, disregarding their irreducibility to one another, or their singularity. This then turns into a problem of the confusion of the more with the less, that is, the confusion of the differences in degree with the differences in kind, when for example Deleuze says: “The idea of disorder appears when, instead of seeing that there are two or more irreducible orders (for example, that of life and that of mechanism, each present when the other is absent), we retain only a general idea of order that we confine ourselves to opposing to disorder and to thinking in correlation with the idea of disorder” (Deleuze, 1988a). So unless we see something that fits into our idea of

perfect order we tend to say there is disorder, ending up in losing the singularity of both life and mechanism, and coming up with one general and abstract concept that can only be evaluated according to differences in degree. In other words, differences in kind are confused with differences in degree at the cost of exhausting difference itself. It is in that sense that Deleuze calls differences of kind “genuine.” Now the dissociation of time and space in fact corresponds to one such instance of problem positing. I will return to this again, but for the moment, let us note that the reduction of time to space is one such false construction of a problem. While time is actually different in kind than space, it is time which creates differences in kind, and not space which essentially involves differences in degree. Thus Bergson, as well as Deleuze, devote an essential part of their respective philosophies to re-claim the primacy of time as an essential criterion for becoming and the event.

The second rule, relating to the three kinds of acts involved in the method of intuition, is “struggle against illusion, rediscover the true differences in kind.” We need to start with acknowledging the fact that reality is complex, and so are real things and “experience offers us nothing but composites” (Deleuze, 1988a: 22). What distinguishes badly analyzed composites from genuine composites is that, the method of intuition being a method of division, “a composite must always be divided according to its natural articulations, that is, into elements which differ in kind” (Deleuze, 1988a: 22). In the case of space and time, for instance, when time is reduced to a dimension of space, and thus represented in spatial terms, what happens is we mix duration with extension, two things which differ in kind. This issue was the object of the famous debate which took place between Bergson and Einstein,

Bergson accusing Einstein of reducing time to a dimension of space, of conceiving of time as countable in spatial terms, or in Deleuze's words, of confusing actual spatial multiplicity with virtual temporal multiplicity (1988a: 85). As far as the theory of relativity goes, this debate has since been discussed at great length and, even though Bergson himself did not claim expertise in physics and his "contestation" of the theory has been proved erroneous, the importance of Bergson's theory, according to Deleuze, resides in his attempt at giving "the theory of Relativity the metaphysics it lacked" (1988a: 116). This is because, in Bergson's view, modern science needed immanent and varying durations, which, indeed has, in its turn, proved to be the case. At this point, I want to point out to a footnote in Deleuze's *Spinoza: A Practical Philosophy* (1988b). Here Deleuze sees a connection between certain modern medical problems and Spinoza's thought. Deleuze mentions a certain Dr. Schwartzberg, who states that death is not a biological but rather a metaphysical or ethical problem and makes the following citation: "No reason compels me to maintain that the body does not die unless it is changed into a corpse. And, indeed, experience seems to urge a different conclusion. Sometimes a man undergoes such changes that I should hardly have said he was the same man" (1988b: 34). Even though this point is mentioned in its resonance with Spinozist themes, it resonates just as well – from another aspect – with what Deleuze calls the difference between virtual temporal multiplicity and actual spatial multiplicity. It is only in considering death itself as a variable duration, always already multiple in itself that one can posit death as a metaphysical or ethical problem. Deleuze, in *Difference and Repetition* (1994) and then again in *The Logic of Sense* (1990), mentions that every death is double. In *Difference and Repetition*, he says

It would be wrong to confuse the two faces of death, as though the death instinct were reduced to a tendency towards increasing entropy or a return to inanimate matter. Every death is double, and represents the cancellation of large differences in extension as well as the liberation and swarming of little differences in intensity (1994: 259).

And in *The Logic of Sense*, he discusses the two aspects of death in the following way:

Are these not the two aspects of death that Blanchot distinguished earlier? Death as event, inseparable from the past and future into which it is divided, never present, an impersonal death, the “ungraspable, that which I cannot grasp, for it is not bound to me by any sort of relation, which never comes and toward which I do not go.” And then personal death, which occurs and is actualized in the most harsh present whose “extreme horizon (is) the freedom to die and to be able to risk oneself mortally.” (...) When Blanchot thinks of suicide as the wish to bring about the coincidence of the two faces of death – of prolonging impersonal death by means of the most personal act – he clearly shows the inevitability of this coupling or of this attempt at coupling. But he tries also to define the illusion. In fact, an entire difference of nature subsists between what is joined together or what is narrowly extended (1990: 156).

On the matter of the two faces of death as actual multiplicity on the one side, and virtual multiplicity on the other, we can find similar resonances among the literature on modern science. Especially in terms of the confusion that may be translated into philosophical terms as that of differences of degree with those of kind. For instance, William S. Beck, in *Modern Science and The Nature of Life*, which may be defined as a book of popular science published in 1957, (and which I resort to as an example because Bergson was concerned with giving the science of life a philosophy of life) writes the following in respect of the problem of death and life in biology:

At the moment, I am having difficulty thinking of any use to which definition of life could be put – other than to the everyday problem of recognizing death. When a scientist manipulates a living system, it is occasionally useful to him to know if it has died. If the system is a horse, there would seem to be few problems. But we quickly discover that the ambiguity of ‘life’ affects ‘death’ in reverse. If it is a bacterium, a seed, or a spore, the problems may be insurmountable, and in practice we usually establish an arbitrary end point at which death, by decision, is recognized to have occurred. Quiescence and death can look very much alike and their distinction brings us straight back to the bar of verbal decisions (Beck, 1957: 196).

Without simply fusing a scientific problem with a philosophical one, we can still see what Deleuze may be meaning about giving science the metaphysics it lacks. In the recent literature on microbiological death we can still see attempts made at distinguishing at least something called "dying as a process and death as end point," the latter being as yet far from unambiguous.⁵ Conventional scientific discourse resorted to a hierarchization of the organism in order to explain the “mechanism” of an organism which resulted in increasingly ambiguous findings as the scale increased:

Thus, the cell is an organized entity at one level of complexity. (...) Yet these cells may be part of a higher organization, the brain, which is a whole made up of the sum of its parts. (...) Likewise, the whole man is still higher on the scale of organization, and men talk to other men, not brains or cells. We may also start with the cell and go down the ladder, for within the cell are self-concerned substructures, like the nucleus, the particles within the nucleus, and the particles within those particles – until we reach the level of the molecule and the atom. It is this rising table of organization that is characteristic of organism, the elusive hierarchy that makes of thin voices mighty antiphonal choirs (Beck, 1957: 255).

In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1988), in the chapter entitled “The Geology of Morals,” Deleuze and Guattari devote the essential part of

⁵ The Nomenclature Committee on Cell Death (NCDD) is one such attempt made in order to establish a common understanding among professionals in the area:
<http://www.nature.com/cdd/journal/v12/n2s/full/4401724a.html>

the discussion to biological processes in terms of organization and organism, contesting the notion of a hierarchy of organization. In the part where they discuss molecular populations, they undertake a reversal of the relationship between embryogenesis and phylogenesis and go on as follows: “Degrees are no longer measured in terms of increasing perfection or a differentiation and increase in the complexity of the parts, but in terms of differential relations and coefficients such as selective pressure, catalytic action, speed of propagation, rate of growth, evolution, mutation, etc.” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 48). In the case of differences in kind, degrees are still measured, but as the citation from Deleuze and Guattari show, the scale against which they are measured have undergone a change. They are no longer measured against a common magnitude from which they go on in the manner of a tree to ever increasing or decreasing levels of complexity, but gain their own intensive degrees which are measured according to variable speeds and slownesses. Put in Bergsonian terms, with different organic strata taken as virtual temporal multiplicities (durations), from one stratum to another, one gets not by ascending or descending, but by a process of “folding” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 46). It is in this sense that Deleuze states in *Bergsonism*:

Intuition leads us to go beyond the state of experience toward the conditions of experience. But these conditions are neither general nor abstract. They are no broader than the conditioned: they are the conditions of real experience. (...) (A)n extraordinary broadening out that forces us to think a pure perception identical to the whole of matter, a pure memory identical to the totality of the past” (1988a: 27).

The event of death can be measured as an actual spatial multiplicity *and* as a virtual temporal multiplicity but an immanent ethics would entail first of all a proper

distinction of the two and would tend toward the latter which would entail in some sort a “counter-intuitive” detour from the tendency that conveniently leads us toward the former. The important point is to remember that the latter is never exhausted in and through the first, an essential difference between actuality and virtuality. When Deleuze distinguishes between death as the return of life to inanimate matter (personal death) and death as the liberation of little differences in intensity (impersonal death), in temporal terms, the difference lies in the conception of present and future. Jay Lampert makes such a point in *Deleuze and Guattari’s Philosophy of History*: “The first conception takes the future as the end of present life; the second accepts the annihilation of presence that it produces, yet still lives the present of that future. For Deleuze, the second type of future can break us of our sense that desire is under our control” (2006: 63). So death, as virtual multiplicity, having its own duration in different strata, for instance on the level of the cells, on the level of tissues, on the level of the human organism as a whole, is actualized each time differently but is never exhausted at either level as an event and in philosophical terms cannot be reduced to an “end-point”:

To open us up to the inhuman and the superhuman (*durations* which are inferior or superior to our own), to go beyond the human condition: This is the meaning of philosophy, in so far as our condition condemns us to live among badly analyzed composites, and to be badly analyzed composites ourselves” (Deleuze, 1988a: 28).

The third rule in connection with the three kinds of acts involved in the method of intuition concerns the dissociation of space and time: “State problems and solve them in terms of time rather than of space” (Deleuze, 1988a: 31). As Deleuze says, intuition presupposes duration as virtual multiplicity, and duration is essentially

memory, consciousness and freedom. As a method, it is essentially *problematizing* in terms of distinguishing the false and creating new problems, *differentiating* and *temporalizing* (Deleuze, 1988a: 35). As has been mentioned earlier, the method of intuition is primarily a method of division (Deleuze likens it to Platonism in this aspect) and for Bergson, the essential division is between time as duration, and space, which are different in kind. But to say this is not enough, because the said division *does* happen between duration and space, however, the genuine difference in kind lies not in between space and duration but is completely on the side of duration. Duration bears all the differences in kind (qualitative variation), whereas space bears only differences of degree (quantitative homogeneity). It has to be kept in mind that duration has an absolute existence and cannot be restricted to our own inner sense of time (Ansell-Pearson, 2007), because in that sense, it connects to the whole of the universe. In his lecture course on Bergson, Deleuze states that “the living is a natural system – that is, one that has duration, while the inert is a system that is artificially – that is, approximately – closed” (Deleuze, 2007: 73). Here we come to the famous Bergsonian example of the lump of sugar: “I must wait until the sugar dissolves,” taken from *Creative Evolution*. This example of the lump of sugar serves to illustrate the fact that everything has its own duration in time, its own way of being in time, and my impatience in waiting for it to dissolve reveals that different durations with different rhythms have all their own way of existing together in time. “This lump of sugar differs in kind not only from other things, but first and foremost from itself” (Deleuze, 1988a: 32), and in this sense we say it is alteration. While duration bears all differences in kind, space consists only of the location of differences in degree. Intuition and duration are not the same thing because intuition consists in our way of

emerging from our own duration and by the same movement, affirming the other durations. Deleuze says that, unlike the Platonic method of division, the method of intuition is thus reconciled with the immediate. With Bergson, contrary to the received idea that Bergsonian duration is subjective, space and time as duration both acquire an ontological status as he develops his project, as two tendencies of being that is expressed simultaneously in two directions. As Deleuze remarks in *Cinema 2* (2005), Kant's and Bergson's conceptions of time have an affinity in that both Kant and Bergson claim that we are internal to time (for both, we could say that time is the form of interiority) but Bergson's difference lies in his conception of the very form of time (Deleuze, 2005), that is duration as virtual multiplicity. If science is concerned with the tendency to quantitative multiplicity, this is because it constitutes one of the two halves of ontology and plays an essential part in showing the differences in degree behind the qualitative distinctions. But it is only through duration, as long as we can repress our natural tendency to project the differences of degree onto differences of kind, that we can come to a genuine knowledge of the absolute, that is, being.

3.2. Duration

In order to do philosophy understood in the sense of creating concepts, Bergsonian theory of duration provides an amazing resource. It is well known that for Deleuze philosophy is the creation of concepts. This is most extensively undertaken in his last book co-authored with Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*(1994). The concept is itself a

multiplicity, a combination of its various components, a constellation. The components of a concept, which are distinct and heterogeneous are nevertheless inseparable, such is the exigency of their internal consistency. This internal consistency means that the concept is absolute as a whole but relative with regard to its components and to the plane of consistency on which it is layed out with others. There are undecidable thresholds amongst the components that turn the components into zones of indeterminacy. As such, the concept is incarnated in a state of affairs but is not mixed up with it, “it does not have spatiotemporal coordinates, only intensive ordinates” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 21). The concept’s essential relation is to the event, or as Deleuze and Guattari say, it “speaks the event.” In other words, “it posits itself and its object at the same time as it is created” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 22). As such, philosophical time is the time of becoming. Philosophy has a becoming and not a history. This is another way of saying that it is creation or constructivism that matters from the philosophical perspective. But from the perspective of the event, this also means that, even though problems may change, and they necessarily do, the event subsists in the problem as an event. When we say that the event subsists in the concept or as the concept, this means it has to be capable of retaining its character of multiplicity. It has to provide the means to prevent the event from being cut off from its virtuality. The concept as a whole, but an open whole, so that it provides for a cosmology in which creations would be able to proliferate. In order to work with the concept as a virtual whole without reducing it to a totality, what we need is an immanent conception of time, a time that is itself a virtual multiplicity. Otherwise we are immediately faced with the imminent threat of exhausting the concept and the event. And Bergson’s theory of duration provides just

such an opening. Bergson, in the first chapter of *Creative Evolution* writes:

It is easy enough to argue that a tree never grows old, since the tips of its branches are always equally young, always equally capable of engendering new trees by budding. But in such an organism – which is, after all, a society rather than an individual – *something* ages, if only the leaves and the interior of the trunk. And each cell, considered separately, evolves in a specific way. *Wherever anything lives, there is, open somewhere, a register in which time is being inscribed* (1922: 17).

As Deleuze remarks in *Bergsonism*, duration is a condition of existence and as such, goes beyond the lived, human experience. If space is the form of exteriority without succession, duration is the form of interiority, offering pure succession (Deleuze, 1988a: 37). Since the object of experience is always a composite of space and time, the division required by the method of intuition occurs between two kinds of multiplicity; one being discrete, quantitative multiplicity represented by space and involving differences of degree, and the other consisting of continuous, qualitative multiplicity, involving differences in kind. Deleuze attributes to the former which divide only by changing in kind, the term “qualitative discrimination” and to the latter which do not differ in kind when they divide, “quantitative differentiation” (1988a: 38). What makes a qualitative multiplicity continuous is, in a sense, the capability of such a multiplicity to exceed all quantitative measure and its being made up of pure interiority, beyond all extrinsic determinations such as the laws of nature. I think a good example would be one offered by Bergson himself:

(I)n an organism such as our own, crises like puberty or the menopause, in which the individual is completely transformed, are quite comparable to changes in the course of larval or embryonic life – yet they are part and parcel of the process of our ageing. Although they occur at a definite age and within a time that may be quite short, no one would maintain that they appear then

ex abrupto, from without, simply because a certain age is reached, just as a legal right is granted to us on our one-and-twentieth birthday. It is evident that a change like that of puberty is in course of preparation at every instant from birth, and even before birth, and that the ageing up to that crisis consists, in part at least, of this gradual preparation. (...) The evolution of the living being, like that of the embryo, implies a continual recording of duration, a persistence of the past in the present, and so an appearance, at least, of organic memory (1922: 20).

We may determine certain points in the life of a living organism, and classify them under some general resemblances, based on abstract properties but this would in no way effect the duration of that organism. It just goes on existing in its own manner of being, in its own duration. But recognition of the singular duration of a certain organism cannot but bring about the affirmation that it is in the pure interiority of duration that it participates in the whole of the universe. In Bergson's view, it is in this sense that we can speak of duration as absolute and of intuition as that which can give us knowledge of the absolute.

Quantitative or numerical multiplicity denotes an object of experience, a composite which divides only by changing in degree and not in kind. "Objectivity" understood in the sense of Bergson is "*that which has no virtuality* – whether realized or not, whether possible or real, everything is actual in the objective" (Deleuze, 1988a: 41). Here, we have to keep in mind that the virtual and the actual, both in Bergson and Deleuze, are *real*. The virtual does not lack in reality, whether actualized or not, it is as real as the actual. But the virtual is not the same as the possible. For the possible can only be thought in terms of the actual and Bergson criticizes the category of the possible because when we speak of the possible we think of it as something that is

less real whereas it “is just the real with the addition of an act of the mind that throws its image back onto the past” (Marrati, 2005: 1109). The possible can only be constructed by a retrospective movement of the human mind. Indeed Deleuze himself criticizes the category of the possible as faulty because in order for it to get actualized, it would require a *leap into existence* and it is as such incompatible with thinking in terms of creation. Thus, the virtual and actual are two halves of difference, or individuation, that are both fully real. Quantitative or numerical multiplicity lies on the side of the actual: “For number, and primarily the arithmetical unit itself, is the model of that which divides without changing in kind. This is the same as saying that number has only differences in degree, or that its differences, whether realized *or not*, are always actual in it” (Deleuze, 1988a: 41). We see here that the possible is subsumed under the actual, and it does not get actualized. What gets actualized is the virtual. The possible is nothing but an artificial category. As to the number, in the given context, Deleuze assigns “number” to the category of numerical multiplicities. Yet in *A Thousand Plateaus*, in the chapter “Treatise on Nomadology – The War Machine,” we see that number is subjected to further specificities and is no longer restricted to such an account of numerical multiplicity (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988). It becomes a nomadic and ordinal number which organizes what Deleuze and Guattari call “smooth space” by distributing itself over it. It takes on a qualitative nature, as it denotes that which does not divide without changing in kind.⁶ It is worth mentioning at this point that a passage occurs only within nonnumerical multiplicities, one does not pass from a numerical multiplicity

⁶ Keith Ansell-Pearson gives a brief account of the modification undergone by “number” in Deleuze’s works in footnote 14 to *Germinal life: the difference and repetition of Deleuze*, 236. According to this account, Deleuze also notes in an essay on Bergson that Bergson’s conception of difference implies a “numbering number”, a virtual number that cannot be reduced to differences of magnitude.

from another which constitute but abstract constructs of the mind but the passage is always a matter of duration, of non-numerical multiplicities. This is why it is never the possible that gets actualized but the virtual. Numerical multiplicities are divided but they do not ensure a passage from one state to another.

That which divides by changing in degree or magnitude, can be divided and subdivided without limit. We can imagine them to be as small or as big as we like. And for Bergson what this shows is that we regard it as extended, hence its being spatial.

As for qualitative multiplicity, it is continuous, indivisible in itself and involves pure succession but this, as Deleuze notes, is only at first impression, for qualitative multiplicity also divides but does not do so without changing in kind. It is in this sense that the number involved in nonnumerical multiplicity is virtual, denoting a virtuality, a potential. As opposed to the objectivity that pertains to quantitative multiplicity, duration is on the side of the subjective, denotes subjectivity. "(I)t is the virtual insofar as it is actualized, in the course of being actualized, it is inseparable from the movement of its actualization" (Deleuze, 1988a: 43). Here we can no longer speak in spatial terms or rather in terms of differences of degree, for it is differentiation at stake and it is duration as virtual temporal multiplicity that can affectuate such a differentiation by differing first from itself and then from others.

However, a point of utmost importance is not to assume that space represents only a relative knowledge in relation to things, that stands in opposition to the absolute that is pure duration, for in such a conception space would be reduced to a disruption of the “purity” of time, while quantitative difference that lies purely on the side of science would be nothing but an illusion. This issue will become clearer once the Bergsonian concept of memory is discussed. For as has been mentioned earlier, as the Bergsonian project matures, these two poles become two halves of the absolute, in the manner that the actual and virtual constitute the two halves of difference in Deleuze.

3.3. Memory

As Deleuze notes in the beginning of the third chapter of *Bergsonism*, memory is both identical to and coextensive with duration. Memory has two forms: recollection-memory and contraction-memory. Recollection-memory is that which enlarges toward the past, and contraction-memory is that which is oriented toward the future. In no case is duration conceived as “a discontinuous series of instants repeated identically” (Deleuze, 1988a: 51). The past is always contained, or in Bergson’s words, conserved *and* preserved in the present. If this were not the case, the passage from the past to the present would never occur. Indeed, in this sense, the passage is always in the making, it occurs without the possibility of intervention. In fact, this constitutes an outstanding critical approach to the notion of “action” in itself. If time is conceived in this manner, how to assign an agency in a primary determining

manner to actions? Or in Nietzsche's famous words, a doer to every deed? The distinction between the doer and the deed loses its primacy in the face of a conception of event that is determined by the form of time conceived as coexistence.

Deleuze, in the same chapter, briefly recounts the five aspects of subjectivity: (i) need-subjectivity (ii) brain-subjectivity (iii) affection-subjectivity (iv) recollection-subjectivity (v) contraction-subjectivity.

In the first chapter of *Matière et Mémoire*, Bergson asks the question of how perception becomes conscious, which is also to say, how do we pass from presence to representation. In order to try this, he notes that we have to first place ourselves in the hypothesis of pure perception, since there is no perception, no immediate given that is not already marked by recollections (*souvenirs*), already containing the past. But this does not mean that we cannot imagine a pure perception that excludes all accidents, for it is precisely because this impersonal perception has been confused with what memory adds or subtracts from it that one has thought of it only as differing in degree from recollection. "However brief one imagines a perception to be, in fact it always involves a certain duration and requires an effort of memory which prolongs one into another other a plurality of moments" (Bergson, 1990: 31). Now the material world is a totality of images and what I call my body is an image among images, taken from that perspective. "It is true that an image can *be* without being *perceived*. It can be present without being represented; and the distance between these two terms, presence and representation, appears precisely to measure

the interval between the matter itself and the conscious perception we have of it” (Bergson, 1990: 32). But the essential point is that, if in order to pass from presence to representation, we had to add an additional term, we could never get passed that distance and the passage from one to the other would remain a complete enigma. This means that representation is always already there, but as a virtuality. What happens in representation is that we hold what interests us about the given object and let the rest go. We let go of all the parts of the object that do not interest us, and retain the contours. What we hold and isolate thus become “perceptions”. This is why we say of images that for them there is “a simple difference of degree, and not of nature, between *being* and *being consciously perceived*” (Bergson, 1990: 35). So in terms of external perception, consciousness consists in this choice of what to hold and what to let go. For Bergson this is a necessary poverty of perception but also one that at the same time announces the mind or freedom, and this is precisely “discernment”. So for him the real question does not consist in “how does perception emerge?” but “how it limits itself;” since if it did not limit itself, it would then be by right the image of the whole, whereas it actually reduces itself to what we are interested in (Bergson, 1990: 38). What I have tried to explain here corresponds to the first aspect stated by Deleuze, that is, need-subjectivity.

As to brain-subjectivity, it corresponds to the above mentioned moment of interval.

In Deleuze’s words:

The brain gives us the means of “choosing” that which corresponds to our needs in the object; introducing an interval between received and executed movement, it is itself the choice between two ways because, in itself, by virtue of its network of nerves, it divides up excitation infinitely and also

because, in relation to the motor cells of the core it leaves us to choose between several possible reactions (1988a: 52).

This process involves a longer duration as the organism becomes more and more complex. While we see immediate reactions to external stimuli in the simplest organisms, with humans this process takes the longest time, a point further explained below.

The third, affection-subjectivity corresponds to the moment of pain and is situated between perception and action. This is the point where Bergson asks “why at this moment rather than another?” because pain arises at a precise moment. In order to explain this, he resorts to the example of the amoeba, a simple organism. When a foreign object comes in contact with the amoeba, its prolongations retract, which means that all of its parts react equally to the excitant and against it. But a division of labor occurs as the organism gets more and more complicated. In an organism like the human body sensitive nerves take on the mission of communicating the excitation to a central zone and thus pain emerges as a result of the effort by the injured element to set things right (Bergson, 1990: 56). It is through the surrender and transition to pure receptivity of the organic parts that pain arises. Insofar as there is an interval between the object and my body, perception refers to a virtual action. But the less distance there is, the more imminent becomes the danger and hence action becomes real. So with affection, real action is expressed in pain in a very specific part of the body. It is the motor tendencies of the body that explain affection.

What Deleuze calls recollection-subjectivity and defines as the primary aspect of memory concerns the choice of the reaction to be given by the body. And this choice naturally depends on past experiences. There is a difference in kind between pure perception and recollection. The reservoir of recollection is not the brain but itself. Deleuze notes that because we believe that the past has ceased to be, we cannot understand how the past can be preserved in itself. “We have thus confused Being with being-present” (1988a: 55). But far from this being the case, the past or pure recollection *is*, even though it is useless and inactive, while the present, being active, *is not*. The present must be thought as the time of pure becoming. But pure recollection is virtual, it is pure ontology. And it is by making an almost Kierkegaardian “genuine leap” into the past that we place ourselves within recollection and it this general past that constitutes the condition of the passage of present moment as well as of all other particular pasts. So there is a leap into being. By gradually becoming conscious of an act, we first leap into the ontological past, that is into the virtual, and only then does recollection acquire a psychological dimension and becomes actualized. First we leap into the general past and then position ourselves in a particular region of the past. Only then can a particular recollection be actualized. This is what constitutes the becoming conscious of an act. If there is any psychology in the general past, it is only attributed retroactively. Bergson, in *Matière et Mémoire*, asserts that it is only because of a misconception of the past in general that we cannot distinguish the past *that ceases to act* from the present *that acts*. In this way, all the difference between perception and recollection is erased, and reduced to a difference of degree. Only if we acknowledge the ontological status of the past, can we speak of pure perception. Otherwise we would

have to say that perception is but a reconstruction of reality. But pure perception is in fact “touched, penetrated, lived” (Bergson, 1990: 72).

What this status of the ontological past entails most of all is coexistence of the past and the present, which differ in kind. The condition of the present moment’s coming to pass is that it coexists with the past and what Deleuze states as the fundamental paradox of memory: “The past is ‘contemporaneous’ with the present that it *has been*” (1988a: 58). Jay Lampert explains this situation as follows:

We know that the present contracts anticipation of past and future into the present. Here, it is the past that is said to contract. The past as a whole, all that has happened, becomes intense in the present moment. However the past comes together, that is what the present contains. One might say that time is defined as the increase of what has happened, so the present is the cutting edge of the past. The present cannot pass until it is put into a sequence of events that was already there. If the present somehow passed but did not fit into the past that was already there, if it did not get released from its contracted state into a relaxed state of belonging with other possibilities, it would not make it into the past, but remain an anomaly of the present. In other words, the present can only pass if it passes *into* a series. (...) Similarly, the past’s capacity to contract into something next, a capacity that may never be actualized, constitutes the future dimension within the past. This emphasizes that events in the past have their own virtual movement, even if nothing is actually passing empirically (2006: 50).

This passage also gives an account of Bergson’s well known cone metaphor. All levels of the past contain the totality of the past as a whole as well as particular elements pertaining to that given level. And all levels of the past contain the totality of the past and the anticipation of the future in a more or less contracted manner. “This is the precise point at which contraction-Memory fits in with recollection-Memory and, in a way, *takes over from it* (Deleuze, 1988a: 60). It had been mentioned earlier that duration is pure succession but in fact, Deleuze states in the

same page that it is only so because more profoundly, it is *virtual coexistence*: “the coexistence with itself of all the levels, all the tensions, all the degrees of contraction and relaxation.” And this sort of coexistence involves a virtual repetition. The whole of the past being played out on every level of the past. Deleuze states four interconnected paradoxes (1988a: 61):

- (i) we place ourselves at once, in a leap, in the ontological element of the past (paradox of the leap);
- (ii) there is a difference in kind between the present and the past (paradox of Being);
- (iii) the past does not follow the present that it has been, but coexists with it (paradox of coexistence);
- (iv) what coexists with each present is the whole of the past, integrally, on various levels of contraction and relaxation (paradox of psychic repetition).

And all of these paradoxes answer to the common sense propositions about time which all amount to being components of a single illusion that makes us believe that:

- (i) we can reconstitute the past with the present;
- (ii) we pass gradually from one to the other;
- (iii) that they are distinguished by a before and an after; and
- (iv) that the work of the mind is carried out by the addition of elements.

It is already the essential element of the ontological past that is virtual that gives us multiplicity, which is strictly distinct from the metaphysical pair consisting of the Multiple and the One. And it is this concept of multiplicity which makes of the theory of duration what it is. Otherwise, considering Bergson – in his account of ontological time – is indeed on the side of a single time, we could just as well end up with a conception of time that is ordinary and, in that, somewhat Heideggerian. (This point will be discussed below by reference to Deleuze’s discussion on the problem of the monism of time in Bergson.) Although Heidegger dismisses the Bergsonian account of time as being Aristotelian (a point which appears to be shared, at least to some extent, by Derrida), when the concepts of multiplicity and, above all, the virtual are duly considered, Bergsonian temporality accommodates in a fascinating way an immanent conception of ethics, of evaluation with regard to the event because (i) duration itself constitutes a thread that connects the whole of the universe to the smallest particle in an immanent manner, as no two durations are quantitatively comparable, yet all participate in the absolute duration which is an open whole; (ii) absolute duration is conceived in such a manner as to give precision, that is singularity to objects of experience as events; (iii) discrimination is carried out on the level not of quantitative but of genuinely qualitative difference, because “duration (is) not simply the indivisible, nor (is) it the nonmeasurable. Rather, it (is) that which divide(s) only by changing in kind, that which (is) susceptible to measurement only by varying its metrical principle at each stage of the division” (1988a: 40) – this is why Deleuze terms one of the functions brought about by qualitative multiplicity, “qualitative discrimination.”

3.4. Multiplicity

Multiplicity is above all not the multiple. The multiple can be subsumed under the category of quantitative multiplicity but by itself gives nothing of the genuine difference inscribed in the concept of multiplicity. It is, in the first place, by changing the form of the question that we can carry out between things a new sort of distinction or discrimination that is required by this concept. When dealing with a composite – and every object of experience is a composite – we no longer ask the question ‘is it one or multiple?’ but the question pertains to the *kind* of multiplicity that is involved: is it a qualitative multiplicity or a quantitative multiplicity? Is it actual or is it virtual? The binarism of the one and the multiple is a well-established theme in philosophy which makes the pair operate in a dialectical movement:

We are told that the Self is one (thesis) and it is multiple (antithesis). Or else we are told that the One is already multiple, that Being passes into nonbeing and produces becoming. (...) To Bergson, it seems that in this type of *dialectical* method, one begins with concepts that, like baggy clothes, are much too big. The One in general, the multiple in general, nonbeing in general.... In such cases the real is recomposed with abstracts; but of what use is a dialectic that believes itself to be reunited with the real when it compensates for the inadequacy of a concept that is too broad or too general by invoking the opposite concept, which is no less broad and general? The concrete will never be attained by combining the inadequacy of one concept with the inadequacy of its opposite. The singular will never be attained by correcting a generality with another generality (Deleuze, 1988a: 44).

Multiplicity takes its force and originality from its ability to elude the categories of *both* the one and the multiple. As such, it has to be established at first hand that *everything*, whether virtual or actual, is a multiplicity. And in the cases of both kinds of multiplicity we are dealing with degrees and not with absolutes. But the two kinds

of multiplicities, although they are completely distinct from one another, are actually the two halves of being, meaning there is no “better” part in itself, none is more authentic or better insofar as the two kinds of multiplicities are properly distinguished. The criteria for evaluation fall upon the manner in which a question is posed, on how a problem is stated. Such a theory of multiplicity does not make judgments on the nature of things in themselves but requires a strictly rigorous distinction/discrimination that needs to be made each time anew in order to construct singular criteria for evaluation as opposed to setting general rules or laws.

Everything is a multiplicity insofar as it incorporates an Idea (Deleuze, 1994: 182). And as Deleuze (1994) says in *Difference and Repetition*, even the many is a multiplicity, even the one is a multiplicity. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze takes up the concept of multiplicity in connection with its specific place in philosophy, more particularly, with what he calls the Idea, which is itself a multiplicity, and the genesis of Ideas. The Idea falls beyond the scope of this work, but its genesis is of importance, because it applies to the relation between the actual and the virtual. Genesis does not take place between one actual term and another but between the virtual and the actual – “in other words, it goes from the structure to its incarnation, from the conditions of a problem to the cases of solution, from the differential elements and their ideal connections to actual terms and diverse real relations which constitute at each moment the actuality of time” (Deleuze, 1994: 183). The process of actualization takes place through differentiation, or more precisely, differentiation and, as a result, produces differences in kind. For differences in degree only occur between actual terms. Deleuze makes a distinction

between differentiation and differenciation in relation to the Idea. Differentiation comes to determine the virtual content of a multiplicity, whereas differenciation involves the actualization of that content, for instance as species and parts, “as though it corresponded to the cases of solution of the problem” (Deleuze, 1994: 207). In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze envisages living beings in a similar fashion to Bergson, as solutions to problems. “It is always a problematic field which conditions a differenciation within the milieu in which it is incarnated” (Deleuze, 1994: 207) and within the dimension of time. At this point, we need to be reminded of the difference between possibility and virtuality. Miguel de Bestegui (2004), in *Truth and Genesis*, explains this matter by referring to Kant who states that, in terms of content, there is no difference between the concept of a thing and its existence, and that this is true insofar as we consider concepts as designating “the thing *qua* possibility.” But this no longer holds true when we think of concepts as virtual multiplicities, or as designating the event, themselves being events but in no way resembling the things they designate (De Bestegui, 2004: 253). For this is how Deleuze explains actualization. The actual and the virtual are two halves of the object, but the two halves do not resemble each other:

In this case there would not simply be a difference between a concept and a thing, and not simply in the order of positing, but the concept itself would be indicative of the thing in its difference – in its difference from those virtual tendencies from out of which it is born, as well as in its difference from the very differences constitutive of the concept itself, as the site of divergent virtual tendencies (De Bestegui, 2004: 253).

Genesis redoubled in the genetic concept. Concept as event. The essential feature of the virtual in both Bergson and Deleuze is that it eludes exhaustion. This is a result of

the two halves, consisting of the virtual and the actual, not resembling each other; or rather, *this is why* the two halves assume no resemblance to one another. Philosophy, as philosophy of life, as de Bestegui points out, thus recognizes with Bergson that life is material and yet also recognizes the essential excess in life, that is, its excess over the various actualizations carried out.

In order to make more clear what Bergson understands by a living system, I want to refer to Deleuze's lecture course on *Creative Evolution* where he gives an account of the difference in kind that Bergson sees between the inert and the living (Deleuze, 2007). Yet this said difference in kind "does not arise from a special principle of life (...), but from the fact that the living is a natural system – that is, one that has *duration*, while the inert is a system that is artificially – that is, approximately – closed. The former, on the contrary, is not closed, but *open*" (Deleuze, 2007: 73). Bergson says that the living is a small "whole", meaning it resembles "the whole of the universe." But, contrary to Plato, for whom the Whole pre-exists the parts and totality implies interiority, for Bergson the whole is neither a totality nor assumes such an interiority, therefore, it is not a closed system.

Yet with Deleuze, de Bestegui notes that Bergson's project is extended, in that it is an attempt at extending this virtual horizon as to encompass not only certain open systems and life in particular, but all systems, be it natural, aesthetic, socio-economic, etc. Yet, it is even possible to go one step further and say that in this case the distinction between artificial and natural systems loses its significance as the very term "artificial" would re-introduce the human condition as measure. Indeed, in *A*

Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, what we see is just such an extension which, by virtue of its speed, necessarily transforms the dimension of the political too. Life proliferating in so many instances; bringing about the proliferation of the political as well, as it multiplies the kinds of connections with a life which is first and foremost a multiplicity.

3.5. Problem of the monism of time

Deleuze extensively discusses the point for which Bergson has mostly been criticized: the question of whether in Bergson's account of temporality we are dealing with one or a plurality of times. In Bergson we see that the concept of duration or real time has undergone some modifications through his works only to finally emerge as a single duration that would be asserted as the absolute. In the fourth chapter of *Bergsonism*, Deleuze states that it is Bergson's *Matière et Mémoire* which goes the furthest in the affirmation of a radical plurality of durations (1988a), in saying that each duration is absolute and that each rhythm is a duration. He goes on to say that, in an essay dated 1903, Bergson conceives of our own duration, which is psychological, as one duration among others that installs us in Being and in which we perceive that Being is multiple. Thus the idea of virtual coexistence is extended so as to include the whole of the universe where it is not only my relationship with being but the relationship of all things with being that is expressed (Deleuze, 1988a). But then in *Creative Evolution*, where this idea is again taken up, Bergson brings a major limitation which results in limited pluralism. He makes a distinction between

systems that artificially and naturally form relative closed systems. Those whose distinctions are artificial are said to endure more in relation to the Whole of the universe than they do in themselves. “Thus, the piece of sugar only makes us wait because, in spite of its arbitrary carving out, it opens out onto the universe as a whole” (Deleuze, 1988a: 77). And then in *Duration and Simultaneity*, we see that generalized pluralism, limited pluralism and monism all are taken up together. Thus, Bergson still retains that there is a radical plurality of durations but restricts this hypothesis to psychological duration and the durations of living species. As a result, he considers material things as having not absolute durations of their own but as participating – somewhat mysteriously – in a relative way in our (psychological) duration. Even though in *Creative Evolution* their participation in psychological duration is by virtue of belonging to the Whole of the universe, the nature of this relationship remains mysterious. Finally, Bergson asserts the third hypothesis, which he holds to be the most valid; that of a single time in which psychological duration, living beings and all material things would all participate. This is what Deleuze calls a monism of Time and which raises the problem of whether it contradicts Bergson’s own assertion in *Time and Free Will* (2000) that duration is a multiplicity. Deleuze says that it is upon the debate with Einstein that Bergson holds on firmly to this final decision considering the nature of time. Deleuze at this point gives an account of Einstein’s theory as conceived by Bergson:

Everything begins from a certain idea of movement that entails a contraction of bodies and a dilation of their time. From this we conclude that there has been a dislocation of simultaneity: What is simultaneous in a fixed system ceases to be simultaneous in a mobile system. Moreover, by virtue of the relativity of rest and movement, by virtue of the relativity even of accelerated movement, these contractions of extensity, these dilations of time, these

ruptures of simultaneity become absolutely reciprocal. In this sense there would be a multiplicity of times, a plurality of times, with different speeds of flow, all real, each one peculiar to a system of reference. And as it becomes necessary, in order to situate a point, to indicate its position in time as well as in space, the only unity of time is in a fourth dimension of space. It is precisely this Space-Time bloc that actually divides up into space and into time in an infinity of ways, each one peculiar to a system (1988a: 79).

For Bergson duration is still multiplicity but the confrontation with Einstein's theory concerns the type of multiplicity that is at issue. And Bergson's fundamental critique against Einstein consists in Einstein's confusion of the two, that is, his confusion of actual numerical multiplicities pertaining to space with nonnumerical virtual multiplicities that pertain to time. Briefly, his confusion of time and space. Deleuze states that it is only in appearance that the discussion refers to the question of whether time is one or multiple, while the true question is "What is the multiplicity peculiar to time?" (Deleuze, 1988a: 80). This is a subtle move undertaken by Deleuze, since it turns the discussion from being solely a problem of physics as received by those who attacked Bergson to a problem of physics *and* metaphysics. It thus becomes a matter of whether time and space can in fact really be valid concepts if their distinction is not duly made, of whether they can be made to act as if in homogeneity.

Deleuze addresses the question of the multiplicity peculiar to time by taking recourse to an example given by Bergson himself where Bergson imagines that when sitting on a river bank, the gliding of a boat or the flight of a bird, the murmur of our life which make up three different fluxes can be taken to be three different things or a single one, "at will". These three things form three fluxes that coexist simultaneously

only by virtue of the fundamental triplicity of fluxes. And this triplicity has to include my own duration which is not just one of them, but also contains the other two. There always has to be an element that contains the other two, otherwise we cannot talk of simultaneous coexistence:

The flight of the bird and my own duration are only simultaneous insofar as my own duration divides in two and is reflected in another that contains it at the same time as it contains the flight of the bird. (...) It is in this sense that my duration essentially has the power to disclose other durations, to encompass the others, and to encompass itself ad infinitum (Deleuze, 1988a: 80).

Deleuze defends Bergson especially on the matter of the twin paradox, which is the famous paradox that involves one twin being sent into space in an accelerating rocket and ages less compared to his twin who remains on earth. Relativists hold that the paradox vanishes when “it is recognized that events happen at spatially different locations and involve observers in different states of motion” because in the theory of relativity, time “*is* the difference of measurement; that is, the theory concerns different intervals of time between ‘two same events’ and it is these time differences between events that are *relative*.”⁷ However Bergson holds that the paradox only vanishes when a multiplicity of times is distinguished from a single time that is absolute duration. Bergson’s theory of a single time has been criticized as being a Newtonian conception of time yet, by virtue of its being a pure multiplicity, Bergson’s idea of a single time certainly does not give itself away to such a conception. Deleuze is on the side of Bergson in the issue of the twin paradox and discusses that the paradox could only be solved by physicists by taking recourse to

⁷ I take the discussion from Keith-Ansell Pearson’s *Germinal Life: the difference and repetition of Deleuze*, footnote 2 in chapter 1.

symbolic moves and manoeuvres because it concerns livable or lived time which can only be single.

As Deleuze holds in *Bergsonism*, duration as virtual multiplicity divides into elements that differ in kind but these elements “only actually exist insofar as the division itself is effectively carried out” (1988a: 81). This is because in order to talk about actual states we have to think of the actual state as continuous actualization. That is to say, in fact it could never be thought completely cut off from its virtuality since it is a continuous work of actualization, of differentiation. So, Deleuze says, if we adopt the view point where this division has not yet been carried out, that is, in the virtual, we can only posit the existence of a single time. The single absolute duration. But when we position ourselves in a moment where the division has actually been carried out, that means we are talking about a division into fluxes that can actually be lived or that must at least be posited as being livable. In the manner of the example with the gliding boat and the flight of the bird, Bergson holds that these fluxes can only be posited as lived or livable in the perspective of a single time. So as Deleuze mentions, if we think of Achilles and the tortoise, the positing of two times in this instance does not only involve two fluxes, that of Achilles and that of the tortoise, and not only the image one has of the other but necessitates that we add a strange factor: “the image that A has of B, while nevertheless knowing that B cannot live in this way. This factor is completely ‘symbolic’; in other words, it opposes and excludes the lived experience and through it (and only it) is the so-called second time realized” (Deleuze, 1988a: 82). And this is how Bergson comes to hold firmly onto the view that there exists one single time on the level of the fluxes,

that is the actual elements as well as on the level of the virtual whole. It is obviously, a convenience of the strange factor that for both Bergson and Deleuze shortcircuits an essential problem about the kind of multiplicity involved in time. The single time can only be divided through actualization into lived times and itself which encompasses all the others. But “The image I make to myself of others, or that Peter makes to himself of Paul, is then an image that cannot be lived or thought as livable without contradiction” (Deleuze, 1988a: 130). Therefore the theory of relativity, in Bergson’s view, proves the opposite of what it claims about the plurality of times since it is by virtue of a symbolic element, a fiction that it can assert itself.

Bergson’s fundamental issue was the confusion of space and time as a badly analyzed composite in science, and the theory of Relativity presents for him one such height of science where this confusion has been carried to its furthest. His technical errors, however, do not cancel out the importance of his claims about science and the relation between philosophy and science. It is of particular significance that in his critique, what he claims is singularity to the objects of experience on the part of science and this, he claims simultaneously from philosophy as well. I think this point is particularly relevant because what he sees as the natural human tendency of the intelligence cannot be tackled by remaining only in the domain of philosophy or metaphysics since I see Bergson’s attempt at that particular time in history that he made philosophy as a reaction against the rising authority of science which had already started seeing itself as “the” discipline against which all others would be measured. Science and “scientific” would take up their own significance and a discipline, in order to be accepted as such, would have to take upon itself the

properties of being “scientific”. Bergson shows that claim to knowledge, the claim assumed by science, is not to be readily accepted since the scientific mind is as poor and weak as the human condition to which it is bound. And as long as its claims to knowledge are not questioned, science and philosophy can only feed each other in common sense.

3.6. Elan Vital

The final Bergsonian theme that assumes importance for my purposes is *Elan Vital*. What I have not mentioned until now but is already a point well established by Deleuze is that Bergson is a thinker of becoming. This is especially the central concern with his thought on evolution and his engagement with evolutionist theories. Bergson’s manner of conceiving the whole reflects his thought on becoming, in that it is not a closed totality but an open system. It can thus never be given and a conception of time which dominated the science of his age in that it asserted time as reversible and the future predictable was the concept that was precisely to be attacked. I want to refer to a passage in *Creative Evolution* where he gives his account of this dominant scientific thought of the time:

The essential function of our intellect, as the evolution of life has fashioned it, is to be a light for our conduct, to make ready for our action on things, to foresee, for a given situation, the events, favourable or unfavourable, which may follow thereupon. Intellect therefore instinctively selects in a given situation whatever is like something already know; it seeks this out, in order that it may apply its principle that “like produces like.” In just this does the prevision of the future by common sense consist. Science carries this faculty to the highest possible degree of exactitude and precision, but does not alter

its essential character. Like ordinary knowledge, in dealing with things science is concerned only with the aspect of *repetition*. Though the whole be original, science will always manage to analyse it into elements or aspects which are approximately a reproduction of the past. (...) Anything that is irreducible and irreversible in the successive moments of a history eludes science. To get a notion of this irreducibility and irreversibility, we must break with scientific habits which are adapted to the fundamental requirements of thought, we must do violence to the mind, go counter to the natural bent of the intellect. But that just is the function of philosophy (Bergson, 1922: 31).

It is indeed the notion of finality which comes with this kind of scientific thought that is fundamentally incompatible with a thought of becoming. Thus in Bergson, finality can be nothing but purely external and the whole, open or/and virtual. In Bergson's account living beings tend to individuation, that it is to closure, but essentially fail by virtue of Life. This is what characterizes them. According to Deleuze in *Bergsonism*, the virtual is characterized by its openness and the actual by irreducible pluralism. Only if we think of time in spatial terms that we can conceive of the whole as given. In that sense, evolution needs to be thought not as a series of changes occurring between actual terms but in terms of a genesis that takes place between the virtual and the actual. Here again, if life is understood in terms of continuous creation, the essential is not to confuse the possible with the virtual. The possible tends to "realization" whereas the virtual "actualizes" itself. In the face of evolutionism, which takes variations in life as actual determinations, as Deleuze says, the philosophy of life assumes three conditions:

- (i) the vital difference can only be experienced and thought of as internal difference; it is only in this sense that the "tendency to change" is not accidental, and that the variations themselves find an internal cause in that tendency;
- (ii) these variations do not enter into relationships of association and addition,

- but on the contrary, they enter into relationships of dissociation or division;
- (iii) they therefore involve a virtuality that is actualized according to the lines of divergence; so that evolution does not move from one actual term to another actual term in a homogenous unilinear series, but from a virtual to the heterogeneous terms that actualize it along a ramified series (Deleuze, 1988a: 99).

These points imply a radical divergence from a mechanistic world view or from a metaphysics of “pre-established harmony,” even if it is broken into infinitely small pieces, as in the case of Leibniz. If, as Deleuze remarks, we focus on actual terms, we end up seeing only differences in degree where there are differences in kind, for instance between man and animal, animal and plant. Or else we will have to take one as the negative or the opposite of the other. If we take the example of pre-established harmony, Bergson says we then subordinate the existence of a small organism to the life of the bigger organism, whereas all elements in an organism may have their own autonomy. Even though Bergson himself expresses himself by resorting to oppositions or obstacles such as when matter is conceived as an obstacle that the *élan vital* must solve in order for life to take place, we should not think that Bergson is repeating the error that he himself attacks. Because life is essentially differentiation in Bergson and *élan vital* is the power of differentiation, the virtual power of life.

The term *élan vital* which Bergson coined in *Creative Evolution*, has been much criticized especially for its mystical ring. But Deleuze takes up this notion and gives it a new twist, making it an essential vital force.

Life and matter, expansion and contraction are correlative and coexist in the Whole. Life is recognized as material in Bergson’s thought, therefore matter does not simply

consist of an environment that is external to the organism. Matter is that by virtue of which life encounters its problems that force it to solve them and in this way achieve a form for itself. “This is why the living being, in relation to matter, appears primarily as the stating of a problem, and the capacity to solve problems” (Deleuze, 1988a: 103). Ansell-Pearson notes that the *élan vital* is ultimately the most profound ‘cause’ of variations in which difference is not a determination but a differentiation (Ansell-Pearson, 1999). That is to say, even though life comes about with the living being’s encounter with matter, the real cause of this is its own explosive vital force. It has been mentioned above that the living being is characterized by a tendency to individuation, to differentiation with, however, unavoidable failure. Even if every solution achieved by life is a relative success dependent on the environment, it is still a relative setback in relation to the internal vital force that is the *élan vital*. This is because the Whole is virtual and as such never given and “in the actual, an irreducible pluralism reigns – as many worlds as living beings, all ‘closed’ on themselves” (Deleuze, 1988a: 104). Life, because it is always in excess of itself as this virtual whole, never completely closes on itself. Thus the setback mentioned, or the failure of achieving full individuation is the consequence of the vital force being as powerful at each instance in which it is actualized, but relatively successful in relation to the conditions of the surrounding.

One of the conditions of the Whole being an open system is the dissociation of space and time, for if time were a dimension of space it would contain all the possible forms of the universe. But when we dissociate time from space and recognize time’s difference in kind, we recognize also that there is a positivity of time, “that is

identical to a ‘hesitation’ of things and, in this way, to creation in the world” (Deleuze, 1988a: 105).

Deleuze notes that in Bergson we can still talk of a finality, but a finality that is external and that is distinguished from a “goal,” unlike the conventional accounts of finalism. On the one hand, the living being can be compared in Bergson to the universe as a whole but not as one closed totality to another. The organism opens onto the virtual whole and not the other way round. And on the other hand, the actual products of differentiation do not resemble the virtual, which means resemblance is subordinated to difference/differentiation so as to allow genuine creation. In this sense, we can talk of finality because life just does not go in any direction whatsoever, it does take up particular lines where it is actualized but these are not pre-existent and come to be only in the process of actualization itself. In that sense, we can admit of finality but of no goal.

There is, however, in Bergsonian thought, a privileging of man and it is through the notion of the *élan vital* that he makes this point because Bergson states that it is only in Man that *élan vital* achieves full success. In other words, as Deleuze notes, it is only in man that the actual becomes adequate to the virtual by virtue of scrambling all the planes, and by his ability to go beyond the human condition “in order finally to express naturing Nature” (1988a: 107). The privileging of man comes about actually by the ability of man that experiences the “longest” interval in between a received excitation and possible reaction:

Every contraction of duration still being relative to an expansion, and every life to a matter, the point of departure is in a certain state of cerebral matter. We recall that this latter “analyzed” the received excitation, selected the reaction, made possible an *interval* between excitation and reaction; nothing here goes beyond the physico-chemical properties of a particularly complicated type of matter (1988a: 107).

In man, this interval is filled with the whole of memory and it is this whole of memory that is actualized. This is precisely the point where choice and freedom emerge and are actualized. Through man, the *élan vital* succeeds in creating and actualizing freedom. And freedom in the physical sense means a more and more explosive vital force. When we consider societies, we recognize that intelligence and memory are put to utilitarian uses and are indeed dominated by need but societies also have the characteristic of forming and subsisting for the most irrational purposes. Deleuze gives the example of obligation which is grounded on nothing but itself. This potential for the absurd which manifests itself as a “virtual instinct” is not grounded on reason but is a requirement of nature that “nature produces in the reasonable being in order to compensate for the partiality of his intelligence” (Deleuze, 1988a: 108). This potential for the absurd is the “story-telling” function and corresponds to the sociability in human beings. It is the same for the creation of gods, for obligations, for religions; it exists in intelligent beings but is not grounded on their intelligence. In this sense this time the interval as well as hesitation shifts to an interval between intelligence and society. As a virtual instinct, intelligence comes up with fictions and then, in an attempt to separate itself from instinct, persuades itself that it is in its own interest to obey the fictions, which works in a similar fashion to a vicious circle, constantly being thrown out from one term to another. As such, it can not yet be said that man has gone beyond his own plane.

It will be said that it is not intelligence nor instinct that gives man privilege in Bergsonian thought, but *emotion*. It is emotion that emerges in the said interval. Deleuze notes that emotion precedes representation and is itself a creative force. Rather than an object, it is said to have an essence that spreads over all living beings and all of nature. Through this interval peculiar to human societies, emerges this creative emotion which has broken all ties with utility and requirements of nature. “It has only made use of their circular play in order to break the circle, just as Memory uses the circular play of excitation and reaction to embody recollections in images” (Deleuze, 1988a: 111). This conception, in the final instance, gives way to the notion of “great souls” who are artists and mystics that succeed in truly opening up to the Whole of the universe. It is at this point that man goes beyond what Bergson calls the decisive turn that is the human condition. Philosophy, with Bergson does indeed go beyond the turn but it is in artists and mystics that the *élan vital* is fully successful. But Deleuze makes a final remark that this point is also what gives a limit to all aspects of the method.

In his books on *Cinema*, and especially in *The Time Image*, Deleuze mentions what he calls a “belief in this world” and devotes a lengthy discussion on the brain. As well known, this book is heavily influenced by Bergson’s understanding of time. The brain and the story telling function are essential elements in relation to the distinction made between the two kinds of images; movement-image and time-image. The interval as a function of the human brain is key in understanding the relationship between intelligence and instinct. But it seems to me that just as important are the

speeds and slownesses that fill *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* in that the way in which this interval is filled seems to take on a particular significance. The speed with which the concepts of *ATP* fill the plane of consistency results in a continuous proliferation of events. This proliferation forces us to think of every event as double, and then redoubling again at each instance. With Bergson the irreducibility of the virtual whole somehow cannot avoid ending up in assigning man the power of expressing this whole in the best way and as such the concept of duration ultimately falls short of a genuine immanence. In fact, it does not fall short in itself, but when it actually folds onto itself as in a circle and provides again for a breaking up, with the mystic emerging triumphant. But in itself, duration as multiplicity, as a virtual multiplicity is the affirmation of becoming and it is again in the conception of duration as virtual multiplicity and the means of evaluation it provides that an opening to immanent ethics lies.

3.7. The politics of difference

The essential significance of Bergson is the way in which he provides the resources for Deleuze to develop the concept of the event in such a way that the event itself becomes the event of passage, or the passage of time. Once time is complicated in this manner and made into the driving force of the event, the questions of origin, subject and object are pushed to the background as to make place to circumstances giving rise to them, since the passage from one state to another is always already in the making. Yet just as significant are the points where Deleuze diverges from and

even repudiates certain points in Bergson's account. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze (1994) overtly repudiates Bergson's critique of intensity. This is a matter that constitutes the difference between differences in kind and differences of degree. The concept of intensive quantity is key at this point, as it comes to substitute the difference that Bergson establishes between quantity and quality for a concept of difference. As Bergson wants to free quality as virtual multiplicity from being expressed in terms of quantity, that is, number and extensity, he reproduces the same differentiation that he opposes in numerical multiplicity. Deleuze says that there is neither a difference in kind nor of degree between differences in kind and differences of degree:

Difference is a matter of degree only within the extensity in which it is explicated; it is a matter of kind only with regard to the quality which covers it within that extensity. Between the two are all degrees of difference – beneath the two lies the entire nature of difference – in other words, the intensive (Deleuze, 1994: 239).

The concept of intensive quantity is of fundamental importance as it is this concept that serves as the scale of difference for Deleuze. He dwells extensively on this point in *Expressionism in Philosophy* and in his lectures on Spinoza, as this concept is posited as a matter of thresholds and limits, of the limits of intensity. In Spinoza, essences would be defined as limits of intensity which would constitute their singularity. He notes in his lectures:

[T]hings have more or less intensity, it would be the intensity of the thing which would be, which would replace its essence, which would define the thing in itself, it would be its intensity. You understand perhaps the link to Ontology. The more intense a thing is, [the] more precisely is that intensity its relation to being: the intensity of the thing is its relation with being (Deleuze,

"On Spinoza").

In *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, further still, intensities play the leading role. They come to populate the plane of immanence at infinite speeds. The Body without Organs is a plane where only intensities circulate, it is a continuous production of differences that is at stake, with the various thresholds and vibrations that come to populate it in all directions at once. Organs change and change their function as they are crossed continuously by intensities: “The BwO is the *field of immanence* of desire, the *plane of consistency* specific to desire (with desire defined as a process of production without reference to any exterior agency, whether it be a lack that hollows it out or a pleasure that fills it)” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 154. Emphasis Deleuze and Guattari’s). The role of the concept of intensity and intensive quantity is to assure that desire is this wild drive that knows no agency or no destination, no limits – except internal ones that arise with intensities – no shame; that there is absolutely no place left to define desire in terms of lack. It is the crack through which the “I” disappears only to leave its place to a pure play of forces. Understood in this way, desire cannot be framed with any reference to agency. The BwO is absolute deterritorialization as opposed to the organism that stratifies it in hierarchical organizations and determined functions, assignable forms.

CHAPTER IV

PROBLEM OF POLITICS

One of the main motivations for this study has been to provide a response to the contemporary critiques of politics in Deleuze's (and Deleuze and Guattari's) philosophy and the need not to provide a straightforward answer to each, but to point to an irreducible difference between these and Deleuzian politics in terms of time and direction. And in doing this, to point to a certain understanding of politics as a universal assumption in contemporary thought that rejects, or at the least fails to grasp, other forms of political struggle that does not fit into this scheme. In this final chapter, I want to look closer at the problematic conception of politics and the assumptions that underly these critiques, and to pose in more concrete terms why these critiques are not effectively capable of challenging the political philosophy of Deleuze (and Guattari). My intention is not to make a defense in the name of Deleuze (and Guattari), but to show how the conception of politics by the respective parties are incompatible and how the critiques addressed to Deleuze fail to grasp a conception of politics that insists on taking a completely other direction than the one

assumed by the classical western tradition of politics. In no way do I wish to advocate that the political philosophy of Deleuze admits of no critique, but that such critique *needs* to take notice of the fact that the domain of the political is not one that is reserved for any one form of struggle and that, in order to make a critique of the political according to Deleuze, it is *necessary* to question what is understood by politics itself.

I have stated this problem as one which involves several axes: the question of time, that is, of the “future”; the question of the political space, that is how this space is measured according to certain criteria such as violence, evil, etc; and the question of the “generalization” of politics, that is, politics as a general category and a domain that needs to be “accessed” in a leap from the quotidian or philosophical to the political, from theory to practice (or *praxis*, to use a favoured term), from present to the future, and in need of an agency to “make it happen.” An additional point that I want to include here is the question of the “people” and how it comes to be determined respectively by the critiques and by Deleuze himself. The critiques that I address here as providing exemplary instances of the debate on politics, that is Balibar, Negri, and Hardt (and Toscano which I do not address separately) are actually all much influenced by Spinoza’s political philosophy although they all have their original approach, and some are more heavily influenced by Deleuze than others, but they more or less agree in the points they make with regard to the problems they trace in Deleuze’s political philosophy.

In order to sketch out these points that they share in common, we can roughly say that the criticisms are directed at the absence of a political “project,” the uncertainty of the direction that “resistance” would take, the lack of a means or method to engage in a “political act,” and, in cases where Deleuze’s political thought is taken to be at best admirable but lacking true political engagement or force, a kind of indifference or even an optimism without realism. I do not mean to say that any of these thinkers underestimate Deleuze’s philosophy, they all agree on the point that it is very important and very influential, but what interests me is the points above because these are the problems that crack open an incommensurable gap between their respective conception of politics and that of Deleuze (and Guattari).

I mentioned that one of the essential points on which they agree upon as a problem is that the thought of Deleuze lacks a political “task” or “project.” The project is one that would have to answer to that inevitable question: “What to do?” In most contemporary discussions the question is posed in the context of capitalism and therefore the question is posed as what to do against the specific modes of oppression and exploitation inherent to capitalism. And in more general terms, it takes the form of what constitutes a specifically political “act” or engagement in Deleuze’s (and Guattari’s) philosophy. The project is thus a project of *liberation* of the “people” from capitalism or from any other mode of oppression they may find themselves subjected to. Thus it is also a project to constitute a collectivity that would be *capable* of countering the relation of forces inherent to capitalism with other forms of organization, it is a summoning of a minority, and indeed, of “a people to come” that could finally rise up to say no. Yet, this project, in order to come about as such, also

needs to be “innocent,” that is, one must come up with ways or methods to assure that it be non-violent, non-anarchic and non-suicidal. Needless to say, even when it is not addressed to a people conceived as *subject* or as a collectivity of subjects, even when it is one that takes precautions not to rely itself upon a collective will or consciousness, but rather upon a collective affectivity, it must be assured at the outset that it does not turn into a bloodbath, into collective suicide or collective extermination. That is, it is set in a certain relation to evil. It is the project of a revolution that would not turn into its own enemy and, for this, needs a method that would ensure that it does not turn out so, and this is precisely the use to which philosophy is put. There are some consequences to this situation at the outset: Since it is a project, its time is the future, understood in the sense of linear temporality, that is, a being-present-to-come. And the people at stake, a people *capable* of the revolutionary act proposed by such a project, is not just any people but a figure that finds its own determinations according to this project. Moreover, the method that is to be adopted needs to assure at the outset that the nature of the political act be “non-violent.” The thinkers mentioned above, even though they can certainly not be reduced or likened to each other in terms of their own theoretical frameworks, share these points in their attempts to provide a project for thinking politics in and through philosophy. And it is not accidental that their criticisms of Deleuze converge on the same points; absence of project or task, indetermination of direction, the uncertainty about the risks and dangers involved, the question of the passage from political philosophy to political praxis. Yet there is a certain ambivalence too in that most of the time Deleuze is criticized for a sort of indifference or optimism when it comes to political matters in general. Already at this point, I want to state that the singular

conception of politics in Deleuze (and Guattari) 1) does not *admit* of any project because 2) its time is *not* the future in the sense of a present-being-to-come but a future that co-exists with the present 3) the “people” cannot be determined at the outset since there is no way of saying who is *capable* of resistance and even what constitutes “resistance” in isolation from the event 4) it does *not admit* of a universal method since the political space is not pre-established according to given notions of evil, violence, etc.

Without going into the depths of their own undertakings, I will attempt to address this radical difference in the approach to politics strictly in relation to the content of the critiques directed to the politics in Deleuze’s philosophy, and to the form in which these thinkers themselves pose the problem of politics in their own theoretical frameworks.

4.1. Balibar

Let us start with Balibar’s interview with Peter Osborne (1999), where he gives his own views on philosophy and its relation to politics. In the passage where he is asked about whether he thinks Deleuze is a philosopher in the classical sense of the term, he says:

Deleuze is extremely important because he shows how superficial and fragile the rules are which allow the individual to keep a good distance in social life, and prevent other people’s thoughts and needs and desires from intruding into his or her identity – and the reverse too, of course. These are trans-individual

processes, which are, as Freud would say, *primary processes*. Released from the Oedipal securities, they come to the fore. They are closely connected to what I call 'the masses'. But the situations in which you can allow yourself to forget about the safeties and securities of conscious individuality and responsibility are extremely rare and extremely perilous (Balibar, 1999).

And in the same interview, a little bit later, what he says seems to point to another direction:

Deleuze has transported a vitalist conception of the multitude into the political field and an imaginary that connects individualities within the multitude, which produces completely optimistic effects. This is a very naturalistic view of the imaginary, in which the forces of life and love inevitably overcome elements of conflict, hostility and destruction. It is utterly opposed to a certain part of the Freudian legacy – *Civilization and its Discontents* – and any interpretation of the basic imaginary processes in which ambivalence is constitutive (Balibar, 1999).

The ambiguity rests upon the concept of individuation in Deleuze and it is not certain whether this individuation results in a forgetting of responsibility and an unleashing of forces that could perhaps turn against themselves or others, or whether it theoretically always results in an optimistic and, ultimately, joyful but not very realistic concept of the multitude. This is an extremely reductionist reading, not to mention that the vocabulary involved serves to undermine rather than question some critical issues. In Balibar's reading the ambiguity is actually a resolution. Either it is an unleashing of forces that can escape the grasp of consciousness or responsibility and it is already too late, or else if one perhaps imagined that they do not end up such and achieve a revolutionary becoming instead, then this *desirable* result could at best be optimistic and in theory. Whereas if an ambiguity is to be traced it needs to be traced to the process of individuation itself or to the process of becoming which in

itself does not have a pre-determined direction or an assured outcome. The issue is the uncertainty of the *result* of the process of becoming and in order to judge the result, Balibar undermines the whole process. According to him, it can only be judged as a matter of projection or retrospection. Indeed, the question of responsibility undertaken in the sense that Balibar gives to it is irrelevant in this context since, in the sense that Deleuze gives to it, the political is already a matter of desire and cannot be restricted to the consciousness or will of a subject and it is precisely in this direction that he pulls the question of politics. The question of responsibility can no longer be posed from the standpoint of a conscious individuality, rather it becomes another question. It is not the question of the responsibility of a conscious and political individual, the process of individuation and the process of becoming themselves are already political. Balibar, even though he himself is greatly influenced by Spinoza, seems to overlook the Spinozian sense of individual that is expressed in Deleuze's conception. The individual itself is not taken as a formal entity, it is already at the level of constitution or individuation that the individual is an affair of politics, it is precisely the question of constitution, composition and individuation itself that makes up the political question. Whereas Balibar's critique conceives of an individuality already constituted and endowed with reason and consciousness, and that has the *freedom* to forget the safety and securities of responsibility. Therefore Balibar's critique fails to be relevant for several reasons. The process of individuation and the concept of individual in Deleuze's philosophy, and precisely in the Spinozian sense, have nothing to do with the concept of individual that Balibar deploys. The level of the political is not the level of the conscious individual but precisely already the process of individuation itself and

therefore, responsibility too is not a position of judgement but rather something that can only have meaning vis-à-vis singular compositions and events. In this sense, with Balibar, we need to assume a traditional conception of politics that can only make sense before a conscious individuality and that implies a reasonable and responsible political act to be effective at all. As to the forces of life and love that would overcome conflicts and hostilities and destruction, it again fails to be relevant since there is no such opposition between forces of life and death, or love and conflict. This is again a level too far, since the primary processes are not forces of love and conflict but desire. Life and death are no longer in direct opposition since death is an imminent element in desire and life itself. An important misunderstanding at this point probably lies with Deleuze's emphasis on "joy" and joyful philosophy which he attributes essentially to Spinoza and Nietzsche. For the most part, this tends to be taken as a merry mode of being at the expense of the violent and even destructive tendencies that find expression in his philosophy and even in Spinoza's. It is important to note that far from being an expression of merriness, "joy" should be considered as that mode of life that does not embrace servility as if it were its salvation. And considered from this angle, it is everything but merriness, it may even be why Deleuze and Guattari say, in relation to thinking, "We head for the horizon, on the plane of immanence, and we return with bloodshot eyes, yet they are the eyes of the mind" (1994: 41). Yet, the critique of Balibar serves to illuminate this irreducible difference in politics, and this is why I want to give an account of how he himself lays out the question of politics in relation to Spinoza.

In *Spinoza and Politics*, Balibar (2008) gives his own account of the relationship between philosophy and politics in relation to Spinoza. In this book which is insightful in many respects, his undertaking of Spinoza is critically relevant for his conception of politics and for its consequences, and it is relevant for this study in order to show the difference of direction between the direction this politics takes compared to the direction politics takes in Deleuze's philosophy. In giving an account of the question of obedience according to Spinoza, Balibar mentions that the classical understanding of obedience involves a separation of body and mind, whereby the body acts according to an idea formed by the soul in recognition of the will of another which it has made its own whether of its own accord or not. But he goes on to say that, in this classical understanding, this is an enigma since one would then have to imagine the subject as "free" and this could at best be an imaginary object that is all the more ambivalent because in imagining freedom one imagines first the freedom of oneself and then of the other, and our obedience to men becomes all the more enigmatic since one imagines the other as a power superior to oneself (Balibar, 2008: 91). Thus it is this other that will be the cause of our joy or sadness. This is not the case for Spinoza. Since body and mind are not subject to the classical separation where one acts over the other, and men are not endowed with reason but become so, the collectivity is based not on obedience but on self-preservation. And the State has precisely this function, to provide safety and security so that men may act *as if* they were reasonable. This is also what Deleuze says in *Practical Philosophy*: "The civil or social state resembles the state of reason, and yet it only resembles it, prepares for it, or takes its place" (1988b: 107). The civil state is not the same as the state of reason, for the state of reason is based on intrinsic relations and

common notions, together with active feelings. Whereas the civil state is based on extrinsic relations, that is on passive feelings like hope and fear, and this is how the City functions. So the civil state resembles the state of reason but is not the same and the City functions by virtue of this resemblance. Men come together in order to be more powerful, in order to preserve themselves since it is in their interest to be with others, rather than alone, for their self-preservation. And since the City resembles the state of reason, even though it provides security by way of addressing to the passive feelings of fear and hope of the citizens, in this way, all can live together regardless of whether they have reason or not. And as such, men can reserve their natural right, that is to persevere in existence, but they also give up their power for the benefit of the Whole. Thus, in the City what unites them is not common notions but common affections. This account is mostly similar in Deleuze and Balibar. Balibar says that any real State contains both “barbarity” and a community of men “guided by Reason,” that is it contains both the level of passions and the level of reason (2008: 95). Balibar’s account begins to truly differ from that of Deleuze when he starts to emphasize the notion of “communication” and its function in the city:

Passion and reason are both, in the final analysis, modes of communication between bodies and between ideas of bodies. In the same way, political regimes should be thought of as orders of communication: some of them are conflictual and unstable, others are coherent and stable (2008: 95).

Thus, the City, whether it be aristocratic, monarchic, democratic or even dictatorial, always includes something in common. When there is not yet something in common, each individual still tries to persevere in its existence by increasing its strength with the others. Balibar says, “Since no individual is rigorously ‘like’ any other, each

having its own ‘temperament’, multitude is then synonymous with exchange (in the broadest possible sense – exchange of properties is only one aspect of this idea) and with free communication between irreducibly singular beings” (2008: 96).

While Deleuze, in accordance with the idea of immanence, considers Spinoza’s philosophy as an expressionism that does away with the hierarchy between the expressing and the expressed, Balibar’s emphasis is on the notion of communication and I will attempt to show what this entails in terms of politics. Balibar says that the body politic, as it develops its powers, is not a stable entity but one that is subject to continuous change and whose principle is mobility. Thus obedience is assumed as a transitory phase as individuals strive to transform their actions based on passions into actions that are brought about through reason. As progress can never be assured, he says that the decisive moment of a praxis is the transformation of the mode of communication: “The most effective form of communication is that which is achieved by means of rational knowledge” (2008: 96). At this point knowledge is crucial since, in this struggle, affects can overcome one another in order to bring about rational actions, and this knowledge is what improves communication. However, Balibar is careful to underline that the concept of knowledge in Spinoza’s philosophy does not let us assume that knowledge can establish any hierarchy between the knowing and the ignorant, neither does it allow for a hierarchy between knowledge and praxis such that we could speak of a “philosopher-king.” But according to Balibar, there is one point made by Spinoza which allows for a minimum of reason to be assigned to each individual and that is the remark he makes

on language. Balibar says that Spinoza notes that “language contains at least one element whose integrity cannot be destroyed by the manipulations of the theologians” (2008: 97). That is, both for the unlearned and the learned, the meaning of words is determined by common usage. The intellect somehow allows for the usage of words to be corrected, even though our usage of words at first necessarily reflects inadequate knowledge. And it is this work of the intellect (we may think of this as the power that is not the power of reason but a power that encompasses and also exceeds reason) that allows words to refer to common notions. He says that every individual has at least one adequate idea which “contains the seed of the equation between freedom and the power to act.” Thus every individual’s idea connects to the others’, and the body politic’s power of transformation thus increases so as to allow the City to be a collectivity of people who live in a state closer to the state of Reason than to barbarity. And it is this understanding of knowledge that leads Balibar to state that “knowledge is a praxis, and the struggle for knowledge (that is, philosophy) is a political praxis” and that the essential element of democracy according to Spinoza is the freedom of communication. Thus the struggle for knowledge refers to the struggle for liberation:

We can also see why the theory of the ‘body politic’ is (...) the search for a strategy of collective liberation, whose guiding motto would be as many as possible, thinking as much as possible. Thus, finally, we see why the set purpose of the philosopher – his ‘ethic’ – is not to prepare or announce the revolution but to take the risk of thinking in full view of his public (Balibar, 2008: 98).

It seems that here we advance somewhat too quickly and are caught by surprise by the sudden announcement of the task of the philosopher vis-à-vis *his* public. Balibar’s

account mostly concerns the constitution of the City and the individuals therein in their relationship to one another and to the City. The problem that arises with this account is that the City, which in itself is but a resemblance of the state of reason, even though it can serve the benefit of each and all in a good City, is not in itself necessarily a good City, a point that Deleuze also makes in *Expressionism in Philosophy* (1992: 267). Here Deleuze says that the City, like individuals, can go astray because of many causes. The conditions under which citizens renounce their natural rights, that is, their rights to being determined by their personal affections in favour of the common good, that is, common collective affections, are to be understood as conditions that would be present in a “good” City. Thus, this situation is the case if one imagines the City to be ideal or as close as possible to this ideal. Balibar in the preceding chapters deals extensively with the apparent paradoxes that emerge with Spinoza’s account of the State and of democracy, and these are well beyond the scope of this study, but he also makes note of similar points. Yet these ambiguities do find resolution in this final account of the City. Ultimately, the City, which is itself determined by extrinsic relations or by passions, for Balibar comes to serve also as the mediator for the people in their struggle for knowledge which he equates with the struggle for liberation. Since the City, however repressive it may be, always includes something in common to all, it comes to constitute for Balibar perhaps the only milieu in which a struggle for liberation is possible. However, to make the City the milieu of struggle seems to go against its own grain, since it is only in a relatively “good” city that the conditions for struggle arise such that affections act upon each other in order to make way to the greater common good. On the other hand, Deleuze says that “One should not take as signs of excessive

optimism Spinoza's two propositions that, everything considered and despite everything, the City is the best environment in which man can become reasonable, and that it is also the best environment in which a reasonable man can live" (1992: 268). This is how he ends the passage where he talks about the City. It is a curious ending, since he makes no further comments on this point. What interests us at this point of the discussion is that Balibar's conception of political praxis is most at home in a relatively good City, where knowledge is the possession of none but the practice of all, as political praxis per se. In the case of Spinoza I'm inclined to say that his conception of politics, as far as the City is concerned, is an attempt to conceptualize democracy free from relations of obedience, but for Spinoza it is already the Republic that is the best form of the State and democracy the best form of government. Thus, considering Deleuze's remark, since there is no inherently critical element in relation to the state and democracy in Spinoza's account, the account of the City is the attempt to achieve an ideal conception of these formations. Accordingly, Spinoza, in his account of the City, remains within a certain tradition and therefore within a certain political rationality that seeks another justification for itself. The "good" City, in this view, rather than being the product of an excessive optimism, is thus constituted rather as the ideal that pertains to that specific political rationality. That is, it is rather conceived as the logical result of a certain political rationality which, while greatly destabilizing the very concept of rationality, nevertheless seeks to secure its sense or direction in the political sphere. It is an attempt to conceive of a republic not as a community of slaves but of free men. Deleuze mentions in his biographical account of Spinoza that Spinoza lived in a republic that had failed but that remained nevertheless, even though poorly accepted

and that if Spinoza did not support revolutions, it is because in his time revolutions were often permeated by theology or in the service of a politics of reaction (1988b: 9). In this sense, it could be said that Deleuze's interest in Spinoza does not focus on the City but on the relations of expression, the theory of bodies and Spinoza's revolutionary force in terms of immanence, while Balibar's specific interest in this concept of the City such that it is, lies in the elements that would make of it a good City. Balibar remarks that Spinoza's definition of the state is much broader than the sense it had in his time and so allows us to conceive of other forms than the present form (2008: 124). Yet Balibar still remains within the traditional element of a thought that would recognize the state form. This is not to say of course that Balibar advocates the state form or his thought is subservient to it, but it remains the case that politics is conceived as a domain that is salutary only through the state form and as a striving for *recognition*.

Deleuze, still in the biographical account on Spinoza, mentions that Spinoza's question was "Why has the republic foundered? Is it possible to change the multitude into a collectivity of free men instead of a gathering of slaves?" (1988b: 11). This could apply to Balibar as well, I think it is this same question that Balibar addresses in his treatment of Spinoza. But Balibar recognizes that there is no way of assuring the stability of a City, that at best, it would remain a "striving" to be a good city, and since it is at this point that Spinoza's *Tractatus Politicus* ends, that is why, he says, the fact that he never got to finish this book provides us with the means to consider this not as a "theory of democracy" but as a "theory of democratisation" that is valid for every regime (2008: 121). Since this striving presupposes a certain consensus, the

problem is one of thinking the conditions under which such a consensus could be achieved given that politics is a matter of the “mass” and that the mass is a fearful thing. Balibar asks: “How can one produce a *consensus*, not just in the sense of communication of pre-existing opinions, but above all as the condition of the creation of *communicable opinions* (that is, opinions which are not mutually exclusive)?” (2008: 119). It is in this process of democratization, in what he calls the “activity” of the masses that such consensus can be achieved. He remarks that with Spinoza there can no longer be recourse to the traditional dualisms between nature and culture, soul and body, goodness and perversity. On this last point, he mentions that Spinoza replaces the dualism between goodness and perversity with an analytic of desire that has instead activity and passivity as its two poles (Balibar, 2008: 122). Thus Balibar’s own concept of communication relies precisely on this polarity between activity and passivity as it provides the criteria for the “masses”: the passive mass that is subject to fluctuations, being ignorant of itself; and the active mass that is a collectivity of citizens that can manage to achieve a certain stability through their functional institutions (Balibar, 2008: 120). We had mentioned in the chapter on Spinoza that it is precisely this direction that Deleuze does not take in his own thought. The polarity of activity and passivity serve to determine just one such direction that allows Balibar to conceive of the city as a collectivity of citizens that is *capable* of achieving a certain stability, that is *capable* of carrying out the process of “democratisation.” Now this question of the *capability* of a people, of a multitude, or a mass – the term matters little – that gets to be determined by the eventuality of a projected result in the desired direction is a problematic element that betrays a traditional conception of politics in contemporary philosophy. The striking point

about this conception is that it thinks itself as a “practical philosophy” or as philosophy-as-praxis but can’t help finding itself responsible not *before* but *for* “its” people, such as in Balibar’s statement: “Thus, finally, we see why the set purpose of the philosopher – his ‘ethic’ – is not to prepare or announce the revolution but to take the risk of thinking in full view of his public.” It is not that the philosopher does not have a people, quite to the contrary, but this is why the question of method is important and a *universal* method problematic. A universal method that implies a sense of *voluntarism* whether in the sense of consciousness or a striving to activity in the specific sense of becoming-reasonable, by definition, cannot address itself to a minority in the Deleuzian sense. I will later make clear what I understand by voluntarism when I discuss François Zourabichvili’s notion of “involuntarism” in relation to Negri and Deleuze. What is meant here by *universal* method is that the political is conceived as determined by certain pre-conditions for there to be a political “act.” This leaves the domain of politics as a *generalized*, universal domain that admits of access according to certain pre-established criteria. In Balibar’s context, even though we no longer rely on a traditional concept of reason, there is a certain course that demands active becoming-reasonable in the Spinozian sense in order to be political and a certain minimum of a certain conception of rationality (provided by language) is needed in order to achieve a collective transformation. Even though Spinoza, in his theory of bodies, revolutionizes the concept of individual, the polarity between joyful and sad passions that Deleuze does not take up wholesale in his own system provides a means for Balibar to give direction to what he conceives as a political act. The minimum provided for through language – a minimum of “at least one adequate idea” that is found in each individual – provides a

mimimum criterion for the thought of the political to proceed by a process of *recognition*. This is how a *consensus* can be “viable.” And it is through this process that the revolutionary potential of the individual in the Spinozian sense of the term loses its revolutionary edge by being reconstituted as the “subject” or atomic unity of politics. Not an atomic unity in the traditional sense of rational subject, but a conception of the individual that serves as a basis for the political “agency” sought after. Balibar says:

For Spinoza, nature is also history: a history without purpose, indeed, but not without a process, not without a movement of transformation (that is to say, no particular transformation is ever “guaranteed”). By analysing all the possible historical configurations of the “dialectic” between reason and passion that structures the life of the City, we come to know human nature itself – and thus, nature in general. But politics is the touchstone of historical knowledge. So if we know politics rationally – as rationally as we know mathematics – then we know God, for God conceived adequately is identical with the multiplicity of natural powers (2008: 122-123).

Since for Balibar, politics is the striving for knowledge, he takes this proposition to its conclusion by saying that if one gets to know as rationally as possible, one will know human nature and ultimately God. All the while saying that no historical transformation is ever guaranteed, the process of knowledge is thought “as if” it could be complete. We have mentioned in the chapter on Spinoza that Deleuze says that in Spinoza one does not arrive at the thought of God in the end, nor does one begin with God but one gets there as “quickly as possible,” this is how one conceives of an adequate idea. This process of knowledge, however, does not readily get confused with historical knowledge. Whereas Balibar, by putting the emphasis on knowledge, underlines that since this knowledge is the possession of none, it is a collective, anonymous process that could provide a direction to the political act.

Indeed, for him, the striving for knowledge is *the* political act par excellence. But in order to say this, one has to assume that the individual is already re-constituted, that is, on the level where one recognizes activity *as opposed to* passivity as the measure, the individual cannot but be reconstituted as a given. From there, the political defined as the activity of “striving” for knowledge will be able to distribute its subject accordingly. From there on, the political only admits of the subject that it *recognizes* as striving for knowledge to be its political subject. It is only this “act” that is political and if the polarity of activity and passivity is thus retained as a compass in relation to politics, it becomes a criterion of judgment and no longer of evaluation. This polarity in Spinoza’s theory of bodies is more complicated as it problematizes the question of the passage from one state to another and it redefines the individual each time with a roll of the dice. Balibar, even though he makes it very clear that the individual is a matter of construction in Spinoza, nevertheless easily conceives of this construction as the striving of the individual; hence a circularity of the individual. He says, in the last passage of his book on Spinoza:

(T)he problem of political communication, as discussed by Spinoza, allow us to go beyond the alternative between individualism and organicism (or corporatism) as it had been understood by political philosophy from antiquity to the present day – that is, as a question of *origin*, of *foundation*. Nevertheless, for Spinoza the issue is still whether what is given at the outset is the individual (conceived of as an archetype or as a random example of humanity, a “man without qualities”) or the “sociable animal” of Aristotle and the scholastics, the “Great Being” of Auguste Comte (for whom the individual is a mere abstraction). As we have seen, for Spinoza the concept of the individual is absolutely central, but it has “several meanings”. The individual is neither created by God according to an eternal model nor delivered by nature as a kind of raw material. The individual is a construction. This construction is the result of a striving (*conatus*) by the individual himself, within the determinate conditions of his “way of life”. And that “way of life” is nothing other than a given *regime of communication* (affective, economic or intellectual) with other individuals (Balibar, 2008:

124. Emphases not mine).

In Balibar's account the construction of the individual happens as if in the imaginary of the individual. The construction of the individual is nothing but the result of a certain activity of this individual, it does not put its individuality into question. Thus between individuals he can talk of different "regimes of communication." This continuity is what allows him to pass from one individual to a collectivity of individuals who are capable of communication. It is a *minimum* of this activity that determines the individual, "at least one adequate idea." Moreover, the minimum of this activity is established nevertheless through language. To recapitulate, I cite the same passage I cited earlier, but more extensively:

But the *TTP* had already pointed out in passing that language contains at least one element whose integrity cannot be destroyed by the manipulations of the theologians. The meaning of words is immune to such corruption. Because "a language is preserved by the learned and the unlearned alike" (*TTP*, 148), the meaning of its words is therefore determined by the common usage of those words by both the "learned" and the "unlearned", insofar as there is communication between them (Balibar, 2008: 96).

Language, knowledge, communication. Thus, the formula that Deleuze precisely attempts to attack through his reading of Spinoza, is precisely the formula that Balibar re-reads into Spinoza. The traditional image of thought that is based on *recognition* returns with full force in Balibar's account of the political. Of course, Balibar is well aware of the consequences and is well aware that his and Deleuze's undertakings have nothing in common in that regard. In his interview with Osborne, he says, "Take the category of the multitude. I wrote my essay on the masses in Spinoza by developing an interpretation of the concept of the multitude which has

some basic elements in common with the Deleuzian-Negri interpretation, but in the end it produced almost exactly opposite results” (1999). The relevance of Balibar’s account for this study is to show how his account of the political does not result in but starts off in the exactly opposite direction. When Balibar says in the same interview, “Deleuze has transported a vitalist conception of the multitude into the political field, and an imaginary that connects individualities within the multitude, which produces completely optimistic effects” (1999) he completely overlooks that it his account of the political basically seeks to exclude desire’s perversities and envisages the domain of the political as the domain of communication. Indeed the individual in Deleuze does not give itself to politics as a minimum of any given commonality, it is a constellation that depends on the local situation at hand. Pre-individual singularities that come to constitute any given multiplicity do not constitute an imaginary but are the very stuff of the real. Thus when we speak of desire, we do not speak of two or more different registers but are already on the level of constitution of the individual. Thus the dice throw that is effectuated in the constitution of a multiplicity is “repeated” in philosophy for each time. A genetic idea effectuates the same dice-throw in philosophy. A concept is one such individuality that has to be created for singular problems. A concept is a constitution quite in the same way as an individual is in the Spinozian sense. Only with Deleuze (and Guattari) the polarities of joy and sadness, activity and passivity do not serve as given criteria, for their determination is a matter of immanent difference and can only be evaluated locally. In political philosophy, it is not a given subject of politics but concepts such as the “war machine,” “body without organs,” “nomadism” that serve not to clear but to populate further the domain of the political with impurities.

Balibar ends his book by saying that the definition of the State in Spinoza provides us with the means “to envisage, at least in theory, historical forms of the State other than the present form. And it also identifies for us the decisive mechanism by which those new forms can be created: the democratisation of knowledge” (2008: 124). When Balibar equates the struggle for knowledge with liberation, liberation in turn is equated with the struggle for knowledge. What is at stake is that “liberation” thus understood hollows out all other forms of struggle which may or may not be conscious of their own activity as liberation or which may very well be the result of some other impulse. As Ruddick says in “Spinoza in the work of Negri and Deleuze,” “the possibility that the ‘multitude’ might exhibit other than an liberatory impulse is not entertained at all” (2010: 33).

Another essential difference of direction between Balibar and Deleuze (and Guattari) involves the thinking through the State form. Deleuze (and Guattari) indeed envisages political potential not (only) in what can be recognized in and through the State form (any given State form) but especially in that which evades it and never stops evading it. Whatever may be the form of the State, it is not through the State-form that creation can be envisaged. Thus the “people” conceived as minority is always in the form “to come” not because it does not exist or because it will “hopefully” exist in the “future,” but because it never is and can be recognized as such. Its future is the future that co-exists with the present in the event, in that this people can never be exhausted, it will always remain *to come*, not by virtue of its absence but by virtue of its non-compliance with existing modes of recognition. Its creation does not involve myth or redemption but precisely a rupture with the

existing modes of knowledge, communication and recognition. Its political force comes precisely with this kind of rupture it effectuates not in the future but in the very present. This effectuation is not an “act” in the sense of a voluntary undertaking aimed directly at “liberation,” it is rather *every act* insofar as it escapes recognition; hence the absence of a political project. The subject of politics is an everybody who is nobody, but a *body* insofar as one cannot know what it *can* do. Deleuze and Guattari say in *A Thousand Plateaus*:

Generally speaking, minorities do not receive a better solution of their problem by integration, even with axioms, statutes, autonomies, independences. Their tactics necessarily go that route. But if they are revolutionary, it is because they carry within them a deeper movement that challenges the worldwide axiomatic. (...) If minorities do not constitute viable States culturally, politically, economically, it is because the State-form is not appropriate to them, nor the axiomatic of capital, nor the corresponding culture” (1998: 472).

When Balibar says the concept of the multitude produces completely optimistic effects in Deleuze, it is because he holds on to a universal concept of the political that needs a responsible agency in order to achieve recognition. If the political is assumed within this framework, then what Deleuze calls revolutionary force indeed appears as an optimistic effect. But if what Balibar calls the imaginary, and which is actually the virtual, is considered with its proper implications, one can say that *history* happens only through this revolutionary force but cannot turn into and indeed *resists* turning into *History* because its agents are forever absent, i.e. *as* agents.

4.2. Negri

Negri, in *Savage Anomaly* (1982), states that Spinoza represents an anomaly in the history of philosophy because it is an envisaging of collective freedom, “awaiting the particular historical and geographical moment that would enable its fullest expression” (Ruddick, 2010: 31). Indeed, in our own time, the time of this “project,” as he calls it, is *still* the future because mankind has not yet reached that certain point. Negri’s main thesis is that Spinoza’s revolutionary contribution to political philosophy consists in his having provided the pre-figuration for what Negri calls “the constitution of collectivity as praxis.” In his own words, “From this perspective Spinoza’s philosophy is truly a timeless philosophy: Its time is the future!” (Negri, 1991: 21). Ultimately this timelessness, however, turns out to be truly time-less, that is without time, indeed from out of time, and the future always a present-being-to-come that could never be present. This future that is inscribed in a political “project” is truly fated to be out of time, since its “practicality” is based precisely on “collective praxis.” We will see how Negri states the “political project” in his own thought together with Hardt and Negri’s formulations regarding their project in *Empire*. It is again through a certain re-working of Spinoza that Hardt and Negri follow a direction completely opposite to that of Deleuze (and Guattari). At this point, we should emphasize once more that Bergson’s theory of duration is of critical importance for Deleuze as it provides him with the means to critically develop the concept of multiplicity and the question of the passage from one state to another, whereas Negri and Hardt are not really interested in the need to re-conceptualize the temporality of the “multitude.” Therefore their understanding of project too is based

on a traditional conception of time that involves a mysterious leap into the future and on the “multitude” as the determined agency of this passage into the future, which is also a passage into praxis as well as a passage into “the political” in general.

Negri, in *Savage Anomaly*, explicitly lays out Spinoza’s political thought as the necessary foundation for what he takes to be *the* political project for the future. After mentioning that in Spinoza the problem is no longer the “the problem of the Power for freedom” but the “problem of the constitution of freedom,” he says:

This divergence still presupposes a series of new concepts. (...) Therefore, with this phenomenology of constitutive praxis, the Spinozian dislocation must also found a new ontological horizon on which this phenomenology can hold. This horizon is collective. It is the horizon of collective freedom, of a nonproblematized collectivity. But is this merely a simple translation of the spontaneous, vague dream of the revolutionary utopia of humanism? No. The idea of the crises, subsumed in the ontological process, is at play here. It puts in motion all the necessary mechanisms of the constitution of collectivity. The idea of the *multitudo* transforms what was a Renaissance, utopian, and ambiguous potentiality into a project and a genealogy of collectivity, as a conscious articulation and constitution of the whole, of the totality. The revolution and its boundary are therefore, in Spinoza, the terrain on which an extraordinary operation is founded, the prefiguration of the fundamental problem of the philosophy of the subsequent centuries: the constitution of collectivity as praxis. From this perspective Spinoza’s philosophy is truly a timeless philosophy: Its time is the future! (Negri, 1991: 21)

Within this particular passage that comes to end the first chapter of the book, we see that Negri states the essential elements that make up this project. These are: the horizon as “collective freedom,” the constitution of a “collectivity as praxis,” the “conscious articulation” of this collectivity, and the time of the project as the “future.” A first point to be made relates to the position of philosophy in relation to

politics. To set a political task as a “project” immediately re-instates philosophy’s “function” as a *reflection* on the political and on its conditions. The problem of the constitution of the multitude or of collectivity does not get re-doubled in philosophical praxis *per se*. That is we are already far away from what Deleuze calls the “genetic idea” in relation to Spinoza. Instead what we have is “freedom” in general, the political in general, the future in general, and the collectivity as a non-problematic “agency” (determined in relation to the project) in general. The summoning of the people thus occurs as the philosopher’s determination of a people that would be capable of carrying out this project in general. Speaking strictly in terms of philosophy, it is necessary to ask what would be philosophy’s “task” once it is assumed that the project would be carried out? Once one becomes political is the philosophical left behind? Why is it that “praxis” is outside philosophy as the condition to access the political? Why does praxis belong to the future of the project? Why are the conditions of praxis determined in such a way as to exclude the means to say that “even lying like a log—nay, that only lying like a log—one can revolutionise the lot of mankind”?⁸ With these questions in mind, I first address more in detail Negri’s *Savage Anomaly* and then Hardt and Negri’s *Empire*.

Negri treats the question of the passage from individuality to collectivity in Spinoza as a continuity. He says that in Spinoza, with regard to the *multitudo*, whether men are led by their passions or by reason, whether they are learned or unlearned is of little importance; what matters is that when men give up their natural rights in favour of the greater good of the community as a result of their striving for self-

⁸ Dostoevsky, F. *The Crocodile*. <http://www.online-literature.com/dostoevsky/3367/>

preservation, this is not according to the principle of contract which would involve the transfer of natural right, but rather a matter of collective constitution (Negri, 1991: 197). Thus he says that what he calls continuity is not founded but constituted by the *multitudo*, as the *multitudo*. He calls this an absolute but relative constitution since, as Spinoza says, just as in the state of nature the individual who is most led by reason is the most powerful, so with commonwealth too, the one that is most guided by reason is the most powerful. We could say that just as an individual is a *multitudo*, so is the commonwealth, therefore there is no question of passage from the individual to the collective and this is what Negri calls continuity. Yet he says, “But in other, much more suggestive terms we can pose this as a continuity from *appetitus* to imagination to reason. Here, in this metaphysical development, the process is clarified. Intensely and profoundly” (Negri, 1991: 198). If the passage from the individual to the multitude does not pose a problem as such in Spinoza’s account, we find that with Negri this process rather becomes one of progress. We again find the assumption that with the multitude, which is thought of in terms of “continuity,” the continuity is accounted for in terms of passage from passion to reason as if this would be the eventual direction of the continuity. If there is only the *multitudo*, it is certain that according to Spinoza, if forces of reason are dominant in the multitude, then this collectivity as a totality would be more powerful; and in Spinoza, as Negri says, since reason happens with the tendency for self-preservation, this outcome is of universal application and not a utopian ideal. In Spinoza, we can say that this process is simply “do-able.” But Negri, by referring to this process as a continuity, introduces a *timeline* to the concept of the multitude that is certainly absent in Deleuze’s account. Moreover, Negri says there is no contract in Spinoza whereas Deleuze says

that, according to Spinoza, the state of society *is* based on a contract, that the passage from the state of nature to the civil state is grounded on a contract (1988b: 108). With the idea of continuity, Negri takes a much less problematic idea of passage that does not involve a passage at all in order to conceive of a collective subjectivity as a totality. But then the passage from passion to reason also becomes problematic since it is with this passage that continuity is introduced. From appetite to imagination and then to reason, we are faced with an account of a linear temporality in favour of progress. Yet Negri himself says that in Spinoza it is useless to orient the “political battle” in one direction, but he takes this as a “setback” internal to Spinoza’s system and not because it does not have a direction in itself:

It is useless, therefore, to pretend to orient the *Political Treatise* toward a determinate political battle (...). Beyond all this, we cannot even come to an agreement on the orientation and the options that would guide this battle. For some it is liberal and aristocratic, for others it is monarchical and constitutional, and finally for others it is democratic (...) and – Rousseauian! The struggle, instead, is internal to the system. It is the struggle between the principle that moves it and the reality of the absolutist and bourgeois reflection of the century that prohibits it from becoming historically operative (Negri, 1991: 209).

Thus he says that what he calls Spinoza’s project encounters its “real limit” not just because Spinoza died before he could complete his *Tractatus-Politicus*, but because the conditions of his time were not mature enough for his project. He says that this project was not defeated but suspended: “The constructive project is now blocked precisely to the extent that the critical power it has developed has moved beyond the historical reality of its times. Political philosophy has become for the first time – after Machiavelli’s anticipatory experiment – a theory of the masses” (Negri, 1991: 209). We see that, for Negri, Spinoza’s “project” itself takes on a particular historical

significance not just because of its “timelessness” but more precisely, because of its *anticipatory* nature. At this point, I cite Negri once more in length in order to make a bit more clear what he understands by suspension:

The suspension of the work, due to Spinoza’s death, coincides with its real, positive, and internal block. But the project lives: It is there, present, taut, ready to be grasped as a message. The temporal dimension, the concept of the future, is formed – an anticipation that the desire and the imagination contain, on the border of a determinate historical block. But it is contingent. The necessity of being, submitted to this tension, cannot pretend to have any setback. It continues to grow on itself, awaiting the revolution, the forceful reopening of philosophical possibility. Spinoza does not anticipate illusionism, he experiences it and develops it fully. In order to be understood, however, Spinoza needs new, real conditions to be given: Only the revolution poses these conditions. The completion of the *Political Treatise*, the development of the chapter on democracy or, better, on the absolute, intellectual, and corporeal form of the government of the masses, becomes a real problem only within and after the revolution. Within this actuality of the revolution, the power of Spinoza’s thought gains a universal significance (1991: 210).

The necessity of being coincides with a historical conception of revolution that awaits in the future, which is a reopening of philosophy, given that certain conditions are met. Conditions whose “newness” come from the future *historically* understood and whose “reality” can only be established in and through their *historical*, that is material, coming into being: “In order to be *understood*, Spinoza needs, new, real conditions to be given” (emphasis mine). And as he says, it is revolution that provides for these conditions. The “setback” is contingent, however the necessity of being envelops this contingency so that the future comes to be determined according to the necessity of being. The necessity of being also sees to it that Spinoza can finally be understood. Again, a matter of capability, even if the capability of

understanding Spinoza or, more precisely, of understanding this project which Negri makes into a universal project of revolution. This capability that has as its condition a certain historical existence. Indeed Negri himself makes all this very clear:

Constitutive ontology is made political. In Spinoza the passage to politics is absolutely necessary; the identification of the subjective articulation of the development of being must be political. Spinoza's political theory is a theory of the political composition of subjectivity. The passage from nature to second nature, from physics to human action must be mediated by subjectivity. (...) Spinozian politics, then, is the theory of the "subjective" continuity of being. The subject is the product of the physical accumulation of movements. The collective subject can only be appreciated as a physics of collective behaviors. Subjectivity is a composition, first physical and then historical (1991: 226).

Negri makes the whole theory of bodies into a theory of collective subjectivity as a totality. He says that subjectivity is a composition but he composes it at one stroke. From physics to human action, from "nature" to "second nature" we are re-introduced un-problematic passages that all constitute a totality of historical subjectivity. What makes it physical is that it is made up of bodies and is material but the whole theory of bodies is subsumed under continuity so as to form a total subject. Moreover, the subject is the "product of the physical *accumulation* of movements." This is clearly never the case in Deleuze's account, neither is there any idea of the continuity of being nor a historical subjectivity in the sense understood by Negri. The question of constitution is affirmed once and for all only to be left behind when one enters the realm of politics. Even if Negri says that the constitution of the subject is immediately political, the subject is already immediately constituted and so is political *only* according to *this* determination. In Deleuze's account the passage from physics to human action is already problematized on the level of constitution. It does

not get to be mediated by any subjectivity, it is already the *process* of subjectivity, since there is no “free will” in Spinoza. However, for Negri, one does not need put its constitution into question anymore, since now there is another project ahead, which is freedom:

The subject, in either its individual or collective figure, is the point on which the productive force of being is shown to be an identity with the constitution of the figures of being. The subject is the ontological site of the determination and, therefore, of emancipation. The entire metaphysical frame is completed in this intensity. Therefore, there is nothing immobile in this finale synthesis: There is rather, the activity of liberation, which is made dense, heavy, and yet always open, always more perfect. We grasp the highest metaphysical perfection on the line of accomplished subjectivity. We grasp it as the satisfaction of a production that sees the perfection of its own composition. In a chain of the woven being of infinite presents, the conclusion is, once again, the present, its joy, all of given being (1991: 227).

In the chapter on Spinoza, we had mentioned how and why Deleuze precisely does not adopt the polarity between joy and sadness in his own thought. What counts with this distinction is that the theory of the composition of bodies can be conceived without referring to transcendent and moral criteria. Deleuze emphasizes that the question of perfection refers to constant variations, although Spinoza does not use this word: “to the extent that ideas succeed each other in us, each having its own degree of perfection, its degree of reality or intrinsic perfection, the one who has these ideas, in this case me, never stops passing from one degree of perfection to another. In other words there is a continuous variation in the form of an increase-diminution-increase-diminution of the power of acting or the force of existing of someone according to the ideas which s/he has” (Deleuze, "webdeleuze"). One never stops passing from one degree of perfection to another. But he also says that “I am always as perfect as I can be according to the affections that I have here and now”

(Deleuze, "webdeleuze"). He says that this is because when one passes from one affection to another what happens is one is still as perfect as can be, yet with a decrease in lived power. At each moment one is as perfect as can be in accordance with one's essence yet experiences an increase or a decrease in lived power, so that one part of that power is subtracted, immobilized. The degrees of perfection only relate to these passages and do not mean that I become less perfect as I become sad. A degree of my power only becomes immobilized but I remain as perfect as I am. But when I do not experience any decrease of power this does not mean that there is an achievement of my subjectivity. It is taken as a constant variation and not just in one direction, although it is all about directions. Since Negri takes the individual and the collectivity as "subject" in the same sense, this comparison is relevant. In this case, Negri takes the question of perfection as inscribed in a linear timeline, as opposed to duration in the Bergsonian sense, and always in the direction of more perfection, and re-instates the passage as a spatial phenomenon. The accumulation of movements that make up the subject in Negri is accomplished in the present as all of given being, and its joy and it looks into the future for its liberation. The collectivity is thus one with itself in the fulness of the present. We are already in the element of a fiction that is dear to the classical image of thought. Even though it thinks political praxis, even though it claims to think in terms of bodies, it is nothing but a determinate "agency" that is needed to "pass from physics to human action." Perfection is no longer an immanent mode of being but a historical process. One that is without finality according to Negri's claim, but progressive nevertheless.

Negri's multitude is of course that subject that will eventually and by virtue of its

own productive force rise up against capitalism and bring about the revolution. And it is through Spinoza's theory of power that Negri envisages the multitude to "historically organize itself." With Negri's "voluntarist" conception of politics, because we are within the confinements of a universal method for a total subject, in Zourabichvili's words "in place of an empirical foundation of voluntarism, we fall back on a voluntarism which lies at the heart of a description of real movements, on the traditional Marxist mode of prescription of the ineluctable" (Zourabichvili, 2002b). Thus history and time are conceived accordingly. Negri's account of time is especially relevant in this regard:

The Spinozian problematic of spatial being, as spatial constitution, of spatial production, coming to and end, is a proposal for the metaphysics of time. Not of time as becoming, as the most recent Modern philosophy would have it: because the Spinozian perspective excludes every philosophy of becoming outside of the determination of constitution. Rather, it is a proposal of metaphysics of time as constitution, the time of further constitution, the time that extends beyond the actuality of being, the being that constructs and selects its future. (...) The cumulative process that constructs the world wants a further time, a future. The composition of the subject accumulates the past only to make it tend toward the future. (...) And then, qualitatively, being is emancipation, that is, once again, the perfection of the tendency in future time. (...) The future is not a procession of acts but a dislocation worked by the infinite mass of intensive being: a linear, spatial displacement. Time is being. Time is the being of totality. Of transformation, of wealth, of freedom. But all this goes together. Being that is is dislocated from one point to the next in space, in its infinity, in its totality, accomplishes a passage in order of perfection, that is, in its construction. Not in relation to any other, but only in relation to itself. Therefore, it is liberation, emancipation, transition. (1991: 228)

Spinoza's thought for Negri thus represents a "savage anomaly" only in relation to *his* time whereas it is completely domesticated in the present and regarding the revolution in the future. Negri needs to bring back the very classical conception of linear time as past present and future, whereby the present is but an accumulation of

past events and the future, *hopefully* the anticipated outcome of a selection. And its accomplishment is the accomplishment of being. The justification of everything that has come to be is inscribed in the future, that is the future of the revolution. The present, although completely full in itself, does not have any force other than its anticipation of the revolution. The future is cut off from the present, since it is envisaged once again as linear, spatial displacement. The passage into the future is but a leap into existence. This is not just different from but completely opposed to the account of Deleuze. While Deleuze continually insists on retaining the problematic elements in Spinoza as the very force of Spinoza's thought, Negri resolves each one of them in a historical perspective. There is no longer the question of the composition of the subject, therefore no longer any question of becoming, since that question is left behind as the subject is constituted once and for all. There is no longer the question of what a body can do, since the body is now the body politic and its capabilities are determined according to the revolution and according to History. The polarity between joy and sadness is no longer a problematic that serves as immanent criteria for evaluation, but it is already joy that determines the direction of the totality of being. Joy becomes in itself an external criterion, as it becomes the direction of being. The attempt at surpassing the body-mind duality is altogether *surpassed* in favour of the "voluntary" nature of being which constructs and selects its future. Indeed it is difficult to envisage that this being implies anything other than the supremacy of the "mind," even though Negri's whole insistence in *Savage Anomaly* is on what he calls the "productive forces" of being, and considering that Negri and Hardt, in *Empire*, put all the emphasis on what they call "affective labour." It might be said that this duality of mind and body arises quite in

the same way as a symptom, each time that a universal method is conceived in view of a “collective praxis” so that an adequate “agency” can be assigned.

At this point I want to refer to François Zourabichvili more in detail, in the interview with *Multitudes* entitled “Les deux pensées de Deleuze et de Negri: une richesse et une chance” (2002). In this interview Zourabichvili refers to Deleuze’s politics as a “politics of involuntarism” in distinction from Negri’s “voluntarism,” and precisely in relation to the absence of project in Deleuze. In affirming the absence of project, he immediately relates this to a thematic that appears in the second volume of Deleuze’s books on cinema: “belief in this world,” as opposed to believing in *another* world or a world transformed. He again opposes the concept of revolutionary-becoming to “concerns about the revolution’s future.” He says, echoing Deleuze, that belief in this world has collapsed not because of images and games that populate modern life, but because with modernity we experience everyday institutions such as family, school, art, etc. as the clichés that they are, that are no longer secure in their function and we do not know how to stop participating in them. Thus he says that what he calls “involuntarism” in relation to the politics of Deleuze (and Guattari) is in itself a trial: “shall we know, one day, how to grant a reality to events as they are, independent of both a plan for the future which assigns to them a certain degree and signification, or a retrospective judgment that evaluates them after they have come to pass (as a revolution missed/betrayed/toxic?)” (Zourabichvili, 2002b). He considers that Deleuze and Guattari seek to think precisely in and through these systems:

We always want the event to have an end, but an event is from the outset a rupture, a transformation of collective perception (new relations to work, to knowledge, to childhood, to time, to sexuality, etc.). Thus believing in the world is about believing in the reality of the world's internal ruptures. According to Deleuze and Guattari, political potential resides in these ruptures (systematically misrecognised by those prescient and retrospective assessments); indeed, they are the source of law and every new economic, social or political assemblage, that is to say, *institutions* in general (new laws, new relations at work or school, or even new forms of conjugal life) (Zourabichvili, 2002b. Emphasis not mine).

Believing in the world's internal ruptures, that is, the ruptures that always occur *behind our backs*. This is also the point where the Bergsonian concept of duration assumes critical importance in Deleuze's thought. And in relation to Spinoza, Deleuze says that the lived passages in Spinoza, that is, the passage from one degree of perfection to another is the point where duration in Spinoza coincides strictly with the Bergsonian concept of duration. He says: "In one sense duration is always behind our backs, it is at our backs that it happens. It is between two blinks of the eye. If you want an approximation of duration: I look at someone, duration is neither here nor there. Duration is: what has happened between the two? Even if I would have gone as quickly as I would like, duration goes even more quickly" (Deleuze, "webdeleuze"). Now the point at which this duration tends to take a desired direction in Spinoza (towards joy) and in Bergson (towards a single duration), is one such point at which Deleuze's thought diverges from these two thinkers. (But at the same time he retains these as problematic elements in relation to their own thoughts and does not propose resolutions; he problematizes them even further.) As Zourabichvili says, it is ruptures understood in this sense that shape and transform the institutions in which one finds oneself. The concept of the virtual is just this attempt to preserve the question of constitution and composition as "event," without giving into the

“prescient and retrospective assessments” in Zourabichvili’s words. Deleuze and Guattari say, in the chapter on the plane of immanence in *What is Philosophy*, “Philosophical time is thus a grandiose time of coexistence that does not exclude the before and the after but *superimposes* them in a stratigraphic order. It is an infinite becoming of philosophy that *crosscuts history without being confused with it*” (1994: 59. Latter emphasis mine). It is a fine line that Deleuze and Guattari trace with history, but one that is of critical importance nevertheless. To make the concept coincide with an actual historical process, such as “the multitude that gets to articulate its subjective development in the unfolding of history,” neutralizes at one stroke all that could be expected of Negri’s multitude. Time is the time of the ineluctable, and so is the multitude that has been prescribed a mythical project in the form of Exodus.

Moreover, this conception of the multitude goes completely against the Deleuzian concept of multiplicity, and minority. The multitude in Negri is one that seeks its recognition in and through history. It recognizes itself as part of history and wants the achievement of that history. Thus when Negri talks of desire, there is only one desire. And that is the desire for revolution. Its solidarity comes from being one with itself, of being a totality that is one with itself. Whereas in Deleuze the multiplicity is always nothing but a *multiplicity*. If there appears a subject in any point, it is always as an effect and always secondary; secondary not in the sense of temporal constitution but in importance. Since everything is a multiplicity (insofar as it incorporates an Idea), there is nothing that does not bare in itself the power to escape recognition and indeed a multiplicity’s power lies precisely here: that one can never

know what it can do. Indeed, one cannot know what it can do *even when it does it*. Indeed, as opposed to Negri where the multitude engenders a solidarity with identity but without force, in Deleuze, it is precisely multiplicity insofar as it cannot be exhausted by systems of representation and recognition that bares the political force; and as opposed to Negri's multitude which is a mythical people that will precisely never come (it is the future that can never be present since it is the future of an a-temporal anticipation), the multiplicity is already in the here and now. As Zourabichvili says in the interview, "as for what you call 'the concrete creation of the possible' there must, as a rule, be silence. No one knows how to anticipate that which can only be created (...): it is not possible to highlight the axes of a new kind of struggle because these struggles are already at work. Yet this theoretical aporia doesn't necessarily mark the destitution of thought: it could be, rather, the courage of a thought which exposes itself to time" (Zourabichvili, 2002b). As he says, the philosopher can no longer assume the role of guide for the masses but is given into the internal transformation of philosophy itself; that is, as regards becoming-revolutionary philosophy assumes a role just like all other discipline, "inasmuch as its practices are not immutable and its own transformations resonate with the transformations of other practices, theoretical or militant." He mentions that it is in this practice of resonances that reside the political power of philosophical discourse. In this regard, Zourabichvili says that what should be studied especially in *A Thousand Plateaus* is Deleuze and Guattari's immanent and "literal" philosophical discourse: "'Literality', that is to say the nomadic distribution of meaning arising from the division between proper and figurative sense, is nothing other than the production of certain effects in the political field" (Zourabichvili, 2002b). So,

Zourabichvili says, when Deleuze says in *Cinema II*, “factories are prisons” this is especially not to be understood as a metaphorical cliché. To hear it as a metaphor neutralizes the political force and one is content to imagine humanitarian adjustments to the banking system which remains more or less unharmed. However, as Zourabichvili says, “everyone more or less intuitively understands this literal understanding (...); what remains to be done is to produce philosophical conditions in it; to seize it with a discourse that shows its legitimacy and explores its virtualities” (Zourabichvili, 2002b).

Thus if the question of philosophy versus politics presents an issue for philosophy, in the traditional conceptions both of philosophy *and* of politics, they give each other direction; philosophy in and of itself does not assume the political power of transformation – of itself and of political transformation. Whereas in Deleuze (and Guattari) we are no longer within this traditional understanding. In transforming itself, philosophy creates political effects, just like any other discipline does through its own means. An important point is that when philosophy transforms itself in this way, or resonates with the transformations in other disciplines, it can take for granted *neither* philosophy itself in relation to politics *nor* the political field as such. The transformation of philosophical discourse, in Deleuze and Guattari, assumes *another* politics. As philosophy takes on another function, another image of thought, so do the political effects it creates challenge the domain of the political itself. In that this domain can no longer accommodate one determined “struggle” as *the* political struggle. But philosophy itself cannot claim to “anticipate” the effects of its creation. It cannot anticipate the effects not because it is not *capable* (for anticipation is not

really a power) but because there can no longer be question of anticipation since it *exposes itself to time* – the only condition of every true creation.

4.3. Hardt and Negri

The last instance that I address here regarding the status of the political in relation to philosophy as opposed to Deleuze (and Guattari) is Hardt and Negri's book *Empire* (2001) which has been greatly influential in these debates. Here again it is to the presentation of the political "project" that I want to draw attention. It is of course very much in line with *Savage Anomaly*, yet there are points that need to be elaborated in further detail.

Hardt and Negri's concern here is to provide a philosophical toolbox in order to determine the conditions for the coming into being of a "counter-Empire" that would be capable of subverting the "Empire" in and through the Empire. The concept of Empire designates the new world order based on the global relations of production of capitalism and that power that rules the world through mechanisms of exploitation and oppression:

Our political task, we will argue, is not simply to resist these processes but to reorganize them and redirect them toward new ends. The creative forces of the multitude that sustain Empire are also capable of autonomously constructing a counter-Empire, an alternative political organization of global flows and exchanges. The struggles to contest and subvert Empire, as well as those to construct a real alternative, will thus take place on the imperial terrain itself – indeed, such new struggles have already begun to emerge. Through these struggles and many more like them, the multitude will have to

invent new democratic forms and a new constituent power that will one day take us through and beyond Empire. (Hardt and Negri, 2001: xv)

What we have is again a total political project and a universal method that will unfold throughout the book and at the same time through history. Since they address this new world order as a condition of “post-modernity” which is characterized by the absence of master narratives, the challenge against binary difference, fragmented identities and the attack on Enlightenment, they identify one of the essential problems as the recognition of a “common enemy.” They say that all contemporary political struggles seem to us right from the start as already outdated, like faint echos of the struggles in the past. And this is because “they cannot communicate, because their languages cannot be translated” (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 56). Thus the political task is first to clarify the nature of the common enemy that could bring all these struggles together, and second, to construct a common language so that these struggles can be made to communicate with each other. They call this “a communication of singularities.” Thus the question that animates Deleuze and Guattari’s political philosophy, that is, “why do men fight for their servitude as if it were their salvation?” is shifted in their opinion such that “the first question of political philosophy today is not if or even why there will be resistance and rebellion, but rather how to determine the enemy against which to rebel” (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 211). At this point we are confronted with the absence of the event. What is at stake is a transformation, but without the event. Thus, “the political” is envisaged as a generalized domain of struggle for the construct of a common enemy that will serve to give to it the direction needed. The “communication of singularities” without the event implies already that what is understood by “singularity” here is a concept

emptied of all its force. It is again the principle of recognition that is inscribed as primary element such that a universal communication is made possible for all political struggle. In “May ’68 didn’t take place,” Deleuze and Guattari say that there has been many stupidities and illusions, many things said regarding May ’68; yet that which really counts is not these but that this was “a phenomenon of clairvoyance, as if a society suddenly saw the intolerable within itself and also saw the possibility of something else. This is a collective phenomenon in the form of ‘The possible, or else I choke...’ The possible does not pre-exist, it is created by the event. The event creates a new existence, it produces a new subjectivity (new relations with the body, with time, sexuality, the milieu, culture, work...)” (*Deux Régimes de Fous*⁹, 215-216). According to Deleuze (and Guattari), subjectivity is created by the event, and hence what constitutes it as a political subject at a given moment does not depend on an external and pre-existing condition of subjectivity but this subjectivity itself comes into being as a creation of the event. It is first and foremost a question of direction: in Hardt and Negri’s case, we start with the subject/ivity which determines the domain of the political and *the* political event; in Deleuze and Guattari’s case a happening of the event that brings about the *creation* of a subjectivity. What is at stake once again is the domain of the political. Negri and Hardt take for granted a universal conception of the political and their problem is one of subversion. Their method involves the same mechanisms of recognition and representation that pertain to the universal conception of the political. It is a matter of subversion, since one form of democracy gets to be replaced with a new and better form. Whereas in Deleuze and Guattari, neither democracy nor another better form of government, or

⁹ Translation mine.

state is envisaged at the outset. It is through completely different mechanisms that precisely resist recognition that the event brings about transformation. In their case, it is a matter of perversion of the existing systems, precisely a lack of direction of the event which in its virtuality goes in all directions at once. I borrow the terms “subversion” and “perversion” from Zourabichvili: “In contrast to Negri, Deleuze never believed the promises of subversion, on the contrary, he was attentive to the manner in which every order, every institution, is incessantly *perverted* by ‘lines of flight’. Hence, a first difference of methodological order: where Negri proposes a total theory, Deleuze proceeds by skirmishes, by localised destabilisations” (Zourabichvili, 2002b). In any case, this does not imply that there is no communication of singularities in Deleuze, to the contrary; but it is precisely through their differences that singularities communicate, first on the level of local and singular events and second, on the level of the “pure event” which refers to nothing but the “eventuality” of the event. As Zourabichvili says:

These singularities have between them relations of divergence or disjunction, certainly not of convergence since this implies already the principle of exclusion which controls individuality: they only communicate through their difference or their distance, and the free play of sense and its production lies precisely in the course of these multiple distances, or ‘disjunctive syntheses’” (Zourabichvili, "Deleuze's Vocabulary")

Creation, in this sense, refers precisely to the communication of singularities in new constellations and thus to the throw of the dice. It is completely opposed to the sense in which it is used by Hardt and Negri. Representation is the system through which singularities are made to communicate by convergence. The conception of subjectivity as pre-existing the event completely overlooks the nature of singularities.

They assume their political power by constantly evading representation and processes of recognition and they do not depend on them. In Hardt and Negri only the name “singularity” remains, having been emptied from the essential element that gives the concept its force.

The conception of the political task in *Empire*, as much as it is based on the fundamental distinction between activity and passivity influenced by Spinoza, is also populated by Deleuzian concepts such as immanence, the virtual, desire, etc. However, they are almost all the time deprived of their perverse potential for the sake of assuring a determinate direction for the political struggle. Indeed the need to give direction arises from the fear that if the said potentialities are assigned, everything could go horribly wrong. They say, “We would be anarchists if we were not to speak from the standpoint of a materiality constituted in the networks of productive cooperation, in other words, from the perspective of a humanity that is constructed productively, that is constituted through the ‘common name’ of freedom” (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 350). I will later elaborate on the problem of freedom. But in this statement, what gives the determined direction to their enterprise is the need to safely distance it from “anarchy” in solidarity with “humanity.” “To the metaphysical and transcendent mediations, to the violence and corruption are thus opposed the absolute constitution of labor and cooperation, the earthly city of the multitude” (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 396). And again, when they say: “Once again in postmodernity we find ourselves in Francis’s situation (Saint Francis of Assisi), posing against the misery of power the joy of being. This is a revolution that no power will control – because biopower and communism, cooperation and revolution

remain together, in love, simplicity, and also innocence. This is the irrepressible lightness and joy of being communist” (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 413). Spinozian "joy," in the hands of Hardt and Negri, becomes precisely “merriness” in order to divest it from all the problematics that are involved in Deleuze’s account of the joyful mode of existence. The binary differences that are claimed to be surpassed or challenged in “post-modernity” are all re-appropriated this time in the duality of joy and sadness, activity and passivity, violence and innocence that do not admit of any confusion. They once again become external and transcendental criteria through which the ground of the political is erected. This logic of exclusion is based on assumptions regarding violence, passivity and sadness. Desire is thus crippled as a political force from the outset, since it must be directed toward innocence, activity and joy which, as transcendent criteria, do not signify anything other than their common sensical meanings. The fundamental problem with this conception is that the theory eats itself as it struggles to speak in terms of immanence, virtuality, desire. And, contrary to all their claims, it measures the political according to this distance.

In the part entitled “Outside Measure (The Immeasurable)”, Hardt and Negri say in relation to Empire, “when we say that political theory must deal with ontology, we mean first of all that politics cannot be constructed from the outside. Politics is given immediately; it is a field of pure immanence. (...) There is no external logic that constitutes it” (2001: 354). This is in two senses: 1) The current political order is neutralized as it appears united, with the global market and the sovereign power organized throughout this universality. 2) All transcendental values and measures that used to organize this power have dissolved. They say that throughout modernity,

the immeasurable was the absolute limit of metaphysical thought, the one thing that ought not be thought, and that this metaphysical illusion can no longer take hold today, that today it is transcendence that is unthinkable. In this post-modern condition the political field is outside of every pre-established value. But they claim that they posit “the immeasurable” not in order to negate any possibility of justice or value but, on the contrary, in order to be able to affirm justice and value only according to “humanity’s own continuous innovation and creation” (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 356). This is what they call “beyond measure” which “refers to a *virtuality* that invests the entire biopolitical fabric of imperial globalization” (2001: 357). And the virtual designates the powers of the multitude to act. In their conception it is what they call “living labor” that is the vehicle of the passage from the virtual to the possible and thus to the real. This living labour represents or presents a productive excess with respect to the given relations of production and it is the activity of what they term “a general intellect and general body outside measure” (2001: 358). Thus they can say that the desire to produce and the desire to exist are one and the same thing. Value can be transformed by virtue of this productive force beyond measure which is singular and common at the same time according to a Spinozist conception: “singular insofar as labor has become the exclusive domain of the brain and body of the multitude; and universal insofar as the desire that the multitude expresses in the movement from the virtual to the possible is constantly constituted as a common thing” (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 358). Furthermore, they equate this transformation of values with the Nietzschean concept of “transvaluation of values” in that it does not only destroy transcendent values but creates new ones (2001: 359). The sense in which they put the virtual into use strictly diverges from Deleuze’s account. The

event remains but an assumption, as does creation. They deduct that living labor with all its joyful determinations is the only form through which a collective act can pass from virtuality into reality, and assume that in this passage the virtual *does* pass into reality in the form of exhaustion. Whereas in Deleuze, the virtual is not the object of a “realisation” but of an “actualisation” that can never be exhausted within a given state of affairs, Hardt and Negri make it the object of precisely a passage into reality, that is, a leap into existence. Whereas in Deleuze’s account the virtual is *fully real* insofar as it is virtual (1994: 208), Hardt and Negri say that it is the stuff of living labour that “seeks to be real” (2001: 359). Deleuze says, in *Difference and Repetition*:

The only danger in all this is that the virtual could be confused with the possible. The possible is opposed to the real; the process undergone by the possible is therefore a ‘realisation’. By contrast, the virtual is not opposed to the real; it possesses a full reality by itself. The process it undergoes is that of actualisation. It would be wrong to see only a verbal dispute here: it is a question of existence itself. Every time we pose the question in terms of possible and real, we are forced to conceive of existence as a brute eruption, a pure act or leap which always occurs behind our backs and is subject to a law of all or nothing (1994: 211).

All of this is indeed not a confusion of concepts. Hardt and Negri make use of these concepts according to their own political theory, therefore it is not an “error” that is at stake but a certain political investment. However, it is curious that they still use them when actually they are not interested in their singularity. The political, considered as a pure field of immanence, appears to be immanent in a peculiar sense: its immanence is a historical condition that is determined by post-modernity and it is immanent insofar as it does not allow for transcendent values and criteria for measure and organisation in the given world order. However, this immanence comes

to assume a limit where the new values that are sought are already set according to a certain humanism, a given opposition between joy and sadness or activity and passivity, an exclusion of a common sensical notion of violence. The “beyond measure” only gets beyond measure within a certain confinement within given values. Indeed it does not get beyond measure at all, if not in the sense that the logic of exclusion has to go in any case beyond measure in order to measure at all. The polarity of activity-passivity, innocence-violence are already measured as “beyond measure”; and the resulting exclusion is precisely the element according to which they measure the presumed political field. They say that this field cannot be determined by an external logic, yet all the concepts that come to populate their plane take on a transcendent function. Subjectivity is the traditional subject, it is determined according to pre-existing conditions, it is judged according to the nature of its being that is *presumed* activity and innocence, and it seeks to realise its essence – which is its productive excess as virtuality – in a leap into existence. As Zourabichvili says in his interview, both with Deleuze and Negri the issue is one of “immanent flight,” that is, to work *in and through* the system in order to flee it, but Negri and Hardt, in *Empire*, determine the conditions of this “immanent struggle” nevertheless from “without.” That is, by taking the immanent plane of politics as one and the same as the global Empire (the historical state of affairs), and turning the question of struggle into a universal one. The consequence is, in Zourabichvili’s words regarding Negri’s thought, “the insoluble paradox of a voluntarist involuntarism.” As Zourabichvili says, the point where Deleuze’s and Hardt and Negri’s thoughts converge could indeed be on the level of what Hardt and Negri call “the immeasurable”; “the incommensurability of the common (understood as ‘a

communication of the heterogeneous’) to the external measure of ‘common sense’ (Zourabichvili, 2002b). This is a question of the relation between the virtual and the actual, which is also the relation between “desire and institution” in Deleuze, and it assumes the same function in Negri and Hardt’s thought with the concept of “living labor.” But as Zourabichvili mentions, the convergence is only on the level of this detail and not when Hardt and Negri make claims regarding immanence and the event.

When Deleuze problematises the relation between the virtual in actual, it is precisely in order to preserve the event in every state of affairs that is actualised. It is for this reason that:

(E)very form of resistance is reciprocal and nomadic. Therefore, what tends to go unperceived is the positivity that envelops resistance: that is to say, the specific space-time that establishes itself in every case and that does not allow itself to become institutionalised in the ordinary sense of the term, but reveals the paradox of institution, insuperable from a crises and a struggle, and opens possibilities for social or juridical assemblages that were previously unthinkable. (Zourabichvili, 2002b)

Therefore in each state of affairs there is a portion of the event that goes unrecognized and it is because the event’s virtuality can never be exhausted in its actualisations. The force of the political resides at this point, whereby the event evades being captured by conventional institutions inasmuch as it transforms them inevitably into new forms of institution that had never been thinkable as possible. It is inevitable that once an event is actualised, the institution as a new state of affairs will take on its conventional meaning but this does not mean that nothing happened. On the contrary, “belief in this world” is precisely to be able to say that even when it

goes unrecognized, it is the event that brings about whatever transformation. Negri and Hardt's insistence on a space-time whereby *the* event gets "realised" takes the completely opposite direction, in the direction of "common sense" and demands the living labour to arise as one with its essence which is joy, innocence and activity and "conquer the world" as such. Commonality turned into common sense, since we leave the plane of immanence where these concepts retain their problematic element. A new order instead of the old one, that would be better in itself: subversion.

When Zourabichvili says that nomads lie on the edge of the relationship between the actual and the virtual, and because of this do not leave a mark upon history; this is a point that Deleuze and Guattari continuously insist upon in *A Thousand Plateaus*:

It matters little that minorities are incapable of constituting viable States from the point of view of the axiomatic and the market, since in the long run they promote compositions that do not pass by way of the capitalist economy any more than they do the State form. The response of the State, or of the axiomatic, may obviously be to accord the minorities regional or federal or satutory autonomy, in short, to add axioms. But this is not the problem: this operation consists only in translating the minorities into denumerable sets or subsets, which would enter as elements into the majority, which could be counted among the majority. The same applies for a status accorded to women, young people, erratic workers, etc. One could even imagine, in blood and crisis, a more radical reversal that would make the white world the periphery of a yellow world; there would doubtless be an entirely different axiomatic. But what we are talking about is something else, something even that would not resolve: women, nonmen, as a minority, as a nondenumerable flow or set, would receive no adequate expression by becoming elements of the majority, in other words, by becoming a denumerable set. What is proper to the minority is to assert a power of the nondenumerable, even if that minority is composed of a single member. That is the formula for multiplicities. Minority as a universal figure, or becoming-everybody/everything. Woman: we all have to become that, whether we are male or female. Nonwhite: we all have to become that, whether we are white, yellow, or black. (1988: 470)

It could even be said that the minority is powerful *inasmuch* as it is incapable of constituting a viable state in the process of becoming. The universality in Deleuze and Guattari, or what could be termed the “communication of singularities” is achieved not by virtue of a common essence posited against a common enemy; the said universality is the process of becoming that cannot be subjected to stationary moments whereby one becomes woman and stops there, one becomes black and stops there in order to claim their rights. Indeed this happens at the same time as becoming, but the issue in Deleuze and Guattari is fundamentally the process of becoming insofar as it traverses all becomings at infinite speeds such that one becomes imperceptible so as to become *just everybody*. This is the universality according to which the smallest and the excessively large communicate. Indeed an essential point is again one that Zourabichvili draws attention to. What Deleuze understands by molar and molecular does not aim at completely getting rid of the “molar” once and for all. Not only is this conceived of as being impossible, but indeed such a claim cannot be made in “innocence” without confronting “blood and crisis.” I find this to be another paradox with Hardt and Negri’s thought, that such a complete subversion of the dominant system in favour of the “multitude” is undertaken without re-considering the place of violence, sadness and destruction. They are excluded from any consideration outside of their common sensical significations by a purely theoretical stroke. Not even a paradox, but rather a matter of convenience. As Zourabichvili says, “a minimum of reproduction is necessary, even if we suffer from the fact that the latter occupies all of the field. In any case, the naked Body without Organs (a little like the *analogue* of constituent power – *Negri’s equivalent for living labour; my addition*) is nothing other than death itself, which is

why every becoming involves a relationship to death, a sort of death drive (the repulsion of all institutions, of all 'organs')" (Zourabichvili, 2002b). The question of the death drive is simply ignored by Hardt and Negri as they give an exceptional status to desire by determining it according to the Spinozian distinction between activity and passivity; and by resolving their problematic relationship in a unidirectional manner such that desire is determined only by activity.

Ruddick (2010), in "Spinoza in the Work of Negri and Deleuze," problematizes this lack of the problematic aspect of joy versus sadness in Negri's work. She says that when Spinoza argues that the rational evaluation of our actions owes to the desire to produce joyful encounters while avoiding those which make us sad, this is not because Spinoza is simply saying that sad encounters should be suppressed in favour of a "disembodied reason." It is in order to seek a better understanding "of the nature of the relationship between affect and reason in the production of knowledge" (Ruddick, 2010: 27). That is, first, it does not involve leaving behind once and for all a presumed state of sadness. Second, it cannot be made to function as a presumed polarity that already animates reason as if from the outside. This is precisely what it does not do, since real knowledge is the knowledge of real causes. "Activity" does not assume in and of itself an external positive value and direction for reason. It is only through the relationship with sad passions that one gets to know the "true cause" of one's affections. "Spinoza's investigation of affect does not simply enable us to reproduce a politics of phenomenology of the subject, a new version, as Grosz notes, of identity politics. It becomes the mechanism by which the subject itself can be undone" (Ruddick, 2010: 27). It is in this sense that Deleuze makes the distinction

between activity and passivity function, not in favour of disembodied reason, but precisely in favour of the knowledge that would bring about the processes of a “becoming reasonable,” together with all the risks involved. It is through the concept of desire that Deleuze breaks away completely from the tendency to assume an autonomous state of joy, that is, an autonomous reason in full control of its destiny. As Ruddick says, it is joy that animates the struggle for liberation in Hardt and Negri’s account and that immaterial labour is made the exclusive domain of that liberation “because it thrives on the affective dimension of collaboration” (Ruddick, 2010: 37). This exclusivity is assigned at the price of the exclusion of all other forms of struggle and only by taking recourse to a series of assumptions that have to be made in order to preserve this exclusivity. Ruddick says:

Immaterial labor might well be a critical venue to challenge a current manifestation of capital’s project of globalization. But we cannot presume that affect is suddenly ‘present’ at work and was not there previously. Nor can we presume the subjective unity of a movement around affective labor and the multitude simply by sleight of hand. Whether the ‘forced joy’ and collaboration of the affective labor can be equated with randomly experienced, poorly understood expansion of active powers (and thus ‘passive joy’ *pace* Spinoza), needs to be seriously interrogated. Joy has ‘labored’ under many forms, including the cut-throat collaboration of Donald Trump’s *Apprentice* boardroom, or as performances of joy not actually felt (as distinct from passive joy), the latter a hallmark of prostitution, servitude and slavery. One would be hard pressed to argue for their liberatory potential. (...) To presume affective/immaterial labor or an undifferentiated multitude as a vanguard eclipses past and current differences within and between fractions of labor (Virno, 2004), and the ambivalent nature of the multitude itself (Montag, 2005). (Ruddick, 2010: 33)

With *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari undertake an exploration of the perversity of desire precisely by confronting and “liberating” the transformative potential of sad passions. As Ruddick says, “the challenge is not to

avoid the sad passions but to engage them actively, to uncover the role they can play in the production of thought, following Spinoza's invocation to explore the meaning of all emotional intensities (2010: 35). This conception of desire cannot and does not overlook the re-consideration of philosophical innocence and violence. It cannot safely distance itself at the outset from a confrontation with the essential element of violence in every thought, that is death and self-destruction as well as the destruction of the world. But it is through engaging in local struggles that it can create new criteria to distinguish the violence of representation from the violence of becoming. It needs to confront the violence of becoming in order to assign to it its revolutionary potential. And as Zourabichvili says, it is the courage of a thought that exposes itself to time.

There is a final remark that I want to make in relation to Toscano's and then Negri's critiques of Deleuze. Toscano, in "The Politics of Spinozism: Composition and Communication" (2005) sketches the outlines of Balibar, Negri and Deleuze's treatments of Spinoza and deduces certain consequences in relation to their respective theories. I find it important to cite a lengthy passage in order to demonstrate the absolute incompatibility of this thought with Deleuze's political philosophy:

Despite the considerable beauty and force of Deleuze's magisterial reading, we may nevertheless wonder about the consequences of the comparatively little attention he lavishes on the effects that political constitution has on ethical composition. Is it not the case that the political dimension introduces fresh challenges and aporias, such as the one of the collective construction of freedom, into the serenity of ethical apprenticeship? Arguably, there is a qualitative leap involved in the passage to politics, which is not at all, as Balibar and Negri amply demonstrate, a merely supplementary dimension – either providing a continuity between the individual organization of joyful encounters and its collective amplification, or, in a kind of Rortyan 'liberal

ironism' *avant la lettre*, the provision of a context of public peace for a private path to the third kind of knowledge. In other words, what happens to the plane of immanence when it is fully socialized? Or again when we move from the ethical individual's 'private' organization of encounters to the citizen's commitment to '*common collective affections*'? (Deleuze 1992) When we realize that the striving of reason as the art of organizing encounters can ultimately not rest with the isolated free man, but that the formation of 'a *totality* of compatible relations' is a political task, perhaps the political task *par excellence*? This is, I would venture, perhaps the best point of approach into the interpretive project of Antonio Negri. (Toscano, 2005: 10)

This passage, insofar as the political thought of Deleuze is concerned, is completely *false*. Not just in the sense of a general tone of "serenity" that is attributed to this thought, but also in its premises. Toscano conceives of the political in relation to Deleuze's thought as merely a supplementary dimension, whereas he describes the relation between the ethical and the political as a passage, a "qualitative leap." What Balibar and Negri demonstrate is precisely the political as a supplementary dimension and not the other way around. He speaks of the plane of immanence "as if" *it were not already fully socialized*. The plane of immanence, by virtue of true immanence, is *at all times* fully populated and socialized and precisely because of this, does not involve a leap into the political whether qualitative or quantitative. It is in each case by bringing forth a multiplicity *in relation to a singular Idea* that one can assume a political "task," if one must. To conceive of the plane of immanence as the interiority of an "ethical individual" (which is a completely ambiguous notion) is to destroy it from the outset. It is everything *but* this simple interiority. It is precisely that which challenges all assumptions regarding the inside and the outside. To claim that the "aporia of the construction of collective freedom" is a "fresh" challenge introduced by the political is a misrepresentation of the whole undertaking of Deleuze's political philosophy. It is precisely against this "conventional"

understanding of the political that Deleuze mobilizes concepts as war machines in their own right. That “the striving of reason as the art of organizing encounters can ultimately not rest with the isolated free man” is again a false proposition attributed to Deleuze’s political philosophy in relation to his treatment of Spinoza. In Deleuze’s account of Spinoza, there is no “striving of reason as the art of organizing encounters” which could be attributed either to the “private individual” nor to a “totality of compatible relations.” “Striving” in the precise sense he makes use of, is the sense in which only Balibar and Negri employ it. The striving of reason cannot exist as such, since reason is only a becoming reasonable, there is no reason that is in full control of its activities. It is precisely through the striving to organize one’s encounters that one becomes reasonable (or not). The unproblematic passage from the individual to collectivity through the organization of joyful encounters is valid only in relation to Balibar and Negri’s respective accounts since, in Balibar’s case, collectivity is assured in the form of communication and, in Negri’s (and Hardt’s) case, the problem of the constitution of the multitude is already skipped over as the individual and the collectivity present one and the same subjectivity. The passage from the “individual’s private organization of encounters” to “the citizen’s commitment to ‘common collective affections’” is assured once and for all in Balibar and Negri’s respective accounts since they recognize that it is only through a State form that is supposedly better from the current one that the multitude can enjoy a better life. In Deleuze we are not even dealing with the same questions. All this becomes completely irrelevant when the concept of minority in Deleuze is conceived as that which goes in a completely other direction than of being a “proper citizen” whether individual or collective. The individual and collective, in the account of

Toscano, is a matter of number, and involves denumerable sets. The individual and collective in Deleuze, far from being pre-existent categories, are always subject to being undone in favour of new multiplicities. There is no private, autonomous individual in full possession of its powers that can assume an absolute interiority, and there is no collectivity that assumes just the same mode of autonomy with respect to its status and its praxis. Toscano sees to it that a completely conventional understanding of philosophy and politics presents itself as a “fresh challenge,” all the while presenting Deleuze’s political philosophy as remaining behind these “challenges.” When Eric Alliez says, in the Roundtable Discussion entitled “Deleuzian Politics?”, in response to Peter Hallward’s critique of Deleuze’s political philosophy, “it is fifty years of contemporary philosophy that disappear in your neo-sartrian ‘engagement’” (Alliez and et al., 2000: 163), this applies to the present context in that fifty years of contemporary philosophy is taken to have already expired for the sake of re-inscribing an agency for “collective praxis.”

It is actually the *same* problem when Negri, in his interview with Deleuze, where he pushes Deleuze for a straightforward answer to the question of the nature of collective praxis (and to which Deleuze does not give in), claims that in *A Thousand Plateaus* which he takes as a major work but at the same time as a “catalogue of unsolved problems,” he nevertheless hears “a tragic note, at points where it’s not clear where the ‘war-machine’ is going” (Deleuze and Negri, "Control and Becoming"). It is the essential point of the concept of “war-machine” that its direction cannot be set in advance, that it goes in all directions at once:

We say this as a reminder that smooth space and the form of exteriority do not have an irresistible revolutionary calling but change meaning drastically depending on the interactions they are part of and the concrete conditions of their exercise or establishment (for example, the way in which total war and popular war, and even guerilla warfare, borrow one another's methods)" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 387).

Indeed the concept of the war-machine is analogous to the body without organs in that it carries with it an irreducible relation to death and destruction but it is precisely this relation to death that makes it a magnificent force of perversion. It is not a political task but a question of existence and becoming that the concept of the war machine demands immanent criteria of evaluation to be "created" according to the concrete conditions of a local situation. Whether it goes in the direction of destruction or life is a problem of immanent criteria, of constructing a multiplicity that corresponds to a local problem. And indeed it is never pure, it is everything but pure and this in itself is the challenge and power of the war-machine. Yet Negri's question transforms the concept of the war-machine into its own parody by conceiving of "war" in "war-machine" as anything but a war. The implication of a "tragic note" is nothing but the tragedy that he hears ringing in the "literality" of the concept of war-machine, which he wants to ward off with a play on words and even feelings; the "feeling human subject"¹⁰ as opposed to the nomadic war-machine.

If there is a "task" and a *political* one, for that matter, it should be, *first and foremost*, a task not for philosophy but for *philosophers* as the necessity to question their own "innocence."

¹⁰ I borrow the term "feeling subject" from an article of mine co-written with Emre Koyuncu.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

My purpose in this study was to show that the domain of the political, once subjected to the conditions of an immanent ethics and temporality, is transformed in a manner that can no longer be contained within the framework of the current understanding of the political and falls short of answering to the demands of a political philosophy that thinks in terms of “solutions” to the problem of politics. It is by looking at the ways in which Deleuze develops his ethics of immanence in relation to Spinoza and his version of temporality in relation to Bergson that I attempted to point out the singularity of the stakes he (and Guattari) rises for politics. Then, through contemporary critiques of Deleuze’s political philosophy, I attempted to show the incompatibility of the contemporary “nature” of the political debate with Deleuzian politics, especially in relation to their respective undertakings of Spinoza and the conception of temporality. In the first chapter on Spinoza, the main issue was the way in which ethics, politics and philosophy are merged in their common interest in a mutually transformative relation within a framework of immanence. In Spinoza’s thought the break with the image of thought involves a break with the conventional

thinking of freedom as an abstract notion and relating it back to the material conditions that gave it its vital force as a political concept. Through Deleuze's account of Spinoza's theory of affects, I problematized the relationship between theory and politics with a view to underlining the interest of Spinoza for Deleuze's politics and contrasted this approach with a philosophy that thinks in terms of a future within conventional temporality, and thinks the political as the act of free subjects. The points at which Deleuze significantly diverges from Spinoza's thought were stated in terms of the passage between states of affection, the problematics of the distinction between sadness and joy in relation to passions and the substitution of desire for the very same passions. This was in order to show why Spinoza was necessary for Deleuze precisely to distance himself again in order to think the political within his philosophy of radical difference. I argued that Spinoza provided the immanent ethical realm within which the movement of the political can be conceived as a matter not of free will but of desire and the means of perceiving philosophy not as a reflection upon politics, but a political act itself. My intention was to show that politics perceived as a "task" risks at all times ignoring the politics that is always already taking place in the present and that Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy constitutes an attempt to reinvest the domain of the social with desire such that all privileged access to politics are undermined. An essential point was that this involves the re-considering of the place of violence in politics since, once put through the lens of immanent ethics, violence can no longer be determined according to an evil or any such pre-given criteria and will itself have to be re-defined according to the immanent conditions of a given situation.

In the chapter on Bergson, I attempted to show the specificity of the temporality that Deleuze incorporates into his system, since it is precisely through this very singular conception of time that he brings together the immanent conditions of philosophy in relation to radical difference. My aim, again, was to underline the necessity of Bergson for Deleuze in order to break up this alliance again, to radicalize this temporality in a way that leaves no place for desire to be inhibited. I argued that Bergson's thinking of time provided Deleuze the grounds for the development of his concept of virtuality that constitutes the realm of true difference and the means of thinking the passage to actuality, of the very conditions of the production of the "new." It is at the point where the new is at stake that Deleuze repudiates Bergson in order to give priority to desire as that which cannot be contained within the limits assigned to it.

In the fourth chapter which focuses on the contemporary critiques of Deleuze's political philosophy, I attempted to sketch out the fundamental gap between the respective conceptions of the "political" in Balibar, Negri, Hardt and Toscano and that of Deleuze (and Guattari). My intention was to show that these critiques hold in common a certain conception of the political that functions as a universal and unchallenged given according to which all "struggles" get measured. I argued that it is a conventional image of thought and notion of the political that is based on recognition that motivates these critiques such that they fail to effectively challenge the political philosophy of Deleuze (and Guattari), and that they fail to be relevant precisely because they take the question of politics to be a matter of a pre-constituted subjectivity. And I argued that this divergence takes place first and foremost via their

respective treatments of Spinoza and the question of temporality. I claimed that it is because they do not “recognize” the change of direction involved in Deleuzian politics that their points of critique fall back upon themselves as a re-affirmation of their proper grounding assumptions regarding politics.

I embarked upon this study because I am amazed by the concept of desire precisely in its perversity. As I conclude, I must mention that it is perhaps only in order to make a statement about both Deleuze and Guattari’s belief in the force of the perversity of desire that I wanted to carry this study out. They remain one of the very few to have that much “belief in the world” (as Deleuze says in *Cinema 2*) so as to affirm the element of perversity and violence in desire and their transformative powers. Together with thinkers like Nietzsche, Bataille and Artaud who I like to think of as animals of philosophy, they constitute the peak of a thought that does not back away in the face of a "humanity" that comes to instate itself as the burden of existence.

As last word, or rather as an afterword, I want to refer to an article by Gregg Lambert, entitled “The War Machine and a ‘people who revolt’” (2010) where he raises the stakes with regard to violence and death in Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the war machine. Here I want to take the liberty of summarizing this article in length, since in itself, it serves as a complementary for an essential element pertaining to the politics of Deleuze and which has not been mentioned until now.

Lambert takes up the concept of war machine in relation to the “somewhat extraordinary and very solitary figures” that frequently show up in their works as aliens to society and its organization, although unlike the figure of the criminal that “enjoys” a domesticated relationship with law. This figure which need not be solitary in the sense of being a numerical multiplicity is actually what Deleuze and Guattari understand by minority.

By contrast, the warrior who kills himself, destroying his own organs, represents a kind of violence that cannot ultimately be internalized by the State Form, despite its efforts to recoup this suicidal character of violence in the myths of martyrdom or patriotic sacrifice. Nevertheless, something always remains exterior and excessive in these acts, or in the exceptional individuals who become capable of undergoing them, even to the point of representing a form of exteriority that can assume what Deleuze elsewhere defines as a “terrible supersensible Primary Nature [...] which knows no Law” (Lambert, 2010).

In this virtually excellent article, Lambert recalls that the image of a minority itself has been appropriated by the State Form as a tragic figure of the “missing people,” as those that have been colonized and oppressed on the one hand, and as its messianic double, on the other, in the form of the “people to come.” But this latter figure, he says, has also been made use of by contemporary post-Marxist philosophy, and more specifically, in Hardt and Negri’s concept of the “multitude”:

Either we have the sad and tragic image of an oppressed or colonized people, or the saintly and other-worldly image of a super proletariat. In other words, all the possibilities of real violence are subtracted as the condition of both representations; either a people are purely subjected to violence of the State Form (i.e., homo sacer), or they are composed of another nature (i.e., post human) like creatures in a Science Fiction (Lambert, 2010).

As against this romantic conception of “the people,” Lambert argues, Deleuze and Guattari posit a sober figure. Sober in the sense that the various solitary figures that populate Deleuze and Guattari’s work, such as Ahab, Bartleby, the drug addict, etc. all possess this double edge, in that they engender this immanent risk of making destructive pacts, of passing, or rather, slipping into the *dark side*. The most striking point of his argument comes when he states that the problem with the war-machine is that it confuses two types of violence that correspond to the two types of war machines, that this concept cannot arrive at “*separating violence from violence* in the first instance, that is, distinguishing destructive violence from creative violence” (2010. Emphasis Lambert’s). But this does in a certain manner take on the form of a rhetorical question, as he asks whether perhaps the error of all “political economies” was the belief that one “could separate and keep separate the two poles of violence (...) so that the ‘the friend’ would never be mistaken for ‘enemy’?” (2010). Lambert recognizes that Deleuze and Guattari do not claim to such a safe and sound distinction, but asks whether, when it is a matter of the “incommensurable character of quantities” (as stated by Deleuze and Guattari themselves), it could be possible to make any distinction at all. In order to deal with this problem, he chooses to dwell on the issue of death and applies the distinction therein. The first kind of death is then the death of total destruction and annihilation, the one that has historically evolved in such a manner as to destroy entire societies. And the other kind of death which seeks something somewhat more positive involves the possibility of a “purely impersonal death.” This is indeed the moment of pure immanence as a life:

Certainly, this image of what Deleuze calls “a life of pure immanence,” something “with whom everyone sympathizes,” could represent the incommensurable character of a death that could directly confront the nearly infinite quantities of death produced by the war machine. This is because this kind of death is neither produced nor created by man, even though its event can never be equated with the simple biological death. Has it not been philosophy’s highest task, since the Greeks, to become equal to this event and thus to provide an adequate concept that would also be the basis for new nonorganic social relations? (Lambert, 2010)

I suggest that this distinction that needs to be carried out every time anew cannot be made into a subject of a coherent analysis. Indeed, Lambert himself embarks upon the question but then acts as if he forgot to analyse. The principal of distinction between what constitutes numerical multiplicity and what constitutes nonnumerical multiplicity is the only criterion that is provided in Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy. Lambert concludes his article by affirming his hope in this second kind of death. I am personally not comfortable with the notion of hope which again serves to project the force of the political into the future, and would rather prefer to conclude on a note of faith. Faith in the capacity of (non)sense as *the* political force.

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