# EXPRESSIONISM, UNIVOCITY, AND SENSE: RETHINKING DELEUZE'S SPINOZA

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ABSTRACT: This paper rethinks Deleuze's engagement with Spinoza in a new light. While it is true that what made Deleuze's Spinoza speculatively different is his inverse presentation of the latter's substance-oriented metaphysics, broadly conceived, the central argument of his unfaithful reading rests on two concepts entirely foreign to Spinoza: expressionism and univocity. The present essay then seeks to intervene by bringing forth a third concept hidden in Deleuze's reading: the ontology of sense. My claim here is that it is on this ontology that we get to reveal more of Deleuze's distinct Spinozism. Through sense, Deleuze implicitly presents new meaning to the classical Spinozist theorem "God (or Nature)" – one that turns the unfaithful reading into a higher form of fidelity to Spinoza's philosophy.

KEYWORDS: Spinozism; Substance; Expressionism; Univocity; Sense

> "To life in unison with a multitude—"
> -Marian Evans, *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868)

While it is widely known that Spinoza lurks at the background of Deleuze's philosophy, infidelity seems to be a fitting term to describe his peculiar reading of the Dutch thinker. Arguably, Deleuze's selective reading of the history of philosophy is a trove of "philosophical claims"[1] rather than a faithful exposition of a thinker's conceptual work. In other words, taking into account this infidelity

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[1] See Todd May, *Reconsidering Difference*, Pennsylvania, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997, pp. 328-9.

as any Deleuzian reader should be aware, it is not easy to differentiate whether Deleuze is doing an expositive reading of philosopher *x,* or if at all, he is attempting "to do philosophy" of his own.[2] By all means, can we say that Deleuze was an unfaithful reader hence?

The general argument of this essay is premised on this question. I broadly argue that what made Deleuze's Spinoza speculatively different, among other things, is his inverse presentation of the latter's substance-oriented metaphysics.[3] Arguably, central to this unfaithful reading, Deleuze weakened the Spinozist 'substance' to build on the 'modes' and 'attributes'. This, in turn, resulted in two concepts entirely foreign to Spinoza's thought: *expressionism* and *univocity.* The essay then seeks to intervene by bringing forth a third concept hidden in Deleuze's reading: *the ontology of sense.* While sense is another concept dynamically morphing in Deleuze's oeuvre[4] and has received recent critical attention in Deleuze studies[5], I mainly focus on the notion of sense found in his reading of Spinoza. My claim here is that we get to reveal more of Deleuze's distinct Spinozism on this ontology of sense. Through sense, Deleuze implicitly presents new meaning to the classical

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[2] See Joe Hughes, *Philosophy After Deleuze: Deleuze and the Genesis of Representation II*, London and New York, Bloomsbury, 2012, Henry Somers-Hall, Jeffrey Bell and James Williams (eds.), *'A Thousand Plateaus' and Philosophy*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2018, Jon Roffe and Graham Jones (eds.), *Deleuze's Philosophical Lineage*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009, Claire Colebrook, *Understanding Deleuze*, New South Wales, Allen & Unwin, 2002, Ian Buchanan, 'Introduction', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 96, no. 3, 1997, pp. 381-91, Michael Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy*, London, University College London, 1993.

[3] Particularly in Deleuze's two texts devoted on the philosopher Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin, New York, Zone Books, 1990, Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley, San Francisco, City Lights Books, 1988. Henceforth, *EPS* and *SPP*, respectively. Also see Simon Duffy, *The Logic of Expression: Quality, Quantity and Intensity in Spinoza, Hegel and Deleuze*, Hampshire and Burlington, Ashgate, 2006, Daniel W. Smith, *Essays on Deleuze*, Edinburgh University Press, 2012, Gillian Howie, *Deleuze and Spinoza: Aura of Expressionism*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, Thomas Nail, 'Expression, Immanence and Constructivism: 'Spinozism' and Gilles Deleuze', *Deleuze Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2008, pp. 201-19.

[4] For example Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson, London and New York, Bloomsbury, 2006b, Gilles Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, trans. Constantin Boundas, Mark Lester, and Charles J. Stivale, London and New York, Bloomsbury, 2015. Henceforth, *NP*.

[5] See, for instance, Daniela Voss, 'Intensity and the Missing Virtual: Deleuze's Reading of Spinoza', *Deleuze Studies*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2017, pp. 156-73, Nathan Widder, 'The Univocity of Substance and the Formal Distinction of Attributes: The Role of Duns Scotus in Deleuze's Reading of Spinoza', *Parrhesia*, vol. 33, 2020, pp. 150-76, Eugene Brently Young, 'The Determination of Sense via Deleuze and Blanchot: Paradoxes of the Habitual, the Immemorial, and the Eternal Return', *Deleuze Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2008, pp. 155-77.

Spinozist theorem "God (or Nature)" – one that turns the unfaithful reading into a higher form of fidelity to Spinoza's philosophy.

The following discussion will be three-fold. As a preliminary, I discuss Deleuze's expressionism in light of the general aim of his 1968 book *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression* (translated as *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* [*EPS*] in 1990). I then turn to the concept of univocity, highlighting Deleuze's different grasp of the Spinozist substance toward the end of *Difference and Repetition* (*DR*).[6] Finally, as an intervention, I introduce the concept of sense that holds expressionism and univocity together as an ontological viewpoint to immanence. The essay concludes by briefly reassessing Deleuze's reading of Spinoza – how faithful was he in engaging (who he thought as) the 'prince' of philosophers?

## EXPRESSIONISM: "SUBSTANCE *TURN ON* FINITE MODES"

In an interview with Martin Joughin, twenty-two years after his 1968 Spinoza book, Deleuze admits that the most original aspect of his book was not the Substance but the composition of finite modes. Specifically, with Spinoza in mind, he initially hoped "to make substance turn on finite modes" (*EPS* 7).

Naturally, any serious scholar of Spinoza would raise an eyebrow on this claim. For instance, Gillian Howie argues in her book *Deleuze and Spinoza: An Aura of Expressionism* that Deleuze's authorial voice in *EPS* and *SPP* appropriates or colonises that of Spinoza.[7] Namely, at one point, Deleuze failed to provide a sufficient defence for the existence of finite modes, so much so for the existence of substance overarching the modes. For this reason, Howie alleges that *EPS* shows Deleuze's lack of sincerity as he unveils and revises a thoroughly disingenuous form of argument.[8]

Given this criticism, a practical response would be this: Deleuze did simply amplify Spinozist philosophy by turning the infidelity to the thinker toward a higher fidelity to the Idea.[9] On this amplification of Spinozism, some scholars took Deleuze's reading of Spinoza as one that benefits both thinkers. Caroline

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[6] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, London and New York, Bloomsbury, 2014. Hereafter cited as *DR*.

[7] Howie, *Aura of Expressionism*, p. 6.

[8] Ibid., p. 170.

[9] For example, Colebrook, *Understanding Deleuze*, p. 2.

Williams, for instance, drew from Deleuze her presentation of a 'non-theological Substance' (in Spinoza) perpetually expressed in the infinite form of being.[10] Also, a case in point is Thomas Nail's reconstruction of Deleuze's immanence in his oeuvre, thanks to Spinoza.[11] For Nail, the concept of immanence takes shape as early as 1968 with the publication of Deleuze's two major works, *EPS* and *DR*. Nail called these early formulations of immanence as "substantial expression" and "modal expression," respectively.[12]

Thusly, we can say that Deleuze might have engaged Spinoza differently, but his reading, as it were, outsourced a new perspective on Spinozist scholarship in the same light that *NP* influenced Nietzsche's reception in France in the early 1970s.[13] This reading will not be possible without Deleuze's engagement with another equally crucial post-Cartesian thinker, Leibniz. Aside from Spinoza, Scotus, and Descartes, Leibniz is a towering figure in *EPS*, where Deleuze meticulously read Spinoza through him.[14] In the Spinoza-Leibniz encounter, Deleuze found a veritable post-Cartesian alliance against the then-dominant Cartesian thought.

Despite Leibniz being speculatively important, Deleuze had a minor misgiving with him. He wanted to avoid Leibniz's equivocal and analogical philosophy of individuation that establishes a form of harmony or unity of multiplicity (*EPS* 328-9). By way of Spinoza, he revised Leibnizian modal metaphysics by accentuating the importance of the relations among finite modes that in turn *expresses* the unity of substance (but not in the sense of establishing

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[10] Caroline Williams, "Subjectivity Without the Subject': Thinking Beyond the Subject with/through Spinoza', in Beth Lord (ed.), *Spinoza Beyond Philosophy*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2012, pp. 11-27, p. 15. I will return to this later in this essay.

[11] Thomas Nail, for instance, pointed out in his essay on Spinozist immanent causality that there are four formulations of immanence in Deleuze's oeuvre: (1) substantial expression in *EPS;* (2) modal expression in *DR;* (3) substances or multiplicity in *A Thousand Plateaus;* and (4) plane of immanence in *What is Philosophy?* (Nail, 'Expression, Immanence and Constructivism', pp. 203-4.) No doubt, Nail's work provided complete cartography of the concept of immanence (except that he excluded *SPP*, which seems surprising). But I would like to focus on formulations (1) and (2) and claim, more generally, that modal expression has been evident as early as in *EPS* and to which we can regard as the foundation of Deleuze's Spinoza.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Francois Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari: Intersecting Lives*, trans. Deborah Glassman, New York, Columbia University Press, 2010, p. 134.

[14] See Sean Bowden, 'Deleuze's Neo-Leibnizianism, Events and The Logic of Sense's 'Static Ontological Genesis'', *Deleuze Studies*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2010, pp. 301-28.

harmony, to say the least). Reciprocally, while recognising Leibniz's theory of individuation, he construed in Spinoza an exact inversion of the substance that is through "individual things" and not the other way around as conventional Spinozist interpretations hold. In the same interview with Joughin, Deleuze admitted that he needed two things and why he considered himself a Spinozist: the expressive character of particular individuals and the immanence of being. "Leibniz, in a way, goes still further than Spinoza on the first point," said Deleuze, "[b]ut on the second, Spinoza stands alone" (*EPS* 11).

In thinking through modes via Spinoza, Deleuze averted two things: the dogmatic truths of Cartesian philosophy and the "pantheist danger" rooted in the theory of substance (*EPS* 328-9; I will get into this 'danger' shortly). For Deleuze, Cartesian philosophy is innately problematic. It holds that clear and distinct ideas are sufficiently demonstrable by the knowledge of the effects through the sufficient knowledge of the cause (*EPS* 155). Recall that the cogito confirms that sufficiency where the *I*, the thinking being, is primordial and necessary. This only gives us a confused knowledge of the cause for what renders knowledge before the cause or, to put simply, *what precedes the thinking being?* It is not sufficient to know the effects because we *think* of them – we *think* because we have adequate knowledge to demonstrate our thinking of the effects. For Deleuze, as for Spinoza, it is not enough to know the effects by way of *implication* or that we just *implicitly* know them. We must demonstrate how knowledge of an effect depends on knowing its cause (*EPS* 157).

A case in point, for instance, is how humans have come to define certain laws of Nature. We can say that these laws represent our knowledge of Nature. But can they qualify as *adequate* knowledge of Nature? Or can we say that these laws are mere aspects of what Nature could be? Attributing a passage to Ferdinand Alquie, his supervisor on his Spinoza dissertation and a known Cartesian academic, Deleuze notes that Alquie has shown how Descartes tactically devalued Nature with the success of mathematical mechanical science in the first half of the seventeenth-century thus, "taking away from it any virtuality or potentiality, any immanent power, any inherent being" (*EPS* 227). Deleuze then reflects on Alquie's thesis, saying that Cartesian philosophy "seeks Being outside Nature." Here, Deleuze becomes suspicious of the world where the cogito finally takes over and undercuts Nature as such (that is, by supposing *itself* as only Being outside

Nature). Deterring the Cartesian spell, this time construing Spinoza and Leibniz, he weaved an anti-Cartesian reaction that unpacks a long philosophical history, hidden and forbidden, called *expressionism* (*EPS* 322).

A borrowed term from German and French painters, expressionism reacts to the "subtle distribution of impressions over a horizontal plane" that favours vertical force of expression.[15] The force of expression, among others, demonstrates a "system of organised distortion of aspects of reality and life in a climate of terror or horror, of sound and fury."[16] It gives reality a new set of clothes, so to speak – one that no longer subscribes to the weightless beauty of Monet's lilies in the pond instead to the force of anarchy and disorder.

In philosophical terms, Deleuze defines expressionism as one that "implies a rediscovery of Nature and her power and a recreating of logic and ontology: a *new materialism* and a *new formalism*" (*EPS* 321; italics mine). In new materialism, on the one hand, Deleuze tries to replace the cogito's impressive power with the force of expression a la Spinoza at the heart of the individual – in his soul and body, his passions and actions, his cause and effects (*EPS* 327). In new formalism, on the other, he formally construes the individual as an expressive centre (namely, monads and modes). Through new formalism, expressionism suggests a double movement: (1) *expresser-expression* (involved, implicit, wounded up); and (2) *expresser-expressed* (unfolds, explicates, unwind). Accordingly, we can find in Nature a double movement always taking place both in the cause and the effect – that the knowledge of the cause *involves-unfolds, implicates-explicates,* and *wound up-unwind* with the knowledge of the effect. In this vein, Deleuze writes,

> To explicate is to evolve, to involve is to implicate. Yet the two terms are not opposites: they simply mark two aspects of expression. Expression is on the one hand an explication, an unfolding of what expresses itself, the One manifesting in the Many … [i]ts multiple expression … involves Unity. The One remains involved in what expresses it, imprinted in what unfolds it, immanent in whatever manifests it: expression is in this respect an involvement. (*EPS* 16)

In Spinozist language, we can vent it this way: *natura naturans* = *natura naturata.* The knowledge of the active causal creation nonetheless equates to the

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[15] Pierre Macherey, 'The Encounter with Spinoza', in Paul Patton (ed.), *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, Massachusetts and Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1996, p. 141.

[16] Ibid., p. 142.

knowledge of the created things (substance = finite modes). Or, in the classic ontological distinction, One = Many. But this does not give privilege to any end of the spectrum of Nature (creator or the created; substance or finite modes; one or the many). The substance is the expression of the finite modes insofar as modes are the expression of substance.[17] "If Nature is expressive," as Deleuze says, "sign, symbol, and harmony are excluded from [its] true powers…" (*EPS* 233). No wonder Deleuze sporadically framed Nature's true powers throughout his works: "a symphony or natural composition"; an "infinitely transformable and deformable structure, universal rhythm"; a polyphony, assembly, conclave and "companionship and conviviality"; and one that rests on the "formal community of things."[18]

But of course, nowhere in Spinoza's *Ethics*[19] could we find a definitive reference to 'expression' other than in the nominal form, the verb *expressio*, which is not the same sense of Deleuze's planned trajectory in *EPS*.[20] Not to mention, as Pierre Macherey insightfully observes, Deleuze's later "little book" on Spinoza (that is, *SPP*) missed the term 'expressionism' in its crucial glossary, one that deserves greater attention so much so a substantial elaboration congenial to the latter text's provocative Spinozism.

While Deleuze was aware that Spinoza neither defined nor deduced the idea of expression (in *EPS* 19), expressionism, as Macherey says, rather plays a critical role merely as a rhetorical device or a scaffolding essential to constructing a new Spinozist reading.[21] Even its elimination to subsequent text, as it turns out, the idea of expression nevertheless lingers as one that amounts to the overarching

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[17] Or, as Nail called it, "substance expression" (in Nail, 'Expression, Immanence and Constructivism'.)

[18] Deleuze, *SPP*, p. 126, Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel Smith and Michael Greco, London and New York, Verso, 1998, pp. 59, 142, Deleuze, *EPS*, p. 174.

[19] I used in this essay the recently published translation of *Ethics* by George Eliot, aka Marian Evans. Like Deleuze, Evans encountered a different kind of Spinoza. Unlike Deleuze, her Spinoza is "more angel than [a] monster." Evans' translation would have become the first English edition of *Ethics* (completed in 1856) if not for a payment disagreement between George Henry Lewes (Evan's partner) and Henry Bohn. Shadowed by the success of Evans' first novel *Adam Bede*, the *Ethics* never saw the press until its purchase by Yale University in 1942 from Lewes' granddaughter. Evans' edition appeared in 2019, 200 years after her birth. See Baruch Spinoza, *Spinoza's Ethics*, trans. George Eliot, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2020. Henceforth, *E*.

[20] Hughes, *Genesis*, p. 21.

[21] Macherey, 'The Encounter with Spinoza', p. 145.

principle of practical philosophy. This was a minor risk Deleuze could afford. The risk of dropping the term expression conveys a more practical clutch of the term. More so, the risk of making expressionism an overarching principle *in absentia* effectively extends philosophy from the metaphysical into the range of the ontological then into the ethical. For Macherey, expressionism as practical philosophy conceives "reality or nature" to its deepest level and becomes a part of it that allows one's self-expression (as part of nature) understood through action. This is evident, for example, in Hannah Stark's conviction that Deleuzian ethics follows from ontology.[22] However, while ethics seems an interesting take off to further an expressionist standpoint, it is a "troubling territory," especially in its implications and applications.[23] I am inclined to see expressionism at the ontological level, conflating the metaphysical and the practical through the rediscovery of Nature and recreation of its ontology (*EPS* 321). But this is not an invitation to dismantle ethics at all. Rather, it is to see that expressionism (as Deleuze's preliminary take on philosophy), at one point, is ethical and practical but always will be ontological. This stance echoes throughout this paper.

No wonder, in the new expression of Nature, Deleuze, this time, focuses on the ontological power of attributes, bodies, modes, and individuals (thus, 'to make substance turn on finite modes'). Likewise, this is particularly notable in his precis of Spinoza's project in *Practical Philosophy*:

> Everyone knows the *first principle* of Spinoza: one substance for all the attributes. But we also know the *third, fourth,* or *fifth principle*: one Nature for all bodies, one Nature for all individuals, a Nature that is itself an individual varying in an infinite number of ways. (*SPP* 122; italics mine)

As you well know, it is arguable that Deleuze claims the same set of principles, for we need to distinguish where his expositive reading ends and his unfaithful reading begins. Though, it is safe to say that the first four are textbook Spinozist principles. But the fifth –*Nature itself is an individual varying in an infinite number of ways* – is an expressionist theorem par excellence. In hindsight, the fifth principle implies another correlation between substance and modes to which I now turn.

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[22] See Hannah Stark, 'Discord, Monstrosity and Violence', *Angelaki*, vol. 20, no. 4, 2015, pp. 211-24.
[23] Ibid., p. 220.

UNIVOCITY: "SUBSTANCE *TURN AROUND* THE MODES"

The summary of Spinozist philosophy presented by Deleuze is worth looking at. On a closer inspection, Deleuze only presented four principles in total: "one substance for all the attributes," "one Nature for all bodies," "one Nature for all individuals," and "a Nature that is itself an individual varying in an infinite number of ways" (*SPP* 122). One might have noticed that the second principle is missing. I suspect that Deleuze deliberately leaves out the second principle to pave the way for a more radical take on the concept of substance.

If we read this move with a grain of salt, the second principle, in theory, should link the first to the third, fourth, and fifth principles. In other words, the second principle underlines Nature as everything and all – the expression of bodies, individuals, and infinite variations – but the Spinozist substance. Deleuze was clear about this: "What is involved is no longer the affirmation of single substance but rather the laying out of a *common plane of immanence* on which all bodies, all minds, and all individuals are situated" (*SPP* 122; italics to the author). With these in mind, thus, the second principle renders an utterly different treatment of Spinoza's substance – something that he alluded to in passing toward the end of *DR*: "substance *turn around* modes" (*DR* 395; italics mine). This does not mean that Deleuze repudiates the theory of substance entirely. Instead, he simply weakens the substance of its strong ontological hold in Spinozist metaphysics. This does not mean either that he is giving full affirmation to modes' ontological primacy. What he did, more broadly, is a transposal of the substance relative to the modes.

*Turning around* modes entails a double movement: substance retreating behind the modes or modes marching themselves in front. Either way, Deleuze's reading has an explicit turn: the modes now eclipse the substance. Here, Deleuze's unfaithful reading is pounding the core of Spinozist philosophy. With modes gaining traction, Deleuze revives a Scholastic ontology that conceptually encapsulates this turn and puts Spinozism to a litmus test: *univocity.*

Univocity traces its origin in the medieval theologian John Duns Scotus as a contradistinction to the tenets of then-dominant emanative ontology. For Deleuze, Scotus' *Opus Oxoniense* or what he called the "greatest book of pure ontology" underlines being as univocal (*DR* 50). But the univocal here is *neutral* – that the *univocal being* is indifferent to the "distinction between the finite and the

infinite, the singular and the universal, the created and the uncreated" (*ibid.*). Moreover, Deleuze believes that Scotus took the offensive by neutralising being as an abstract concept that more so escapes from then-controversial pantheism and, in turn, conforms to Christianity's strict theological requirement. In doing so, Scotus plummeted into transcendentalism. In his univocity, the distinctions between finite and the infinite or created and the uncreated are said of God alone.[24]

In the previous section, I mentioned that in the Leibniz-Spinoza encounter, Deleuze tracked down expressionism. Delving into the post-Cartesian debate, Deleuze then renewed univocity to differentiate the philosophical expressionism he found between Leibniz and Spinoza. Leibniz believes that what expresses is 'endowed with true unity' with its expression (*Harmony*) or simply expression is unity in relation to the multiplicity and divisibility of what is expressed (*Analogy*).[25] But this *equivocal* expressionism is problematic. It introduces a unity capable of more distinct expression over multiplicity (*EPS* 328). It also necessitates a preestablished Harmony where multiplicity is linked, making harmony purely monadological as monads themselves are primarily harmonic (*TF* 147-48). Following this analogy, harmony is then preconditioned by a "dominant monad" that unites aggregates of monads.[26] Later, Leibniz claims a theological position out of this, positing the existence of God as the sufficient cause of such harmony.[27]

Hence, Leibniz elevated monads to another level of expression. Monads, for example, can be taken as "expressive centres" capable of "express[ing] the whole world." But what Leibniz missed is that each monad only expresses a particular zone of the world, and the world, as Deleuze contends, can only be viewed in this regard as a 'continuum' or 'singularities' of monads (*EPS* 331; *TF* 149). Needless to say, monads can either confusedly or distinctly express the world. Against this, univocity rather captures expression as a double movement that gathers along with a multiplicity of modes which "involves, implicates, winds up or unfolds,

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[24] Widder, 'Univocity of Substance', p. 159.

[25] Deleuze, *EPS*, p. 328, Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold*, trans. Tom Conley, London and New York, Continuum, 2006a, pp. 147-8, Stark, 'Discord, Monstrosity and Violence'. See also. Henceforth, *TF*.

[26] Simon Duffy, 'The Question of Deleuze's New-Leibnizianism', in Rosi Braidotti and Patricia Pisters (eds.), *Revisiting Normativity with Deleuze*, London and New York, Bloomsbury, 2012, p. 57.

[27] Stark, 'Discord, Monstrosity and Violence', p. 212.

explicates, [and] unwinds" (*EPS* 333). With Spinoza in mind, univocity, unlike the Leibnizian monadology, involves a two-fold modal expression that arguably weakens the Spinozist substance: "substance turns on finite modes" and "substance turning around modes" (and, as we will see later, weakens God in the Spinozist theorem *deus, sive natura*).

In this modal expression, Deleuze perceives the importance of Duns Scotus. For Deleuze, the Scotist *formal distinction* complements with univocity (*EPS* 63). It apprehends that each attribute may be taken by itself distinctly with other attributes but at the same time make up a single identical subject (or univocal being, for that matter). Each attribute, in other words, defines itself *formally* in relation to the other as composites of a univocal being. As Deleuze writes, "the univocity of being [in Scotus] itself leads to the univocity of divine attributes … common to God and creatures, as long as it be considered in its *formal reason*" (*EPS* 63). Say, as Deleuze exemplified, there is no distinction of reason between animal and rational, for they are already structured *formally* according to the "conceivable diversity of genus and species" (*EPS* 64). As we can see here, Scotist formal distinction involves a one-way expression from the formal structure of reason or formal perspective of a univocal being, namely, God.  Alternatively, Deleuze read Scotus alongside Spinoza, saying that "formal distinction is definitely a real distinction" (*ibid.*). With real distinction, univocity is not merely an expression from the perspective of the univocal being. Conversely, attributes then express "as it does the different layers of reality that form or constitute a being" (*EPS* 64).[28]

Accordingly, real distinction – a term originally from Descartes – allows the reconciliation between ontological unity of substance and the qualitative plurality of attributes (*EPS* 29, 182). It affirms that while they constitute the essence of a substance, attributes are also quiddative or distinct from one another. Attributes are not distinct *formally* in relation to a univocal being alone but are distinct attributes by themselves (relative to the univocal being). This, in turn, rallies against the Neoplatonist ontology that otherwise treats attributes as emanating from a single absolute substance. "[A]ttributes are not emanations," writes Deleuze, "[t]he unity of substance and the distinction of attributes are correlates

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[28] See also Howie, *Aura of Expressionism*, p. 25.

that together constitute expression" (*EPS* 182). To clarify, real distinction does not replace formal distinction. What it hopes to achieve is to provide formal distinction with a two-way expression between substance and attributes. For example, Justice and Goodness are two of God's attributes in which the plurality in one (attributes) follows from the simplicity of the other (God) (*EPS* 64). Put simply, we can say that the real distinction essentially counterchecks the formal distinction. It ensures that expression does not come from univocal being alone (substance) but from beings in relation (modes). In this sense, Deleuze reconciled the quiddity of attributes and the qualitative composition of substance *univocally.*[29] Or, in sum, "ontologically one, formally diverse" (*EPS* 66).

Consequently, Deleuze saw this as an opportunity to push Spinoza further by vesting a new aspect to the unity of substance and plurality of attributes. "It is formal distinction," he explains, "that provides an absolutely coherent concept of the unity of substance and the plurality of attributes and gives real distinction a new logic" (*EPS* 66). The new logic is obvious:

> For Spinoza … the concept of univocal Being is perfectly determinate, as what is predicated in one and the same sense of substance in itself, and of modes that are in something else. With Spinoza univocity becomes the object of pure affirmation. The same thing, *formaliter,* constitutes the essence of substance and contains the essences of modes. Thus it is the idea of immanent cause that takes over, in Spinoza, from univocity, freeing it from the indifference and neutrality to which it had been confined by the theory of a divine creation. (*EPS* 67)

In this new logic, Spinoza regards univocal being as an object of "pure

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[29] Clearly, this goes against Francois Zourabichvili's position in his book *Deleuze: A Philosophy of the Event* [Francois Zourabichvili, *Deleuze: A Philosophy of the Event together with The Vocabulary of Deleuze*, trans. Kieran Aarons, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2012.] He argues that there is no ontology in Deleuze (36). The French philosopher sees in Scotus' univocity "the most glorious act of ontology" that leads to what Zourabichvili called the 'auto-abolition' of being. "If there is an orientation of the philosophy of Deleuze," he writes, "this is it: *the extinction of the term being and therefore of ontology*" (37). As evidence, he quoted a line from *A Thousand Plateaus:* "substitution of IS by means of AND" and the establishment of the "logic of the AND, overthrow ontology" (37). But Zourabichvili's quote was contentious. He selected the words that serve his argument and deliberately excluded the rest of the sentence. In this section, Deleuze and Guattari discussed how American and English literatures move in the rhizomatic direction between things and–hence, the entire passage – "establish a logic of AND, overthrow ontology, nullify endings and beginnings" (see Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, London and New York, Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 27.). Henceforth, *ATP*

affirmation" (*EPS* 333).[30]  A pure affirmation in the sense that the univocal being is no longer neutral; rather, it is expressive and affirmative of the modes, as modes – by way of formal and real distinction – constitute a shared expression with the univocal being. As we can see, formal and real distinctions reconcile the ontological unity of substance and the plurality of attributes.[31] Not to mention, in doing so, Deleuze was able to go around Scotus' alleged transcendental univocity of being. Conversely, in this setup, all creatures are not predicated and "can be said of God alone" (as Nathan Widder puts it) but equally assumes their distinct attributes in relation to a univocal being. In keeping up with Spinoza, Deleuze called this ontological alternative, *immanence.*

Immanence provides a new philosophical expression that frees the subject and attributes in a hierarchical relation that privileges one over the other. On this concept, Deleuze's Spinoza distinguishes *itself* from its post-Cartesian contemporary, Leibniz. Deleuzian univocity contradicts the harmony preestablished by analogous relations (say of one monad to the other), favouring a more dynamic field (the plane of immanence). In this case, immanence neither privileges nor neutralises the beings in relation but considers their specific identities and intensities all the more their shared expression with the univocal being (recall the third, fourth, and fifth principles of Spinozist philosophy earlier in this section).

However, Deleuze was aware of the deeply entrenched problem in expressionism that since then plagues Spinozist philosophy – the danger of pantheism (*EPS* 333). He was aware, too, that we cannot go around more so repudiate pantheism in Spinoza (for pantheism, arguably, was and remains a centralising concept in his thought). What Deleuze did, at most, is to appeal to the concept outside the Spinozist system implicit in pantheism. Well, there is univocity. But this time, Deleuze tweaked the concept – utilising formal and real distinctions – to free modes from their analogous relation with an indifferent Being hence, affirming, in turn, their plurality, diversity, and difference. Deleuze has arrived at a different kind of pantheism in coming to terms with immanence

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[30] Later in *LS,* Deleuze made a soft turn of this view, upholding the original meaning of Scotist univocity in light of his theory of nonsense: "[It is] neither active nor passive, univocal being is neutral … [a] position in the void of all events in one, an expression in the *nonsense of all senses* in one" (Deleuze, *LS*, p. 186.).

[31] Duffy, *Logic of Expression*, pp. 98, 100, 82.

and its dangers.

In this pantheism, Deleuze's Spinoza no longer subscribes to the analogous relation between univocal being and modes (as Leibniz did, which, nonetheless, made me think that he is more pantheist than Spinoza!). Instead, it induces a sense of sameness in a unique take without letting go of the latter's qualitative modalities, *vis-à-vis* their individual differences. Daniel W. Smith claims that Deleuze's thesis in *DR* maintains that its only univocity can give us a collective sense of Being through a play of *individuating difference* within beings.[32] For Widder, it is also on the same individual difference – not only of substance, attributes and modes – where Spinozist pantheism rests.[33] In short, in extension it means that Spinozist metaphysics is no longer about the ontological priority of God or Nature for Deleuze. Instead, it boasts an ontological difference as collective expression: Nature or God is a univocal expression of modes or beings.[34] But despite this, the cornerstone equation of the pantheist charge remains: what about God or Nature? How can we go around to their ontological singularity? How can we posit their immanence without invoking their absolute equation? In this controversial equation, I propose another turning point in Deleuze's reading.

## ONTOLOGY OF SENSE: "GOD (OR NATURE)"

In this section, I return to the controversial Spinozist equation "God (or Nature)" by way of Deleuze. Deleuze concluded the third chapter of *EPS* with a strange Spinozist and partly Scotist axiom that in some way summarises the whole theory of expressionism and univocity: "God is said to be the cause of all things *in the very sense* (*eo sensu*) that he is said to be the cause of himself" (*EPS* 67).[35] It is not by chance that Deleuze emphasised the phrase "in the very sense." For *eo sensu* mediates two co-equal registers: the causality of all things through God, and his

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[32] Smith, *Essays on Deleuze*, p. 40.

[33] Widder, 'Univocity of Substance', p. 160.

[34] To quote the concluding sentence of *DR:* "A single and same voice for the whole thousand-voiced multiple, a single and same Ocean for all the drops, a single clamour of Being for all beings: on condition that each being, each drop and each voice has reached the state of excess – on other words, the difference which displaces and disguises them and, in turning upon its mobile cusp, causes them to return" (Deleuze, *DR*, p. 396.)

[35] See also Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands: And Other Texts, 1953--1974*, trans. Michael Taormina, Semiotext(e), 2004, p. 151. Henceforth, *DI.*

self-causing existence. Accordingly, it also echoes two aspects of univocity in Deleuze's reading[36]: there is a *univocity of cause* ("God is the cause of all things *in the very sense* as he is the cause of himself"), and there is a *univocity of attributes* ("attributes are said in one and the same sense of God and his creatures") (*EPS* 103).[37] Immanence is then expressed at the crossroad of these univocities (*EPS* 165).

For Deleuze, Nature is immanent: "Nature at once comprises and contains everything while being explicated and implicated in each thing" (*EPS* 17). He adds: "Attributes involve and explicate substance, which in turn comprises all attributes." We have seen thus that immanence chiefly attends to the univocity of attributes and less to the univocity of cause. Not only in the above passage but also this was evident in Deleuze's passive treatment of the Spinozist substance on several occasions: "substance turn[s] on finite modes" (in *EPS*); "substance turning around modes" and "Substance must itself be said of the modes and only of the modes" (in *DR*). Same can be said in his review of Martial Gueroult's *Spinoza* where Deleuze, again, appealed to a different kind of Spinozism, prefiguring a "genealogy of substance itself" and not merely the genesis of modes from the substance. In tracing the substance from the modes, the genealogy establishes "diverse realities of one same being" (*DI* 150). Contextualising the Spinozist God anew – putting expressionism and univocity into perspective – we can say then that God as substance can be thought *only* in the very sense of the modes, that is, through the immanence of Nature. Put in another way, framing the précis of the concept of immanence: the univocity of cause (God) is said in the very sense of the univocity of attributes (Nature). Thus – *Deus eo sensu natura* or God in the very sense of Nature – completes Deleuze's conceptual portraiture of Spinoza.

*God in the very sense of Nature* simply means that God is immanent to Nature.

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[36] In *LS*, Deleuze claims that as a general rule, it is only by denying or suppressing their differences that two things are simultaneously affirmed. We can say that the disjunction 'or' in "God (or Nature)" exhibits this simultaneity in terms of their identical relation or *through identity*. On the other hand, two things can be simultaneously affirmed through their difference in God *in the very sense* of Nature. *In the very sense* hints that God and Nature are two utterly different registers in which God can only make sense through Nature, and Nature, in turn, bears a difference or divergence from God. While we can say that God is affirmed in the very sense of Nature, we cannot say the reversal that is Nature is affirmed in the very sense of God. See Deleuze, *LS*, p. 178.

[37] Also in Smith, *Essays on Deleuze*, p. 37.

By immanence, this time easing the pantheist imputation, I refer not to their singularity or sameness (or absolute immanence in effect) but rather to the point of distinction between their speculative registers. For instance, in reading Spinoza's *deus, sive natura* – God (or Nature) – the disjunction *sive* (or) denotes a weak disjunction that nonetheless *inclusively* demonstrates God that which is identical or equal to Nature (God = Nature). Alternatively, positing *in the very sense* indicates a strong or *exclusive* disjunction (or distinction) between the two concepts. In other words, if in *deus, sive natura* we posit God as identical to Nature, in *deus eo sensu natura,* God and Nature are two distinct entities where God is *only* thought in the very sense of Nature, not to the point of being Nature itself.[38] Precisely, their point of distinction rests in the perspective from which they make sense: for God, from his self-causing existence only demonstrable through Nature; and for Nature, from which God is immanent (but this does not presuppose a hierarchy between God and Nature as we will see later). Noting this distinction, Deleuze mobilized what Nature could mean and how God benefits from such: "Substance already expresses itself in the attributes that constitute *natura naturans,* but attributes in their turn express themselves in modes which constitute *natura naturata*" (*EPS* 100). In the vein of *natura naturans* (naturing nature) and *natura naturata* (natured nature), Deleuze maintains that Naturalism, in this case,

> is what satisfies the three forms of univocity: the *univocity of attributes*, where the attributes in the same form constitute the essence of God as naturing nature and contain the essences of modes as natured nature; the *univocity of the cause,* where the cause of all things is affirmed of God as the genesis of natured nature, in the same sense that he is the cause of himself, as the genealogy of naturing nature; the *univocity of modality*, where necessity qualifies both the order of natured nature and the organisation of naturing nature. (*SPP* 92-3; italics mine)

Recall that *EPS* puts forward double univocities: univocity of cause and univocity of attributes. Twenty years later, in *SPP,* Deleuze added a seemingly crucial mediator between these univocities: the univocity of modality. If anything, the univocity of modality reconciles the univocity of attributes and univocity of cause, "the order of natured nature and the organisation of naturing nature,"

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[38] Spinoza proposed in *Ethics* that "God is the *immanent* and not the *transient* cause of all things" (*E*, 1, Prop XVIII). That everything must be conceived in relation to God as he is the cause of all things and that which causing himself. Not to mention, Spinoza demonstrates that there is no substance besides God (*E*, 1, Prop. XIV), so, in effect, there is no thing which in itself outside God (*E*, 1, Prop XVIII, Dem.)

respectively. It means then that Deleuze was consistent in framing an immanent Nature at the crossroad of expressionism and univocity attentive to the modes. Not for nothing that the two *turns* in Deleuze's reading illustrate this point: (1) substance *turns on* finite modes and (2) substance *turning around* modes. As Deleuze puts it, *natura naturans* (substance and cause) and *natura naturata* (mode and effect) are mutually immanent, namely, one resonates inside the other (*SPP* 92).[39] This is Deleuze's Nature, broadly conceived.

More than anything, in accentuating these two-fold aspects of Nature, Deleuze tendered a great deal of services to Spinoza, whose *Ethics* initially (and essentially) undercuts Nature with God, thus making God "more capable of expressing the immanence of the naturata and the naturans" (*SPP* 111).[40] In fact, the parenthetical placement of Nature in the formula "God (or Nature)" syntactically dismisses Nature as mere disjunct or, to a certain extent, second to God.[41] On the other hand, Deleuze unwinds this short path Spinoza took in the first part of *Ethics* to arrive at God "as quickly as possible" (God = substance; see *E*, 1, Def. 6) by way of rediscovering or returning to Nature as a distinct concept once and for all. On this return to Nature, I uncovered Deleuze's formal divergence from Spinoza.

For Deleuze, philosophical expressionism underscores not the substantial unity of God and Nature (as Spinoza claims) rather their expression *in the same sense* to one another in light of modes that actively expresses them in turn (thus,

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[39] See also Smith, *Essays on Deleuze*, p. 34.

[40] There was even a mention that some of Spinoza's friends considered removing 'or Nature' in the widely accessible Dutch version of the *Ethics* as it chiefly highlights his pantheism. Pierre Bayle's popular interpretation intensified such an all-too-radical understanding of Spinoza in *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1897), twenty years after Spinoza's death. For Bayle, Spinoza collapses "the distinction between God and Nature," leading to a brand of atheism on the top of his renegade pantheism (see Dimitris Vardoulakis, 'Spinoza's Empty Law: The Possibility of Political Theology', in Beth Lord (ed.), *Spinoza Beyond Philosophy*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2012, p. xii.). Not to mention, Marian Evans' translation of *Ethics*, uses parentheses around 'or Nature' (which in no way has appeared to any English translation). Clare Carlisle notes that Evans did this, perhaps, to lessen the impact of Spinoza's *deus seu natura* slightly (Clare Carlisle, 'George Eliot's Spinoza: An Introduction', in Clare Carlisle (ed.), *Spinoza's Ethics*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2020, p. 226.).

[41] Or as Duffy pointed out: "It is in the attributes that the univocal character of being is absolutely common to substance and to modes, such that modes implicate the same attributes that constitute the essence of a substance and these same attributes contain all the essence of modes" (Duffy, *Logic of Expression*, p. 111.).

the univocity of modality: the triad of God – Mode – Nature). In *Logic of Sense,* Deleuze explains that the univocity of Being posits that "beings are multiple and different" and signifies that "Being is Voice" which is said in "one and the same sense of everything which it is said" (*LS* 185; see also *DR* 45). Following this, in effect, modes *make sense* of what God and Nature identically (and mutually) share, namely the third term in relation that ascertains one does not slide into or over the other (such as in emanative ontology), or dissolve into a metaphysical reality afforded with speculative privilege (say, in post-Cartesian and post-Kantian systems).

Though there might still be a unity of substance, it is devoid of theological meaning, thanks to expressionism and univocity. Theoretically, they both exposed the fragility of the Spinozist substance: expressionism insists that substance turns on finite modes while univocity maintains substance turning around modes. In the same light, Caroline Williams reads the "non-theological Substance" as a perpetual expression of infinite forms of being (namely, attributes) to which "there is no loss of power" between them. Substance, she adds, is "an immanent structure" through which finite being is constituted.[42] We can then say that in "God *in the very sense* of Nature," God, essentially perceived as a once-powerful substance, retreats *in* Nature. Contrary to Williams and relative to the weak substance, Nature is the immanent structure where all finite modes or beings are constituted. Taking Being for Nature, "the essential in univocity," Deleuze contends in *DR,* "is not that Being is said in a single same sense, but that it is said, in a single and same sense, *of* all its individuating differences or intrinsic modalities" (*DR* 46). Should God be conceivable, the conceivability lies in the single and same sense of differences and modalities in Nature.

Thus, this is how I construe the theorem "God (or Nature)" in light of Deleuze: God in the single same sense as Nature (*univocity of causality*) which induces attributes in the single and same sense as modes (*univocity of attributes*) and modes in the single same sense as substance (*univocity of modality*). Not only to read Spinoza in a new light, but this register also avoids Deleuze being read as an essentialist metaphysician, even more, an advocate of the ontology of essence (pace Zourabichvili; see n.28 of this paper). Quite the contrary. Deleuze thinks

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[42] Williams, 'Subjectivity Without the Subject', p. 15.

of an alternative ontology.

Widder argues that Deleuze's use of Spinoza contra Hegel is an interpretive strategy that broadly aims to reconstruct figures in the history of philosophy in light of the contemporary milieu.[43] From this strategy, Deleuze read around the problem of expression, turning expression into an ontology, *the ontology of sense.* Widder defines the ontology of sense as one that denies appearances and essences any foundational status and holds that being is neither of these instead an expression, a sense.[44] In short, as Deleuze writes, "what is expressed is sense" (*EPS* 335). As Wilder claims:

> The concept of sense, which recurs throughout Deleuze's early works, relates to a unity of differences that holds together traditional oppositions between the universal and individual material and conceptual, subject and object, etc., in which what is expressed in sense has no existence outside its expression.[45]

In an earlier work, Widder explains the ontology further:

> But an ontology of sense refuses this foundational division too: being is neither distinct from nor prior to its expression, nor is it expressed by something or someone else; rather, being is immediately expressive and, indeed, it is nothing but its expression.[46]

Considering sense as what expresses being, Widder extends this analogy to the constitution of the Absolute. He says that Deleuze traces the concept of sense to Jean Hyppolite, his Hegelian mentor and friend, who holds that Hegel thinks of the Absolute as an "immanent ontological sense by way of speculative contradiction."[47] But with expression in mind, Deleuze was able to turn around this constitution by deploying Spinoza contra Hegel and proffering an alternative version of the post-Kantian Absolute.

In his review of Hyppolite's *Logique et existence,* Deleuze claims that the central thesis of the book is this: "Philosophy must be ontology, it cannot be anything else; but there is no ontology of essence, there is only an ontology of sense" (Hyppolite qtd. in *DI* 15). For Deleuze, Hyppolite extracted a "great proposition"

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[43] Widder, 'Univocity of Substance', p. 152.

[44] Ibid., pp. 22-3.

[45] Ibid., p. 152.

[46] Nathan Widder, *Political Theory after Deleuze*, London and New York, Continuum, 2012, pp. 24-5.

[47] Widder, 'Univocity of Substance', p. 152.

out of Hegel's *Logic*. He transformed metaphysics into a "logic of sense" by denying a "second world" other than or outside the present. If there is nothing outside the world, as Deleuze says, proper to his anti-Hegelianism, "[a]bsolute knowledge … *is here*" (*DI* 17). Surprisingly, Deleuze evidenced this in the "Third Series of Proposition" in *LS,* saying that sense merely inheres or subsists (*LS* 21). Somehow Hyppolite and Deleuze would converge beyond their disputation: "Behind the curtain there is nothing to see…the secret is that there is no secret" (*DI* 16).[48]

This leaves us then, as Deleuze would agree, with an ontology that "reintroduces finitude" to the Absolute where "Being is only sense" (*DI* 18). In his 1980 Spinoza seminar – in search of an ontology in Spinoza – Deleuze posed the question, "What else is there than Being?" to which he answered, "Being is expressed of, that is, be-ing (*l'etant*), the existent."[49] In short, the ontology he found no longer subscribes to the Being as substance instead to its sense and expression as the existent (being or finite modes) from "the viewpoint of ontology itself."[50] I can see why Deleuze insists that "be-ing is not substance" despite being a scandalous stance for Descartes and all Christian thought.[51] The only escape he can offer to Spinoza is to present Spinozism minus the substance. Oddly enough, Spinoza, in his great escape, produced a philosophy (nay, an ontology) that, in his words, brings a "philosophical danger: pantheism or immanence" (*EPS* 322). But it is only in the vein of this danger that we recover Nature's "own specific depth" (*ibid.*)

Overall, we can thus say that *God in the very sense of Nature* is a sheer return to

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[48] Before appearing in *DI,* Deleuze's review of Hyppolite's book appeared in Gilles Deleuze, 'Review of Jean Hyppolite, Logique et Existence', in Leonard and Amit Sen Lawlor (ed.), *Jean Hyppolite's Logic and Existence*, Albany, State University of New York, 1997.

[49] Gilles Deleuze, 'Spinoza: The Velocities of Thought, Seminar at the University of Paris, Vincennes-St. Denis, 1980-1981, Lecture 2', *The Deleuze Seminars*, 1980, pp. 7-8.

[50] Veronique Bergen carefully threaded an 'ontological montage' in Deleuze's philosophy in her re-construction of Deleuzian thought. Deleuze's ontology, arguably, follows from Kantian critique and the detonation of its strong dualism between noumenon and phenomenon. In doing so, Deleuze coalesces ontology and critique to ascent into a new understanding of Being by way of univocity (Spinoza) and becoming (Nietzsche). See Veronique Bergen, 'Deleuze and the Question of Ontology', in Constantin Boundas (ed.), *Gilles Deleuze: The Intensive Reduction*, London and New York, Continuum, 2009, pp. 7-22, pp. 8, 10.

[51] Deleuze, 'Velocities', p. 8.

Nature itself. And by Nature, it preconditions a return to its immanence, the knowledge of its attributes and modes (Spinoza) which expresses or makes sense of its Being (Deleuze). Deleuze has a name for this: the "flirtation with immanence" – the immanence of image in the mirror, the tree in the seed.[52] Would it be too much to ask for God to flirt with immanence? Would it be too much to see the same God in the very sense of Nature? I think not. Here lies the rub of Deleuze's Spinoza.

CONCLUSION

At times, I wonder, when Deleuze was reading Spinoza (or his selected philosophical heroes), was he *really* unfaithful? Did he read him in good faith? Or, did he engage his works to benefit a larger speculative goal in mind? Can we, therefore, judge a philosophical reading by the merits of its scholarly commitment? Or can we read a thinker to make her alive? By making her alive, I mean to write something that will get her attention, and when she takes the bait, you will find yourself involved in a deep conversation that will eventually end up with you leading the charge.

Deleuze's two-fold advice in *Negotiations* never gets old: approach the philosopher from behind and use his (Deleuze's) philosophy as a toolbox. The present article, with high hopes, aimed at utilising this advice in rethinking Deleuze's Spinoza. But we landed unexpectedly on a different constellation: to Deleuze himself. We found Deleuze alone, despite the promise made earlier in the essay to discover Deleuze's Spinoza. In our approach, we explored three turning points evident in Deleuze's reading: (1) substance *turn on* the finite modes; (2) substance *turn around* modes; and (3) God *in the very sense* of Nature. I read each point in light of an ensemble of Deleuzian concepts: expressionism, univocity, and sense, respectively. While (1) and (2) will unmistakeably qualify as Spinozist (with substance and modes as two operating concepts hard to fault not from Spinoza's), the (3) is concealed, more hidden or crypto-Deleuzian, if you will. On the latter, I found Deleuze no longer speaking Spinoza's language but distinctly his.

In the final analysis, although the first two turning points seem to follow Spinoza's thought, Deleuze altered things slightly to intensify his Spinozist

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[52] Gilles Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, California, Semiotexte, 2007, p. 267.

reading. Of particular thing to note is how Deleuze weakened the substance in favour of the modes namely on two registers: substance *turns on* the finite modes (either read as transformation or submission); and substance *turn around* modes (that is, to go behind or the latter marching at the front). In both currents, Deleuze zooms in from substance to mode. In effect, the weakening of substance entails the immanence of Nature (for what is subsisting in Nature if not its attributes). On this philosophical conviction, Deleuze was able to avert the pantheistic danger that has since cursed Spinoza: to posit God only in the very sense of Nature. There, Deleuze's Spinozism nay his own pantheism stands – it is only in and through Nature, through its attributes and modes, that God makes sense. True to his infidelity, Deleuze presented Spinoza minus the substance, and so too the concept of Nature minus Spinoza.

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