

Substance Abuse: Spinoza contra Deleuze

LANDON FRIM

Florida Gulf Coast University

HARRISON FLUSS

St. John's University

ABSTRACT: This paper will set out in plain language the basic ontology of “Deleuze’s Spinoza”; it will then critically examine whether such a Spinoza has, or indeed could have, ever truly existed. In this, it will be shown that Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza involves the imposition of three interlocking, formal principles. These are (1) Necessitarianism, (2) Immanence, and (3) Univocity. The uncovering of Deleuze’s use of these three principles, how they relate to one another, and what they jointly imply in terms of ontology, will occupy Part 1 of this paper. The critique of these principles from a Spinozist perspective, i.e., that their use by Deleuze is incompatible with Spinoza’s own metaphysics, will occupy Part 2 of this paper.

INTRODUCTION

Despite living in exile and infamy, Spinoza is today one of the most celebrated philosophers. Atheists and pantheists, humanists and anti-humanists, materialists and idealists alike each have their notable representatives who claim Spinoza as their own. Perhaps most surprising is that Spinoza, the mechanistic-determinist, is also held up as a touchstone within certain quarters of French, continental philosophy.¹ In the revolutionary year of 1968, the philosopher Gilles Deleuze invoked *his* version of Spinoza as a foil to what he saw as the hegemonic rule of Hegelian dialectics.² As against the supposedly negative and hierarchical method of Hegel, Deleuze championed a Spinoza whose dynamic ontology was one of pure positivity and immanence. This paper will set out in plain language

the basic ontology of Deleuze's Spinoza; it will then critically examine whether such a Spinoza has, or indeed could have ever, truly existed.

First, a clarificatory note about the scope of this project: This paper will not merely critique Deleuze for his "eccentric" reading of Spinoza, such as his focus on the concept of "expression," or his frequent invocation of the late scholastics (neither of which were of central concern to Spinoza himself).³ Neither will this paper give Deleuze a "free pass" as simply a poetic interpreter of Spinoza, unconcerned with the truth content of the latter's texts. For Deleuze, it must be said, was an extremely serious and meticulous—if at times highly selective—reader of Spinoza. What's more, he was well aware that his historical readings were, in general, in non-conformity to the traditional academic treatments of the great philosophers. He freely admitted that his interpretations engaged in a kind of philosophical "buggery" (*enculage*). Yet it is important to understand what he meant by this; Deleuze insisted that his readings of a historic philosopher were to be that philosopher's "own child, because the author had to actually say" all that Deleuze had him saying. He did not deny that this "child was bound to be monstrous too" but such a monstrosity was to be produced from a very meticulous reconstruction of the author's own words.⁴ Put otherwise, Deleuze's claim was that his heretical readings were already inherent, and not alien, to the text itself. The purpose of this paper is to uncover whether this is, in fact, true in the case of Deleuze's reading of Spinoza.

The overall goal of Deleuze's reading of Spinoza is to recast the latter as the preeminent philosopher of immanence; indeed he asserts an immanence that is so thoroughgoing that it abolishes all hierarchical order whatsoever and so ushers in a pluralist ontology that is, to use Deleuze's celebrated phrase, "the very vertigo of philosophy."⁵ To accomplish this, Deleuze not only deploys a detailed reading of Spinoza's central texts, but also imposes on these texts a series of interlocking formal principles. These are (1) Necessitarianism, (2) Immanence itself, and (3) Univocity.⁶ The uncovering of Deleuze's use of these three principles, how they relate to one another, and what they jointly imply in terms of ontology, will occupy Part 1 of this paper. The critique of these principles from a Spinozist perspective, i.e., that their use by Deleuze is incompatible with Spinoza's own metaphysics, will occupy Part 2 of this paper. In other words, Deleuze will be shown to fail by his own lights, insofar as he cannot, in fact, make Spinoza say all that he wants him to say. This conceptual demonstration is the major innovation of the present work.⁷

Finally, throughout, it will be seen that Deleuze's theses, and specifically the ways he deploys these principles, are not entirely idiosyncratic to himself. They rather relate to, mirror, and sometimes anticipate similar moves within so-called mainstream Spinoza scholarship. The import of this is that if one wishes to avoid the pluralistic extreme of Deleuze's interpretation of Spinoza, then one should

first be wary of some of the more conventional-sounding principles that he consistently employs.

PART 1: DELEUZE'S *EXPRESSIONISM IN PHILOSOPHY*

Deleuze begins his reading of Spinoza conventionally enough. In his exposition of the central concept of "expression," for which his book on Spinoza's metaphysics is named, he asserts that "Substance is what expresses itself," "Essence is what is expressed," and "Attributes are the expressions."⁸ At first glance, this appears to conform to Spinoza's claim that God, being the absolutely infinite substance, has an "infinity of attributes, of which each one *expresses* an eternal and infinite essence."⁹ Relatedly, Deleuze, (contra "Hegelian" commentators like Wolfson and Joachim) adopts an "objectivist" interpretation of the attributes themselves.¹⁰ That is, the attributes do express the actual essence of God, rather than simply being "read into" God by a finite human subjectivity. This is exegetically apt since, as numerous commentators have long pointed out, it is the *intellect* (and not the imagination) which perceives the attributes, a key distinction within Spinoza's epistemology.¹¹ Indeed, we may further assert that God is *nothing* apart from the attributes, since these constitute God's very essence, and for Spinoza an entity is fully convertible with its essence.¹²

However, from these seemingly orthodox premises we begin to perceive the radical direction of Deleuze's reading of Spinoza. For the objective reality of the attributes correlates to a particular sort of distinction, namely, "real distinction." It should be noted that "real distinction" is first and foremost a technical term, important both for Cartesian philosophy and its intellectual progeny. As Descartes explains in the Fourth Replies: "[In] establishing a real distinction it is sufficient that two things can be understood as 'complete' and that each one can be understood apart from the other."¹³ In Spinoza's ontology, the attributes each express the actual essence of God, and so are each contemporaneous with God, one attribute not being limited or produced by any another. The relationship between attributes, then, must be one of total conceptual independence, or "real distinction."¹⁴

The upshot of all this is that God, that substance containing infinite attributes, must be inherently plural. For each of God's infinite attributes, which again are objective expressions of God's infinite essence, would have to exist in God as conceptually independent from one another. More than this, the plurality inherent in God must be of a radically qualitative, rather than a merely quantitative sort. For, as Deleuze asserts, two "really distinct" entities cannot be considered side by side as in a quantitative series, or merely as two species within the same genera. Such distinctions would be merely relative, numerical, and modal, but not "real" in the technical sense of the word. Hence, Deleuze makes the provocative statement that, although there is but one substance in terms of quantity, there is

“one substance per attribute from the viewpoint of quality.”¹⁵ Put otherwise, for Deleuze, each attribute of God is (qualitatively speaking) its own substance. For “real distinction” expresses qualitative “difference within being” understood as the real multiplicity of truly independent, objective, and *sui generis* attributes.¹⁶

Deleuze’s project vis-à-vis Spinoza is to show that this qualitative plurality inherent in God in turn implies a quantitative multiplicity in the world at large. The differences and changes we see in the created world (*Natura naturata*) are not simply the mechanical effects of previous events; they are rather predicated upon a deeper dynamism and flux, inherent in the very ground of being itself (*Natura naturans*). While the Cartesian notion of “accident” could preserve a sovereign God above and beyond his mechanically changing creation, Deleuze insists that Spinoza’s ontology abolishes all such accident.¹⁷ Instead, God is the sole, sufficient cause of all genuine difference in the world, and conversely, is entirely bound to (and so affected by) said differences. As such, this ontology is one where difference is primary, and indeed, sustains all identity. Identity, for its part, is nothing above and beyond its inherent differences. To use Deleuze’s famous phrase “pluralism = monism.”¹⁸ It is a reading of Spinoza’s metaphysics which is both shocking for its apparent eccentricity, while enticing for its ostensible grounding in Spinoza’s own words. Yet, again, none of Deleuze’s grand thesis follows without recourse to the three aforementioned principles of “Necessitarianism,” “Immanence,” and “Univocity” to which he continuously refers.

i) Necessitarianism

In *Expressionism*, Deleuze first invokes the principle of “necessitarianism” in connection to the attributes. This pivotal moment of Deleuze’s argument deserves to be quoted at some length:

Attributes are for Spinoza dynamic and active forms. . . . [A]ttributes are no longer attributed, but are in some sense “attributive.” Each attribute expresses an essence, and attributes it to substance. All the attributed essences coalesce in the substance of which they are the essence. As long as we conceive the attribute as something attributed, we thereby conceive a substance of the same species or genus; such a substance then has in itself only a possible existence, since it is dependent on the goodwill of a transcendent God to give it an existence conforming to the attribute through which we know it. On the other hand, as soon as we posit the attribute as “attributive” we conceive it as attributing its essence . . . to necessarily existing substance. The attribute refers his essence to an immanent God who is the principle and the result of a metaphysical necessity. Attributes are thus *Words* in Spinoza, with expressive value: they are dynamic, no longer attributed to varying substances, but attributing something to a unique substance.¹⁹

In this passage, we notice several things: First, Deleuze entirely reverses the common reading of Spinoza's metaphysics. Namely, the attributes are here read as primary, and God as merely the byproduct or result of their correlation. This is in contrast to a self-caused substance which has an infinity of attributes as a consequence of its absolutely infinite nature. As such, Deleuze here speaks in terms of the attributes "coalescing," or sometimes as "relating" to one another, so as to form substance.²⁰ Second, and connected to this, the attributes are no longer spoken of as passive qualities. Instead of being the static adjectives of a single God, derived from God's nature, the attributes are fully active. They are recast as dynamic "Names" or even verbs, and positively lend or "attribute" *their own* independent essences to God.²¹ Third, as a consequence of the above, we see that God is himself plural since he is nothing without the objective and mutually irreducible attributes which actively express his own essence.

Importantly, this rereading of the attribute-substance relationship is not capricious on Deleuze's part. Rather, it follows from Deleuze's affirmation of necessitarianism, and is also a conscious reply to the standard Hegelian criticisms of Spinoza's system. These Hegelian objections tend to assert that there can be *no reason* why one attribute as opposed to another should be derived from God, who is after all a unitary substance. For example, that God is extended appears arbitrary, as opposed to God possessing any number of other particular attributes. Thus, the objection goes, the status of the attributes must indeed be accidental, or merely subjective from the point of view of our finite intellects.

In Deleuze's version of Spinoza, we *begin* with the constituting attributes themselves, not God or substance; necessity then demands that each of these attributes positively (and uniquely) refer their essence to God. For necessity relates to an active, expressive God who "speaks" and has the attributes as his "divine names," i.e., expressions.²² A parallel to this can readily be found in contemporary Spinoza commentators who likewise read the first fourteen proofs of Spinoza's *Ethics* as involving the coalescence of all possible attributes within a single substance by virtue of the PSR (i.e., a formal principle of necessity).²³ Hence, as far as Deleuze is concerned, there is truly no problem of an arbitrary derivation of multiple distinct attributes from a God who is "one." For, qualitatively, God is not "one" to begin with.

Throughout *Expressionism in Philosophy*, "expression," therefore, has the force of "causal necessity." For a thing only ever expresses what is *essential* to it, i.e., that which necessarily and actively constitutes its own nature. This is distinguished from its accidents being merely observed extrinsically, or derived contingently from an outside observer.

It should be noted, however, that the principle of "necessity" not only determines the relationship of substance to its attributes, but also the production of the finite modes as well. One may entertain the question, posed by some Hegelian

critics of Spinoza and theists alike, as to why God should produce anything at all? Why is there a creation?²⁴ Of course, the common theistic answer is precluded in Spinozism, namely, that God produces for the sake of his glory, or human worship, or for some other “end” that is better than had there been no creation at all. For Spinoza’s absolutely infinite, impersonal God lacks nothing, and so desires nothing.²⁵ Instead, God produces the finite modes, “creation” as it were, out of sheer, inner necessity.

To use Deleuze’s terminology, whereas in the “first triad” *God* expresses his *essence* in the *attributes*, this event is sufficient to reproduce itself in a “second triad.” This is where the *attributes* express *their essences* in their respective *modifications*.²⁶ Crucially, this chain of expression, from God, to attribute, to finite modes, is cast as an unbroken “vertical” movement, entirely marked by sheer necessity. “If God expresses himself in himself, the universe can only be a second degree of expression.”²⁷

In “understanding himself necessarily, [God] acts necessarily.” And while “God produces as he exists; necessarily existing, he necessarily produces.” This is the opposite of producing finite things based on their mere “possibility,” since “God does not conceive in his understanding *possibilities*, but understands the necessity of his own nature.”²⁸ Expression is thus tied to necessity precisely because what is expressed is always *essence*. Again, for Deleuze, this is all in contradistinction to the specifically Cartesian concept of accident which allows for a sovereign God to remain unaffected by the flux and contingency of his finite creation, considered “un-essential” to the Creator Himself.

ii) Immanence

Nonetheless if God is not a transient cause of accidental things, he likewise cannot be a transcendent cause either. As opposed to the transcendent model of creation, Deleuze affirms a God that “expresses himself in himself.”²⁹ For precisely this reason, then, the notion of “necessity” also implies a second principle of “immanence.” For if what is expressed is the very essence of a thing, then the “expressions” themselves will always be related to the “thing expressing itself,” not only necessarily, but also with strict inherence as well. When it comes to illustrating this idea of inherence, one of Spinoza’s best known analogies is to the *propria* of a circle (i.e., its 360 degrees) which necessarily follow from the figure’s essence, but also physically *inhere* within the circle itself.³⁰

Indeed, from a purely exegetical point of view, Deleuze is rather explicit about his claim that “necessity” implies “immanence.” As he says, expression (since it is marked by necessity), ends up “proceeding all the way to the immanence it implies.”³¹ Compared with more traditional accounts of God, we see the pantheistic “danger” that necessitarian expression entails, namely, a Creator who is inextricably, indeed “essentially,” bound to his own, immanent creation. It is not

very surprising, then, that thoroughgoing necessity was perennially suppressed by theistic religion.³² Of course, this is a “danger” that Deleuze himself wholeheartedly embraces.

Tellingly, Deleuze compares Spinoza’s concept of immanence to that of Leibniz, wherein each *monad* is an “expression of the world,” but that the world has no existence outside the monads.³³ Hence, according to Deleuze, there is an “equality of being” between God as cause and the world as effect. There can thus be no hierarchy between Creator and creation, and so immanence is distinguished from all forms of theistic creation, and even from all forms of “emanation,” as in the Neoplatonic tradition.³⁴

And the cause appears everywhere as equally close: there is no remote causation. Beings are not defined by their rank in a hierarchy, are not more or less remote from the One, but each depends directly on God, participating in the equality of being, receiving immediately all that it is by its essence fitted to receive, irrespective of any proximity or remoteness.³⁵

Again, the force of this thesis of “immanence” is by virtue of it proceeding from the first principle of “necessitarianism.” Specifically, the nature of necessary expression (that is, of a thing’s own essence) is such that expression is, in some sense, reciprocal. Just as creation is always immanent to God, the inverse for Deleuze is also true. There is a mutual relationship here, for which Deleuze uses the scholastic terms of “*complicare*” and “*explicare*.”³⁶ Substance is fully “explicated” in its attributes, which in turn, are all “complicated” within substance. Hence, Deleuze says, “The essence of a substance has no existence outside the attributes that express it, so that each attribute expresses a certain eternal and infinite essence.”³⁷

In contrast, “exteriority” or transcendence of cause from effect would imply a theistic or Cartesian form of voluntary creation out of mere “possibility,” rather than through the necessary self-understanding and unfolding of God’s own essence. Since “necessity” holds, and God does all that God can do, then he automatically produces as he understands his own nature. There can be no question of God *deciding* to produce more or less as a matter of subjective volition. God is always “*en acte*,” and so *maximally* expresses himself in the infinite attributes, just as the attributes *maximally* express all that they are in the collection of finite modes.³⁸ In this light, we see that “explication” involves not only the modes following from God, but also God being *fully expressed* in the modes (through their respective attributes). Hence, for Deleuze, Spinoza’s God is an immanent God precisely in this strong sense, i.e., that he is nowhere and nothing outside the finite modes which are his ultimate and necessary expressions. This reciprocal relationship of “*Complicare*” and “*Explicare*” is then the very basis for immanence and the “equality of being.”

Things remain inherent in God who complicates them, and God remains implicated in things which explicate him. It is a complicative God who is explicated through all things: “God is the universal complication, in the sense that everything is in him; and the universal explication, in the sense that he is in everything.” Participation no longer has its principle in an emanation whose source lies in a more or less distant One, but rather in the immediate and adequate expression of an absolute Being that comprises in it all beings, and is explicated in the essence of each.³⁹

This goes to Deleuze’s critique of the Neoplatonic tradition of emanation. Of course, he finds this tradition superior to both (1) the Platonic tradition of formal participation, and (2) the theistic tradition of creation *ex nihilo*. As we said above, theistic creation involves a transcendence of cause over effect. The effect can thus be nothing more than an imitation or equivocal expression of God’s own power. The Platonic tradition of formal participation, on the other hand, involves a sort of “violence” according to Deleuze.⁴⁰ Specifically, it involves a theory of participation from the point of view of what participates as it is “supervening on what is participated from the outside” (i.e., from the point of view of how sensible particulars can capture some eternal forms for themselves).⁴¹

Emanation (as in Plotinus) is superior to both of these, since in emanation, everything is indeed from the point of view of the eternal, i.e., from God, rather than (violently) from the point of view of creation.⁴² Also, for emanation, the effect is still contained within the cause, i.e., God. Still, for Deleuze, emanation does not adhere consistently enough to the logic of expression. For there remains the notion of a sovereign “One” above “Being,” which is unchanged by the radiation of its power throughout creation. Or, to use the Deleuzian terminology, in mere emanation the “One above Being . . . is explicated but does not explicate itself. . . . It is not affected by what expresses it.”⁴³ Yet, as we have indicated, Deleuze’s initial postulate of “necessitarianism” entails that finite things must represent all that God is, and all that God can do. God cannot help but to explicate himself fully in the finite modes. Indeed, God cannot help but to “*be affected*” by the finite modes as well.⁴⁴

iii) *Univocity*

We see, therefore, a second implication, namely that “immanence” implies “univocity.” Put otherwise, a God that necessarily produces things out of his own essence is not only immanent to those created beings, but also shares in the very same *form* of those created things. Just as God (as cause) is not transcendent of the world (as effect), so God and the world too share in the same nature. This is opposed to nature being merely “analogously” related to the essence of God. Deleuze is explicit about immanence implying univocity in at least three places within *Expressionism*:

[E]xpressive immanence cannot be sustained unless it is accompanied by a thoroughgoing conception of univocity, a thoroughgoing affirmation of univocal Being.⁴⁵

Furthermore, pure immanence requires a Being that is univocal and constitutes a Nature, and that consists of positive forms, common to producer and product, to cause and effect.⁴⁶

The significance of Spinozism seems to me this: it asserts immanence as a principle and frees expression from any subordination to emanative or exemplary causality. *Expression itself no longer emanates, no longer resembles anything.* And such a result can be obtained only within a perspective of univocity.⁴⁷

And what does “univocity” ultimately mean for Deleuze? It is this: “God is cause of all things *in the same sense* that he is cause of himself; he produces as he formally exists, or as he objectively understands himself.”⁴⁸

Univocity, for Deleuze—along with the broader philosophical tradition—is a claim about the relative status of God and Creation, or the finite entities in nature. However, when Deleuze speaks *specifically* of Spinoza’s sense of univocity, he most often reduces it to the rather more cautious and exegetically indisputable statement that the attributes of God are at once the forms of their respective, finite modes. Or, put more succinctly, the attributes are the “common forms” of both God and the modes.

Unfortunately, this statement on its own tells us very little. For though the attributes are undeniably the forms of both God and their respective modes, this does not fully define the relationship between God and creation. And, of course, this is traditionally what the notion of “univocity” was meant to cover. Specifically, the claim of univocity has historically included the more controversial idea that the qualities of God, when applied to finite creatures, denote the same thing, or are meant in the *same sense*. For example: God is “good” in the same sense that a person is “good.”⁴⁹

Indeed, Deleuze *does* claim that Spinoza affirms something like this, albeit with reference to the attributes of “thought” and “extension,” rather than the modes of “benevolence” or “justice.” However, this richer idea of having qualities “in the same sense” is only possible if we draw out the implications of the previous notions of “necessitarianism” and “immanence” as they bear on the univocity of attributes.

To begin with, necessitarianism, with its attendant concepts of *complicare* and *explicare*, entails a reciprocal relationship between God (as cause) and finite modes (as effects). For if (1) it is God expressing his own essence that produces the modes, and (2) God is always “*en acte*” and does all that God can do, then (3) each expression is a necessary result of God’s own essence. Hence, God would simply not be God without each of these finite expressions. As Deleuze states,

referencing the *Short Treatise*, “God would not be God without them [i.e., his *propria*], but is not God through them.”⁵⁰

Hence, even the finite things necessarily produced by God are inseparable from God himself. They are always *in* God, (through his attributes) in the contemporary sense of *inherence*. In other words, finite things are always “in” and “properly belong to,” (i.e., are the *propria* of) God as flowing from their respective attributes.

Yet it is precisely this sort of immanence that ultimately precludes both theistic and Platonic notions of participation, wherein finite things merely “imitate” God, or else, are based on transcendent models that subsist in the Divine mind (i.e., Equivocation, Analogy).⁵¹ Instead, all truly expressive creation must be “univocal.” This implies two things: (1) God necessarily produces finite things from his own essence, and (2) These finite things at once share in God’s own form, and so are “in” God in a strong sense, rather than merely resulting from him.

iv) Consequences for the Finite Modes

What, then, does this say about the production of finite things themselves? Here, Deleuze makes a critical distinction between the production of modal essences, on the one hand, and the constitution of existing modes, on the other. Regarding the essences of finite modes, Deleuze asserts that God is always their direct, efficient cause. Hence, Deleuze is an explicit “necessitarian” with reference to the modal essences. For these (following both Scotus and Avicenna), have an “existence that follows from their essence,” albeit, by virtue of their cause, i.e., God. Deleuze elaborates:

In short, essence always has the existence due to it by virtue of its cause. Thus in Spinoza, the following two propositions go together: Essences have an existence or physical reality; God is the efficient cause of essences. An essence’s existence is the same as its being-caused.⁵²

This is in sharp contrast to the Cartesian God who produces things as a matter of volition. In Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza, the actual infinite series of modal essences is the objective result of God’s own nature. Hence individual modal essences are not mere possibilities before God, nor are they predicated upon metaphysical “models” in the divine intellect; they are rather, for Deleuze, fully actual, “physical realities.” According to Deleuze, “Spinoza is looking toward the idea of a distinction or singularity belonging to modal essences *themselves*.”⁵³ Thus, even a non-existing mode (such as the oak tree that is absent from my backyard) is not to be considered a mere possibility, but rather “an object whose idea is necessarily comprised in the idea of God just as its essence is necessarily contained in an attribute.”⁵⁴

However, in claiming this, Deleuze has Spinoza come very close to a form of occasionalism. For Deleuze is very clear that modal essences have *no part* in

producing one another, but rather are each produced, *in their individuality*, by God alone. Each modal essence merely sits alongside all of the others in what Deleuze terms a “total conformity.”⁵⁵ All essences agree precisely because they are “not the cause of one another . . . but all have God as their cause.”⁵⁶ The totality of such essences is, consequently, not numerical. That is, essences cannot be counted together in a series due to their wholly singular and unique production by God. Modal essences are only quantitative in the (non-numerical) sense that they are each definite quantities of God’s own power or essence.⁵⁷ It is this “quantitative,” yet “intrinsic” share of divine power which individuates each modal essence in God alone.

It should be noted that, in Deleuze, this non-numerical nature of modal essences cuts both ways. Since non-numerical, each modal essence is both causally and conceptually independent from all others. Yet at the same time, the non-numerical nature of modal essences precludes them from being *separated* from one another as well. For, Deleuze asserts, such abstract separation is likewise predicated upon numerical distinction.⁵⁸ We can only divide things that are, to begin with, countably distinct. Here, one may compare Deleuze’s stance to that of the contemporary Spinoza scholar Don Garrett. Here we find, similarly, (1) a necessitarian stance on the production of finite modes by God; (2) the assertion that each modal essence is fully individuated *in God alone*, i.e., in causal isolation from all other modes; (3) that God necessarily produces all modal essences together; and (4) that only if we subjectively abstract one mode from another can we ignore the strict necessity of modal production.⁵⁹

So much for modal essences. We have still yet to account for the *existence* of certain finite modes, as well as the *non-existence* of others. In contrast to finite modal essences, extant modes do not depend only on their divine attribute, but also depend on other finite, existing modes *ad infinitum*.⁶⁰ This is true both in terms of causal history, but also internal composition. For modal existence simply means to “*actually possess a very great number of parts*” that correspond to a given modal essence.⁶¹

Here again, we see the reassertion of Deleuze’s formal principles. For it is not enough to posit that extant modes are merely composed of a great many parts. Necessity further demands a plenum in which there is an *actual infinity* of parts for each mode. Moreover, these cannot be merely “potential” parts, in the sense that one could arbitrarily imagine how to slice up reality at will.⁶² These must be an innumerable collection of objective parts, actually “extrinsically distinct” from one another, and composing all of extended space. Only these conditions correlate to a God who is always “*en acte*,” and expresses his essence maximally as a matter of necessity. Consequently, a certain symmetry now emerges. Just as God must actually divide (intrinsically) into an infinite series of modal essences, so must God actually divide (extrinsically) into an infinite field of simple bodies.

Indeed, these bodies must be *so simple*, according to Deleuze, that they lack all other determinations. Devoid of their own essence, or even true existence, they do not qualify as modes themselves—even as they compose all extant modes.

Strictly speaking, simple parts have neither an essence nor an existence of their own. They have no internal essence or nature; they are extrinsically distinguished one from another, extrinsically related to one another. They have no existence of their own, but existence is composed of them: to exist is to actually have an infinity of extensive parts.⁶³

Importantly, for Deleuze, this symmetrical picture of the modes involves a strict bifurcation: Modal existence has *no part* in explaining the individuation of modal essences. As we have just seen, modal essences are individuated in God alone, and not through transient causation in existence.⁶⁴ As Deleuze says:

Individuation, through the existence of a mode is insufficient. We cannot distinguish existing things except insofar as we suppose their essences distinct; similarly, any extrinsic distinction seems to *presuppose* a prior intrinsic one. So a modal essence should be singular in itself, even if the corresponding mode does not exist.⁶⁵

The production of modal essences is totally *separate from*, and *irreducible to* the composition and decomposition of extant modes. These essences are already “singular in themselves.” There is, in other words, an *un-dialectical relationship* between the two kinds of causation, as “this infinite regression [of transient causation] in no way tells us in what that essence consists.”⁶⁶

For Deleuze, extant modes merely “come about” when a certain relation of simple bodies obtain. But *never*, as is clear from the preceding quote, does the composition of bodies *depend* on the nature of modal essences. Nor, conversely, does the composition of bodies bring about the actuality of modal essences from a state of “mere” possibility.⁶⁷

While modal *essences* are eternal relations, their *existence* comes about through a process which recedes back into history *ad infinitum*. The latter (i.e., the composition of bodies) is determined according to Deleuze by “purely mechanical laws.” Thus, we see two entirely *separate* laws are at work here, as laws of composition and decomposition are not contained in the production of modal essences themselves.⁶⁸

It is from this discussion of the production of modal essences, and extant modes, that we see the full import of univocity. That is, the idea that God causes things in the same manner that he causes himself.⁶⁹ For it is not a unitary God that produces a plurality of finite modes; instead, univocity demands that there is a plurality of *substance itself* “before all production” of the finite modes. God then is always, already plural through the composition of his distinct essences. The attributes, we remember, are not mere *aspects* of the one absolute essence of

God, but rather each “relate” or “lend” their really distinct essences to God. And so, “this distinction is also the composition of substance itself.”⁷⁰

This inherent plurality is then “re-expressed” in the collection of modes, both in their essences and in their existence. The finite modes are not merely *caused* by God, and do not merely *inhere* in God, but are moreover *actual parts* of God.⁷¹ As Deleuze explains:

To participate is to have a part in, to be a part of, something. . . . A mode is, in its essence, always a certain degree, a certain quantity, of a quality (i.e., of an Attribute of God). Precisely thereby is it, within the attribute containing it, a part so to speak of God’s power.⁷²

So, while the attributes are internally indivisible according to *quality*, they are actually divided into modes according to quantity—both intensively and extensively. Just as “the simplest bodies are the ultimate extensive modal division of extension,” so the infinite array of finite modal essences is the ultimate *intensive* modal division of God’s power. It is this literal “partitioning” of God’s essence and existence that marks the ultimate conclusion of Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza.⁷³

PART 2: A SPINOZIST CRITIQUE OF EXPRESSIONISM

At first glance, all of this might seem a bit underwhelming. The most traditional readings of Spinoza outline an ontology wherein a singular God has a plurality of attributes, and these in turn contain a plurality of modes. It is similarly orthodox to read Spinoza’s God as being the immanent, efficient cause of the modes. Nonetheless, Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza goes further than this. Namely, it asserts a logic of expression whereby God is the direct and sole producer of every modal essence *in their individuality*. As intimated earlier, this entails a species of occasionalism which undermines the comprehensibility of the observable world itself. For since all intelligible production occurs in God alone, the role of transient causation *between* modes is demoted. Ordinary, worldly interactions can have no part in the intelligible individuation of things, nor the determination of their natures.

i) Expressionism Leads to Occasionalism

It is true that, for Deleuze, there must be an actual infinity of simple bodies. This, as we have seen, follows from the principle of necessitarianism. Yet, the existing modes which are *composed* of these simple bodies are clearly countable. For example, there are a certain number of pink Cadillacs existing in 2016. For Spinoza, the reason why there are a certain number of a given mode is no great mystery; it comes down to a “horizontal” causal story about production in time and space.⁷⁴ Intelligible things, like factories, materials, and workers—by their nature and coordination—come together to produce intelligible effects, such as the production of a certain number of cars.

However Deleuze cannot abide this commonsensical picture. For he is very clear that numerical distinction is identified with “abstract thinking,” “inadequate ideas,” and even mental “phantasms.”⁷⁵ Things, according to him, are only known adequately insofar as they are wholly in God, and known wholly through God. When we consider entities numerically, “we separate essences from their cause [i.e., God] and from the attribute that contains them, considering them as simple logical possibilities and taking from them all physical reality.”⁷⁶ As he puts it elsewhere, “When we explain them [extant things] by number, we lose our hold on the real being of existing modes, and grasp only fictions.”⁷⁷ We should take Deleuze’s language very seriously here; it is not only that we can be mistaken about number, but moreover that number itself is inherently abstract and unintelligible, since divorced from God as sole, adequate cause.⁷⁸

Consequently, the *transient interactions* between countable, composed bodies, which occur *ad infinitum* back in time, are considered only inadequately as well. For Deleuze, transient causation, caught up with “number,” is always abstract and merely empirical (since number applies only to “things of reason”).⁷⁹ The mechanical laws which govern the interactions of countable bodies are, likewise for Deleuze, not something that can ever be known adequately, but only empirically. Hence Michael Hardt, one of Deleuze’s most enthusiastic legatees, emphasized this seminal point when he noted that the “common notions” which govern physical bodies are essentially “biological,” as opposed to “mathematical,” and rise up from “a Hobbesian material terrain, rather than from a Cartesian mathematical universe.”⁸⁰ Put simply, the laws governing transient interactions are brute facts, occasionally presented to the senses, but always lacking in true intelligibility. For, again, these are wholly irreducible to, and separate from, the intelligible modal essences of things themselves.

This downgrading of transient causation is also readily seen in Leibniz, whom Deleuze wishes to associate more closely with Spinoza (and vice versa). For instance, we may recall Leibniz’s insistence that transient causation cannot be the true “sufficient reason” for the various facts of the world; for then such explanations would likewise go on *ad infinitum*. And so for Leibniz, God alone must be the real sufficient cause for all the contingent facts of existence.⁸¹ Once more, Michael Hardt emphasizes this point in his objection to mechanism, which, since depending upon “external” relations between things, “risks posing being as purely contingent.”⁸²

Yet Spinoza is not Leibniz. Certainly, Spinoza believes that knowledge of extant modes or events is inadequate if it does not involve God as an indwelling (i.e., immanent) cause. On the other hand, it is not at all clear that Spinoza believes adequate knowledge of extant modes can be had with *only* a reference to God, as Leibniz does. Indeed, the opposite appears true, for Spinoza seems to believe, much more deeply than does Leibniz, in the intelligibility—and certainly the real

effectiveness—of natural laws. Whereas Leibniz famously classifies mechanical interactions between bodies as merely “well-founded illusions,” for Spinoza, natural laws govern the actual interactions between extended things.⁸³

However, since Deleuze radically separates transient (i.e., mechanistic) laws from intelligible essences, the former are rendered unintelligible, as we have seen above. The result can only be a God who directly and individually produces everything himself, free from lawful strictures:

But God is the power that, in each case, determines a cause to have such an effect. We never enter into infinite regress; we have only to consider a mode together with its cause in order to arrive directly at God as the principle that determines the cause to have such an effect. Thus God is never a remote cause, even of existing modes.⁸⁴

In this picture, each extant thing, if understood adequately and not abstractly, is caused and individuated by God alone. This is the textbook definition of occasionalism. Indeed, Deleuze’s physical theory seems to necessitate such occasionalism, at least implicitly. For if each “simple body” is so simple, then a number of very Leibnizian problems arise. The foremost of these is, how are such absolutely simple bodies, wholly extrinsic from one another, supposed to interact? Indeed, how are they to coalesce into the various modes in the first place?⁸⁵

We confront here a “monadizing” of the modes. Deleuze’s orthodox sounding answer to the above questions is that modal composition and interaction occurs according to natural “mechanical laws.” Yet how can these mechanical laws actually operate in such a universe? These most simple bodies lack even essence or existence according to Deleuze. They likewise would seem to lack true extension, or at least any kind of measurable, divisible extension in any sense that is commonly understood.

Leibniz certainly has an answer to this problem via his notions of inner “appetition” and “God’s pre-established harmony.” The monads need not actually interact since they are pre-ordered by a well-intentioned God.⁸⁶ Hence, in Leibniz there is an *equivocation* between mechanistic “natural laws” (which, again, are well-founded illusions) on the one hand, and “divine necessity” on the other.⁸⁷ But Deleuze knows that, for Spinoza, there can be no such equivocation. All emphasis, instead, is placed univocally on the side of divine necessity. For Deleuze’s Spinoza, then, how transient causation occurs is a question which cannot ever be answered. Thus, if Leibniz attempted to avoid the charge of occasionalism through a deft equivocation, this charge lands squarely on Spinoza as Deleuze imagines him.

The result is a world which Spinoza himself would not recognize, namely, a world in which the production and interaction of finite things is not determined by natural, mechanical laws—or, at least, that these laws are merely the products of imaginary, fictitious thinking. Each thing, therefore, is incomprehensible when

compared to other finite entities, and each event is epistemologically divorced from all preceding events. All things and events are, rather, known only through God in their singularity. Of course, whether there can be any genuine content to this knowledge remains questionable.

The ultimate fallout from this total separation of transient from immanent causation, therefore, falls on God himself. For, if univocity holds, then God necessarily produces the multiplicity of individual things within himself, as literal parts of his own essence. Each extant thing will “affect him in an infinity of ways,” and being God’s *propria*, the divine essence is nowhere and nothing outside of his modal parts.⁸⁸ Yet we now see that these finite modes lack all intelligibility apart from their production by God. A vicious circle thus emerges wherein the modes are only known through God, and God only known through the modes. The mediating structures of natural laws are absent from this picture. They thus can offer no determinate form to such an ontology. Hence, God becomes the ultimate occasional being, lacking all intelligibility (ironically because of Deleuze’s fidelity to those supposedly rationalist principles of “necessity,” “immanence,” and “univocity”).

The parallels to current tendencies within mainstream Spinoza scholarship should not be overlooked. Most notably, we may reference Michael Della Rocca’s enthusiasm for a very strong reading of the principle of sufficient reason in Spinoza, i.e., a strict necessitarianism. However, it is precisely a thoroughgoing fidelity to the PSR, as Della Rocca reconstructs it, that leads him to his ultimate conclusion that there can be no numerical multiplicity of attributes. As a consequence of this, “substance or nature is not fully intelligible and does not fully exist.” We finally arrive full circle, as “in the end, the PSR, which takes us beyond monism and [even] beyond Spinoza, may also thereby take us beyond truth and falsity.”⁸⁹ To be sure, the mediations of Deleuze’s argument are not the same as Della Rocca’s; nonetheless, the pattern of affirming a very strong, and ultimately self-destructive, principle of necessitarianism remains.

ii) Spinoza’s Denial of Univocity, Immanence, and Necessitarianism

Perhaps, however, Spinoza does not truly embrace these principles, at least not as Deleuze intends them. To begin with, Spinoza appears to have an extreme allergy to the principle of univocity as such. For example, in a particularly biting passage, he insists that, “we must of course understand by each of these attributes something different from what men commonly understand. For the intellect and will which would constitute God’s essence would have to differ entirely from our intellect and will, and could not agree with them in anything but name. They would not agree with one another any more than do the dog that is a heavenly constellation and the dog that is a barking animal.”⁹⁰ A harsher critique of univocity, and a clearer statement of equivocality, would be hard to find.

True, Deleuze tries to limit univocity to the relatively tamer notion that the attributes are merely the *forms* of both God and the modes, not that they are manifest in each identically. However, the preceding argument should demonstrate that the Deleuzian concept of “univocity” is not as simple as that, but rather at once is already laden with the other principles of “immanence” and “necessitarianism” which jointly imply it. Hence univocity does connect to the larger, more traditional sense that God causes finite things “in the same sense” that God causes himself, since these are part of his necessary essence.⁹¹

Yet this is clearly wrong on an exegetical level. Spinoza’s God maintains his own existence “immediately,” “directly,” and through strict necessity as based on his absolute nature. On the other hand, God produces finite things in a wholly different sense. Namely, finite things are created mediately, and also indirectly, and based on God’s non-absolute nature.⁹²

The modes are consequently immanent to God in a much weaker way than is asserted by Deleuze. Spinoza does affirm immanence *in a sense*, namely, that all things do inhere in God, and are not merely caused by God. Yet, as Melamed correctly points out, this inherence need not imply the actual partitioning of God in the collection of finite modes. For God’s “immutability” may be read in a “deflated” manner, wherein God is the sufficient cause of changing, divisible things, while remaining essentially unchanged and indivisible himself. Indeed, this division corresponds to the basic, ontological distinction made by Spinoza between independent substances and their dependent modes.⁹³

Relatedly, there is no “equality of being” to be found anywhere in Spinoza’s own texts. Deleuze’s thesis that all things are caused equally directly by God is in direct contradiction to numerous statements as found within the *Ethics*. We may here draw on Melamed once again, as he characterizes Spinoza as affirming an *emanation* of what are called the “infinite modes,” which explicitly have “decreasing perfection” as they move further down the chain from God’s absolute nature.⁹⁴ These “infinite modes” are not individual things, but rather articulate how the attributes of God relate to, and condition, individual things. In this way, the infinite modes occupy the traditional, mediating role of “natural laws” within Spinoza’s system, bridging an absolute God with a determinate creation. The more general these infinite modes are, the nearer they are to the attributes of God himself, and contrariwise, the more determinate they are, the further are they from God’s absolute nature.

Indeed, it is precisely this “leavening” of Spinoza’s ontology, through the procession of the infinite modes, which allows for Spinoza to avoid the charge of occasionalism, and so an exaggerated necessitarianism. For it is clear from the text of the *Ethics* that the infinite modes do indeed condition all of the finite modes that fall under them. And yet, they can never actually *produce* these. Rather, the existence or alteration of a finite mode always requires the intervention of another

such mode *ad infinitum*.⁹⁵ For example, the first infinite mode of extension is that of “motion and rest.”⁹⁶ Clearly, the nature of motion and rest is the sort of thing that will lawfully condition the production of a finite entity such as our pink Cadillac, but it in no way *produces* pink Cadillacs directly. (For otherwise these cars would be as old as the laws of motion and rest themselves!) However, if the infinite modes condition, but do not *proximately cause*, finite things or events, then not everything is produced by the absolute nature of God alone—not even mediately. Instead, the temporal chain of mechanical causes-and-effects is required as well.

However, what is crucial to note here is the *dialectical relationship* necessary for the production of individual things. There are, we may say, both “vertical” and “horizontal” axes to existence, where the horizontal axis involves the interplay of finite modes in time and space, and the vertical axis involves the lawful conditioning of these interactions. The precise manner in which two finite things interact is a function of the nature, or essence, of each individual object as derived from God. As Spinoza clearly states, “all modes by which a body is affected by another body follow both from the *nature* of the body affected and at the same time the *nature* of the affecting body.”⁹⁷ Thus, contra Deleuze’s reading, the laws governing the composition and decomposition of extant bodies, on the one hand, and the law of the production of natures or essences, on the other, are not wholly separate. While certainly *distinct* from one another, they nonetheless cooperate in jointly producing particular effects.

All of this further suggests that finite modal essences, while all *contained* within God’s nature, are nonetheless *individuated* only in existence. This is an extremely unpopular view in contemporary Spinoza scholarship, though one articulated by Spinoza himself in the *Short Treatise*.⁹⁸ It does have for itself a certain conceptual plausibility. For if the absolute nature of God can only condition the *existence* of finite things, but never produces them directly, then the same should hold for the *nature or idea* of these same things. Certainly all possible physical permutations are contained within the infinite intellect of Spinoza’s God. This is just as all possible shapes are implicitly contained within the geometrical strictures of a blank chalkboard. But the question remains as to why any *particular* shape, as opposed to another, is actually conceived on this board individually? Simply put, this cannot be explained through the general nature of the board itself. It rather seems to require the intervention of a particular, finite event *in existence*—namely the actual drawing of the shape. One may likewise invoke Spinoza’s Letter to Tschirnhaus, in which he plainly states that, “as to whether the variety of [singular] things can be demonstrated a priori *solely* from the conception of Extension, I think I have already made it quite clear that this is impossible.”⁹⁹

Indeed, to say that all of the infinite possible shapes are actually individuated from one another on this blank board seems a confusion at best.¹⁰⁰ What we have here is rather the *potential* for individuation as based upon the fully general geo-

metric laws contained therein. Likewise, the full collection of finite essences may exist in the infinite intellect, but it is unclear how each of these is meaningfully *individuated* from one another until (and only *if*) this occurs through transient interactions in nature.¹⁰¹

Exegetical plausibility is added to this reading when it is realized that the argument, as found within the *Short Treatise*, is indeed consonant with principles retained in the later *Ethics*. Specifically, it relies principally upon the claim that “there is no inequality at all in the attributes,” and as such, whenever modes are distinguished in existence, then too “a particularity presents itself in the essences of the modes . . . which are necessarily contained in the Idea.”¹⁰² This notion is, if anything, *strengthened* in the *Ethics* which famously affirms that “the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things.”¹⁰³ Individuation of modes ought not to be “actual” in the mind of God, if it is only “conditional” in existence, as the common mainstream readings seems to assert.

This interpretation of Spinoza would, furthermore, have the distinct virtue of retaining the intelligibility of the world. For it avoids the Deleuzian thesis that each modal essence is individuated in God alone, and so conceptually sealed off from all other modal essences. Instead, the import of the infinite modes—functioning as natural laws—is emphasized. These intelligibly (but only generally) determine the interactions between finite things, and so also the emergence of particular finite entities whose essences are individuated in the process. The result is that the essences of extant things are comparable to one another, since they have a part in mutually individuating one another under the auspices of those same general laws.

We may thus read Spinoza’s system as differing from Deleuze’s reconstruction in two important ways: First, existence is not actually divided into a real infinity of simple extrinsic parts. For as we have seen, this raises a multitude of problems involving the interaction and composition of bodies which render the universe unintelligible. Second, and parallel to this, there is no actual individuation of the finite essences within the mind of God. On both counts, rather, Spinoza’s system seems to support only extended space which is *potentially* divisible into an infinite array of modes, and similarly, an absolute divine essence which is *potentially* divisible into an infinite array of finite essences. No doubt Deleuze would critique the above claims as retaining the Cartesian notions of *accidens* and *possibilia*. To be sure, it sketches a picture of the universe which falls short of what today is termed strict necessitarianism. However, this does not imply mere indeterminism either. To the contrary, each finite thing is fully determined by the conjunction of preceding events and the conditioning essence of God.

CONCLUSION

Reading Deleuze is laced with difficulty, precisely because he employs concepts which appear to be compatible—even central—to Spinoza’s system. However, one need only be attentive to the specific ways in which these concepts are employed and relate to one other. Thus, we can summarize a Spinozist critique of Deleuze through addressing each of the three principles of univocity, immanence, and necessitarianism:

1. Spinoza clearly *accepts* “univocity,” if univocity merely entails that the attributes of God also contain their respective modes (as Deleuze sometimes says). However, Spinoza *rejects* “univocity,” if this entails the stronger claim that “God causes things in the same sense that he causes himself.” (as Deleuze says at other times)¹⁰⁴
2. Spinoza *accepts* “immanence,” if by this we merely mean that all finite modes inhere in God. However, Spinoza explicitly *rejects* “immanence,” if this precludes all notions of emanation and hierarchy, as the procession of infinite modes clearly involves.
3. Finally, Spinoza *accepts* “necessity,” insofar as God—who exists necessarily by his own nature—is at once the indwelling cause of all finite things, conditioning each extant thing. However, Spinoza *rejects* “necessity” in the stronger sense that God must “directly” and solely cause the individuated collection of finite modes. For modal individuation always requires the intervention of other extant finite modes via transient causation.

Unfortunately, much of mainstream Spinoza scholarship is given to ignoring the contributions of the French-continental tradition. Deleuze’s historical works, in particular, are often considered as idiosyncratic to Deleuze himself. However, as we have seen, this dismissive attitude entirely ignores the shared theoretical commitments of both Deleuze and mainstream, anglophone interpreters. Deleuze may thus profitably be seen, not as an outsider, but instead as anticipating some of the more problematic tendencies within Spinoza scholarship today. If one desires to go beyond the current interpretive orthodoxies and to rediscover the “real” Spinoza, a critique of Deleuze’s reading may be an indispensable starting point.

NOTES

1. The association is indeed surprising since the tendency of French thought most enthusiastic about Spinoza is also the one most clearly derived from the work of Henri Bergson. Bergson was keen to oppose the determinism and “mechanism” of Spinoza’s system with his own ontology of spontaneity and vitalism, culminating in the famous principle of “*élan vital*.” See Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell, Unabridged edition (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1998). This tradition of vitalism was carried on into the twentieth century by Gilles Deleuze and his legatees, most obviously in Deleuze’s 1966 literary homage to Bergson, aptly titled *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1988).
2. This was based on the “minor half” of Deleuze’s doctoral dissertation, ultimately published as *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York; Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books; distributed by MIT Press, 1990).
3. It is true that Spinoza made liberal use of the term *exprimere*, and its variants, in the *Ethics*. However, “expressionism” in Deleuze’s writings is used in a different sense than in Spinoza, most often being mediated through scholastic concepts such as “*implicatio*” and “*explicatio*,” as is stated in the translator’s note to *Expressionism*, 5.
4. Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations: 1972–1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 6.
5. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 180. It should be noted that Deleuze never claimed that Spinoza, himself, desired to defend a pluralist ontology. Nonetheless, it is clear that Deleuze’s pluralism is meant to be based, at least in part, upon aspects of Spinoza’s methodology and metaphysics which Deleuze believes are supportive of this goal.
6. Together, “necessity,” “immanence,” and “univocity” are each ingredients or moments of Spinoza’s “logic of expression.”
7. Previous analyses have generally fallen into one of three categories: First, there are those authors who are critical of both Spinoza and Deleuze, and see the latter’s metaphysics of flux as essentially drawing out the logical conclusions of Spinoza’s own system. Second, there are those who likewise see a conceptual contiguity between Spinoza and Deleuze, yet affirm something about their supposedly common ontology. Finally, there is a third class of authors who criticize Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza, but primarily on exegetical and historical (rather than conceptual) grounds.

For a notable representative of the first tendency, see Gillian Howie, *Deleuze and Spinoza: Aura of Expressionism*, 3rd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002). For the second tendency see Michael Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). See also Audrey Wasser, “Deleuze’s Expressionism,” *Angelaki* 12(2) (August 2007): 49–66. For the third, see Charles Ramond, *Qualité et quantité dans la philosophie de Spinoza* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1995), 200–2. This present work, in contradistinction to all of the above, seeks to show the conceptual incompatibility between Deleuze’s metaphysics and that of Spinoza, quite apart from Deleuze’s often idiosyncratic style.

8. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 27.

9. Benedictus de Spinoza, "Ethics," in *The Collected Works of Spinoza, Volume I*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), E1 D6.

N.B.: For purposes of clarity, original works by Spinoza will be cited according to the standard abbreviations. In the case of the *Ethics*, the letter "E" precedes the part, while the letters D, A, and P indicate definition, axiom, and proposition, followed by their respective number. In the case of the *Short Treatise*, references are to the part, chapter, and then section, (e.g., "I.iv.3" for Part 1, Chapter 4, Section 3). For the "Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect," numbers refer to the sections as introduced by Bruder. When citing Spinoza's letters, unless otherwise noted, references are to *Spinoza: The Letters*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1995). Letters are cited using the standard abbreviation Ep., and follow the numbering adopted by Shirley.

10. Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Philosophy of Spinoza: Unfolding the Latent Process of His Reasoning* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1933), 145–56; Harold Henry Joachim, *A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza: Ethica Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata* (London: Forgotten Books, 2016). (cf. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 34.)
11. Spinoza, "Ethics," E1 D4. For Spinoza, the intellect (as opposed to the imagination) ought only to "reproduce the connections of Nature," rather than impose upon Nature its own anthropocentric categories. See Benedictus de Spinoza, "Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect," in *The Collected Works of Spinoza, Volume I*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 95. For objectivist interpretations of Spinoza's attributes, see Jonathan Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1984), 147; Michael Della Rocca, *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 10–7.
12. "I say that to the essence of any thing belongs that which, being given, the thing is necessarily posited and which, being taken away, the thing is necessarily taken away" (Spinoza, "Ethics," E2 D2.); Deleuze elevates this statement to a formal "principle of convertibility," and makes extensive use of it despite the phrase's total absence from Spinoza's own corpus. See, for example, *Expressionism*, 42–9, 201.
13. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, vol. 2 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 2:156.
14. Spinoza, "Ethics," E1 P10. Deleuze exploits this definition by affirming that "Real distinction is never numerical or modal." For things, if they are conceived numerically "in a series," or modally as species in a genera, are certainly conceived relative to one another. *Expressionism*, 35.

As such, Deleuze applauded Spinoza for being more consistent than Descartes regarding this important distinction. For while Descartes allowed for multiple substances to share a single attribute, say for example, two extended things, Spinoza did not. Rather, Spinoza famously insisted that two substances cannot ever share a single attribute, lest they not "really" be conceivable apart from one another, and so not truly be substances at all. For a substance must, by definition, be considered through itself alone. See Spinoza, "Ethics," E1 P8, E1 D3. (cf. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 31.)

15. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 37.

16. Ibid., 39. The interpretation that there are (qualitatively speaking) multiple substances in Spinoza's metaphysics is not unique to Deleuze, but rather derives from the broader tradition of French Spinoza interpretations, especially those of Martial Gueroult and Pierre Macherey. For a history of the fortunes of French Spinozism in the twentieth century, see Knox Peden's *Spinoza Contra Phenomenology: French Rationalism from Cavailles to Deleuze* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2014).
17. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 38.
18. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004), 23.
19. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 45. (Bold italics added)
20. Ibid., 27.
21. Ibid., 104–5. In Spinoza's own *Hebrew Grammar*—in contrast to Deleuze—substance is treated as analogous to nouns, and the attributes to adjectives. See Warren Zev Harvey, "Spinoza's Metaphysical Hebraism or Hebraic Metaphysics," in *Jewish Themes in Spinoza's Philosophy*, ed. Heidi M. Ravven and Lenn Evan Goodman, SUNY Series in Jewish Philosophy (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).
22. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 44.
23. In particular, we may reference Della Rocca's reconstruction of Spinoza's proof for substance monism which relies heavily on (1) the total conceptual independence of the attributes, and (2) the formal principle of sufficient reason. Della Rocca uses these two elements to argue that it is indeed possible for a substance to be composed of multiple attributes, for otherwise the exclusion of a given attribute would constitute a "brute fact." It is this "possibility" or conceptual "coherence" of such a God that, in turn, ensures the actual existence of such a being. See Michael Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, New Edition, The Routledge Philosophers (New York: Routledge, 2008), 55–6.
24. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 99. It should be noted, however, that not all Hegelian readers of Spinoza are so critical of the latter's conception of substance and attribute. See, for example, Errol E. Harris, *The Substance of Spinoza* (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 1995).
25. Spinoza, "Ethics," E5 P17, E5 P19.
26. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 82, 100–10.
27. Ibid., 100.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., 99.
30. Spinoza, "Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect," 95.
31. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 180.
32. Ibid., 177, 333.
33. Ibid., 42.
34. Ibid., 172–3.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., 175, 186, 214.
37. Ibid., 42.

38. Ibid., 93–4. (cf. Spinoza, “Ethics,” E1 P34.)
39. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 175.
40. Ibid., 169–70.
41. Ibid., 143.
42. Ibid., 178.
43. Ibid., 177.
44. Ibid., 102.
45. Ibid., 178.
46. Ibid., 173.
47. Ibid., 180.
48. Ibid. (italics added).
49. For an analysis of the concept of univocity in the hands of Scotus, Spinoza, and Deleuze, see Simon Duffy, *The Logic of Expression: Quality, Quantity and Intensity in Spinoza, Hegel and Deleuze*, New Edition (New York: Routledge, 2016), 95–9.
50. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 49. (cf. Benedictus de Spinoza, “Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being,” in *The Collected Works of Spinoza, Volume I*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985], I.iii.1 footnote.); It should be noted that Deleuze is here referencing a footnote within Spinoza’s *Short Treatise* which, in fact, is not making the same bold claim as Deleuze himself. Namely, Spinoza is here identifying a class of divine adjectives which are not quite “attributes” in the fullest sense of the word. As such, it is a limiting statement having to do with the non-essential status of these adjectives. Spinoza is *not* making a strong, positive claim about the necessary status of all finite modes, at least at this juncture.
51. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 180–1.
52. Ibid., 194.
53. Ibid., 192–4, 197.
54. Ibid., 192–3.
55. Ibid., 211, 237.
56. Ibid., 194.
57. Ibid., 183.
58. Ibid., 203.
59. Don Garrett, “Spinoza’s Necessitarianism,” in *God and Nature: Spinoza’s Metaphysics*, ed. Yirmiyahu Yovel (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 191–218. Specifically, Garrett speaks of particular finite modes as following from the “non-absolute nature” of God. This in no way limits the necessity of the existence of finite modes, nor their exclusive production by God. To the contrary, on Garrett’s view, each finite thing does follow from God, so long as these are considered in relation to all of the other finite things, likewise created by God. In no sense, however, is one finite mode considered to be necessary for the *production* of another such mode.
60. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 184, 201.
61. Ibid., 201–2.
62. Ibid., 204.

63. Ibid., 207.
64. Ibid., 195.
65. Ibid., 196 (underline is in original).
66. Ibid., 201.
67. Ibid., 201, 205–6, 212.
68. Ibid., 209–11.
69. Ibid., 332.
70. Ibid., 182.
71. For the view that God has a “causal only” relationship to the finite modes, see Edwin M. Curley, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics: An Essay in Interpretation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), 37. For the critique of this view, and the assertion that the finite modes also inhere in God, see Yitzhak Y. Melamed, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics: Substance and Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 4–48. As will be discussed below, neither of these interpretations accept the Deleuzian notion that the finite modes subsist as “parts” of God.
72. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 183.
73. Ibid., 191.
74. Spinoza, “Ethics,” E1 P8 Schol. 2.
75. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 203.
76. Ibid., 212.
77. Ibid., 203.
78. Much of Deleuze’s rejection of numerical distinction in Spinoza is derived from the so-called Letter on the Infinite to Lodewijk Meyer. In it, Spinoza states that only insofar as “we separate the affections of Substance from Substance itself, and arrange them in classes so that we can easily imagine them as far as possible, there arises Number, whereby we delimit them.” (Spinoza, *The Letters*, Ep. 12.) Deleuze takes this letter to entail a total rejection of number as merely an aid to the imagination in all cases, even identifying all number with “fiction.” However, a more judicious reading would take Spinoza to be warning his associate against the *unjustified* use of number, especially in attempting to quantify infinite substance, duration, and extension, into discrete parts, mirroring his argument in the note to E1 P15 (hence the letter’s oblique reference to Zeno’s paradox).
Analogously, in the *Emendations* Spinoza warns against the use of abstract definitions which too are used as aids to the imagination. (“Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect,” 93.) Yet this warning is contrasted to “legitimate” definitions of real beings. Just as (ostensibly legitimate) definitions form the very bedrock of Spinoza’s *Ethics*, so too does Spinoza make liberal use of numbers in the *Ethics* as well. To cite just a few examples, Spinoza speaks of their being *one* substance, *two* known attributes, *three* interior angles of a triangle, etc. (E1 P5, E1 P10 note, E1 P16 Schol.) In the case of the first two terms (“substance” and “attribute”), we have a clear example of Spinoza applying number to things that are “formally distinct” in contrast to Deleuze’s repeated assertion that this is impossible.
79. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 183.

80. Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze*, 96–7. (cf. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 212, 281.)
81. Gottfried Leibniz, “Monadology,” in *Monadology and Other Philosophical Essays*, trans. Paul Schrecker and Anne Martin Schrecker (New York: Prentice Hall College Div., 1965), paras. 36–9.
82. That an overemphasis on a formal principle of necessity deprives transient causation of its proper role, essentially making it an “empty category,” is likewise a feature of Melamed’s contemporary criticism of Della Rocca, and the outsized role that the PSR plays within the latter’s reading of Spinoza. See Melamed, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics*, 96–7.
83. See, for example, Spinoza’s discussion of efficient causation between finite bodies in E1 P28, E2 P9.
84. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 184. It is worth noting that Deleuze uses the phrase “remote cause” in a way that would have been unrecognizable to Spinoza himself. For Spinoza, God is the indwelling, immanent cause that conditions all finite modes, even though God does not directly intervene in mechanical interactions, as in a theistic model. Spinoza is well known for rejecting, for example, the notion of miracles. Divine intervention, of this sort, is the very paradigm of God being the “remote cause” behind particular events. Deleuze, on the other hand, appears to have the exact opposite interpretation of the phrase. For him, God not being a remote cause means precisely that God is the sole, direct cause of all particular events. Far from rejecting miraculous, divine interventions, Deleuze seems to affirm their absolute ubiquity.
85. Indeed, a more basic, exegetical problem presents itself. Namely, Spinoza is very clear at E1 P25 that “except for substances and modes there is nothing.” Deleuze appears to require a third entity, namely, the most simple bodies, which he explicitly claims are neither substances nor modes.
86. Leibniz, “Monadology,” paras. 10–6, 18, 52–5.
87. Indeed, Leibniz affirms (no less than Deleuze) that God’s action “cannot be general or indeterminate. . . . Conservation by God consists in the perpetual immediate influence which the dependence of creatures demands.”
Theodicy, ed. Austin M. Farrer, trans. E. M. Huggard (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2010), para. 27. This has led some commentators to question Leibniz’s own disavowal of occasionalism. For it is precisely God that, at every moment, renews the permanence and activity of each created substance. See, for example, David Scott, “Leibniz’s Model of Creation and His Doctrine of Substance,” *Animus* 3(4) (1998): 73–88.
88. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 102. This set the groundwork for Deleuze, in later works, to affirm a sort of inversion of Spinoza’s metaphysics: “All Spinozism needed to do for the univocal to become an object of pure affirmation was *to make substance turn around the modes*.” *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 304 (italics added).

Indeed, even in Deleuze’s early thought presented in this paper, he is ready to claim that “Spinoza’s philosophy does not fix itself in God, or find its natural starting point in God.” (*Expressionism*, 271.) Yet while it is true that Spinoza does not start with the definition of God in the *Ethics*, he *does* start with “substance” as the first

- proposition. It is this substance, defined as that which is in and conceived through itself, that turns out to be identical to God.
89. Michael Della Rocca, "Rationalism, Idealism, Monism, and beyond," in *Spinoza and German Idealism*, ed. Eckart Förster and Yitzhak Y. Melamed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 25–6.
 90. Spinoza, "Ethics," E1 P17 Schol.
 91. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 180, 332.
 92. Thus, while Spinoza does say that God produces the modes "in the same sense in which he is called the cause of himself" (E1 P25), this is immediately *qualified* by a following proposition which clearly states that singular things are produced only mediately by God, "insofar as it is modified by a modification which is finite and has a determinate existence." (E1 P28) Thus, when Spinoza uses language to the effect that he causes the modes just as he causes himself, this is in contrast to theistic models whereby God produces modes wholly outside himself, and as a matter of divine volition. It is clearly not intended in the strongly univocal sense that Deleuze employs.
 93. Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 38, 47–9, 131.
 94. Ibid., 120. (cf. Spinoza, "Ethics," E1 P22, E1 P23, E1 P36.)
 95. Spinoza, "Ethics," E1 P22, E1 P28.
 96. Spinoza, *The Letters*, Ep. 64.
 97. Spinoza, "Ethics," E2 P13 Axiom 1."
 98. Spinoza, "Short Treatise," II.xx.4 note 8, Appendix II.11.
 99. Spinoza, *The Letters*, Ep. 83. (Italics added)
 100. Specifically, there seems to be only a semantic difference between saying that "every possible shape is *actually* individuated within the blank board," on the one hand, and that "every possibly individuated shape is implicit within that board," on the other. What work the word "actually" does is unclear. Indeed, the only way to draw a clear difference between the two statements would be to have the former describe a situation in which the collection of shapes are not only actually individuated, but moreover, that each individuated shape exists autonomously, and not as derived from the common essence of the geometrical plane itself. Perhaps Deleuze would agree to this reading, but this would clearly run counter to Spinoza's own ontology. For, by analogy, it would have the essences of finite modes as existing autonomously vis. the essence of the God (i.e., Substance) that they are meant to modify in the first place.
 101. This is not to make God merely a "material" and not "efficient" cause of things — i.e., a formless and passive substrate to be arbitrarily sliced into determinate figures. For, as with the chalkboard analogy, there is a lawful, geometrical quality to the plane itself which determines which objects are possible, while others impossible, as well as the determinate natures of those possible shapes.
 102. Spinoza, "Short Treatise," Appendix II.11.
 103. Spinoza, "Ethics," E2 P7.
 104. Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 180, 332.

