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**Cardiff School of English, Communication
and Philosophy**

Spinoza: Ontology and the Political

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Abstract

Historically, Spinoza has tended to be considered as something of an anomaly within European modernity, a fascinating exception within the Western philosophical canon but one who has largely remained on the margins. More recently, however, there has been a significant revival of interest in Spinoza, a 'turn' to Spinoza which has had major impact on leftist philosophical-political thought.

This thesis traces some of the history of this turn, and seeks to determine the nature of this impact. It ranges critically over the readings of Spinoza produced by Louis Althusser and by Etienne Balibar, by Gilles Deleuze and by Antonio Negri, and by Alain Badiou. As the conjuncts and the commas here suggest, these readings are grouped within two broad 'lines of descent' from Spinoza: Line 1 comprising Althusser and Balibar, and sharing among other things a problematic of ideology and of the subject in which the influence of Lacan becomes apparent, Line 2 comprising Deleuze and Negri and sharing a certain qualified naturalism. Badiou, while exhibiting connections with Line 1, at the same time produces his own distinctive reading of Spinoza (as indeed do each of these thinkers), one which turns on the status of the subject within Spinoza's ontology, and on what Badiou alleges is a suppression of ' the place of the subject', and therefore of the negative, within it.

Several broad lines of enquiry run through the thesis. The first of these concerns the relationship between ontology and the ethical-political, between what Balibar terms 'first' and 'second' philosophy. The second concerns the function of the negative within these various readings, and what I argue is its persistence within an otherwise apparently positive ontology. The third, however, an overarching theme, concerns the ways in which Spinoza is deployed by these various thinkers as a philosophical and political antidote to Hegelian idealism within Marx, and above all to Hegelian teleology.

In connection with this, the thesis therefore moves towards an examination of the ways in which these various readings of Spinoza have in turn fed into renewed readings of Marx, and considers this both in connection with a preoccupation with primitive accumulation shared by Althusser, Deleuze and Negri, and in relation to the readings of Marx produced by the Italian Marxist traditions of *operaismo* and *autonomia*.

The thesis concludes that the turn to Spinoza has had a positive and enriching effect on Marxist thought, and outlines both some of the new dimensions which it has allowed to be developed, and some new lines of investigation which it has opened up within Marxism.

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Spinoza: Ontology and the Political

I Introduction

What is so striking when we consider Spinoza's reception-history is its astonishing historical unevenness, both in terms of an overall assessment of his relevance, and in terms of the consistency of the various readings. At the same time, however, at the beginning of his intricate historical study of early Enlightenment Europe, Jonathan Israel¹ speculates on the paradox of how it was possible that such '... an aloof, solitary figure ...could have 'decisively shaped a tradition of radical thinking which eventually spanned the whole continent [and] exerted an immense influence over successive generations ...'.

While this description is clearly partisan, Israel's intricate study of early modernity, and of Spinoza's place within it, reminds us of something crucial in relation to Spinoza: that to understand him, to read him *adequately*, we must also understand his time, the conjuncture in which he lived, thought and acted, that of the late 17th century Dutch Republic. This may ultimately be true, of course, of all philosophers, but it is Spinoza above all, perhaps paradoxically, who brings home to us that a thinker is rooted in the time and the conditions into which s/he is born, no matter how s/he may go on to transform them. And Spinoza is also testament to the power that we have to effect such transformation

A more common response, however, as Israel also comments,² has been to claim that Spinoza was actually rarely understood and in fact had relatively little influence. And it is this more generalized and diluted stereotype, that of Spinoza as lofty obscurantist, eternalist of the *more geometrico*, even as the 'God-intoxicated man' of Novalis, which perhaps in some way accounts for

the way in which he has been so long marginalized as a fascinating but ultimately unplaceable thinker within the European philosophical canon, a philosophical and political exotic who was at the same time capable of attracting thinkers as diverse as Russell and George Sand, Nietzsche, and Marx and Goethe. This latter stereotype, however, is one which Israel's, Balibar's³ and Negri's⁴ close historical studies all render no longer tenable. As Toscano asks, 'How then could such a figure, seemingly the "least historical" of philosophers, provide thinkers concerned with transformation, novelty, the event, with the wherewithal to advance radical projects of thought?'⁵

And so there are major lingering doxological inconsistencies in Spinoza's reception-history, inconsistencies which, in a psychoanalytic context, we might well describe as a kind of *overdetermination*, and therefore, perhaps, even as indicating something very like a *symptom*. On the one hand, Spinoza is '.. the supreme philosophical bogeyman of Early Enlightenment Europe'⁶, and on the other the inaccessible obscurantist just described. At the same time too, he is '.. the prince of atheists, Christendom's chief foe, the 'new Mahomet'⁷ and yet, by the time of the 19th century German Enlightenment, he is the '*Gottbedrunkenener Mensch*' celebrated by Novalis, by Goethe and by all of Romanticism, while at the same time, for Hegel he is simply 'Spinoza, the Oriental'.

These very inconsistencies, however, perhaps tell us more about the complex ways in which the dominant philosophical tradition, a 'meta-narrative' in a perhaps unusually informative sense of that term, has in fact been constructed out of its repressions, a narrative which may also constitute, at least from a certain point of view, the philosophical residue of *political* failures, and of course, conversely, of political successes. Such a sequential residue of successes might thus include, for example, Hobbes, Bentham and Locke (whose ontologies, surely by more than fortunate coincidence, effectively mirrored their normative political doctrines), Descartes (whose dualism constituted something like a provisional compromise between science and theology), Kant (in one

sense the theorist of the mutual limitations of theology and the secular state), and Hegel, who blended the transcendental with history, thereby imbuing the secular state-form with something very like redemption.

More recently, however, there has been a revival of interest in Spinoza among certain political philosophers who, along with Spinoza, also share a common denominator in Marx, and it is these thinkers, Althusser and Balibar, Deleuze and Negri and Badiou, together with their various readings of Spinoza, on which this thesis will be based. As we shall see as the thesis develops, what most of these thinkers sought for in Spinoza (by the time we reach Badiou, this work had already been accomplished), in their various ways, was in effect a philosophical-political antidote to Hegel, and especially to a supercessionary and teleological conception of dialectical progress. And it is in this context that these thinkers explore and articulate the consequences of Spinoza's signature ontological doctrine of *immanence*.

Judith Butler, in Subjects of Desire,⁸ meanwhile, traces the complex influence of Hegelian thought among French thinkers as diverse as Sartre and Hyppolite, up to and including Lacan, all of whom share, one way or another according to Butler, the seminal influence of Kojève's own highly distinctive reading of Hegel, focusing in particular as he did on the Master-Slave passage in the Phenomenology. Above all with reference to Lacan, what Butler's expository narrative appears to pick out is an uncoupling of *desire* from its teleological-historical moorings within Hegel's own thought. This is the force of Kojève's 'labour of the negative', in which desire takes on the power to annul and move beyond the present but now bereft of the destination of a *telos*, a '.. lack, a being-without ..'⁹ as Hyppolite describes it, a relationship '.. to that which is not itself, that which is different, strange, novel, awaited, absent, lost ..' in Butler's own words. As we shall see, Deleuze and Negri in particular deploy a positive reading of Spinoza's ontology against such

Hegelian influence and reject in particular Lacan's view of desire as a lack-of-being ('manque-a-etre') in the name of the positivity of desire, thereby drawing closer to a Kantian conception of will. As we shall see, Deleuze in particular challenges what he views as Hegel's 'external ' negation (Butler's ' relationship to that which is not itself ' referred to above) and counterposes to this both a conception of 'internal' self-difference and an ontology of the virtual in which such self-differentiation becomes paramount. At the same time, however, this uncoupled negative which in Kojève becomes assimilated to desire will roam through these readings in various forms: it is there in the later Althusser's conception of the future-as-void in his work on Machiavelli; it is there too in Macherey's remark to the effect that Spinoza's infinity is itself indistinguishable from emptiness¹⁰, and it is also there in Badiou's appeal to the void of inconsistency which inhabits situations and which has the power to inaugurate the new and to provoke a subject-of-truth. The question of the role of this uncoupled negative posed by these various readings of Spinoza will therefore also constitute a recurrent theme.

Another concerns the relationship between ontology and *the political*. As Balibar comments, with Spinoza, philosophy and the political become indistinguishable, not only because the axiomatic principles governing the ontology are transferable directly into the political domain, but also because of the facts of his conjuncture: the turbulent times of the Dutch Republic in which he lived and wrote, and in which he sought a hazardous course between the freedom to think and write as he did and the repressive forces which vanquished several of his own close associates.

As I have suggested above, one of the ways of interpreting the consistency of the turn to Spinoza among these and other Marxist thinkers is as an antidote to Hegel, and as a means (especially in the case of Althusser and Balibar) of attempting to unravel Hegel from within Marx in order to produce a *new* reading of Marx, a reading for our times. And there is no doubt that such a process of unraveling left gaps, blank spaces, and so perhaps what it was that these thinkers sought in

Spinoza was in fact an *alternative* ontology, one which could replace the supercessionary logic of historicism, along with a clichéd rhetoric of dialectical laws (clichéd to the extent that these thinkers, so to speak, will now only use the term 'under erasure'), with a new ontological terrain in which the lines and contours all remained to be drawn. How these lines were drawn, and the larger question of the relationship between ontology and the political, will therefore form the second set of questions informing this thesis.

In a sense, Butler's study cited above, impressive in itself, also provides both a model and an aspiration for this thesis: just as she traces the influence of Hegel (via Kojève) on a succession of thinkers, each of whom remains singular (to use that distinctively Spinozan term) in his (or her) interpretation of Hegel, so will this thesis set out to work its way through the complex impact of these various readings of Spinoza on Marxist philosophical-politics. As such, the thesis addresses the question of whether this turn to Spinoza has in fact moved Marxist philosophical-political thought significantly beyond Hegel, and if so in what ways.

It will therefore consider the readings of Spinoza developed by Althusser, by Balibar, by Deleuze, by Negri and by Badiou. These readings, however, will not simply be considered as idiosyncratic; rather, I will try to group them into two major lines: Line 1, which brings together Althusser and Balibar, and Line 2, shared by Deleuze and by Negri. The former, I will argue, share a common yet complementary orientation towards a 'structural' understanding of immanent causality on the one hand, and towards the identification of a new social ontology in Spinoza: that of *transindividualism*, on the other. Line 2, comprising Deleuze and Negri, are grouped together in terms of a shared expressive or *productivist* ontology, ultimately a late form of naturalism which does not recognize the 'split' character of the subject deriving both from Hegel and from Lacan. Lastly, I place Badiou as a distinctive offshoot of Line 1 in that he inherits and significantly advances a problematic of the subject inherited both from Althusser and from Lacan.

With this architecture now in place, we turn first towards Althusser, whose influence from Spinoza continued to resonate beyond his overtly 'structuralist' earlier period and on into his later thinking on 'aleatory' materialism.

Line 1 : Althusser and Balibar

II Althusser

In commencing this thesis with Althusser's interpretation of Spinoza (and all commencement must in some sense cross a void), we begin with Althusser's account of Spinoza's own point of commencement of the ontology which he develops in the *Ethics* : '*All things are in God.*'

Althusser comments here that , '*We need only notice how Spinoza begins ... " .. some begin with the world and others with the mind of man ; I begin with God." .. All of them take a path that leads through God. Spinoza shuns these detours and deliberately takes up his position in God. Hence one can say that he occupies, in advance, the common fortress, the ultimate guarantee, and last recourse of all his adversaries, by starting with this beyond-which-there-is-nothing.*'¹¹

But Althusser's distinctive interpretative point is precisely *that there is that nothing*. Thus he adds to the preceding that because this 'beyond-which-there-is nothing' exists in the absolute, in the absence of all relation, *it is itself nothing*.¹² And this is so since, if nothing exists outside the whole, if the immanent totality of '*Deus sive Natura*' has no transcendent outside, then there is no distinction to be made between totality and nothing. And *this foundation which is nothing* also has profound implications for how Althusser interprets Spinoza's theory of the attributes. Thus, he asks the question, following on from the above, ' What, then, is this [Spinozan] God? An absolute,

unique, infinite substance, endowed with an infinite number of infinite attributes.' Yet in fact we, as human beings, know only two such attributes, those of thought and of extension, however ' .. even then, we do not know all the powers of the body, just as, when it comes to thought, we do not know the unthought power of desire.'¹³

Consciousness, then, the self-conscious subject which knows, is lacking in two dimensions: that of the subtle, causal capacities of the body, and also in relation to desire, with which, for both Spinoza and for Lacan, it is actually identical. And concerning the resulting parallelism *for us* of the attributes of thought and extension, Althusser writes that ' The fact that they are parallel, that here everything is an effect of parallelism, recalls Epicurus' rain. The attributes fall in the empty space of their determination like raindrops that can undergo encounters only in this exceptional parallelism, this parallelism without encounter or union (of body and soul..) known as man.'

Thus, implicit within this reading of Spinoza's attributes through Epicurus suggested above, there lies another central concept which, although present in Althusser's earlier work in the form of *conjunction*, both undergoes transformation and takes on greater prominence in the later work in the form of the concept of *encounter*. And this too Althusser inherits from Epicurus, and from the *clinamen*, or swerve of the atoms out of which things are given structure, a structure which then may or may not endure. Here too, in this concept of encounter, Althusser foregrounds a concept of contingency previously ignored if not suppressed within Marxist thought yet subtly present within Spinoza's ontology. Thus, it is present in the *doctrine of the three orders* in Spinoza: that of essences(which determines a given entity's share in power), of nature (which determines an entity's capacities to be affected, therefore of composition), and thirdly the order of encounters, within which composition *may or may not take place*. Thus, in spite of the wider ontological commitment to causality made by the appeal to an ascending order of perfection, Spinoza also opens up a space of contingency here which is both ontological (it pertains to a theoretical

description of the orders of being) and also a space *for an existential subject*, a subject of uncertainty, above all the uncertainty of duration and therefore of death .Moreover this extends further back into the ontology than the order of encounters itself, since Spinoza does not take the order of essences to imply necessity: ' ..on the side of essence we find in it no necessity to exist'¹⁴ . At the same time too, this existential subject within the order of encounters is situated within a wider causal domain which nevertheless remains potentially knowable, since ' .. a thing is termed ' contingent' for no other reason than a deficiency of our knowledge.' ¹⁵ The concept, then, of an encounter which might or might not take place, and if it does, might or might not endure, is thus also present within Spinoza, yet there is also a significant distinction: the subject which Althusser describes, as we have seen above, is a subject which is inherently split, inherently divided: a '*parallel subject without encounter*'. As I shall later argue, however, there is also another subject-position in Spinoza: that opened up by the dislocative move from *imaginatio* into *ratio*, a move which is accompanied by an enhancement of power since reason gives access to the order of causes which traces back to the foundation in power: an emancipatory subject defined by the move from a lesser to a greater degree of power.

As we shall later see below, this concept of *encounter*, and of the contingency which surrounds and defines it, is then extended to play a crucial role in a radically non-teleological conception of social class which Althusser later develops, one which focuses, like Negri's own major work on Spinoza, on the 'moment' of primitive capitalist accumulation. And with this 'moment', of course, we return to Marx.

What I shall argue throughout this section is that Althusser deploys Spinoza as a means of rereading Marx, a means towards the unravelling of Hegel from within Marx, and towards the unraveling of an idealist from a materialist Marx, yet this new materialism which is released by such

a rereading bears features which make it ontologically uncomfortable to those previously immersed both in some unreflected mechanistic materialism, tantamount itself to 'an idealism of matter', and to those taking comfort from a recuperative dialectic, a 'logic of *Aufhebung*'.

However if Althusser deploys Spinoza as a means towards the *theoretical production* of a new Marx, one which is both radically non-teleological and, I shall later argue, also radically non-*statal*, then here we see a certain doubling in that Epicurus is also employed as a means towards the theoretical production of Althusser's Spinoza. And if these several layered readings seem to be taking on something of the recessive quality of Chinese boxes, we should recall that Althusser views this current of non-teleological materialism as actually constituting a suppressed but nevertheless unified tradition: that of an 'underground current' of a materialism of the encounter, an 'aleatory materialism' comprising not only Epicurus, Spinoza and Marx, but also Machiavelli and Montesquieu, along too with 'a certain' Rousseau.

One final clarification. If Negri argues that there is not one Spinoza but two, then there are those too who argue that there are also two Althusser's: the earlier 'theoreticist' Althusser associated above all with a structural Marxism, and then the later thinker of aleatory materialism, and that the later material in fact constitutes a philosophical-political refutation of the former. Goshgarian, however, Althusser's translator, argues against this that '.. Althusser's late work does not refute his earlier work, even when it contradicts it, but reveals patterns once invisible in it - not by repeating, but by transforming them.'¹⁶ Throughout this section I will adopt this general interpretive approach: that the later work actually constitutes a set of transformations of the central concepts associated with the former, above all those of *structure* and *conjuncture*. This approach also provides a logical structure for this section: I shall begin with an account of Althusser's structural Marxism, isolating its key concepts and themes, then shall go on to consider the ways in which these are reworked through the later material. Throughout, of course, the main concern will be with

Althusser's deployment of Spinoza as philosophical and political antidote to Hegelian idealism.

Althusser's Conjuncture

As I have done elsewhere in the case of Spinoza (cf. p. 79 onwards), and will do again with Negri, we begin with an account of Althusser's own conditions of writing: conditions which together defined a major political and theoretical crisis within western Marxism, and within the PCF in particular, of which Althusser was of course himself a long-term member. Thus, on the one hand the character of the Stalinist state, and of Stalinism as a political and theoretical system which had been defended for decades by communist parties across the world, had been revealed by the Moscow trials in the early 50s, under a wave of reforms initiated by Khrushchev after waging a successful power-struggle with Beria, following on from Stalin's death. These revelations were subsequently widely disseminated and debated, and led to a profound questioning of the allegiance which European communist parties had maintained to the Stalinist state since at least the nineteen-thirties. One specific set of conclusions to this wave of critical self-examination led to the formation of a new Euro-Communist position, one which began to form currents within existing communist parties across Europe, most notably in Italy, Greece and in France, and which defined itself precisely by its repudiation of the history of this allegiance, repudiation too of this most recent *ancient regime* in its entirety, both politically and theoretically. One consequence of this profound theoretical re-examination was the acceptance by Euro-Communist parties of existing parliamentary process and of its representational political logic, such that communist parties would participate in elections simply as one more pluralistic option among others, abandoning the traditional strategy , expressed in antagonistic, quasi-military terms as ' the conquest of state-power'. Such a Euro-Communist current had of course also formed within the PCF, led by the

philosopher Lucien Sève, one of Althusser's principal theoretical antagonists. Thus, under the leadership of Marchais, the PCF was also concerned with reconstituting itself as a predominantly parliamentary party, albeit one which would enter into alliance with the PSF to form a common electoral front, one from which the PSF would emerge as principal beneficiary and which would eventually come to mark the long-term eclipse of the PCF itself.

On a theoretical level, this process therefore opened up a number of central issues which together define the space within which Althusser's *return to Marx* began to take shape. Essentially, these issues were three: the question of the conceptual integrity and of the scientific status of Marxist theory; the question of the role played by ideology in the systemic reproduction of capitalism; the question of the nature of the state and of the meaning of the demand for a 'dictatorship of the proletariat', a demand which both the mainstream PCF and the Euro-Communist currents were then in the process of abandoning. Thus, just as the resurgence of the claims of theology and of absolute monarchy form a non-reductive but nevertheless formative background to Spinoza's thought, so does the post-Stalinist reconstitution of the European Marxist left provide such a significant background to Althusser's own theoretical production.

With this sketch of such a background now in place, we turn to the first of these issues: that of the scientific status of Marxist thought, and of the complex question of the relationship between idealism and materialism.

Idealism and Materialism

As argued above (cf. p. 15, and elsewhere), Althusser's 'return to Marx' may be defined in terms of a complex, far-reaching theoretical project: that of the unravelling of Hegel from within Marx's thought, and of the reconstitution of Marxism in philosophically consistent materialist terms. And it

was Spinoza who provided Althusser with the initial counter-position from which Marx's texts could be reapproached, along with the key theoretical instruments which assisted Althusser in this process of unravelling: above all Spinoza's ontology of immanence, and a philosophically exceptional concept of *immanent or structural cause*, which we will consider in some detail below. This central strategy of Althusser's philosophical-political project, that of reading Marx *against* Hegel, in turn led on to a theory of theoretical rupture and refoundation within Marx: the theory of *epistemological break*, a break which purportedly shifts theory in general onto a scientific foundation, and whose immediate theoretical predecessors are to be found in Canguillem and Bachelard. Such a theory of break, of epistemic rupture, however, is of course also centrally present within Spinoza, in the form of the dislocative move from *imaginatio*, an initial *Lebenswelt* of influence and *doxa*, into the domain of *ratio*, an understanding of things by their causes, a move which is inherently emancipatory since it is accompanied, Spinoza argues, by an augmentation of power and freedom of action, or autonomy. As I have argued above (cf. p.15 and elsewhere), here is one of the *places for a subject* in Spinoza, an emancipatory subject which comes into being in this movement from a lesser to a greater degree of power, an *emergent subject*.

Initially, then, Althusser presented this epistemological break as if it were once and for all, as if it marked a discernible conceptual-chronological frontier, one coinciding with the German Ideology, from which point onwards, Althusser argued, Marx went on to develop a new set of questions, a new *problematic*, and a new conceptual configuration in response: a *synchronic theoretical structure* which picked out its own new theoretical field, above all, of course, within Capital itself. Althusser's later works, however, while not repudiating the concept of break, both refine and complicate it in the sense that the epistemological break then comes to be regarded as presenting the need for a *continuous and sustained counter-idealism*, a continuously critical position which must be maintained throughout Marx's texts, including Capital itself . Thus, Althusser later

comes to refer to a certain 'imprudence' with which he came to speak of such rupture as being of itself finalistic, implying : ' .. [a] moment when there suddenly emerges, in the 'consciousness' of Marx and Engels .. the need to think in an entirely different way, to shift ground, or change elements ..'¹⁷ The self-ironising tone is apparent here, above all in the quotation-marks surrounding the word 'consciousness'; however there is no loss of clarity with respect to what Althusser took Marx and Engels to be leaving behind: ' the Feuerbachian philosophy of alienation', a humanist and essentialist philosophy in which man mis-recognises himself in the form of an alienated, projective theology, together with the investment of the concept of human essence in classical political economy. And by implication, whatever it is that lies on the far side of the break, wherever that break is to be placed, and for how long it is to be sustained, will be characterized by a rejection both of humanism, a philosophical anthropology which places a human subject in central position as voluntarist causal origin, and of essentialism, which posits an unchanging determinate substratum within any given formation.

As suggested above, Althusser's major project is that of the unravelling of Hegel from within Marx, an unravelling too, therefore, of Hegelian idealism, which Althusser defines in terms of two principal themes: that of a metaphysical *Subject* working its way through history towards integration and ultimate self-unity, and that of an involuted metaphysical schema of origins and ends. However we should also recall here the connection which pre-existed Althusser's interpretation of the relationship between Hegel and Spinoza, a relationship which saw Hegel attempt to *mobilize* Spinoza's ontology into history, and to do so by transposing the self- originating properties of substance into the form of an integrative metaphysical *Subject*. Both the metaphysical Subject, and the schema of origins and ends, come together in an internalist, supercessive dialectic in which self-difference, 'contradiction', is progressively eliminated , a logic of *Aufhebung* which, although

driven by negation, nevertheless knows no dissipation, and can therefore neither know nor recognize loss or failure. Such a dialectic is therefore intrinsically teleological and, synonymous with this, essentially finalistic.

Althusser also imputes a theory of causality associated with such teleological finalism, an 'expressive' causality which he claims Hegel shares with Leibniz. Thus, it is through such a conception of cause that Hegel seeks to configure a theory of totality, a means of conceiving of the social whole, yet this conception of expressive cause endows the totality itself with causal power, in an idealist reversal of causality '...in which each element is expressive of the entire totality as a 'pars totalis'.¹⁸ , as exemplified by Leibniz's monadism. Such expressive cause, Althusser argues, '...presupposes in principle that the whole in question be reducible to an inner essence, of which the elements of the whole are then no more than the phenomenal forms of expression.'¹⁹ As such then, this theory of expressive cause must constitute a form of essentialist holism. And to this essentialist totality, represented in the figure of 'a circle of circles', Althusser and Balibar counterpose the concept of *structure* . Thus, while conceding that 'Leibniz and Hegel did have a category for the effectivity of whole on its elements or parts...', nevertheless this was achieved '...on the absolute condition that the whole was not a structure.'²⁰ I shall reserve a fuller discussion of this concept of structure for a sub-section below, in which I will try to clarify its derivation from Spinoza. In the meantime we return to the nature of the materialism which Althusser seeks to mobilize against Hegelian idealism in Marx's texts. And this materialism, like that argued for elsewhere by Michael Hardt, does not constitute a reductionist metaphysical doctrine of the primacy of matter, a doctrine which Althusser dismisses as in fact a mere 'idealism of matter'; rather, it constitutes a *critical* doctrine, one which, like Lacan's *objet a* in relation to the symbolic order, serves to undermine and restrain the grandiose power of the concept. Thus, Althusser returns to the history of western philosophy to produce Plato's early distinction between '

the friends of the Forms' and 'the friends of the Earth'²¹, among whom Plato groups the '.. empiricists, skeptics, sensualists and historicists.'²² However he goes on to note that ' Both terms in this pair are posited as being essential to constituting the pair, in which each term commands the other.'²³ Such co-derivation Althusser describes as 'speculary', with obvious reference to the ambiguous effects of the mirror-stage in Lacan's *Imaginary*, and he thus comes to refer to ' the speculary pair idealism/materialism'. He then goes on to develop an argument for the *complementarity* of the idealism/materialism pair, with idealism nevertheless remaining the dominant term: ' The intrinsic tie that we find in the pair of opposites idealism/materialism is therefore primary with respect to both idealism and materialism, with the important distinction that because idealism has been the dominant tendency or current in all of Western philosophy, the idealism/materialism pair itself is clearly based on the dominant tendency, idealism.'²⁴

This identification of the speculary nature of the idealism/ materialism pair allows him to go on to deliver a philosophically sophisticated account of their relationship in the history of Western thought. He writes, ' .. in the philosophical tradition, the evolution of materialism is the index of an exigency, a sign that idealism has to be rejected, without breaking free, without being able to break free, of the speculary pair idealism/ materialism .. because one does not break free of idealism by simply negating it, stating the opposite of idealism, or "standing it on its head". We must therefore treat the term 'materialism' with suspicion: the word does not give us the thing and, on closer inspection, most materialisms turn out to be inverted idealisms.'²⁵ Thus, Althusser comes to refer to particular philosophical positions not as falling on one or the other side of a fully constituted divide, but as constituting *tendencies*: a *tendential* idealism or a *tendential* materialism, yet given the complementarity of the pairing argued for above, it is clear that materialism, *the materialist tendency*, must come to constitute not a doctrine but a critical counter-position vis-à-vis a dominant

tendential idealism. Yet at the same time, in the later works especially, Althusser does go on to suggest that there is in the history of Western philosophy something more fully formed though still suppressed and latent : a 'subterranean current' which he will later refer to as an *aleatory materialism*, or alternatively, as a *philosophy of encounter*, a current of thought which he traces back to the 'Friends of the Earth' cited by Plato and to the thought of Democritus and Epicurus, the contrasts between whose thinking formed the content of Marx's own doctoral thesis which, we should not forget, was a thesis in *philosophy*. This movement back to sources suggests a certain subtle *counter-dialectic* consistent with Althusser's project of the unraveling of Hegel from within Marx. If Hegel's dialectical logic was essentially supercessive, and therefore teleological, then Althusser, so to speak, inverts it, *puts it into reverse* in a movement which is necessarily deconstructive: by means of an appeal to the nominalism which was always there in Marx, and to *contingency* as a counterposition to the benign necessitarianism which turned complex, emergent, antagonistic history into *History*, Althusser thus uncovers a new layer of meaning within Marx, a latency which has taken many by surprise. And this is the significance of Althusser's focus in Reading Capital (a focus he shares with Negri and with Deleuze) on the 'moment' (itself a term charged with Hegelian associations, in which it signifies a mere point of passage, a point along the way towards a destination) of primitive accumulation, a 'moment' in which Spinoza himself, of course, antagonistically participated.

Primitive Accumulation

Here Althusser detects a split within Capital between an idealist and a materialist logic, revealed by tensions and inconsistencies between the *order of exposition*, the sequence in which Marx develops his conceptual analysis of the capitalist structure, and *the order of historical events*, the precise sequence and *ontological character* of the 'moment' of primitive accumulation. Thus,

Capital commences with an analytical exposition of the abstract concept of the commodity and of value, which presupposes an equally abstracted conception of labour : an already subsumed *abstract labour*. Althusser writes that ' It is no accident that Marx rewrote Book 1, Section 1, the beginning of Capital, a dozen times or more; that he was determined to begin with that which was 'simplest' and with the abstract, namely, the commodity, and therefore with value.'²⁶ Here, he argues that in thus privileging abstraction, Marx was in fact conforming to a dominant epistemic paradigm of scientific procedure, one in which abstraction, and therefore the self-consistency of the concept, was held to be paramount, an assumption which rests on ultimately essentialist grounds. Thus, Althusser argues that ' ..all these requirements, and the problems they entailed, were imposed on Marx by a certain idea of science. '²⁷Such commencement in abstraction had an immediate pay-off in that it permitted, like Spinoza's *more geometrico*, a *deductive* strategy, one which lent 'impressive force' to his conceptual derivations, above all in contrast to the already naturalized scenarios of classical political economy; yet it did so at a cost : situating such deductions within such a framework then proved problematic when it came to a question of the *simple deduction* of the money and wage-relationship, *above all insofar as these are considered as power-relations*. Thus, in adopting such a commencement in abstraction, Althusser writes that '.. in order to propose such a theory, he has to take into account what the order of exposition requires him to bracket out: the productivity of labour in all its forms; labour-power as something other than a simple commodity; and quite simply, the history of the conditions under which capitalism itself arose ..' And for the Althusser of The Underground Current, it is precisely what is excluded in the first theoretical inscription, above all Marx's account of primitive accumulation, which constitutes ' the true heart' of Capital.²⁸

Central to such a process of exclusion is the positing of abstract labour, presupposed by the

abstraction of value, which assumes ' [the] existence of a homogeneous field ruled by – because it has already triumphed – the equivalence of socially necessary labour-times in any equation of value whatsoever.'²⁹ And included among all that is bracketed out, there is the central fact that extraction of surplus-value is achieved through concrete, specifiable mechanisms of exploitation, among which Althusser lists ' .. the implacable constraints of the labour-process embedded in the process of production.. the socio-technical division and organization of labour.. the length of the working-day ..' Not only such mechanisms of exploitation , but the extraction of surplus value and its continued appropriation also presuppose the conditions which govern *reproduction*, not only the reproduction of the means of production, but also the reproduction of labour-power, up to and including the state-apparatus itself, both in its repressive and in its ideological function, as ultimate guarantor of the reproduction of capitalist-relations.³⁰ Thus it is that commencing with the bracketed abstraction of the commodity and of value, the initial presentation of the concepts takes the form of a ' topography', ' .. a figure laid out in a space in which places (topoi) and their relations are defined in order to 'make visible' relations of relative externality, determination and so on ..' And this 'topographical' conceptual structure has a remarkable consequence: that there is a *repetition* at the heart of *Capital* , a double-inscription which arises from the commencement in abstraction. Thus, Althusser argues that ' ..Marx adopts a topographical arrangement in order to be able to present his theoretical ideas twice, and in two different forms or 'places' in the same [theoretical] space ' ³¹ (my amendment). In the first of these places, Marx ' .. presents his theoretical ideas as principles of analysis of the whole of his object .' At the same time, however, Althusser argues that ' .. Marx arranges for his ideas to appear a second time ..', this time ' among those ideological forms in which men become conscious of [class] conflict and fight it out.'³² And in this second place ' Marx treats and presents his theoretical ideas not as principles of explanation

of the given whole, but solely in terms of their possible effects in the ideological, and therefore political, class struggle commanding this 'whole': such-and-such a social formation, such-and-such a conjuncture, and so on ..' ³³ Such comments too, as we shall later see in connection with Negri's reading of Spinoza, suggest a remarkable parallel: that within Spinoza too there is a tension between synchrony and diachrony, a tension which Negri will argue comes to constitute not a double-inscription but two distinct ontological foundations.

But if the first of these 'places' in Capital is a theoretical one, conforming, as we have seen, to the prevailing norms of scientific procedure which demanded a commencement in abstraction, such that a given theoretical-conceptual configuration picks out and delineates its own proper theoretical object, then the second place is that of what Harry Cleaver has termed a *political reading of Capital*. I shall take this point up at length in due course: that there is in Althusser, as in autonomist Marxism, a *critical theory of these two places* in Marx, and that the second place marks out an insurmountable site of political antagonism, of class-struggle. But there is one thing that we should note here in passing in relation to Althusser: that this account of double-inscription also crucially poses *the question of the subject and of agency*, that is, the question of whether social transformation should best be theorised as arising ultimately from a failure of structure to reproduce itself, therefore within a scenario of *structural failure*, or whether it should instead be posed as arising from the formation of an antagonistic social subject, one whose interests become irreconcilably antagonistic to those of capital.

Consistent with the theory of *this second place* in Marx, in 'Marx in his Limits' (a title which seems inevitably to recall Negri's Marx Beyond Marx) Althusser turns his attention towards a remarkable analysis of the significance of the treatment of primitive accumulation within Capital. However this theory of a double-inscription within Capital does not simply present, as Negri argues in the case of Spinoza's Ethics, a tension between synchronic and diachronic readings. Instead,

Althusser takes the set of circumstances in which capitalism emerged historically, the period of primitive accumulation, and proceeds *to extract the ontological characteristics of any such situation of change*. Thus, he comments that ' In untold passages, Marx .. explains that the capitalist mode of production arose from the 'encounter' between the owners of money and the proletariat stripped of everything but his labour-power. '³⁴ And this concept of *encounter*, one which I have suggested above derives from Spinoza's own three orders of nature (cf. p.14), becomes a signature concept in Althusser's philosophical articulation of the kind of materialism which he claims emerges once the teleological logic inherited from Hegel is unravelled from within Marx. And this early formation, arising from this mass encounter, did not simply pass away, but 'took hold' and endured. Such a 'taking-hold', however, could equally have been otherwise: ' 'It so happens' that this encounter took place, and 'took hold', which means that it did not come undone as soon as it came about, but lasted, and became an accomplished fact, the accomplished fact of this encounter. ' '³⁵ But the uncertainty of the duration of such encounters continues too from Spinoza, in what I have suggested too may mark out *another subject-place in Spinoza*, in this case, a subject of uncertainty, an existential subject (cf. p.15 above).

And so with this cluster of concepts ..*encounter- taking-hold- accomplished fact* .. an element of radical contingency appears within Althusser's historical understanding of the emergence of social formations. Important *ontological* consequences ensue from this, consequences which, as we shall see, have crucial bearing on the concept of *structure*, a concept which, Goshgarian argues, remains constant, though not uninflected, from early to late Althusser. The first of these concerns the status of *relations* among elements of structure. Thus Althusser writes that ' .. every mode of production comprises elements that are independent of each other, each resulting from its own 'specific history, in the absence of any organic, teleological relation among these diverse

elements.' As we shall later see, this thesis of *the ontological externality of relations* will also appear within Deleuze and Guattari, and in particular within their theory of assemblages, a theory which in some ways can be seen as an alternative theoretical model to Althusser's own concept of structure. But for Althusser, as for Deleuze and Guattari, such elements also take up a place within established structure (or assemblage), but only once such structure has itself 'taken hold', after which point it becomes subject to a *logic of the accomplished fact*, and to the *conatus* of the reproduction of structure.

Within this context of a theorization of the significance of primitive accumulation within Marx, Althusser goes on to make quite radical claims. Thus, he comes to challenge the widespread conception of the proletariat as ' a product of big industry'. Here, Althusser advances the crucial thesis that two sets of principles are confused in this definition; I would suggest also two *temporalities*: on the one hand, a teleologically nostalgic *logic-of- the-accomplished fact*, a version of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, through which a history is read backwards from an accomplished state of affairs, with a *logic of the fact-to-be accomplished*, which opens out onto an emergent and unforeseeable future; and on the other, the conditions of the production of wage-labour with the consequent stabilisation of this relationship and then of the conditions of its reproduction. The confusion of these logics, and of their associated temporalities, a time of the accomplished fact with a time prior to accomplishment, a confusion which thereby abolishes the crucial *threshold of emergence*, thus constitutes a version of history which is written by victors, or at least by those whose historicism appears to guarantee it. A *time of victors* as opposed to the time of *Geschichte* and of *kairos*, a time of uncertainty, but of opening, therefore also of opportunity.

These claims are far-reaching. I would suggest, in connection with the significance of the structural placing of primitive accumulation within Marx's Capital (cf. p.23 onwards) that here, Althusser is in effect putting into operation a *reverse-dialectic*, one which works

backwards from the accomplished fact towards conditions of emergence. And here Althusser moves beyond the logic of the accomplished fact, and takes up instead a viewpoint from the other side of the 'take', from the time of *Geschichte*, a move which he alleges Marx failed to make, or rather, made then unmade: 'Marx deliberately leaves the aleatory nature of the 'encounter' and its 'taking-hold' to one side in order to think solely in terms of the accomplished fact of the 'take' and, consequently, its predestination..'³⁶ Moreover such a position has major implications for the concept of structure with which Althusser continued to work.' On this hypothesis [that of the perspective of the accomplished fact], each element has, not an independent history, but a history that pursues an end – that of adapting to the other histories.. constituting a whole which endlessly reproduces its own elements.'³⁷ Thus, such an aleatory account from the perspective of what I have termed *the time of victors* ends up refusing to confront the radical contingency of the encounter. From the perspective of accomplished structure in which all elements are placed, '.. there is no encounter, for the unity precedes the elements...the void, essential to any aleatory encounter, is lacking.'

Thus, although Althusser insists that Marx himself repeatedly confronted the 'encounter' which took place between the owners of money and deracinated, landless labourers (labourers whom he describes as *vogelfrei*, 'free as birds'),rather than thinking this encounter through and developing a logic appropriate to its implicit ontology , Marx instead veered away from such a logic and reverted to a Hegelian teleological logic which had served him elsewhere, a logic which was ready-to-hand, the logic of the accomplished fact. Thus Althusser writes that ' Whereas it is in fact still a question of thinking the fact to be accomplished, Marx deliberately positions himself within the accomplished fact, and invites us to follow him in the laws of its necessity.'³⁸ Here I have suggested that what Althusser is in fact developing in the theory of encounters is *an ontology of structure*, but one that seeks to think structure not only from within its accomplishment, a

perspective which arguably characterizes Althusser's earlier work, but also from the perspective of the time of its emergence. Thus understood, we can consider the later works as seeking to draw out the ontological consequences of the fact that *structure is not preordained but emergent*. We now turn to a closer examination of the main features of such an ontology, and following Suchting's lead, will do so by routing our examination through the early Wittgenstein.

Althusser and Wittgenstein : Sachverhalten

In a remarkable article Wal Suchting³⁹ casts interesting light on Althusser's distinction between accomplished-fact and fact-to-be accomplished with reference to Wittgenstein's Tractatus. Nor is this far-fetched since Althusser himself makes significant reference to Wittgenstein in his later work in a quotation which weaves further, overdetermined reference to Spinozan immanence, to Heidegger, and to Epicurus: 'Die welt ist alles was der fall ist': The world is all that falls, all that emerges into being *just as it is*. We have already seen how Althusser proposes a remarkably original interpretation of Spinoza: that Spinoza effectively prefigures Heidegger in the sense that he posits the true object of all philosophy as the void, but a void which cannot remain as such: a void *which will produce being*. Prior to the production of being, however, there is nothing: 'Epicurus says that before the formation of the world an infinity of atoms were falling parallel to each other in the void.. They are still falling. This implies .. that .. before the formation of the world, there was no Meaning, neither Cause nor End nor Reason nor Unreason.' Such a 'world', moreover, understood as the kind of encounter and taking-hold discussed above, is itself the product of the *clinamen*, of the 'swerve' and resultant configuration of atoms falling in the void, a swerve which is itself without reason. However within Epicurus' metaphysical-poetic image of the rain of atoms (and Althusser suggests elsewhere that in philosophy one can only think through metaphor), it is not that the atoms constitute ontologically determinate entities which then coalesce to form higher-

order structures; rather, the swerve ‘.. endows the atoms themselves with their reality, which, without swerve and encounter, would be nothing but abstract elements lacking substantiality and existence’⁴⁰, such that Althusser also describes Epicurus’ atoms as ‘ghostly’ entities, entities lacking in being. This is important since it implies, as suggested above, that for Althusser at least, this void through which the atoms rain cannot remain simply as non-being, that in spite of the lack of reason for the *clinamen*, it is, so to speak, a void which is predisposed towards being, a void which inclines towards being. Thus, following the implicit logic of the *clinamen*, such atoms, far from providing the origin and ground of the world as its ultimate constituents, become instead ‘.. merely the secondary consequence of its [the world’s] assignment and advent.’⁴¹

Thus, as Suchting identifies, there are crucial ontological ambiguities and reversals which lie implicit within the figure of the *clinamen*. And it is here, Suchting suggests, that Wittgenstein’s Tractatus may help to provide clarification through the way in which it defines its own basic ontology of objects, facts, states of affairs and also, crucially, *worlds*.. Here, Suchting goes back to the early, opening sequence of propositions of the Tractatus, where we are told at 1.1 that ‘The world is the totality of facts, not of things.’⁴² Like the atoms which precede the *clinamen*, ‘things’, ‘objects’ cannot be taken to be the primary constituents of a world ; instead, such constituents are provided by *facts*, which are themselves further defined as ‘*states of affairs*’ which we are then told at 2.01 constitute *combinations of objects*. Within this ontology, therefore, ‘things’, ‘objects’ constitute *predispositions towards combination in states of affairs*. And Wittgenstein stresses this point at 2.0121 : ‘ .. There is no object that we can think outside its combination with others.’ And Suchting comments here that ‘.. ‘things’ are not ‘constituents’ of states of affairs and hence of facts, in the sense of actually existing prior to what they are constituents of, for they are always already such constituents. To borrow a term from medieval philosophy, ‘things’ may [thus] be

described as 'virtual'.⁴³

Such a distinction within objects between their status as constituents of states of affairs and their 'virtual' pre-existence becomes a distinction between internal and external properties in the sequence of propositions which are developed from 2.012, where we are told that '.. If a thing can occur in a state of affairs, the possibility of the state of affairs must be written into the thing itself.'⁴⁴ Moreover the virtual pre-existence of objects which Suchting suggests, that is, their independence and temporal priority, is actually annulled at 2.0122, where Wittgenstein says of this independence that ' Things are independent insofar as they can occur in all possible situations, but this form of independence is [in fact] a form of connection with states of affairs, [therefore] a form of dependence.'⁴⁵ And this leads him on to present a distinction between the *internal* and *external* properties of objects, such that, at 2.01231, ' If I am to know an object, though I need not know its external properties, I must know all its internal properties.'⁴⁶ Such internal properties, of course, are those which define a given object's combinatorial potential, while external properties define the 'accidental' combinations which will in fact take place.

In the Tractatus too, finally, we are told that states of affairs (*Sachverhalten*) are also defined by their *structure*. Thus at 2.031 and 2.032⁴⁷ ' In a state of affairs, objects stand in a determinate relation to one another', and also that ' The determinate way in which objects are connected in a state of affairs is the structure of the state of affairs'. Now quite apart from the clear relevance that the ontology which Wittgenstein develops here has to Althusser's thinking of the aleatory, what also seems striking are the ways in which this view of objects as intrinsically compositional appears to parallel the distinction which Spinoza makes between *the orders of nature and of encounter*, such that the first of these identifies precisely the kinds of internal properties which Wittgenstein here argues for while the second, the order of encounters, define external properties of actual combination which may or may not take place. Having established these connections

between the central ontology of the Tractatus and Althusser's thinking of the aleatory, Suchting goes on to employ these ontological definitions to resolve some of the peculiar ambiguities and even reversals which we came across previously, above all the ambiguity in the ontological status of the atoms which arise within the figure of the rain, which appear in some sense to precede the *clinamen*. Thus, to begin with, if Epicurus' *atoms* are thought on the predispositional model of Wittgenstein's *objects*, we see that such atoms may, as Suchting suggests above of Wittgenstein's objects, be conceived of as virtualities, as combinatorial potentialities. And against the background of these ontological definitions drawn from the Tractatus, Suchting then goes on to develop an analytical argument which distinguishes between *logical*, *ontological* and *temporal* priority. Thus, while logical priority states that A is logically prior to B iff the constitutive properties of A determine the logical possibility of B, ontological priority states that B really exists iff A really exists, while temporal priority states that A is prior to B iff A exists before B in a strictly temporal sense, and distinguishes these as priority i), ii) and iii) respectively. Applying these distinctions to Epicurus' atoms, Suchting then argues that atoms are prior to world in sense i) (logical priority) but not in senses ii) and iii): ontological and temporal priority. And this is consistent with the internal property which Wittgenstein argues for, that of the combinatorial propensity of objects, defined as a *logical* property. From all of this, Suchting goes on to conclude that ' ..i) encounters are totally aleatory and atoms are purely abstract; ii) atoms have 'affinities' with one another, dispositions to combine, as it were, which pre-exist encounters, so that not just anything can arise as a result of an encounter. ' , and that ' 'Things' have internal properties which constitute their 'form', and constrain, though in no way determine, their external properties ..' As suggested previously of the void itself, such dispositional entities seem to constitute in effect a predisposition towards combination, and towards the formation of 'states of affairs'; and thus too what we might characterize as a kind of

ontological disposition towards futurity. Such future-inclined dispositions, however, as Suchting goes on to point out, pose a problem for the nominalism which both Marx and Althusser take to be a defining property of materialism: the breaking down of abstract 'nominal' entities into their lower-order constituents, as if such a reduction were somehow available in logical, ontological and temporal senses. Such a nominalistic logic, however, involving a *reductive* working backwards, at the same time works against precisely what such a *dispositional ontology* seems to point towards: *emergent* formations which, on the far side of the taking-hold, are then characterized precisely by a certain *irreversibility*, even where they may result in a failure to take hold or to endure. It is surely in this sense that Althusser chooses to describe aleatory materialism as ' *a philosophy of the result.*'

Rather than nominalism, therefore, with its inherently reductionist tendencies, what Althusser's aleatory materialism seems to point towards is instead a thinking of the kind of causal complexity capable of producing emergent effects.

Structure

The *overt* influence of Spinoza on Althusser's thought (and we must be careful to distinguish overt from more implicit, therefore also more pervasive influence) is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the concept of *structural cause*. Although Althusser was later to repudiate Spinoza's influence on the concept of *structure* which became the hallmark of his own earlier thought as contributing towards 'theoreticist error', which itself appears to imply some kind of break in Althusser's own thinking on structure, I shall argue here, following Goshgarian, that there is in fact sufficient continuity between early and late Althusser on structure to provide support for a further argument concerning the continuity of Spinoza's influence. As we have seen above in connection with the later aleatory materialism, the question of influence here is a complex one, since Althusser

cites the names of Epicurus, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Heidegger and Wittgenstein, along with those of Marx and Spinoza, as flowing into what he calls 'the underground current.' What I will suggest here, and argue for, is that these streams are not equal in volume, and that if it is Marx who constitutes the dominant and consistent influence on Althusser, and of course it is, then at the same time it is Spinoza's ontology which provided the conceptual apparatus which permitted Althusser to embark on the audacious project of the production of a *new theorization* of Marx.

Structuralism was of course in its heyday at the time of Althusser's early exegetical work on Marx, the time of For Marx, and Reading Capital, co-authored with Balibar. And the structuralist concept of a combinatory in which relations supervened over bearers, and which also revealed a certain reproductive constancy, exercised clear appeal to Marxist thinkers, especially so since such structures, like those described by Levi-Strauss in both myth and the exchange of women in marriage, did not presuppose the conscious knowledge of first-person social actors. Thus, like the production of surplus-value, such reproduction of exchange-relations could be enacted at a level which constituted an *unconscious system*, one that would require theoretical intervention to reveal. It is therefore no accident that that this same concept of structure should also have appealed to psychoanalysts such as Lacan who were concerned to carry out their own re-theorizations. And this intersection of Althusser's 'return' to Marx with Lacan's to Freud was of course to provide a mutually enriching one. To the name of Spinoza, then, in terms of the influences on Althusser's thought during this period, we must add the name of Lacan, the walls of whose own adolescent bedroom were themselves decorated, bizarrely perhaps, with pages from the Ethics.

However it was not the concept of structure per se which Althusser derived from Spinoza but the concept of *immanent or structural cause*, a form of causality which, Althusser argued, had the

apparently paradoxical property of being *both present and absent* within effects. That this was a difficult and elusive concept, something previously unformulated in this history of philosophical thinking on causality was something of which Althusser was acutely aware. Thus, he writes that the task⁴⁸ '...posed an absolutely new problem in the most theoretically embarrassing circumstances, for there were no philosophical concepts available for its resolution. The only theoretician who had the unprecedented daring to pose this problem and outline a first solution to it was Spinoza.'

Thus, Althusser's early thinking on structure was preoccupied with the concept of *cause* on the way towards developing a means of thinking of the social totality, or in what is now perhaps a more welcome formulation, of the *social whole*, one which could avoid the pitfalls both of Hegelian idealism and of mechanistic reductionism. What he was seeking, therefore, was an articulation of the kind of causality which could be held to operate at the level of such complex social formations, one which could protect the specificity of causal determination within sub-regions of such a formation : the concept of a *causally complex, structured whole*. And this entailed the inclusion of the mechanisms governing the *reproduction* of such wholes, and therefore too of the conditions under which they might fail to reproduce: that concept of *conjuncture* which Althusser first identifies in Lenin and which actually forms a constant companion to the concept of *structure*, a connection often overlooked in those accounts of Althusser's thought which counterpose an 'Althusser of structure' to an 'Althusser of conjuncture'. What I would like to suggest here is that the ontological model for this connection between structure and conjuncture, and therefore also between production and reproduction, was also already available in Spinoza, in the concept of 'compositional', higher-order entities, entities which are ontologically defined as *complexes-of-complexes*, therefore as ultimately irreducible to ontologically simple elements. Such higher-order entities, moreover, like all such complexes in Spinoza, are also subject to *conatus* : to the need to

structurally reproduce themselves, and therefore subject too to the uncertainty of being able to do so: the uncertainty of their own duration. In connection with such complex social wholes, Althusser identified two forms of causal thinking which he argued had dominated the ways in which they had traditionally been conceived, above all within Marxism itself. The first of these is an *expressive* causality, attributed to both Hegel and to Leibniz in which, as in Leibniz's monadology, the whole comes to be expressed without loss in and through the parts, such that the parts come to constitute a '*pars totalis*'. Such expressive causality, moreover, is revealed to be governed by a central essence which expresses phenomena and yet remains transcendent to them, constituting what amounts to 'a holism without immanence' in Fourtounis' phrase. Thus, as Althusser writes⁴⁹ such a notion of totality "... presupposes in principle that the whole in question can be reducible to an inner essence, of which the elements of the whole are then no more than the phenomenal forms of expression.'⁵⁰ Such holism, then, while exhibiting some conception of the effectivity of the whole on its elements, cannot permit the concept of the complex interaction of constituent causal series, nor therefore the concept of a social whole in which there are specific regions subject to their own, *relatively autonomous* causal determination, regions which are identifiable in Spinoza's *res singularis*.

The second 'classical' alternative Althusser describes as a 'transitive' theory of causation, one which rejects the expressive holism of the former to postulate in its place a homogeneous, 'planar' space in which pre-given elements form their own causal hierarchies, such that one element may be viewed as epiphenomenal to another, and may also interact to form causal series consisting of purely external cause-and-effect relations, and which are conceived of as composing a single master-series. Such 'transitive' causation Althusser attributes both to the mechanistic causality of Cartesianism and to empiricist atomism, but especially to those mechanistic forms of Marxism which would reduce complex social structures to economic epiphenomena. What Althusser sought

for, therefore, in the concept of *structure* was a means of thinking a complex social whole, one which retained the causal specificity of its constituent elements but in which the whole formed by the conjuncture of elements still exercised *its own proper effectivity*. Such a complex, determinate, *materialist* conception of the social whole had been remotely anticipated in Marx's own concept of *verbindung*, 'combination', similarly suggesting a whole which, while built out of constituent elements, nevertheless takes on the character of *an emergent complex*.

This concern with a materialist thinking of structure came to be theorized too in an expanded concept of *mode of production*, one which included not only *production* in the conventional and conventionally reductionist economic sense (medieval guilds as opposed to the factory-system, *par excellence*), but also elements governing *social reproduction*, such as educational, religious, legal and political institutions. And what Althusser was of course challenging here was the 'topographical' model of mechanistic Marxism in which economic base and ideological superstructure were *transitively determined*, such that elements of superstructure were always and in principle reducible to the 'underlying' economic base, thus ultimately constituting mere epiphenomena. In absorbing elements governing social reproduction into the mode of production, Althusser was not only challenging economic determinism, but was developing a *complex, non-linear conception* of the social whole, one which, in many ways anticipated developments in complex-systems theory and in chaos-theory. As we shall see later as this thesis unfolds, this challenge to the separation of production from reproduction was also to be made by autonomist Marxism.

Yet such a complex social whole remains causally determinate, in that it is defined precisely as a whole arising from the causal interaction of its elements, and so had to be underpinned by a causal theory capable on the one hand of preserving the autonomy of the constituent elements,

their own specific causality, and on the other, of accounting for the effectivity of the entire combination. And it was just such a theory of cause which Althusser began to discern in Spinoza. Thus, opposed to the alternatives of Hegelian totality in which each of the constituent elements is equivalently related to a governing essence, and a mechanistic conception in which some elements could be hierarchically reduced to mere epiphenomena of others, Althusser sought to develop a conception of a structured whole in which structure *is the immanent cause of its effects, while at the very same time such effects are immanent in their cause*. That is to say, that structure is given entirely through its effects, without transcendent remainder, and yet such structure in some sense *contains all and only its effects*. Thus, while the constituent elements of such structure are to preserve their own relative autonomy, thus to be asymmetrically related, at the same time too, one element, the economic, is to retain *relative* dominance, not in the sense of being itself determinant of the other elements in either expressive or transitive senses, but in the more causally and politically complex sense of determining *which of the other elements is to dominate within the formation*. And to this conception of a structure in which the economic is to be 'determinant in the last instance' (an instance which, Althusser cautioned elsewhere, constituted a lonely hour which might itself never come) he gave the name of a '*structure-in-dominance*.' Moreover the non-linearity which characterizes this conception of structure becomes evident too in the form of the determination which it produces. Since constituent elements preserve their asymmetrical autonomy, they are said to stand in a relation of 'contradiction' to one another, yet at the same time the combined effect of their structuring relationship on one another produces what Althusser described as effects of 'uneven development', or alternatively effects of 'overdetermination' : effects of slippage and of condensation of multiple contradiction understood in the strictly non-teleological and non-superscessive sense defined above . Thus, 'overdetermination' becomes a means of thinking the impact of relatively autonomous causal regions upon one

another: of causal series acting upon other causal series in an accumulative and recursive manner to produce *emergent effects*, effects which the theory of conjuncture postulates, may come to exceed the prevailing structure so that it may fail to reproduce.

Now there are clearly hidden ontological complexities in such a conception of immanent, structural cause: on the one hand such cause is given entirely in its effects, and yet at the same time such effects are to be contained entirely in their cause. What is clear too is the area in Spinoza's ontology from which Althusser derived this conception of immanent structural cause : from the central substance-modes relationship itself. As we shall see below in Line 2, Deleuze argues for an interpretation of the substance-modes relationship in Spinoza such that, within his own *expressive* account of Spinoza's ontology (not to be confused with Althusser's own account of *Hegelian* expressive causality, a distinction I will develop below in connection with Fourtounatis' comments), substance stands to modes in a relationship of 'ungrounding', such that substance comes to constitute, consistent with an ontology of power, a *continuous productivity of differential effects*. At the same time, however, the substance-modes relationship is a non-linear one in that if modes can be said to depend on substance, so equally can substance be said to depend on modes. And it is just this *productive, mutual ontological dependence* which Althusser comes to identify as a *present-absent cause* : present in the effects, and yet absent in that it does not simply ontically collapse into the effects themselves.

Giorgios Fourtounis, in an article previously cited, focuses on the nature of this present-absent cause, and seeks to develop certain tensions which remain within it. He begins by drawing attention to the question which Althusser himself posed of this ontological-causal dilemma: *With what concept are we to think the determination of either an element, or a structure, by a structure?*

⁵¹And it is precisely this which Althusser began to identify in Spinoza, just such a metaphysically

unorthodox mereological principle, one which itself derives directly from the fundamental principles of his own ontology of power, and which, I have suggested above, and will return to and develop later is also consistent with a conception of *non-linear emergent effects*. The discomfort provoked by what we might term this 'ontological rebus' is a persistent one, since it postulates that

".. structure does not have existence before or beyond its effects.. then is not transcendent to its effects.. [but] the field of structure's effects too has no existence prior to structure; if structure is the immanent cause of its effects, then the latter too are immanent in their cause: they always already remain in the structure, the structure contains them completely and contains only them."⁵²

What both Montag and Fourtounis suggest is that what Althusser sought to bring together in the concept of *dominant structured whole* was a principle of holism derived but profoundly distinguished from Hegelian totality, combined with a conception of causality derived from Spinozan immanence, resulting in what Fourtounis describes as 'an immanent holism'.

Now whereas for Montag the concept of 'whole' itself remains problematic, since it runs the risk of itself being taken as origin and centre of a given field, Fourtounis' defends this 'immanent holism', and argues that Althusser's project, routed through Spinoza's ontology, should be taken as '.. a bringing together of holism and immanence.. in search of an adequately Marxist concept of structure.'⁵³ It is such a concept of *structure*, then, which provides the missing term between elements and whole, so that the causality involved here becomes that of 'the determination of the elements of the whole by the structure of the whole.'⁵⁴ Such immanence, however, in Montag's view, amounts to '..a world without transcendence, a world in the pure positivity of its being .. in which every individual thing is composed of individual things, themselves composed of individual things, ad infinitum.'⁵⁵ And such an *ad infinitum*, for Montag, implies 'an infinite sum, that is, a sum which does not totalize its elements.' Thus, the very concept of 'whole' remains ultimately problematic for Montag, as does the elusive question of Spinoza's nominalism: since Spinoza's is

an ontology of complexes, not of individuals, the bedrock of particulars at which nominalist reduction conventionally arrives becomes unreachable, therefore the 'infinite sum' to which Montag refers, a sum of singularities which are themselves in turn defined as complexes.

While Fourtounis accepts the main contours of Montag's position, at the same time he seeks to explore what he describes as '... the constitutive, necessary tension of immanence itself'⁵⁶, and to offer a defence of a certain concept of holism. To begin with, he argues that '[Spinoza] immanence always refers to a kind of causality; immanence is always a relation of cause and effect.'⁵⁷ and this is so, I would add, precisely because Spinoza's ontology *is founded upon power*; in the absence of the foundational axioms which define being as the power-to-be, then as the power to produce, then as the power to be affected, it becomes difficult if not impossible to derive a *causal* understanding of immanence. Fourtounis then goes on to identify the 'constitutive tension' referred to above: 'Immanence on the one hand means the annihilation of the gap between substance and modes; but on the other, the strict identification of the two would result in the elimination of immanence itself, because we would then left with a world of 'substantial modes', given self-subsisting entities ...' I would suggest here (and will do so elsewhere throughout this thesis) that what emerges here within Spinoza's ontology may be interpreted as a version of the Heideggerian distinction between the ontological and the ontic, and therefore that those interpretations of Spinoza which find in his ontology an unqualified positivity of being also run the risk of such a collapse into the ontic. Later, in connection with Negri, we will come across this problem in connection with what I there suggest is a *process* interpretation of Spinoza's ontology, but one in which we come across another form of the same problem: something must *remain and exceed* in the substance pole of the substance-modes relationship in order to guarantee the *return and repetition* of process, and this problem is shared by expressive readings such as that of

Deleuze: the expressor cannot be exhausted in either the expressing or in the expressed: here too, something must remain and exceed, but something to which there is a general reluctance to define as a form of transcendence. And what is interesting in Fourtounis' article is that it allows us, perhaps, to begin to elaborate how we might begin to characterize this remainder.

Employing Althusser's causal vocabulary rather than Heidegger's, Fourtounis goes on to remark that in the absence of such an *asymmetrical remainder*, the very conception of immanent causality would itself collapse, from an immanent causality *between* substance and modes to a form of causality between modes tout court, which could only be defined as *transitive*.⁵⁸ Adducing Althusser's own account of the relations between idealism and materialism as a 'speculary pair' (cf. sub-section above on Idealism-Materialism), Fourtounis cautions against becoming caught up in the turnstile-effect of simply inverting idealist holism in order to produce a sheer positivity. Thus, he argues that ' The important point here is that [Spinoza's] immanence, while opposing idealist dualism, does not succumb to its subordinate other. Immanence, being the radical opponent of transcendence, is not its opposite ..' ⁵⁹

Thus, Spinoza's groundbreaking conception of immanence must be protected against being collapsed into the mere 'sequence of a given' by yielding to the same kind of specular inversion which has maintained a cyclical and stagnant dialectic in the history of Western thought. And as Fourtounis astutely points out, Althusser's insistence upon *levels of structure* itself militates against such collapse: if transitive causality requires the ontological simplicity of a single level on which to operate, like the billiard-table metaphor of efficient causality, then ' In that level reigns a transitive causality of *pars extra partis*, where nothing can be immanent in anything'. And this follows directly from the assumption of a single ontological level, a 'surface without depth' as Negri will later describe it. Thus the very concept of immanence requires the kind of ontological depth which is provided, like Spinoza's own 'order of perfection', by a variation in ontological level. And

from this Fourtounis draws the conclusion that 'Immanent cause cannot be atomistically related to its effect, but holistically to its effects – still better, to all the things of 'the field it defines.'⁶⁰

Now this productive asymmetry of substance-modes is something which Macherey has also argued for⁶¹, arguing that the relationship cannot simply be flattened into an equivalence such that the terms could become interchangeable: rather, there is a 'unity in difference', a difference which Fourtounis describes, recalling Deleuze's own account of 'ungrounding' referred to above, as 'expressed in the infinite differentiation of its effects'. Similarly too Althusserian structure is ultimately characterisable by the same 'infinite differentiation' and is thus likewise open to singularity.

What follows on from all of this is what Fourtounis terms 'immanence's requirement of an unsuppressed duality',⁶² but a 'duality' in the qualified sense of an excessive remainder within the substance-modes relation for which we perhaps lack an appropriate term, since we are forced to resort to the conceptual vocabulary of the same specular pair from which Spinoza himself sought to break free. Elsewhere in connection with Negri's account of the imagination, I will suggest the perhaps awkward formulation of a 'transcendence-within-immanence' in an attempt to describe in this case, a non-supercessive movement beyond the given. And here, Fourtounis appears to be advancing something distinct and yet related in connection with Althusserian structure, a 'duality' which marks out a certain polarity: on the one hand, a 'field of individuation, of singularities', and on the other 'a non-eliminable instance of totalisation'.

Now while Fourtounis raises a number of important ontological issues here, issues which apply equally both to Althusser's concept of structure (CSW) and to Spinoza's substance-modes relation, at the same time, as he himself admits, 'It may seem that this persistent duality restores a remainder of transcendence'. As I have mentioned above, this is a remainder which one certainly

feels at times tempted to make, since however the *productivity* of the structure-elements or substance-modes relation is to be interpreted, it appears to require asymmetrical polarity in order to be able to account for the reproduction of structure on the one hand, and for the return of ontological productivity on the other. Fourtounis is quite right, then, to draw attention to the difficulties within Althusser's idiom of the absent cause. Thus, as he puts it, '.. the cause must be present and in the very level of the effects, a cause 'inside' (or a part of) the field of the affects; in the second, the cause still has to be present, but not in the same level: it has to be transcendentally present, from 'outside' the field of the effects.'⁶³ And it is just such an apparently ontologically ambiguous quality which prompts Montag to speak of Althusser's notion of structure as involving a contradictory conjunction of holism and immanence. Fourtounis, however, as we have seen above, in another, quite distinct reading of Althusser's idiom, suggests here that a way of resolving this ambiguity is to posit 'something like a transcendent remainder , that is, the presence of a cause .. which is not present in that field, in its existential surface.'⁶⁴

Now something which is worrying here in this idea of ' a transcendental remainder' is that it seems to reinforce the original critical objections to Althusserian structural Marxism: that it defined structure in such a way as to appear to privilege its reproduction; alternatively, that in concentrating on the subtle ontological-causal issues involved in this conception of structure, and above all on the asymmetrical privileging of the productive pole, it fails to give account of the concept which I have argued is complementary to that of structure: that of *conjunction*. To his credit, this is an objection which Fortounis anticipates in a footnote, in which he refers to a substitution of ' the vocabulary of an 'internal' , 'necessary' tension .. for that of antinomy { and } contradiction..' And it seems to me that perhaps what has to be done here in connection with an appraisal of the contemporary relevance of Althusser's work is to shift the centre of gravity away from a more traditional metaphysical preoccupation with the nature of structural cause, and therefore with

the reproduction of structure (and we should not, of course, lose sight of the fact that this is *capitalist* structure which is under discussion) , and towards the equally important dimension in Althusser of an analysis of the philosophical nature of *the form of necessity* governing structure (later, Althusser speaks of the contingent-become-necessary) and also of the conditions under which it may fail to reproduce, open as it is to shifting historical conditions. And it may also be possible here to shift this balance in a manner consistent with Althusser's project of the production of a new reading of Marx outside of and beyond Hegel. Thus, abandoning any appeal to a supercessionary dialectic, if we look carefully at Althusser's conception of complex structured whole (CSWD), perhaps we can find those features which will begin to shift the centre of gravity away from the nature of the causality by which structure reproduces, thus subtly implying effects of ontological nostalgia, as I suggest elsewhere in connection with Spinoza, and (carefully, cautiously, and on *ontological* grounds) towards a more future-oriented temporality.

As we have seen throughout, Althusser defines structure in terms of its *complexity*: its ontological character as a complex-of-complexes, and as including (in some sense) determinate sub-regions which are relatively autonomous but which combine/ are combined in structure. As we have seen above, Althusser describes this combinatorial effectivity as 'overdetermined': no linear (or expressive) causal ascription is possible due to the inmixing of causal regions, and due to the fact, as Fourtounis has argued, that structure, all of structure, is immanent in each of its elements. Now if this is the case, and sub-regions are relatively causally autonomous, it may be possible to begin to view structure not in terms of some implicit cause which is in some sense always already-there, but as a subsequently stabilized but *emergent effect* of the complex interaction of sub-regions. The danger here, of course, is that this can itself be condemned as a form of atomism, in the sense that it presupposes the independence of the constituent elements prior to their taking-

hold in structure. But this is precisely what the later Althusser argues in the form of the aleatory materialism he then develops: that structure, a complex structured whole (CSWD), arises precisely as *the emergent effect* of a contingent encounter of external elements, an effect which, if it persists, will then become subject to a dynamic of reproduction, and therefore too, by implication, to a preoccupation with the nature of structure and of cause. Thus the nature of the aleatory encounter, I would argue here, implies precisely the kind of future-oriented temporality which I have suggested above may represent a kind of metaphysical reversal from ontological nostalgia, echoes and delayed effects of a metaphysics of origin and of ground, and instead founded/non-founded on an appeal to *void* (a philosophical move which as we have seen Althusser also, perhaps overgenerously, attributes to Spinoza), and which evacuates all possibility of origin, implying a temporality which must be orientated both towards futurity and towards emergence. Thus, bereft of all teleological-supercessionary effects, the only kind of futurity which such an encounter of external, 'contradictory' elements can produce is in fact an emergent one in the strict sense of an unforeseeable effect of self-organisation arising from the nature of the connections made between constitutive elements. And as we shall see later in connection with Negri in particular, this appeal to emergence also raises problems of political agency, problems which Althusser also shares, although in different ways. But the problems of agency associated with emergence are distinct from those associated with structure. Thus too, whereas Althusser in the theory of *dominant structured whole* effectively preserve a materialist conception of dialectical relationship, he does so in the form of 'contradiction', and by means of what Fourtounis describes as a 'constitutive disharmony between elements', *constitutive* in the sense that their interaction as causally independent regions will produce emergent effects, effects which will themselves, therefore, become structural, and *disharmonious* in what must now be understood in a strictly non-supercessive sense, a new, non-supercessive sense of contradiction which is consistent with Machiavelli's *antagonism*.

In this section I have investigated the theoretical character of Althusser's concept of structure, and have considered some of the ontological-causal ambiguities involved in Althusser's conception of present-absent cause, a conception which Althusser himself attributes to Spinoza. As we have seen, there is lingering controversy still surrounding this conception, above all in the kind of debate which has been taking place between Montag and Fourtounis. However what I have suggested here is that there is a paradoxical evolution in Althusser's work from what we might term *the time of structure* (in terms of which we must so to speak think *within* structure of its constituent features) and what we might term *the time before structure*, the time of its genesis, which as we have seen, is in the aleatory encounter. In a sense, therefore, we can see this evolution as a move in Althusser's thought from an emphasis on structure to an emphasis on conjuncture, understood here not only in the sense of the aleatory encounter, but in terms of a shift in philosophical emphasis from the nature of productive cause inherited from Spinoza's ontology to the nature of modal concepts such as necessity and contingency. I have suggested too here (and will return to in the closing section in which I compare Althusser's void to Heidegger's *Abgrund*), is that what takes place in Althusser's later thinking is not simply a foregrounding of contingency, but a new concern too with temporality, above all of a temporality which is oriented not towards the past but towards a futurity which I argue is implicit within the concept of *encounter*.

In the meantime we move on to another major area in Althusser's thought, early and late: that of a theory of the state, and correlated with this, that of Althusser's theory of the subject, expressed at times, following Lacan, as an *imaginary subject*, a subject of ideology, and at others, influenced by Spinoza, as a *juridical* subject, an obedient subject of law. And here we begin to touch on some of the problems of agency referred to above.

State, Subject, Agency

As we have seen in the above section, Althusser's conception of a social formation as a *complex structure in dominance* broke new ground in Marxist theory in connection with the prevailing 'topographical' model of social formation, one of base-superstructure in which complex social phenomena, social *structures*, could ultimately be reduced to the status of economic epiphenomena. In its place, Althusser's 'structure of structures' proposed a new conception of *mode of production* which was expanded to include just such complex structures: that is, elements previously theorized as functions of social reproduction. Putting this together in a succinct formula, Althusser argued that *mode of production* and *relations of production* were in fact combined. An immediate consequence of this is that *the economic and the political become effectively fused*, with the economic supervening only 'in the last instance' as a quasi-virtual determinant, a 'virtual cause'. And this leads on almost directly to the question of the capitalist state, and of its function in subtending, managing and ultimately enforcing capitalist relations, a question which, like that of structure itself, remained a constant in Althusser's thought.

Elsewhere above too (cf. **Althusser's Conjuncture**, p.17) I have tried to provide some of the political background to Althusser's 'theoretical practice', and to suggest connections between his theoretical evolution and the pressures of his own situation within a specific conjuncture: that of the post-Stalinist crisis then pervading the European Marxist left and of the rise of a new Eurocommunism which sought to root itself in a certain understanding (a certain *construction* we might say) of Gramsci. And we should perhaps recall here that Althusser himself sought to distinguish his own thought as ' a new practice of philosophy' precisely against what he referred to as ' the party of the state.'

As we have seen above, Althusser sought to defend the validity of the concept of dictatorship of the proletariat which both PCF and Eurocommunism were in the process of abandoning. And this was so, as he repeatedly argued, not because this was in any sense the imposition of a dictatorship where none existed, but precisely because there was already in place *a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie*, whose forms and effectivity he went on to analyse. Thus, in Sur La Reproduction⁶⁵, written in 1969, Althusser challenges, as elsewhere, a conception of the state according to which it constitutes a systemic distribution of power which is established over and above class-interests : a 'neutralist' conception of the state consistent with transcendentalist theories of sovereignty. At the same time, however, structural Marxists were also concerned to challenge an 'instrumentalist' counter-conception according to which the state was definable simply as the exploitative and coercive apparatus of the capitalist class, little more than another more generalized form of capitalist management, a view of state-power which, as we shall see, Negri shares in many ways in his conception of the state as *command*. It is also the view of state-power argued for in Lenin's State and Revolution. Against such a view, structural Marxism sought to develop a more complex, more sophisticated but ultimately perhaps more realistic conception of state-power, one which included *the power to produce consensual subjects*. And this required a more careful analysis of the nature of political power itself. We should note here too that in his analysis of state-power, and of its reproduction, Althusser was explicitly repudiating a Hegelian conception according to which antagonistic individuals found their *mutual recognition* in the state, such that the state itself in Hegel came to be identifiable with 'civil society'. One can already see here how Spinoza would have been deeply attractive to Althusser. As we have seen, Spinoza's ontology may itself be defined as an ontology of power, and in the social domain, Spinoza produces a version of social contract (if indeed it can be defined in such a form at all) which outlines a scenario in which power is never fully surrendered to the sovereign, and which

therefore produces a 'multitude' as an excessive remainder. In addition, Spinoza too was clearly aware from the pressures of his own times of the power of ideological institutions, above all the power of theological institutions such as that of the Calvinist orthodoxy which threatened both him and his associates. Like Negri, Althusser also found much to admire in the TTP, not only its astonishingly materialist account of the nature of prophecy, and of the theological institutions associated with the formation and *reproduction* of the Hebrew state, a reproduction which for Spinoza depended largely on the production of juridical social subjects, but also on what Althusser saw as its underlying materialist methodological innovation: a thinking of *singularities*, an example of which Althusser found in Spinoza's treatment of the Hebrew state in the TTP, and which focused on a domain of knowledge of *singular cases* which were governed not by laws, but by general constants comparable in some ways to Marx's *tendential laws*.⁶⁶ Thus, Suchting writes that 'Such knowledge [knowledge of the singular case, which is by definition non-generalisable] is possible because the singularities are 'traversed' by 'constants'/'invariants'. These are not 'general' but generic. . An example of the latter from Spinoza is his treatment of religion which is used as a means to knowledge of the Jewish people. ' Such general constants, too, are also epistemically comparable to Spinoza's 'common notions', which are similarly capable of producing more generalized forms of knowledge without compromising the irreducible character ('irreducible' in the sense of yielding real abstractions) of the singularities which they generalize over.

Thus, Spinoza's treatment of the role of religion and of law in the TTP seems to have provided Althusser with a model of the effectivity of 'superstructural' elements in the reproduction of the complex structure governing a singular social whole, and perhaps also to have informed a problematic of the production of *subjection*. And here we should recall that for Althusser ideological practice is constituted precisely by the *transformation of individuals* (*perhaps more accurately, as*

we have seen, of singularities) into subjects. This new and expanded conception of *mode of production*, then, one which brought 'superstructural' elements of the topographical model such as those of law and family-structure together with economic relations into a complex structure in dominance, thereby constituted too a mode of production which was fused with elements of reproduction. In fact this concern with *the reproduction of capitalist structure*, and of the conjunctural conditions in which it might fail, may go a long way towards defining Althusser's central political concerns. And once again, as we shall later see, these are theoretical concerns shared with Italian *operaismo*.

In thus theorizing the reproduction of structure in and through the state-form, Althusser also drew upon Montesquieu to elaborate the obscure, complex transformation of power which results at the same time in a *subjected consent* to state-power and in the quasi-transcendence of the power of the state which constitutes the reserve of exceptional force which Karl Schmitt has both described and defended: that of a 'force above the law': *a surplus-value of power itself*. And Montesquieu is nothing if not candid in this regard: as Goshgarian puts it, this version of surplus-value as a power-differential, '*relies on the very nature of exploitation*.' But this surplus-value of power follows what Goshgarian describes as 'a logic of the supplement'. Thus, 'Economic class struggle accordingly obeys {a} logic of the supplement: the relations of production/exploitation that determine, in the last instance, the complex unity of the state depend for their survival on the state that derives from them, that is, on the supplementary political and ideological relations of domination which ensure their reproduction.'⁶⁷ Thus too, this surplus 'force above the law', itself derived 'in the last instance' from the sheer but generally repressed reality of economic exploitation, is magically, ideologically transformed into a *dispositif* in which subjects see themselves as juridical subjects, and at the very same time, given the juridical prevalence of the paradigm of contract, as being the free disposers of their labour. Here, Althusser traces the early influence of Hugo Grotius and of mercantile law,

on the early theorization (rationalization ?) of the surplus of power possessed by the state. Thus, Althusser argues that Natural Law philosophers ' ..tried to find in mercantile law (the reality behind what the jurists call private law) the means by which to think both public law (the state) and the establishment of mercantile law itself under the protection of the state.' ⁶⁸And this disparity between the juridical paradigm of contract, generalized into the political imaginary of a contractualist scenario in which subjects freely surrender power, must surely justify Althusser's own complex, ambitious project which would bring Marx into systematic relationship with Freud.

It is here that Althusser deploys, clearly influenced by Lacan, a conception of the *ideological imaginary*, and of the associated conceptions of *interpellation* and of the exercise of what he terms ideological state apparatuses or *ISAs*. Concerning the first of these, in Sur la Reproduction this *imaginary* is described, as we have seen above, as ' an imaginary relationship to men's real conditions of existence' , just as in Lacan's mirror-stage the imaginary subject misrecognises itself in the ego, the illusory image of its own unity, but with Althusser's formulation therefore suggesting that one, some-one, in that lonely last hour, could have access beyond the imaginary to such knowledge. The second but related term, ' interpellation' is modelled on the experience of *being-called and responding*, as when someone is called by name or by pro-noun. Here, Althusser suggests an analogy with such direct vocation: just as we hear our name and take the referent upon ourselves, so does ideology, by no means simple in its operations, invite us to take up a position in a field of ideological meaning which allows this field to cohere, as if around us, by placing us at the centre of the field. Here, Althusser comments⁶⁹ with reference to Spinoza that ' The imagination is 1) to put the (human) subject at the centre and origin of every perception, of every action, of every object, and of every meaning, but 2) to reverse in this way even the real order of things, since the real order is explained (and not 'comprehended', a subjective if not

subjectivist notion completely foreign to Spinoza) solely by the determination of causes.' And this notion of a centred subject, of a subject-as-origin, allows us to bring the above conceptions together: the interpellated subject is one who takes up central place in a field of ideological meaning which coheres around the representational position of a free and self-transparent subjectivity. Thus, as Althusser summarises it, 'This is how the ideas that make up an ideology impose themselves ..on the ' free consciousness' of men : by interpellating individuals in such a way that they find themselves compelled 'freely' to recognize that these ideas are true.' ⁷⁰

Concerning the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs hereafter), in which such imaginary relations are concretized, Althusser variously cites the domains of law, of education and of the family. Within such domains, however, ideology does not operate simply through cognitive-representational systems of belief. Rather, they constitute what Althusser terms 'material practices' comprising such things as ritualized behaviours (the singing of anthems at the beginning of the school day), power-differentials within such domains together with varieties of discursive practice which define and reproduce them (in many social situations, for example, such as the school classroom and the police-interview room, those who wield power ask questions while those who don't answer) together with codified features of dress, language-use, gesture and so on. As we shall later see, Deleuze and Guattari will develop a similar conception to the ISA as material practice in their theory of *assemblages*, which similarly combine material with discursive practice. Thus, what the theory of ISAs as material practice does is to move the question of the effectivity of ideology out of the cognitive-affective domain, in which it might be approached in terms of belief and value-systems, therefore potentially rationally corrigible, into the domain of consenting power-relations and their reproduction *in the midst of daily life*. And here, in Discipline and Punish , we can perhaps see the extent to which Foucault is Althusser's successor in this regard. And this *free*

interpellated subject referred to above (as Marx reminds us, classical political economy represents the seller-of-labour as the subject of a free exchange) is also central to the main if not exclusive target of Althusser's critique of ideology: that of the unified figure of 'man' underpinning humanism, a figure which Spinoza also refutes as the illusory figure of ' a kingdom within a kingdom.' As suggested in the opening section of this thesis, however, this figure of a kingdom is doubly subversive and by the very same logic by which 'man' is removed as a privileged domain over and beyond the causal order of nature, so too is the figure of the king itself effectively erased as transcendent-genetic subject. This *monarchical metaphor* is one which Althusser, like Balibar, also directly associates with theology, in the form of a transcendental subject functioning as the support of ontological unity, of truth, and of sovereignty. Both Althusser and Lacan thus see the subject of ideology (the *sub-jectum*) and the theological subject as forming a specular pair: the ideological subject thus comes to be viewed as *the subject-of-a-Subject*.

As we can see, therefore, Althusser views ideology itself as constituting an overdetermined structure: it operates in each distinct field (metaphysics, religion, law, politics ..) with the combined but variable force of all of them. At the same time, however, it is a structure-in-dominance in that, like Spinoza, it is theology to which Althusser ultimately views as providing the primordial model, even where this dominance has become vestigial. Althusser suggests that in the current social formation it is in fact the educational apparatus which has taken on the dominant function of producing consensual social subjects, of naturalizing a social division of labour, and of reproducing dominant ideology across a wide range of domains. However, like the Freudian unconscious, Althusser argues that ' ideology has no history'. Here, Ricoeur comments that ' Mainly under the influence of Freud and Lacan, Althusser says that we need to pursue a theory of ideology in general, just as metapsychology is a theory of the unconscious in general, an inquiry separate from specific treatment of the expressions of the unconscious found in such particular areas as mental

illness, art, ethics, religion and so on.⁷¹ Moreover the reason why ideology has no history, Ricoeur argues, is that, just like the unconscious, it is *a permanent structure*. Now the implication of this is far-reaching, since it seems to imply that no social formation will be ideology-free, or correlatively, that no mode of production will ever be uncontaminated by social relations of production, a profoundly anti-Utopian implication which appears to erase the essentially teleological scenario of a 'free society of producers'. Ricoeur also goes on to argue that this structural analogy with the unconscious sets up a certain tension within Althusser's theory of ideology between the consequences of a concept of ideology in general in relation to particular ideological instances, or *regional* ideologies. Thus, for example, humanism itself must be taken as just such a particular ideology, therefore one whose consequences can be articulated and which can be philosophically and politically refuted. The more general form of ideology, however, comparable to the unconscious, belongs instead within some generalized relationship to the world, such as that proposed by Althusser, as 'an imaginary relationship to men's real conditions of existence.', approximating to the Freudian fantasy. Here, Ricoeur suggests a comparison with Spinoza's *imaginatio*, provided that we take the structure *imaginatio-ratio-scientia intuitiva* to represent not a supercessive sequence, but, like Lacan's own three orders, a mutually involuted structure. He then goes on to argue that in this more general sense, that of the 'imaginary relationship to men's real conditions of existence', Althusser in fact ends up repeating something very like the structure of humanism itself, and in effect reestablishes an essentialist unity.

What I would like to argue instead here is that in fact Althusser is developing something much more like a critical-ethical position, one which is in fact indistinguishable from commitments concerning ontological priority. Thus, in this more general sense of the function of ideology, ideology will exist in constant tension with scientific-causal knowledge, and must be taken,

therefore, as also pervading scientific discourse itself, just as Hegelian idealism pervades the text of Capital in Althusser's psychoanalytic-hermeneutic theory of the two-texts. However the permanence of this tension, although clearly asserting the ontological priority of scientific-causal knowledge over ideology, in its very permanence may also be enjoining something very like a critical-ethical attitude towards knowledge, something which I would like to describe as a *materialist ethics of alterity*, one which functions as a perpetual reminder that there is always available *another way of viewing the world*. Such an 'ethics of alterity', however, should be understood in a sense which is quite distinct from the sense of alterity as deployed by Levinas, for whom it is strictly situated, in a manner which recalls Kojève, within the realm of inter-subjectivity. In some ways, this *materialist ethics of alterity* which I am suggesting is also implicit within Spinoza's dual-aspect monism. In his 1998 monograph on Spinoza, in the context of a brief discussion of dual-aspect monism, Scruton suggests that the experience of listening to a piece of music may be described in different but compatible ways: as an affective and phenomenological experience, or in terms of acoustic physics. Although non-excursionary, such an alterity of descriptions, one which nevertheless involves commitment to the ontological independence of the material world, is in fact deeply inscribed within the French philosophical tradition, as Elisabeth Roudenesco has shown: ⁷² 'Foucault pointed to the fault-line separating two main currents of contemporary French thought: on the one hand a philosophy of experience, of sense, and of the subject (a line running from Merleau-Ponty to Sartre), and on the other a philosophy of knowledge, of rationality, and conceptuality (Cavailles, Canguilhem, Koyré) ..' And with specific reference to Cavailles, Roudenesco cites Canguilhem's eulogy to Cavailles in which he states that ' His mathematical philosophy was not constructed with reference to any Subject ..' and speaks of ' This philosophy, from which Jean Cavailles was radically absent ..' Now Althusser is of course firmly in the lineage of Cavailles and Canguilhem (as is Foucault), and this is reflected in his view of the imaginary

ideological subject. And what remains implicit within this distinction between the two traditions is a certain conception of the *subjectlessness* of mathematics, a position which came to be theorized in the later Lacan under the doctrine of the *matheme*, and which was also taken up in Badiou, which I will take up in detail later. But for the moment we will simply note the profound difference which sets mathematics apart from linguistic discourse: the fact that viewed simply as a semiotic system aside from wider ontological commitments concerning the referentiality of mathematics, it has no requirement of a subject-position, nor any requirement of the I-you polarity which marks out at least one side of the Saussurean paradigm: that of *parole*. As Roudensco suggests, this philosophical preoccupation, this problematic of the *subject*, has been largely a French philosophical event, albeit one which has subsequently become generalized largely through the influence of such thinkers as Lacan, Althusser, Foucault and Badiou. In some ways we can understand this preoccupation as one appropriate to a philosophical tradition which inaugurated the *cogito*, and with it the conception of a subject-as-origin, as a centre of freely chosen action and speech, transparent to consciousness. In a critical article Blunden⁷³ suggests that in his formulation of a subjected-subject, Althusser is in fact conflating two distinct and historically successive conceptions: the first denoting a conception of subservience (a *subjectum*), as in the idioms associated with monarchical sovereignty in which someone is said to be the subject of a sovereign, or subject to law, and the second, as in Descartes and in Kant, denoting a transparent self-consciousness and a sovereign individual respectively. Thus he argues that ' [these] two opposite meanings of the word 'subject' have quite different genealogies. Descartes, criticizing Aristotle, used the Latin translation of Aristotle's *hypokeimenon*, *subjectum*, to mean the substance (*substantia*) to which all attributes adhered i.e. (for Descartes) the individual self-consciousness and *cogito*; Kant went on to define this subject as the sovereign individual, the free subjectivity, a centre of initiatives, author of and responsible for his actions.' ⁷⁴ , adding that 'This meaning of the

word 'subject' has continued in use, but exclusively within philosophical discourse.', and concluding that 'Rather than an ambiguity, what we have is effectively two different words, two different concepts. The connection between the two meanings of 'subject' is historical, not logical.' But what Blunden is surely ignoring here is the profound influence of psychoanalysis on Althusser's formulation, and especially of Lacan's conception of the split, linguistic subject, the subject which is, simultaneously, a speaking subject (the subject of utterances and statements) and a *spoken* subject, a subject which is inscribed and takes up its place within a pre-existing linguistic and social-symbolic system.

What I want to suggest here in connection with what I have proposed as a *materialist ethics of alterity* in Althusser is that within such a tradition what we might call ' the subject-position' in effect constitutes a *limit* on the cognitive appropriation of the world, a limit which can and should be transgressed, giving this the force of something very like an ethical injunction. Following on from this what I would also argue is that in the thesis that 'ideology has no history', implying that, like the unconscious, it constitutes a permanent structure, and in the closely related thesis that ' the subject is ideological', Althusser is in fact appealing to a cognitive-political form of ' determination in the last instance' by scientific-mathematical knowledge. Such an *ethics of alterity*, I would also argue, one which presupposes an always greater and more complex remainder in the real, is also implicit within Spinoza's order of perfection. And within the context of the Cavailles-Canguilhem tradition, such an ethics, consistent with Althusser's own account of the critical relationship between idealism and materialism, constitutes a *counter-subjective*, and therefore counter-idealist position. At the same time the convergence between ideology and Freud which Ricoeur has argued for enables us to establish a clearer understanding of Althusser's conception of ' the last instance': just as the transgressive and subjectless character of scientific knowledge constitutes a determination in the

last instance, and therefore a quasi-cause, so does Lacan's *objet petit a* constitute just such an instance of this same kind of *indetermination* in the subject, here given once again as a form of transgression, as a violation of the subject's self-consistency. As we shall see later, this conception of *a limit to be transgressed* takes on major significance in Badiou, just as it does in Foucault and in Wittgenstein too, although in very different ways. It therefore appears to constitute a recurrent motif in contemporary philosophical thought, a motif which, while rejecting Hegelian supercession, at the same time, as we shall see, also leaves Kant behind in significant ways. Lastly, such an ethics also has its origins in de Saussure, and in the way in which he characterized the 'split' subject in terms of a distinction between *langue* (the language-system, one which is theoretically separable from speakers of the language) and *parole* (the temporal utterances and statements of a speaking subject) referred to above, one which we might also characterize in terms of a distinction between *system* and *subject*. And just such a conception of *system* may provide us with what is perhaps a term suited to a characterization of the 'last instance' in its various manifestations, including the economic, a term which, since it is more consonant with a dynamic conception of production-reproduction, is perhaps preferable to that of 'structure', which carries undeniably monolithic associations.

In the same article cited above, Blunden frames his criticism of the subjected-subject within a wider set of concerns concerning the nature of agency, and specifically of *political* agency. These are legitimate concerns, as we shall also see in our later discussion of Negri's politics of *multitude*. In expressing these concerns, Blunden poses the open question of the point at which '...coming down from epochal shifts in history, to changes in government, to events in union branches or workplaces, to deciding where to have lunch, is there room for free will?' ⁷⁵ As we shall see later in connection with Negri, Malcolm Bull raises these same issues⁷⁶ in an article in which he frames the problem of agency as one involving a contrast between a conception of agency founded

ultimately on a concept of will (as represented, for example in Rousseau's appeal to 'popular will'),and what Bull terms 'invisible hand theories', founded on a conception of large-scale emergent effects. Understood in relation to complexity (we have already seen how Althusser's overdetermination is itself an attempt to come to terms with complex, non-linear causality) and to emergence, we can see how Blunden's request for ' a dividing line' between the epochal and systemic on the one hand, and the quotidian and presumably will-governed on the other is in fact one that is impossible to supply: emergence refers precisely to unforeseeable, innovative change as systems move away from equilibrium-states and closer to what non-linear theorists describe as ' the edge of chaos.' And as Blunden himself later recognizes, such large-scale qualitative changes ' more closely resemble tidal movements than they resemble [the actions of] self-conscious, knowing, sovereign actors.' Now the problem here, I would suggest, is ultimately an ontological one: a problem of *social ontology*. And this too is something which Blunden ultimately recognizes. Thus, in his search for a 'dividing line', what he is actually seeking is some 'third position' which lies between the kind of massive, metaphysically derived collective social subject associated largely with Hegel, and the individual subject, the subject of consciousness, rights and of property, associated not only with Descartes and with Kant, but with a long tradition of British empiricism extending through Hobbes, Mill, Locke and Hume, and on, of course, up to the present. However there is precisely such a 'third position', one that emerges in the *transindividualism* associated with Althusser but more explicitly with Balibar, which we will consider in the section below. And what is postulated here is a combinatorial social subject which is an ontological alternative to 'individuals', a category which, as we shall later see in Delanda's reading of Deleuze , is necessarily associated with an essentialist and universalist tradition, one which he associates with a deeply embedded idealist tradition of hylomorphism, according to which a preceding

essence or form is imposed upon matter. In its place, Althusser's and Balibar's category of the *transindividual* proposes in the place of the 'individual', with its assumption of an already-formedness, the radical alternative of the *singularity*, derived from Spinoza's twin concepts of *ingenium* and *res singulares*, which once again is radically non-teleological, and which, as we shall later see Delanda argue, is therefore also radically *historical* in the sense of a constituent, differential history. The precise nature of this 'third way', and of the agency which is associated with it, is something we will continue to investigate throughout this thesis.

Above, I have suggested that implicit within Althusser's conception of rupture and epistemological break, there lies what I have called *an ethics of alterity*, to be interpreted outside of the intersubjective domain associated with Levinas and as pertaining instead, following Lacan, to an impossible, ruptured subjectivity, one constantly subverted by the *real*. As such, such an ethics constitutes, consistent with Althusser's view of the relationship between idealism and materialism, a *counter-subjective* position. Such alterity, as we shall later see in connection with Deleuze and Badiou, comes to be expressed through a conception of the *event* as an extra-subjective, transgressive moment, a moment which Lacan came later to refer to as a form of 'ex-timacy'. Along with Spinoza and Lucretius and Montesquieu, Althusser also had a consistent interest in Machiavelli. What I will suggest below is that in his later work on Machiavelli, Althusser found a different kind of futurity, one which was neither utopian nor supercessive, yet one which required a hazardous abandonment of the present and a projection towards a future which was without guarantee. In this sense we can perhaps find in Althusser's treatment of Machiavelli a version if not a precursor of Badiou's own theory of the event, and perhaps even of his *subject-of-truth*. And it is in this sense that I describe the appeal to alterity which in fact runs throughout Althusser's thought as eventually assuming an ethical form: it is perhaps what eventually allowed him a painful acceptance both of political defeat and of unmitigated psychic and personal disaster, and yet

which provided him too with a groundless, aleatory form of hope.

Machiavelli : Althusser's Void and Heidegger's *Abgrund*

Along with Spinoza, Montesquieu and Epicurus, Machiavelli also came to constitute a major and consistent theoretical reference for Althusser, one which, while establishing a bridge between earlier and later work, does so by revealing a shift of emphasis in the later work away from a concern with structure towards a concern with conjuncture, and along with this, a thinking of the aleatory. And it is Machiavelli, after all, who first foregrounds the aleatory in the form of the uncertain encounter of *virtu* and *fortuna*. Concerning the chronology of this reference, in an introductory note to Machiavelli and Us (MU)⁷⁷, Francois Matheron suggests the years 1971-72 for the first, primordial version of the book, followed by a substantially reworked version in 1975-76, then by an even later version which incorporated material from as late as 1986, material which is contemporary both with Althusser's (handwritten) Machiavelli, Philosopher, and with his later work on aleatory materialism. Thus, in Machiavelli and Us, we have a text which originated in the early seventies, but which was then subsequently substantially revised from the positions Althusser had reached by the mid-eighties, a text which is therefore strongly inscribed with the aleatory materialism which Althusser was later to develop. Elliot reinforces and adds detail to this chronology, as follows: 'Derived from a lecture course given in 1972, revised on and off up to the mid-1980s, and prepared for publication after his death in 1990, Machiavel et Nous eventually appeared in a 1995 collection of Althusser's philosophical and political writings.'⁷⁸ Thus, as Elliot also comments, in this shift in interest towards the conjunctural and the aleatory which Althusser's book on Machiavelli enacts, we have further retrospective evidence of 'the recurrent tension in the Althusser of the 1960s between the analyst of singular conjunctures and the theoretician of

invariant structures.' ⁷⁹ And the 'singular conjuncture' which Machiavelli's thought addressed was of course that of late 16th century Italy, a fragmented political entity riven by war between atomized principalities, and subject too to frequent foreign invasion and external dependence. Thus, Althusser saw in Machiavelli, just as he had seen in Spinoza the attempt to think the singular case of the Hebrew state, the first attempt to 'think the irreducibly singular, the concrete-historical case of sixteenth century Italy', and as in fact constituting nothing less than 'the first theorist of the conjuncture' ⁸⁰ What Machiavelli was in fact theorizing was therefore the conditions of possibility of the emergence of a new political entity: a unified national state comparable to those of contemporary France and of Spain, a state which would be capable of unifying its own internally antagonistic elements (not only the atomized principalities themselves, but also the nobility and ordinary citizens, a more generalized antagonism) and of creating a state-form which could resist foreign invasion, a state with its own proper *conatus*, a structure capable of reproduction. Such a state-form, such a theoretical object, however, within the conjunctural conditions of sixteenth century Italy, was strictly *non-existent*, thus constituting a *void*, a vacuum which Machiavelli saw as calling out to be filled not only by the New Prince, but in the formula of 'a New Prince in a New Principality'.

I referred in the previous section to a preoccupation with the transgression of limits, not only in Althusser but on other philosophers such as Foucault and Badiou. However what appears to take place in Althusser's book on Machiavelli, is that such a conception of transgression comes to be temporalised, such that the future-as-void comes to represent the transgressible limits of the present. One serious implication of this, however, is that the future then appears, in its unforeseeable, transgressive force, as being causally separable from the tendential present, thus taking on some of what Badiou will later describe as a truth-event, one which violates the business-

as-usual of the present.. Now it seems to me that there are both positive and negative aspects associated with this doctrine of aleatory futurity which emerges in Althusser's study of Machiavelli. Taking the positive aspects first, it seems that such a doctrine is in fact mounting a challenge to Heidegger. Within this context, Althusser comes to apply the concept of *void* to philosophy itself. Thus, recalling Epicurus once more, he argues of aleatory materialism that ' It is a philosophy of the void which not only says that the void pre-exists the atoms which fall in it, but also creates .. the philosophical void in order to endow itself existence: a philosophy which, rather than setting out from the famous ' philosophical problems', begins by eliminating them and by refusing to endow itself with 'an object' .. in order to start from nothingness .. We have then the primacy of nothingness over any form, the primacy of absence (there is no Origin) over presence. ' ⁸¹

The references to Heidegger seem quite clear here, and we should be aware too of a shared underlying orientation: the appeal to a sheer, unoriginated immanence, to everything which is summed up in Heidegger's own expression of ' *es gibt*', for which Althusser proposes as translation ' This is what is given', one which echoes the earlier quotation from the Tractatus: ' Die Welt is alles was der fall ist.' And this appeal to a sheer, immanent givenness also implies a further, radically materialist thesis, one which Althusser takes to characterize Epicurus' thought in particular : that of *the non-anteriority of meaning*, the non-anteriority of any logos prior to material configuration. And the implication of this, of course, is that such a 'logos' will therefore always be *post hoc* , therefore constantly subject to the critical question of whether and to what extent this 'logos' may be in fact be *ideological*. Here too we see this same materialist thesis insisting in another form: that of the ontological priority of *what is always already there*.

Along with the ultimate primacy of absence which Althusser detects both in Epicurus and in Spinoza, he also inherits from Heidegger a preoccupation with radical contingency, a contingency which for Heidegger accompanies the very possibility of metaphysics in the form of the question of

why there is something rather than nothing, a question which can only be posed subsequent to the thought that things in general, the totality of what is, might equally not have been. Here, we have seen throughout how Althusser's conception of the encounter is pervaded by contingency: encounters which may or may not take place, and if they do, may or may not endure. But this is subtended by a deeper reversal in the modal concepts through which necessity and possibility are normally thought. Thus, Althusser writes that ' .. instead of thinking contingency as a modality of necessity, or an exception to it, we must [instead] think necessity as the becoming-necessary of the encounter of contingencies.' ⁸²

However if Althusser shares these important philosophical themes with Heidegger, at the same time we should be aware that he is in fact mounting a major challenge to him, and especially to the potentially *regressive* character of Heidegger's *Abgrund*. Thus in the late Althusser the primacy of absence over presence is characterized ' .. not as a going-back-towards, but as a horizon receding endlessly ahead of the walker who, seeking out his path on the plain, never finds anything but another plain stretching out before him..' ⁸³ The figure which Althusser employs here, that of a walker on a plain (a 'plain of immanence, perhaps), is of course one intended to recall Heidegger's own more *volkisch* figure of the *Holzwege*, of forest-trails. And this figure of the forest is also invoked elsewhere in connection with Rousseau, where it likewise becomes the scene of potential encounters (equally, however, of missed encounters) and therefore of the genesis of social formations. In Rousseau, however, the contingency of such encounters is interpreted by Althusser as persisting beneath the social contract by which for Rousseau the social taking-hold is secured and maintained. Thus, Althusser argues that for Rousseau, and on a non-linear interpretation of Hobbes, the social contract is itself ' .. based on an 'abyss', and that ' .. the taking-hold induced by the encounter is, even at its most stable, haunted by a radical instability'.⁸⁴

Now what we have in the above is of course a philosophical-poetic figure, such as those employed by Epicurus, by Lucretius and by Heraclitus, not an argument; although as we have seen, the argument is there in Althusser's texts, although wide-ranging across the history of Western philosophy and in places complex, elusive and overdetermined, as I have suggested above may be the case in Machiavelli and Us. And what is presented in this highly condensed form is a rejection of the dynamic of repetition and return which is fundamental to Heidegger's account of epochal error in the comprehension and thus making-present of being. Thus while Althusser too proposes a philosophy of non-origin, non-foundation, one which, like Heidegger's, appeals not to a founding presence but to a presence-absence, there is nevertheless a profound difference in orientation: while Heidegger's historical ontology implies a potentially reactionary metaphysical nostalgia through the structure of epochal return to the question of being, Althusser's figure of the walker on an open plain on the contrary implies a quite distinct temporality, one which is oriented instead towards a sense of *an open futurity*. As Suchting comments here, 'to think of change in terms of the metaphor of 'going-back-towards' is to think of it as an approach to a pre-existing somewhere which is the goal of the return'⁸⁵. Heidegger's epochal renderings of being, therefore, would emerge within the aleatory scenario as *encounters which have failed but to which we do not look back*. And this futurity is of course consistent with what I have argued in the preceding section, following Suchting's lead, is an ontology which inscribes a certain futurity within its most basic ontological concepts, both in the form of the internal properties of objects which anticipate combination in more complex structures, and more generally in the form of a void which itself intrinsically inclines towards being. I have argued too that such a temporalised ontology, one which inclines towards the future, is also latent within Spinoza, provided that one bears two things constantly in mind: that for Spinoza the order of essences does not imply existence, and that the order of encounters, in a sense the reflex of this same principle in the realm of actual existence,

states equally that the capacities which may or may not coincide, and whose coincidence determines greater power, therefore greater joy, may or may not be realized in actual encounters. For this reason, therefore, it is the order of encounters, in a curious reversal, which turns out to be ultimately determinant. Understood in this way, Althusser's aleatory materialism may be taken as dissolving the mechanism of repetition and return which seems a necessary accompaniment to the Heideggerian *Abgrund*, and as opening up in its place *another kind of historical ontology*, one which is consistent with what Althusser terms 'the other type of history', that of *Geschichte*, '...which designates not accomplished history, but history in the present, without doubt determined in great part by the already accomplished past, yet only in part, for a history which is present, which is living, is also open to a future that is uncertain, unforeseeable, not yet accomplished, and therefore aleatory.' Such a present, however, will itself always be the present of a 'singular, aleatory conjuncture',⁸⁶ a 'tendential' present which is not subject to linear causal laws but which '.. can bifurcate under the impact of another tendency, and so on ad infinitum.'⁸⁷ Here it is as if Althusser has taken the uncertainty of the *Abgrund*, the absent-present uncertainty and anxiety of repetition and, in a remarkably Nietzschean gesture, cast it beyond all repetition and all possibility of return, into the uncertainty of an emergent future. And with this same gesture too, Althusser has reversed the nature of Heideggerian anticipation: from a 'being-towards-death' towards a desired but uncertain futurity.

Once again here, we find the clash of two logics: the logic of accomplished fact with that of the logic of the fact to be accomplished. And once again too, as we shall come across later in this thesis, we find in the signature concepts of emergence, of complexity, and also here of bifurcation, arising from the multiple interaction of causal series, a recurrent although often unacknowledged reference to complex-systems theory. And in this context, in relation to the suggestions just made

concerning the *implicitly future-oriented temporality of the aleatory*, we should note too that this is also a temporality held in common with complex-systems theory. Such comparisons can perhaps help us to make (non-reductionist) sense of a now widespread philosophical preoccupation with a faultline which appears to separate the normative present, Badiou's business-as-usual, from the impact of the radically new, the impact of the *event*. What I would like to suggest here, in closing this section on Althusser, is that such a faultline is precisely what is marked out by the concept of *emergence*, a concept which implies both discontinuity and instability, the defining properties of the aleatory, yet which does *not* imply a causal separation from the present, and which rests upon an underlying causality in the last instance.

This last feature of complex systems is crucial for any thinking of the futurity of the aleatory. As indicated above, there remains a major problem associated with Althusser's conception of the future-as-void: that is, if the future does constitute in some sense a form of non-being in relation to the (social-historical) present, and therefore as causally separable from the present, then planned action, political strategy therefore, becomes in a strict sense irrelevant, and in its absence one ends up either with a form of empty utopianism, one in which one simply lives in hope and anticipation of the transformative event, comparable to forms of religious anticipation, or with the kind of negative dialectics proposed by Adorno in which political activity ultimately collapses into a practice of endless critique, a practice whose product ends up as recuperable by the same capitalist system which is its object.

Here, Mackenzie⁸⁸ makes some interesting proposals which may provide just the conceptual resources which might serve to avoid these implications. As mentioned above in connection with Suchting's analysis of the later Althusser, a strong theme which has emerged in contemporary philosophical thought is that of the *limitedness* of the present order, whether this is understood in terms of forms of life, as it is in Wittgenstein, in terms of discursive practices, as in Foucault, or in

terms of the prevailing political order, as it is in Althusser and Badiou.. Essentially this concern with *limitedness* derives from the revival of a Kantian problematic within contemporary thought, a revival which, like the turn to Spinoza, may also be interpreted as a critical response to the ascendancy of Hegelianism, and which seeks to draw a line around what can count as valid knowledge-claims, and above all which seeks to restrain any claim towards a totalizing knowledge. At the same time, however, this problematic has undergone a major inflection, if not a reversal. Kant sought to restrict knowledge to a phenomenal domain, one which delivered up the kind of knowledge of which he understood human subjects to be capable, marking off a limit to knowledge in the form of a domain of persistent aporia, a noumenal domain which came to constitute something very like a frontier which could only be passed in the form of a quasi-religious experience of the sublime which involved the suspension of reason. The contemporary revival of this problematic, however, has on the contrary reversed attitudes towards this conception of the limits of knowledge and of experience, and has come to explore precisely the consequences of *transgression* of this limit. It appears, in fact, that if the Kantian problematic of limitedness has returned, then it has done so only under what almost constitutes an ethical *imperative* to transgress. As Mackenzie puts it, 'Where the Kantian search for rational foundations of knowledge had helped liberate people from the prejudices of feudal society, the current task is to pursue this liberatory role to its utmost extent.'⁸⁹ And along the way, perhaps under the influence of structuralism, this concern with limitedness then came to be *historicized*, above all in the work of Althusser and of Foucault. In a certain sense, therefore, structuralism both revived the Kantian problematic *and* began to explore the consequences of transgression. Mackenzie offers a possible explanation for this: he suggests that, since the beginnings of the Enlightenment, the *Aufklärung* which Kant defended, '[is] rooted in a tradition of permanent critique, an attitude whose only 'judge' can be on-going engagement

with the present'⁹⁰, then this has the consequence, as Mackenzie expresses it, that 'Kantian epistemology is turned into a *critical ontology* [my emphasis] of the present ', a version of the same *Geschichte* to which Althusser persistently appealed in his later work. In this sense the present itself ' becomes a potential site for transition and transgression rather than a barrier to thought.' And such transgression, of course, may have the effect of introducing innovation, the opening up an unforeseen futurity.

It is in this context of *Geschichte*, following Althusser's usage, that I would argue for the relevance of the concept of 'liminality' proposed by Mackenzie in connection with Foucault, as a means of conceiving the relations between present and future. Drawn from anthropology, the term refers initially to the transient, interim state involved in rights of passage, a state of being 'in-between' established categories such as those of child and adult, girl, woman and mother, and so on. As Van Gannep⁹¹ employed the term, however, it came to refer not only to socially perceived processes of life-change, such as in the examples above, but to the threshold of changes of state in general. This interpretation was further developed by Turner⁹² for whom the liminal came to represent a state which was no longer classified and not yet classified', ' a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise'.⁹³ As such, as the transiently unstructured, such a present comes to be associated with ' the unbounded, the limitless', with creative potential, but also with the confusion and uncertainty which arises from the unstructured. As Mackenzie puts it, 'the insight that may accompany the 'unbounded' and 'unstructured' position may be gained at the cost of profoundly unsettling experiences.'⁹⁴ An important implication of such liminality, moreover, with Althusserian structure in mind, is that any given structure-in-dominance will always be vulnerable to such liminality, pervaded by intersitiality, by zones of indeterminacy such that structure, on this understanding, may also be said to be pervaded by a *latent counter-structure*.

The question of *limitedness*, however, in Foucault's case the limitedness of an episteme, also raises the question of whether or not there is available some position transcending the present ordering from which it can be known and critically described, and in a sense Althusser's future-as-void represents the abandoning in advance of such a possibility. This question of a critically transcendent position, as we have seen, remained a problem endemic not only to structuralism, but to all theoretical positions which sought to advocate alternatives to the present ordering. In an idiom which runs through Foucault, Lacan and also Deleuze, this turns on the topological question of relations of *inside* and *outside*, of access to an outside, whether this is an outside to thought and conceptuality, to language and the symbolic order, or to a prevailing social system. And here we experience once again the full implications of Spinoza's ontological commitment to a world without transcendence. As Wittgenstein argued, the attempt to draw a limit implies the paradox of taking up a position on both sides of the limit: to think of a limit in fact implies also thinking beyond that limit, thinking the limit *from the outside*. As he states in the Tractatus⁹⁵, 'Logic pervades the world: the limits of the world are also its limits. So we cannot say in logic "The world has this in it, and this, but no that." For that would appear to presuppose that we were excluding certain possibilities, and this cannot be the case, since, since it would require that logic should go beyond the limits of the world; for only in that way could it view those limits from the other side as well.' And it is because of these kinds of problems that Mackenzie sees Foucault as eventually abandoning the approach of archaeology to replace it with a genealogy which both reflexively includes the theoretical observer and which effectively constitutes a 'history of the present', or as Foucault describes it, 'a historical ontology of ourselves'. Thus as Dreyfus and Rabinow express it, cited in Mackenzie, 'Genealogy accepts the fact that we are nothing but our history, and that therefore we will never get a total and detached picture either of who we are or of our history .. we must inevitably read our history in

terms of our current practices.'⁹⁶ Or, as Althusser repeatedly states in his book on Machiavelli, we must think *within the conjuncture*, and in terms of *the logic of the fact to be accomplished*. At the same time, however, the reason which eventually compelled Foucault to abandon archaeology is precisely that '...movement and change and the act of transgression are unaccounted for..' ⁹⁷, except in the form of what he termed a 'lightning movement' lacking both content and duration, comparable perhaps to the discomfort and unease which Wittgenstein described in the Philosophical Investigations as we draw through thought-experiment towards the limits of the thinkable and the familiar in relation to our own naturalized forms of life. For this reason Mackenzie sees Foucault as coming to abandon genealogy in turn, precisely because it too proved incapable of accounting for 'the experience of living in and through times of change, times of reappraisal.'⁹⁸ And it is just here that Mackenzie names what he thinks proved to be deficient both in Foucault's archaeological and in his genealogical approaches: the lack of a *liminology of the present*. Lacking such a concept, one which, like *Geschichte* and like Negri's *kairos* as we shall later see, views the present itself as transitional, and as containing emergent possibilities which a sterile presentism must necessarily suppress, then Foucault, recalling Althusser's future-as-void, must come to define rupture as a 'vacant moment', one which is effectively causally separated from the present. Here, Mackenzie argues that 'Foucault's genealogy talks of transgressing the bounds of our thought, it talks incessantly of this, but it is incapable of theorizing a way of passing the bounds of its own self-critical perspective,' and goes on to comment that 'A history of the present may be non-teleological but at the cost of a transcendental understanding of the present.' He also raises an important question: 'Is not the aim of critical thought [in fact] to surpass the present, to find ways of conceptualizing social relations that may transgress this boundary of our thought, the boundary of a transcendental present? A history of the present is scuppered by its inability to reach an immanent understanding of the present. Without this, it will never gain a critical understanding of

the future',⁹⁹ and goes on to suggest that a foregrounding of liminality may achieve just such a critical understanding of the future. Moreover just like Althusser in relation to Machiavelli, Foucault's genealogy must present the future as void, as 'a nothingness that occupies a space outside of our thought', and thus too, 'The future is not simply unknowable, but in a real sense does not exist'.¹⁰⁰ The concept of liminality, on the other hand, is to be conceived instead as an *immanent* dimension of the present, one which subverts all attempts to reify the present, to naturalise it into a form of ontic repetition by emphasizing, like *Geschichte*, that it is itself in transition, and open to becoming. Thus understood, as Mackenzie claims, 'it becomes possible to identify the field of possibilities implicit in the present.'¹⁰¹ the more so since Foucault came to conceive of social criticism as active experimentation in the production of new forms of subjectivisation and of their accompanying forms of life. Understood in this way, 'The present .. becomes a potential site for transition and transgression, rather than a barrier to thought. An 'open' present, a present conceived as being permanently in transition..' However it is not to Marx and to the concept of *Geschichte* that Mackenzie turns in order to theorise this open temporality but to Bergson, and to Bergsonian *duree*. Thus, just as Bergson analysed the present 'as a moment of duration that contains traces of that which has been and that which is becoming',¹⁰² so does Mackenzie go on to argue that there are 'virtual fractures' running through the present, 'lines of fragility in the present ' which allow us ' to grasp why and how that-which-is might no longer be that-which-is'.¹⁰³ 'The present' thus comes to be thought in its virtuality, ' as a continuous moment in which past, present and future cannot be separated from each other'. This virtuality, moreover, Mackenzie sees as permitting Foucault precisely the account of discontinuity and change which both archaeology and genealogy had been blocking : '.. the present-as-limit condemns the analysis to a repetition of the same, whereas the present-as-virtual allows for the transformations that make

discontinuity possible.' And such a virtual-present also has strong implications for the way in which we conceive of futurity, implications which have bearing not only on Foucault but also, as we have seen, on Althusser's future-as-void: 'The future is no longer closed off; no longer the site of rupture .. Rather, the future is brought into focus by the duration of our existence, our experience of constantly becoming', and such becoming thus constitutes 'the inescapable immanent temporality of our lives, becoming as always coming to presence.'¹⁰⁴ Such a temporality, moreover, establishes certain ethical-political lines of action and of practice, a practice which enacts a form of 'concrete freedom', a freedom of which "transition, transience, transformation, transgression and liminality' constitute the immanent ontological conditions.¹⁰⁵ Nor is such temporality without its own agonism, since it must refuse all those 'theoretical constructions that create a repetitive present'¹⁰⁶. I would add here, however, that such sterile presentism is not only served by theoretical constructions but also, following Althusser, by material-ideological practices which are part of a specific mode of production.

We have digressed here towards Foucault, but as I have tried to show, this digression has been motivated by a common problem in the thought not only of the earlier and later Althusser, and also in Foucault, but also, as we shall see later, in that of Badiou: a shared conception of transformational events as unforeseeable invasions from what can only be described as a disruptive and heterogeneous *outside*. Such an 'outside', however, therefore constitutes in itself a vestige of transcendence which is surely incompatible with an immanent, materialist ontology. The precise character of this anomalous 'transcendence-within-immanence' is something which I will attempt to interrogate throughout this thesis; I shall suggest here, however, that Spinoza provides us with the guidelines for such an enquiry. The 'ethics of alterity' which I have suggested above in Althusser is quite consistent with Spinoza's dual-aspect monism, but with the proviso of the ontological priority, in Althusser's terms, of 'what is always already there'. And this 'already-there',

in Spinoza, the ontological postulate of anteriority, constitutes an immensely complex causal order, one which the human subject can only progressively come to comprehend, thereby enhancing both its (our?) own power and its (our?) reverence for that complexity. What I would suggest here is that it precisely this optimum of causal complexity which can perhaps allow us to account for the transcendence-within-immanence which underlies the various forms of appeal to the irruptive event discussed above. And if this is so, then it must surely validate the 'ethics of alterity' which I have proposed, one which is also an ethics of humility: we must live knowing that we are circumscribed by a causal order which transcends us, but for which there is in turn no *outside* except our own state of knowledge. And in this sense we can view Spinoza, in relation to Descartes, as instituting an alternative 'problematics of the subject', to employ Lacan's term, a problematics of 'extimacy'.

If the above argumentation is valid, then we can see Althusser, like Nietzsche, as proposing, against the Heideggerian *Abgrund*, a philosophy of the future, one which I have tried to show has its origins in Spinoza's ontology, albeit one which must still resolve, as we have also seen above, the problem of what I have termed a certain 'transcendence-within-immanence'.

With these latter issues in mind, we now turn to consider Balibar's exegetical work on Spinoza, Spinoza and Politics, in which, as we shall see, Balibar develops out of Spinoza an alternative social ontology, one which critically rejects both social atomism, and the methodological individualism which has been its theoretical underpinning. A student of Althusser's, but also collaborator in the writing of Reading Capital, we shall see once again in Balibar's reading of Spinoza how ontology is necessarily connected to the political precisely because philosophy itself, at least as defined by its doctrines of how and why things are as they are, is always-already-political.

III Balibar: Spinoza and Communicative Democracy

As a student of Althusser's and as one of the group of students who collaborated in the production of Reading Capital, one would expect evidence of this influence, and of course it is there, not only in connection with Marx, but in connection with Spinoza as well. At the same time, however, Balibar's reading of Spinoza has its own quite distinctive character, and produces its own distinctive themes, which I will try to identify and develop in this chapter. As elsewhere in this thesis, I will try both to demonstrate the ways in which Balibar's reading remains close to Spinoza, and at the same time to identify the transformations of key concepts and themes drawn from Spinoza which are then developed. The greater part of the chapter will focus on Balibar's central work on Spinoza, Spinoza and Politics (SP)¹⁰⁷, but I shall draw on other material, such as The Philosophy of Marx (PM)¹⁰⁸, where this assists the elaboration of these transformations.

Like Negri's Savage Anomaly, which we will consider in Line 2 below, Balibar views Spinoza as being above all an interventionist and conjunctural thinker: a thinker who actively engaged in the political turmoil of the late-sixteenth century Dutch Republic in order to influence outcomes, and whose philosophical thought, therefore, is profoundly invested with political significance. Moreover Balibar identifies in Spinoza's thought a central concept of *communication*, which can be interpreted both ontologically, as issuing from the underlying axiomatic concepts as they are developed in the Ethics, and also politically, as providing a foundation for the threefold political typology which Spinoza employs in the TTP: that of theocracy, aristocracy and democracy. However to suggest that the ontological may be separated from the political runs counter to Balibar's entire interpretation of Spinoza and of his significance: ' .. the whole of Spinoza's

philosophy, insofar as it makes metaphysics inseparable from politics (this unity or reciprocal presupposition being precisely what is meant here by an 'ethic') can be understood as a highly original philosophy of communication.' ¹⁰⁹

Just what this 'theory of communication' consists in and implies, I will try to elucidate and develop throughout the chapter, reserving the final sub-section for its most explicit exposition. The chapter is therefore structured as follows, more or less following the sequence of Balibar's text :

- 1 Theology and Subjects of Law
- 2 Anthropomorphism and the Monarchical Metaphor
- 3 Power and State
- 4 Singularity and Social Ontology

Before moving on to develop this sequence, however, I would like to outline certain features of the concept of *communication* as Balibar develops it in Spinoza and Politics, and to relate these features both to Spinoza and to aspects of the reading of Althusser which I have developed above. As we shall see in the Deleuze section (cf.p. 136 onwards below), a central concept in the ontology which Spinoza develops in the Ethics, closely related to that of order of nature, is that of *composition*, according to which modal entities may combine into higher-order entities according to their dispositions, which Spinoza defines as their capacity for affect. Such capacity, moreover, as we have seen too, is also identified with their power. Thus, the ontology possesses a central characteristic which is erased by those readings of Spinoza, such as Hegel's, which seek to position him as a thinker of the absolute: that of its *dynamic and combinatorial properties*. Thus, within the ontology there are no atomistically separated entities, since all such (modal) entities in fact enter into relational complexes, which in turn enter into higher order complexes and so on through the entire ascending ' order of perfection'. And here we are appealing to two implicitly

dynamic principles. The first is *interactionism*: things do not exist outside of their relational contexts. Even within the 'order of essences' there is present an implicit relationality since any given essence presupposes and entails all others. And we should remember here too, of course, the principle of *conatus*, the drive inscribed within each thing to maintain itself in being. In Spinoza, however, as argued elsewhere, *conatus* does not license a competitive egoism, as it does in Hobbes, but instead lays the basis for an inherent sociality, since *conatus* is also compositional and expansive: we become more powerful, and therefore more autonomous, through association with others. The second feature, following Althusser, is what we might term their *conjunctural* nature. Thus, *the order of encounters* which Spinoza identifies is not, arguably, a post hoc feature of the ontology, one perhaps introduced in order to account for the contingency of lived experience, but is actually more primordial in the sense that just as there can be no distinction within an expressive ontology between expression and what is expressed, nor can there be a distinction between essences as *degrees of power* and the infinitely complex relations which they enter into with one another, since power is also defined as capacity to be affected. As we shall see in this chapter, it is precisely this often ignored *dynamic interactionism* in Spinoza which Balibar comes to emphasise, and which underlies the concept of communication which is central to his reading.

Conjuncture

As mentioned above, like Negri's Savage Anomaly, Balibar's study of Spinoza roots him in his times, and begins with a fine-grained account of Spinoza's singular historical circumstances: those of the power-struggle then taking place in late-sixteenth century Holland between the House of Orange on the one hand, and the Party of the Regents on the other. Here, I will attempt simply to sketch out the historical-political situation which Balibar richly describes, in order both to validate his account of Spinoza as an interventionist thinker, and also to provide context

for Spinoza's account of the theological imaginary which he develops in detail in the TTP and which, in the form of *imaginatio*, also underpins the claims for the emancipatory exercise of reason made throughout the Ethics. Like Negri's reading too, Balibar ranges over Spinoza's entire corpus, but perhaps tends to emphasise the TTP and the incomplete TP over the Ethics. Moreover it is clear that whereas the Ethics constitutes the more developed form of Spinoza's ontologically derived ethics, it is the TTP which carries signs of greater urgency, and which constitutes the more obviously interventionist text. All of Spinoza's texts, however, share a common agenda, that of ' .. an urgent need to reform philosophy so as to be able to eliminate, from within, theological prejudice, ' the relics of man's ancient bondage " There is an urgent need to defend philosophy against the forces which threaten its free expression. There is an urgent need to analyse the reasons for collusion between the principle of monarchical authority and religious fundamentalism, which has mobilized the multitude against the interests of the nation and therefore against their own interests.'¹¹⁰ But this agenda also has deeper dimensions, dimensions which closely connect the TTP and the Ethics, and which seek to explain the very nature of human happiness and unhappiness, which for Spinoza consist ultimately in questions of power. Thus, ' there is also an urgent need to understand the kind of life that fosters those feelings of impotence in which the spurious ' second nature' of theological illusions has its origin.' ¹¹¹

Against the background of the Thirty Years' War, fought principally under the banners of just such 'theological illusions', and which had raged furiously all the way across Europe, the Dutch Republic was divided into two opposing camps, succinctly characterized by Balibar as follows: 'The House of Orange-Nassau, descended from the former counts of the country, traditionally held both command of the army and the executive function of 'stadtholder'. Alongside them were a group of bourgeois 'Regents' who were responsible for the administration of the cities and for

managing public finances.¹¹² Thus, as in England, a complex array of antagonistic class-forces was forming up in Holland: on the one hand a traditional landed elite who had wielded sovereign power, and on the other an urban commercial bourgeoisie growing both in prosperity through international trade and also in political confidence. Balibar characterizes this opposing array of forces as follows: ' The Princes of Orange were in the first instance, the leaders of a small, landowning aristocracy in the inner provinces, while the Regents belonged to an extensive bourgeoisie made up of city-dwellers, ship-owners, industrialists and merchants.' ¹¹³ And extending away between both of these camps, there stretched what Hobbes was the first to term *multitudo* : the multitude. It is Balibar's claim that it was Spinoza, uniquely in the context of early modern philosophical-political thought, who identified this nominally powerless mass as being in fact ultimately politically determinant, which for Balibar singles out Spinoza as the first political theorist of mass-movements.

Within the Dutch context, however, unlike elsewhere where Protestantism had provided a religious-ideological rallying-point for these new urban-commercial class forces, in Holland it was precisely orthodox Calvinism which provided the House of Orange with its ideological apparatus. Thus whereas the Remonstrants were allied with the Party of the Regents, Gomarist Calvinism was closely allied with the House of Orange. And these opposing theological doctrines had profoundly political implications. The Remonstrants insisted on a distinction between inward and outward religion, the former constituting the foundation of true religion and informing an invisible community of believers, an implication of which was a clearly secular conception of church-state relations, with inward religion transcending both the power and the reach of the state. Gomarist Calvinism, on the contrary, argued for a doctrine of 'double allegiance': both to the political sovereign and to the prevailing church. Such an identification of powers, however, had sinister implications which Balibar identifies as follows: ' In practice.. the pastors who came out of the

universities insisted that municipal and State authorities should keep a close eye on those heresies which lay in wait for their flock . Thus a religious denomination (i.e. Calvinism) that in other contexts was at the centre of resistance to absolutism came to exercise an essentially repressive function in Holland.' ¹¹⁴ Spinoza himself was associated with an Arminian sect even more renowned for its radicalism: the Collegiants. The Collegiants were Anabaptists, and followed an organizational model of free assemblies of believers, which they saw, somewhat like the Diggers and the Levellers of the English Civil War, as being generalisable as a form of egalitarian social and political organization. The Collegiants, moreover, again like the Levellers, were evangelical rather than quietistic, and their doctrines anticipated a general social transformation. Such debate was pervasive, extending too into the Jewish community of which Spinoza, as a Marrano Jew, was born part of, a debate whose progressive arguments came to influence Menasseh bin Israel, teacher of the young Spinoza.

At the same time, as Balibar cautions, we should avoid the error of an 'expressive', Hegelian reading of this conjuncture. Thus, it is of course not the case that Spinoza was a doctrinal Collegiant. Rather, it was the case that the nature of this widespread theological-political debate, itself a symptom of complex, accumulating class-antagonism, both provided organizational form for complex political interests, and drew attention to the close relationship between theology, and the ' theological corporations' in Balibar's phrase, and the distribution of political power.

Here, Balibar draws careful attention to the (overdetermined) heterogeneity of interests which gathered around these nodal theological positions. And here, his close historical analysis, like that of Jonathan Israel, must surely dispel the doxological image of Spinoza as an aberrant outsider within an otherwise orthodox philosophical tradition, a sheer exception. Instead, both readings present Spinoza as on the contrary a man who was part of a growing community of like-minded

thinkers, albeit one who was exceptional in his intellectual courage and range and in his analytical brilliance. As Balibar expresses it,

.. the philosophical demands made upon Spinoza by those around him brought together three very different kinds of expectation. Even if these different demands were sometimes made by the same men, they remained fundamentally heterogeneous, corresponding to the imperatives of science, of non-denominational religion and of republican politics. Not only was Spinoza aware of these various demands, but he displaced each of them in turn, never responding any of them according to the expectations that lay behind them. ¹¹⁵

Thus it is that for Balibar, Spinoza's thought is characterized by a *logic of displacement*, one which, *contra* Hegel, and like the antagonistic circumstances themselves in which Spinoza lived and wrote, never attained a synthesis. One final detail must be added to complete this sketch of Balibar's account of Spinoza's circumstances of writing. Like Negri, he draws attention to the fact that Spinoza's time of writing was precisely that of primitive capitalist accumulation, a 'Golden Age' of maritime-commercial expansion which Negri has described as instilling in the Dutch urban commercial bourgeoisie 'the utopian lure of the capitalist market', and which resulted in the growing confidence and power of those forces gathered around the Regents' Party. The growth of this maritime trade was also significant in another sense: Althusser has argued that it was maritime law, and above all the laws defining and governing the nature and disposability of property, which was to provide a primordial model for the conception of social contract which was to have such long-term influence as a theoretical explanation of the inequalities in the distribution of power within representational political systems.

Theology and Subjects of Law

As former student and close collaborator of Althusser's, it is unsurprising that we should find evidence of an Althusserian understanding of the role of ideology in Balibar's account of Spinoza's intervention. As we have seen above, influenced by Lacanian psychoanalysis, Althusser speaks of the effect of ideology on a social subject as an act of 'interpellation' by which, through mechanisms of identification, the subject is called upon to assume a subject-position around which a given ideological discourse takes on coherence. With particular reference to religious belief, such 'interpellation' presupposes the existence of a primordial Subject, 'God', who is taken to be the source of this calling-forth, and which provides a model for various agentive qualities: will, intentionality, judgement and so on. However 'interpellation' engenders subjects in a second, important sense: as subjects of *obedience*, as already 'subjected to the Subject' as Althusser puts it, analogous to the structure of Lacan's 'big Other', which for Lacan is a figural displacement of the linguistic order itself. Thus, interpellation does not only engender a subject who takes her/himself to be a source of intention and action, but one which at the same time is *always-already-subjected*. As he puts it in *Lenin and Philosophy*, interpellation defines a subject which is already '... a subjected being, one who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission.'¹¹⁶

Thus the effects of interpellation, of ideological subjection, are contradictory: the apparently agentive and voluntaristic subjectivity which it institutes is actually subtended by a more profound passivisation. And there is a remarkable convergence here between Althusser's account of the activity of subjection instituted by ideological discourse, one which Balibar inherits, and Spinoza's *anthropological* account of the generalized function of religion. Thus, Spinoza writes that

Scripture demands nothing from men but obedience, and condemns not ignorance, but obstinacy. Furthermore, since obedience to God consists solely in loving one's neighbour ... it follows that Scripture commands no other kind of knowledge than that which is necessary for all

men before they can obey God according to this commandment ... ¹¹⁷

Here too, then, we see that for Spinoza, systems of religious belief act in such a way as to produce subjection, above all subjects who are obedient to a system of law, *juridical subjects*, and for Spinoza there can be no social formation, no sociality, without a system of law which achieves such widespread obedience. Balibar comments here as follows:

The fundamental dogma of true religion is, in fact, that love of God and love of one's neighbour are really one and the same. ... But the salutary value of charitable action towards one's neighbour is not, on this theory, the result of a choice between good and evil, but of simple obedience. Moreover, Spinoza leaves no place for the idea of repentance, nor of that of 'redemption' from original sin. In fact original sin is entirely eliminated from his scheme; it is nothing more than an imaginary representation that accompanies a man's actions when they are detrimental to the man himself. ¹¹⁸

And so the *anthropological function* of religious systems, properly understood, Spinoza argues, is the production of obedience to law, of juridical subjectivity, but this is an obedience which does not remain indifferent to the content of law; rather, that law must be seen to pursue the general human utility of social justice and therefore, by implication, of equality.

Anthropomorphism and the Monarchical Metaphor

Following on from Spinoza's candidly anthropological account of the social function and utility of religious belief as instituting subjection to law, Balibar goes on to develop an account of Spinoza's pervasive anti-anthropomorphism. He therefore raises the question, having established this essentially anthropological account of religious law, of why Spinoza does not just state that salvation is simply the fruit of obedience to Law, and suggests that: 'If Spinoza does not adopt a more direct method, it is because the idea of a 'rule for life' still contains within itself the notion of a law. In translating 'the eternal decree of God' as 'the universal laws of nature', we have merely

shifted the notion from one ground to another. Until we are actually able to shed some light on the meaning of this metaphor ..., we will never be able to break out of the vicious circle of theology.'¹¹⁹

Re-reading the predestinarian position of orthodox Calvinism in the light of 'true religion', Spinoza tells us that the laws of nature ' .. are not adapted to religion (whose sole aim is the good [*utile*] of man) but to the order of Nature as a whole, that is, to God's eternal decree. This truth seems to have been glimpsed by those who maintain that man can sin against the revealed will of God but not against the eternal decree by which he has pre-ordained all things.'¹²⁰

And in this re-reading of predestination Balibar discerns a further, crucial move by Spinoza: he understands Spinoza as conceding to the Calvinists that they had glimpsed a fundamental anthropological, and we now know psychoanalytical truth: that of the disproportion between human powers and the power of nature as a whole, on which human beings depend. And in response to this disproportion, Spinoza thus views all theologians as filling the void of this discrepancy in power, again in a manner that anticipates Lacan's mirror-stage, by projecting the fundamental illusion of a sovereign, anthropomorphic god, one perceived through a monarchical metaphor as ruler and law-giver, and as disposing through divine will over human destinies. As Spinoza himself tells us, with reference to the discrepancy of power referred to above, theologians had come to project a fundamental illusion: they had ' ... imagined God as ruler and law-giver, king, merciful, just and so forth; whereas these are all merely attributes of human nature, and not at all applicable to the divine nature.'¹²¹ Thus too, the effect of this theological projection, this anthropomorphic imaginary, was to fantasise a second source of power over and against that of nature. Spinoza tells us¹²² that they (the theologians) imagined ' two powers quite distinct from each other, the power of God and the power of Nature.'¹²³ But the power of God here came to be formulated within a strictly political metaphor: that of the power [*imperium*] of a royal potentate taken as the source of

law. Later, in the Ethics, Spinoza will suggest too that this imaginary paradigm of an autonomous authority and its correlate of obedience also pervades our affective life, such that the body comes to be represented as subject to the authority of the soul, a paradigm which he sets out to critically undermine. Moreover within this dualistic illusion of a split in powers, the history of Nature came to be re-interpreted according to a figure of *conquest*, one invested with moral qualities such that the 'conquest' of nature came to appear as a species of moral victory of good over evil. This monarchical metaphor, moreover, itself a version of the unnecessary and contradictory doubling of a 'kingdom within a kingdom', remained common across theological differences, and as Balibar puts it

.. the image we make is nothing more than an anthropomorphic transposition, attributing to God patterns of behaviour drawn from our experience of relationships between men. In so doing, these patterns are idealized, stripped of any human limitation or 'finitude'. By conceiving God's will as an example of 'free will', a power to do or to refrain from doing, to give or to refuse, to create or to destroy ... theologians and philosophers had created a fantastical picture of the 'psychology of God'.¹²⁴

And Balibar concludes here that the monarchical metaphor, the voluntaristic fantasy of power dreamed within a natural condition of highly constrained powers, becomes for Spinoza the prototype of the *imagination* in general, and of an inadequate (in the specific Spinozan sense of the term) understanding of natural relationships. And here too we can see at work the doctrine of the three orders of reason which we have considered previously in the context of the Ethics, and an instance of the critical and regulative function of 'adequation'. Thus, Balibar writes, striking a recognizably Althusserian note, that this fiction (i.e. the monarchical metaphor) '... derives from our common experience that it is impossible to live without desiring salvation (happiness, security, knowledge) and equally impossible to have immediate knowledge of real causality'.¹²⁵ What is crucial here, crucial to the activity of adequation, is the absence of *immediate*

knowledge of causality. Like Althusser's three Generalities, and like Marx's own complex hermeneutics, knowledge begins in illusion, immersed in metaphors such as that of the theological monarch, but must dispel these, which therefore form in a sense its primary material, in order to *actively produce* a valid, causal and empowering understanding of our real situation. That is to say, following Althusser, that reason constitutes in itself *a form of production*. Nor should we be under any illusions concerning the ideological power and the political consequences of such metaphors. Balibar writes that this entire theological imaginary, organized around the central monarchical metaphor,

... brings with it benefits which are by no means secondary from the point of view of the theologians, for it casts them in the role of indispensable intermediary between God and man. ... What began as an indirect benefit becomes in time an end in itself, as the theologians seek to establish their power, even if it is only the power (which may seem slight, but is, in practice, exorbitant) to teach everyone what they must think and do at every moment if they are to obey God. ¹²⁶

And there is another, far-reaching implication, one that ends up reinforcing the sense of powerlessness which was the existential source of the monarchical metaphor itself: 'Every sacred figure of power is an expression of man's inability to see themselves as fully responsible for their own collective salvation.'¹²⁷

In the TTP, Spinoza works with a threefold typology of political systems which includes theocracy, aristocracy and democracy. His analysis of theocracy, however, and therefore by implication of theocratic ideology, is not a wholly negative one. This adds a subtlety to his critique of theocracy since it thereby offers an explanation of its historically proven popular appeal. Thus, although theocratic ideology is the source of the monarchical metaphor, together with the consequences we have analysed above, at the same time it offers a kind of 'democracy of the imaginary'. Here is how Balibar summarises this contradiction: '... on the one hand, theocracy is

equivalent to democracy: in handing over all power to God.[On the other] the Hebrews, were keeping it away from any particular man or men. They were all equally involved in their 'alliance' with God, and despite their barbarism, constituted themselves as citizens, fundamentally equal before the law ...'¹²⁸ But this is so, however, precisely because '... it dramatizes the displacement of collective sovereignty onto 'another' stage.' And in the monarchical metaphor Spinoza sees an evolution from this primitive and projective form of sovereignty into actual monarchical forms, which in terms of the threefold typology, Spinoza defines as aristocratic, a conflation which is perfectly consistent in class-terms. While this 'place of God' may be occupied by prophet-legislators such as Moses, or by historical monarchs, it must retain a certain ambivalence. As Balibar puts it 'The place of God (*vicem Dei*, TTP 256- translation modified) must both be given a material form and left vacant if it is to house an authority that can transform the rules of social life into a set of sacred obligations.'¹²⁹ Thus too, whatever human figure will come to occupy this central place in the political-symbolic, it will therefore express this ambivalence by appearing to be at the same time *both* real and symbolic. And this also accounts for the mystifying power which monarchy can continue to possess up to the present: as a human individual, any given monarch will possess an ultimately insignificant amount of power in relation to the multitude of social subjects, and in spite of their purported divine support, dynasties can therefore be overthrown and replaced, as they have been throughout history. And that is precisely why they must emphasise instead the mystifying role of the symbolic, above all in the form of their divine right to rule. Arguably, however, a remote but still recognizable form of this ambivalence between real and symbolic persists into representational forms of democracy, above all in the ways in which 'representative' political leaders go through cycles of media-driven idealization followed by critical and sometimes scandalizing exposure, thus triggering a new cycle.

Stavrakakis too refers to such a central 'locus' in the political-symbolic, but does so, following

Machiavelli's usage, in the figure of the Prince.¹³⁰ However here he raises the interesting question of whether such a locus can become an 'absent centre', consistent with the 'politics of aporia' which he advocates. What Stavrakakis appears to elide here, however, is that such an 'absent centre' nevertheless *remains a centre*, and so this central absence can take on a power of lack and of limitation which in real terms renders this 'new modernity' incapable of providing *positive* content to representational-democratic regimes..

There are a number of particularly striking themes so far in Balibar's reading of Spinoza. Firstly, there is the contemporary relevance of Spinoza's deconstruction of theological illusion and will-to-power to a conjuncture in which theology, once again, seeks not only to constrain knowledge (the continuing attempts, well supported by the Republican right in the US, to subvert evolutionary biology in the name of 'creationism' is surely an instance of this), but to disseminate its values throughout civil society so pervasively as to make opposition to them an act of fundamental civil disloyalty, in a manner analogous to the attempts of the orthodox Dutch Calvinists in Spinoza's time. Similarly too we see multiple bids for power by theology in the Islamic world in the various spiritual-military leaders who continue to make absolutist claims, and who therefore appear to be antagonistic towards the Spinozan communicative ideal as defined by Balibar: *as many people as possible thinking as many things as possible*. The second concerns the ways in which Balibar's exegesis draws consistently on psychoanalytic (and especially Lacanian) insights and manages to deploy these relevantly on a social-political scale. Thus, for example, both displacement and condensation run through his reading of Spinoza's text, the former accounting for the overdetermined nature of the Ethics vis-à-vis the demand of Spinoza's several constituencies, the latter for the manner in which a dominant metaphor (the monarchical metaphor) can pervade an entire ideological discourse, operating at multiple levels and with far-reaching psychological,

existential and political consequences. Here is surely a very concrete instance of what Jameson would describe as an articulation of the 'political unconscious'. Moreover as Balibar clearly demonstrates, concepts which have become psychoanalytic commonplaces seem actually to be prefigured in Spinoza, above all in his theory of the affects: imaginary identification (*affectuum imitatio*), ambivalence ('vacillation of mind ') and the fear of difference, the fear that others may possess a love in which we cannot share. And we have seen too, in the above account of the effects of the religious imaginary, how effectively these are deployed in the analysis of the power and the effects of religious ideology.

Lastly, of course, there are the twin themes of power and powerlessness which run through Spinoza's various philosophical texts, which appear both in the form of the subjected-subject analysed elsewhere above, and which in effect bring together ontology, psychology and politics. As Balibar astutely remarks, in Spinoza unhappiness becomes a *political* problem.

Power and the Suturing of Powerlessness

As we shall see later in this thesis, Badiou argues, at least at a certain point of development in his thought, that Spinoza's ontology, since it cannot allow a place for the void, in turn leaves no place for a subject. Against Badiou, I will later argue that there are at least two places for a subject in Spinoza, and one of these is located precisely at the transition between a state of lesser to one of greater power, which itself can be understood, in Badiou's terms, as ' a place for the void', a void of power which marks out the site of an emancipatory subject. Such an emancipatory project lies at the heart of the Ethics, and turns, as we have seen above in connection with Althusser, on the central distinction between *imaginatio* and *ratio*, and on the transformation of passive into active affect. In the ethical domain (and for Spinoza, perhaps uniquely, there is properly speaking no other), Spinoza assures us, what is beneficial is that which promotes the sense of power and

of range of action, and conversely what is malignant is whatever engenders and perpetuates a sense of powerlessness and helplessness. It is this general 'utility' which underlies the general theory of the affects developed in Ethics Book 5, and which informs his theory of religious sadness in particular. Lastly, we have seen above how the *conatus*, the drive towards self-perpetuation inscribed within existents, in the social domain becomes a drive towards association motivated by the *multiplication* of powers. It is due to this common preoccupation with a naturalism of power that Nietzsche, never one to cite forebears lightly, came to see Spinoza as a kindred spirit.

Just the same sort of preoccupation, I shall now argue, is present within Lacan's psychoanalysis, and it is perhaps this aspect which has made Lacan's thought so attractive to Marxist thinkers such as Althusser, Jameson, Badiou and of course to Balibar himself. As I have suggested elsewhere, there appear to be tantalizing parallels between certain aspects of Spinoza's thought and aspects of Lacan's, and I have suggested that the link between the two is provided both by Althusser, and by the mounting evidence of Lacan's own youthful enthusiasm for Spinoza's Ethics. Thus, for example, Spinoza's three orders of reason exhibit certain analogous connections with Lacan's 'registers' of *imaginary*, *symbolic* and *real*, and I have suggested what these connections might be. In connection with the TTP, however, a further connection suggests itself, one concerning the relationship between power and powerlessness in the imaginary, in both theological and political senses. In the form of the 'mirror-stage' Lacan characterizes the imaginary as a 'misrecognition' ('*meconnaissance*') through which the human infant (the '*hommelette*' as Lacan puns it), misidentifies with the body of the mother who satisfies her/his needs and interprets, in the stage of the 'holophrase', the infant's words and desires, thereby positioning the infant as one capable of intending a meaning at a time when this is impossible. And here Lacan appeals to the biological fact that the human infant, unlike the young of other species, lacks motor

co-ordination, physical autonomy, for several years after birth, and therefore remains in a state of passive dependence on a care-giver until such autonomy has developed. Such 'misrecognition', however, becomes the very basis for all later identifications: that is, a basis founded in an essentially narcissistic attempt at fantasized incorporation. In particular, it becomes the basis for the subject's attempts to establish a sense of self-unity and self-presence as a 'speaking subject', one that is doomed to failure since it rests on an attempt to cancel out, or as Lacan puts it to 'suture' a fundamental split: in this primordial case, between the immature body of the infant, pervaded by drives over whose satisfaction the infant has no control, and the body of the mother who necessarily mediates the drives.

In the preceding section, we have seen how Balibar implicitly employs Lacanian insights to elucidate Spinoza's remarkable deconstruction of theological illusion. Thus, for example, with reference to what we have termed the 'monarchical' metaphor, we have seen how originating in perceived powerlessness, the theological imaginary divides nature into a second illusory kingdom, one presided over by an all-powerful subject, which then comes to oppose voluntarism and will to the necessities of the natural order. We have also seen that this 'monarchical' divinity in turn has the effect of engendering juridical subjects, subjects of obedience to law, comparable to Lacan's 'Law-of-the-Father'. To employ Althusser's phrase once more, the theological illusion has the effect of engendering 'subjects of a Subject'. On the one hand, then, an all-powerful Subject, a 'big Other (*grande Autre*)' in Lacan's terms, on the other, passive subjects of obedience but with investment in the 'big Other' as potential source of satisfaction of need through prayer and supplication, in which, as in Lacan's infantile scenario, there is a blurring and confusion of desires through mechanisms of identification. The structure of Lacan's primordial misrecognition appears here to be remarkably similar to the subtle yet anthropologically direct ways in which Spinoza seeks to dissolve the royal metaphor, and the entire metaphysics of voluntarism and

transcendence which it trails in its wake. It seems to me that it would not be stretching a point to describe the metaphor itself as a kind of primordial 'suturing' of the sense of powerlessness, and like the infant's fantasized incorporation, as a form of misrecognition within the causal order.

Power and State

One distinctive aspect of Balibar's reading of Spinoza which is that of the ways in which he interprets Spinoza's doctrine of the nature of the state and of its power. Here, Balibar begins by identifying in the TTP what appear to be a set of contradictory claims. He writes that

Individuals, according to Spinoza, cannot withdraw their active participation from the State to which they belong without themselves being classed as 'public enemies', with all the risks that entails (cf. Chapter XV). Yet at the same time, any State that wishes to guarantee its own stability must allow the individuals who live in it the greatest possible freedom of thought and self-expression (cf. Chapter XX). How can these two be reconciled? One seems to derive from an absolutist, not to say totalitarian, conception of the State, while the other is apparently the expression of a fundamental democratic principle.¹³¹

Balibar suggests that Spinoza moves beyond this apparent contradiction by means of a distinction between thought and judgement on the one hand, and freedom of action on the other. Evidence of this is given in TTP 293:

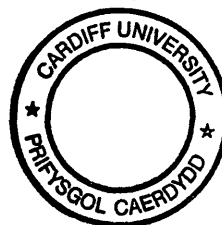
... since there is considerable diversity in the free judgement of men, each believing that he alone knows best, and since it is impossible that all should think and speak with one voice, peaceful existence could not be achieved unless every man surrendered his right to act as he saw fit. Thus it was only the right to act as he saw fit that each man surrendered, and not his right to reason and to judge.

We can see here clear reference both to natural right and to the surrender of power which we have discussed previously in connection with Hobbes' conception of sovereignty, and which ultimately

underlies all social contractualism. As in the Hobbesian doctrine, then, so in Spinoza's there is a surrendering of rights and of powers. However as stated previously too, there are nevertheless major differences between Hobbes' and Spinoza's versions of social contract and between their consequent conceptions of sovereignty and of the transfer of power. Balibar also suggests that Spinoza seeks to find a way out of this apparent contradiction between an 'absolutist' conception of the state and a democratic conception of the rights/powers of individuals by making a series of finer distinctions. The first of these concerns a definition of *agency*. Thus, Spinoza writes that 'From the fact that a man acts from his own decision, we should not forthwith conclude that his action proceeds from his own right, and not from the right of the government'.¹³² Here, then, concerning those actions which are in conformity with the law, Balibar takes Spinoza to be suggesting that it is not, as in the atomistic paradigm, individuals who are the author of their actions, who possess *agency*, *but in some sense the state itself*. As Balibar puts it, '... the state is (here) the supposed author of all actions that conform to the law, and all actions that are not against the law can be said to conform to the law.'¹³³ (*SP*, 26) This is a fascinating proposition, since it appears to force on us a radical revision of the concept of political agency, one that in effect appears to abolish the transcendence of the state. Thus, any given social multiplicity which has combined its *conatus* thereby multiplying its powers, and which acts in conformity with established institutions and established law, is here taken to be *coextensive* with the state, and possesses agency insofar as it is so coextensive. If so, then such a revision might be shown to be consistent with other aspects of Spinoza's political theory, especially that of the inalienable nature of power.

A further distinction concerns restriction on the range of permissible opinion, since, as Spinoza acknowledges, there are occasions when speech can itself constitute a form of political action. In effect, this concerns a definition of seditious opinion. And here two considerations enter: that of the right of any given state to seek to perpetuate itself (a consistent application both of the

identification of right with power, and of the general principle of *conatus*), and the question of the systemic validity of the state itself, the question of whether it is or is not 'corrupt', whether or not it operates to the optimum utility of its compositional members. Thus, in terms of the question of the *conatus* of the state, any given state can be said to have the right, consistent with its own self-perpetuation, to define those opinions as seditious which tend to 'dissolve the social covenant' , and which call therefore for a new covenant and for a new state-form, a new social composition. However, following from the question of systemic validity, only a healthy state, in Spinoza's eyes, will be able to sustain itself and produce obedience to the laws which ensure its perpetuation. Important political issues are at stake here, not the least of which is the right to rebellion, the *ius resistentiae*. And here Balibar suggests a highly original interpretation of Spinoza's underlying thesis. To begin with, he argues that, in the initial separation of opinion and action, Spinoza does not intend to reproduce the separation into private and public spheres on which social atomism rests, such that opinion belongs to the private domain while action belongs to the public. Such a separation, Balibar argues, involves excessive weakening both of the 'right' of the individual and of the state. He writes ' The individual is thus unduly limited because the essential area in which he should be able to exercise his freedom of opinion is in the area of politics itself. The state is unduly limited too, because its control should extend directly or indirectly, to all the different relationships that may exist between men, and thus to all their actions ' ¹³⁴ Initially, this would appear to contain worryingly totalitarian implications, since it appears to assert the state's 'right' (power) to reach into all areas of the lives of individuals. And in so doing, it also appears to threaten the separation into civil and political society, which has become virtually naturalized within political discourse. The underlying thesis, however, in Balibar's reading, is actually free of the former sorts of implication precisely because its purpose *is precisely to challenge the civil/political*



society distinction itself . He writes that

.. what Spinoza wants to prove is a much stronger thesis (and a much riskier one too): that the sovereignty of the State and individual freedom do not need to be separated, nor indeed conciliated, because they are not in contradiction (*ibid*, 27) . The contradiction lies precisely in the attempt to set them up in opposition to one another. ¹³⁵

And such an opposition, of course, is central to all liberal models of democracy, and to the theories of negative liberty, such as those of Berlin, which they articulate. Central too, almost tautologically, is this quasi-ontological separation into private and public domains, one that is progressively naturalized in contractualist and representational political theory.

With Spinoza, then, a very different paradigm of sovereignty is being proposed, one which invites us to think beyond a whole series of oppositions which rest ultimately on the assumption, articulated by Hobbes in particular, of the ultimately transcendent nature of state sovereignty. Thus, as we have just seen, we are invited firstly to think beyond the separation into public and private spheres, a separation, as we have seen, which is crucial to the entire project of Lockean democracy, and founded essentially on the 'right' to private accumulation within a security guaranteed by social contract. And this entails too thinking beyond the naturalized separation into civil and political society. This, as we shall see, has major implications both for subsequent political theories deriving from interpretations of Gramsci, and for their critique. However there are other oppositions too which Spinoza begins to move decisively beyond. Thus Kochin (2001), for example, in a combined review of Spinoza and Politics and of Montag's Spinoza Our Contemporary, suggests that Spinoza also undermines the metaphysical separation of the *natural* and the *institutional*. ¹³⁶ Based ultimately on the ontological principle of compositionality (and we can see here once again just how powerful Spinoza's ontology is, and how pervasive in its implications) the order of nature and the social order alike, bound by this common ontology, are to

be viewed as ‘.. complex bodies acting and suffering according to the organization of their parts’¹³⁷. Nor is it the case here, as with other metaphysical pairings, that one term is being subordinated hierarchically to the other, the social-institutional to the natural, let's say, as might be possible in some form of naturalistic reading. Rather, it is the ontology itself that is treated as being capable of extending across domains. Likewise Kochin, summarizing Montag, suggests that the entire project of the TTP in particular, implies yet another abolition: that of *text* and *context*, such that Spinoza ‘.. locates the text of scripture in the immanent labyrinth of natural, historical causes and effects..’¹³⁸, so that such (theological) texts are therefore to be viewed as ‘... material products continuous with the history of their causal relations to the material bodies of human beings ..’¹³⁹. Thus, the anthropological reading of scripture which Spinoza carries out in the TTP can be described as a consistently historically materialist one.

Singularity and Communication

A further instance of this collapse of the text/context separation, however, appears too with Spinoza's appeal to the principle of the *ingenium* of individuals, which Balibar defines, recalling Althusser's comments on the materialist specificity of cases, as ‘.. a memory whose form has been determined by the individual's experience of life and by his various encounters, and which, as a result of the unique way in which it has been constituted, is inscribed both in the mind (or soul) and in the dispositions of the body.’¹⁴⁰ Such a principal of *ingenium*, moreover, is the translation in the human and social domain of the more general ontological definition of *res singulares*: singular things. And with this, yet another pair of metaphysical oppositions is undermined, perhaps with even greater consequence: that of the opposition *universal/individual*, since what the *ingenium* appears to describe is nothing less than *the singularity of social subjects* deriving from the irreducible and unrepeatable particularity of encounters. Manuel Delanda, as we shall see later

in his reading of Deleuze, speaks of an essentialist tradition of *hylomorphism*, one which assumes the prefiguration of shared morphology, and which views the bearers of a given morphology as its instances. Transposed into the political domain, humanism shares such hylomorphism, both in its underlying doctrines of human essence (deconstructed by Marx in the form of the *homo economicus* of classical political economy), and in its *derivation* of political-judicial individuals from such a prefigured universality. It is precisely this essentialist paradigm of universal-individual which Spinoza's doctrine of *ingenium* not only challenges but effectively replaces. Within the context of Spinoza's argument on sovereignty, and on the non-separation of state and social individuals, the principle of *ingenium*, social singularity, plays a central role, and contains interesting implications. In Lacan and the Political, Stavrakakis¹⁴¹ calls for a ' new modernity' founded on what he terms a ' politics of aporia'. Influenced strongly by Lacan, and by what he takes to be a Lacanian logic of lack and antagonism which he seeks to extend, like Žižek, into the political domain, Stavrakakis there argues that all attempts at building a homogeneous social totality are doomed to both failure and menace because they will seek to repress or to cancel a primordial lack which for Lacan is itself constitutive of the social-symbolic order. Such a lack, in the context of Lacanian theory, as I have suggested elsewhere, since it is taken to be constitutive, must therefore also be understood as having ontological status. Within the context of Lacanian theory, the human subject is engendered through a series of 'splits' (cf. '*Spaltung*'), above all that brought about by the advent of language itself, interpreted by Lacan as implicating 'The Law of the Father' presiding over the symbolic, and engendering a fundamental non-coincidence within the subject, a split between the speaking and the 'spoken' subject, the 'subject of the enunciation' and the 'subject of the enunciated', developed by Althusser in his own theories of ideology.

Thus the Lacanian subject is constituted in and through this pervasive non-coincidence with itself,

such that all attempts at imaginary self-totalisation, at self-coincidence, are doomed to failure in advance, and the subject must instead come to know and to embrace the restlessness of its own desire in its passage through language, through 'the defiles of the signifier.' Thus the subject, in a strict sense a product of the advent of language, comes to share the *beance* (void, hole) of the language system itself which, lacking the idealized place of the referent triangulated within Saussurean linguistics, can only likewise move differentially, in an endless 'sliding' (*glissement*) of the signifier. Attempting to transpose these insights from Lacan on the nature of the speaking-subject, Stavrakakis suggests that just as such a subject cannot attain self-coincidence, so any given social formation cannot attain a state of harmony, of totalizing self-identity. The belief that this is possible, he cautions, is a dangerous illusion engendered by what he terms a 'fantasmatic ethics of harmony', a harmony which would also presumably extend to all essentialist, universalist doctrines such as those which subtend humanism. For Stavrakakis, such doctrines are dangerous for a specific and historically recognizable reason: since something must always escape from the symbolic, an effect of the 'persistence of the real; in the form of the 'objet a', since systems of representation, such as ideologies, must ultimately rest upon *beance*, and since something must therefore continuously evade them, then any attempt to establish homogeneous social identity (of a human essence, a political system, a race or a nation, perhaps also of a class), at least at the fantasmatic level of ideological representation, will necessarily end up in an attempt to close or 'suture' this inherent lack in the only form possible: by the attempt to expel or to destroy a stigmatized Other, who will become the projective bearer of the lack which is obstructing closure. These are without doubt potentially interesting political applications of Lacanian theory, and appear to have a certain intuitive historical validity. However they also have a specific bearing on Spinoza's discussion of *ingenium*, and on Balibar's own suggestion deriving from this that

'democracy' is a *processual and not a stative concept*. Thus, following on directly from the principle of the formative influence of the singularity of encounters, Balibar writes that 'For the opinions of individuals all to be reducible to a single world-view, it would be necessary not only that they should all desire the same thing, but that they should have had the same experiences'.¹⁴² And these issues, of course, concern not only social ontology, but the underlying ontology of democratic formations itself. Two instances of such irreducibility emerge here: the first is desire, a theme that will acquire even more prominence in the TP. And here, since it is being cited as an instance of potential antagonism and non-identity, it also refers to what Spinoza defines critically in the Ethics as 'ambition': the attempt to impose our desire upon others. Here, then, we can see that Spinoza, like Stavrakakis, is fully alert to the dangers of any political project which would seek to establish identity and the uniformity of desire. The second is empirical irreducibility, the *qualia* of individual lives, which refers in turn to the order of encounters, a conjunctural principle. If we recall that what Spinoza is developing here is a highly distinctive version of social contract, involving as we have seen, obedience to law, and some qualified 'surrendering' of natural right, then we see that in Spinoza's account the basis of such a 'surrender' is irreducible human difference, a difference of desire, of memory and of encounters. Since such singularity therefore founds any social compact, moreover, it inscribes the entire Spinozan democratic project with a twofold character. And it is here that we can begin to see the ways in which Balibar's own conception of communicative democracy begins to emerge directly from Spinoza's ontology.

Firstly such a democracy must not only depend upon but *derive from* a primordial need for communication: since human beings are so deeply inscribed with difference, the only manner in which such difference can come to be known (and we must constantly remember the emancipatory character which knowledge has for Spinoza) is through communication. Here is one strand of the insistence on the need for communication: that it is required if we are to move

beyond the *solitude* of our singularity. We should remember here too that Spinoza's doctrine of *conatus*, a drive towards self-perpetuation, also founds sociality: association with others results in an enhancement of powers, and thus too in enhanced autonomy, on a principle of greater power leading to greater autonomy. Implicit too within this doubling of singularity and communication is a highly original thesis concerning the nature of communication itself: that communication is driven by difference and dissonance, by a kind of *cognitive inequality*. The corollary of this being, of course, that if there were such pre-existing cognitive equality, then communication could be dispensed with, other than in the phatic and citational function of engendering and reaffirming identity. Communication, therefore, is itself premised on non-identity. But there is also another powerful strand to the theory of communication which arises from this principle of *ingenium*, a kind of *social-cybernetic* principle. Balibar writes

The modalities employed may vary, but there is one fundamental mechanism which is always the same and to which Spinoza continually returns. This is the circulation of information, which will tend both to guarantee that the actions of government and the motives for decisions receive the greatest possible publicity (thus opposing the *arcana imperii* or *secret d'Etat*) and to educate the citizens themselves by exercising their judgement on public affairs. ¹⁴³

Thus, Spinoza's political theories as closely interpreted by Balibar run counter to all appeal to *raison d'etat*, and therefore to its currently influential exponents such as Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss, and to their appeal both to a permanently accessible logic of exception on the part of the state, and to elitist conceptions of eligibility to information. The principle of *ingenium* too, with what for Spinoza is therefore its necessary counterpart of communication, also informs the drive towards association, towards social being itself, since on its own, divorced from a necessary connection with communication, the principle would simply underwrite social isolation, the kind of solitary being postulated by solipsistic epistemologies and by the atomistic political ideologies with which they are

closely associated. A 'logic of solitude', of which Nietzsche is perhaps the most vivid and most tragic example. Secondly, the principle of *ingenium*, this founding singularity, and recalling Stavrakais' comments concerning the sinister implications of a 'fantasmatic ethics of harmony', entails too that the democratic project is necessarily open-ended: democracy cannot be understood as being in any sense totalizing or finalistic. Rather, democracy should be understood as an *open-ended process of increasing democratization*, increasing multiplication of powers through association, since the progressive inclusion and communication of multiple singularity can never be finally accomplished. And here once again we can detect clear traces of the more general *emendational* project of the Ethics: just as the movement from singularity to communication describes a passage to a kind of provisional mutual understanding, so is knowledge in a more general sense, knowledge of the ascending complexity of the causal order, necessarily expansive, and for human beings, can only come to rest, momentarily, in that *scientia intuitiva* which can combine the universal with the singular. The principle of *ingenium*, moreover, with its inherent links to communication and to a form of expanded knowledge, a knowledge which is mutually empowering, also provides a powerful alternative to Hegelian 'recognition', which is based not on an appeal to knowledge but on the cessation of an otherwise irresolvable intersubjective antagonism through the supercessionary, transcendent sovereignty of the state. Since this founding singularity, deriving strictly from an appeal to the order of encounters, entails an open-ended, non-finalistic process of increasing inclusion within communication, it is then a *philosophical-political error* to approach the concept of 'democracy' as if it were a stative concept, and even more so as if it were a natural given which had no need of the kind of rigorous exegesis which Spinoza undertakes in both the TTP and the TP. Thus, on grounds which are ultimately ontological, it makes no sense to treat the concept of democracy as being either stative or finalistic or both, as Fukiyama attempted to do some years ago in postulating liberal democracy, in a quasi-

Hegelian manner, as the end-of-history, an error which the Bush regime, among others, continued to repeat with tedious, uncritical regularity. In fact such a finalistic and uncritical approach to the concept of democracy must surely constitute one of the greatest political blind-spots of our times, and this too, therefore, points up the urgent contemporary relevance both of Spinoza's theory of political and democratic power, and of the kind of close exegesis of this theory carried out by Balibar. For all of these reasons, therefore, Stavrakakis' concerns with the sinister dimensions of a 'fantasmatic ethics of harmony', although full of insight, are not relevant to the Spinozan democratic project, founded as it is on the non-finality of difference, singularity and desire, and on their counterparts of communication and of maximized circulation of information and opinion.

Based on the principle of *ingenium*, and on its irreducibility, Spinozan democracy can perhaps be interpreted therefore as itself constituting 'a politics of aporia', but one which is, at the same time capable of achieving *positive* passage to a provisional, common understanding, just as the more general emendational project of the Ethics is capable of generating, of *producing*, common, *democratic* forms of causal knowledge.

Balibar's emphasis on the central role which *communication* plays in Spinoza's philosophical-political thought (perhaps, after Spinoza, this hyphonisation should become permanent) thus covers two senses, derived, as I hope I have demonstrated, from the underlying ontological axioms: that of combination or composition, understood as a movement towards social association and the multiplication of powers, and that of communication understood as a movement away from the logic of solitude. Such a theory of communication, however, contains far-reaching implications which we must now attempt to develop.

Social Ontology : Atomism and Transindividualism

If for Deleuze it is a concept of *expression* which lies at the heart of Spinoza's thought, for Balibar, as we have just seen, it is instead a sophisticated theory of *communication*. He writes that '... the whole of Spinoza's philosophy, insofar as it makes metaphysics inseparable from politics (this unity of reciprocal presupposition being precisely what is meant here by an 'ethic') can be understood as a highly original philosophy of communication'¹⁴⁴. For Balibar, then, the theory of communication which he identifies in Spinoza, as we have seen above, is inextricable from the insistence on the singularity of social subjects, their *ingenium*.' Since no individual is 'like' any other, each having his own temperament, multitude is then synonymous with exchange (in the broadest possible sense – exchange of properties is only one aspect of this idea) and with free communication between irreducibly singular beings.'¹⁴⁵ Understood in this way, communication becomes an antidote to social sadness and isolation, and like *expression* in Deleuze's reading of Spinoza, *communication* appears to take on ontological status in Balibar's reading of Spinoza, as a principle of generalized exchange and interaction. A consequence of the *politics of happiness* which Spinoza's thought initiates and articulates, is therefore that social sadness will rather be the effect of the suppression of a primordial need for such communication, understood in both of the senses given above. And as suggested in the preceding section above, we can also see here how closely communication is connected to two other major themes: that of *knowledge* and that of *sociability*, in which case communication takes on a quasi-Kantian status as a condition of the possibility of social relationships. Thus, Balibar writes that

Spinoza's philosophy is, in a strong sense of the term, a philosophy of communication – or even better, of modes of communication – in which the theory of knowledge and the theory of sociability are closely intertwined. Spinoza himself addressed this idea in his theory of 'common notions'. By this concept, he was referring simultaneously to the universality of reason and to the institution of a collectivity.¹⁴⁶

At various points in preceding sections we have seen how Spinozan thought mounts a powerful

critical challenge to a paradigm which has become deeply embedded in both philosophical and political discourse: the atomistic paradigm in terms of which first-person singular epistemological privileges are accorded to individuals (privileges which Wittgenstein, among others, set out to undermine through the private-language argument), and juridical privileges accorded to individual owners of wealth and property. Through the appeal to common notions, then, reason becomes itself a social property, and here, Balibar takes the public, communicative character with which Spinoza imbues knowledge and connects it with the threefold schema of the types of knowledge from the Ethics: *imaginatio*, *ratio* and *scientia intuitiva*. In an argument that initially recalls Wittgenstein's, he writes that

By this process, words come to refer to common notions. This allows us to define more precisely the place of knowledge in the life of the multitude. If no man ever thinks alone, then we might say that to know really is to think ever less by oneself. Moreover, every individual has at least one 'true idea', even if it is only the idea of what is useful to him, which contains the seed of the equation between freedom and power to act. ¹⁴⁷.

The claim being made here is once again a far-reaching one. It is that for Spinoza the *very activity of thought as productive reason is inherently social*, and establishes commonly held forms of knowledge through the common notions. We can also see here, I think, clear echoes of the theme of 'general intellect' emphasized initially by Italian operaist/autonomist Marxism. And we can see too the extent to which Spinoza's concept of the inherently social character of knowledge undermines and displaces the atomistic paradigm (actually a concrete reality imposed by capitalist 'social relations of production'; as Althusser reminds us, ideology is a material process) which enshrines and naturalises not only a distorted account of the nature of bodies (that bodies are essentially isolated, like Robinson Crusoe on his island, ideological-fictional hero of *homo economicus*) but a parallel distortion of the nature of thought and knowledge: that the activity of thought is essentially first-person singular, as if outside of the materiality of language, and that

individuals are the producers *and owners* of knowledge. Indeed it is as if Spinoza brings about an inversion of the atomistic paradigm.. And the activity of productive reason can be said to be communicative precisely to the extent that it moves from the imaginary domain, a passive condition in which a person is subject to the affects experienced as the residue of causes which remain uncomprehended and external, and to those other 'general ideas' which inhabit the collective imagination, and which often assume the form of superstitious belief and compensatory fantasy. Through the activity of productive reason, however, ' .. there is on the contrary a coherent order structuring the encounters between his body and other bodies , and the ideas that are in his soul follow on from one another according to 'common notions' – in the double sense of common to all men and common to both men and nature as a whole, that is to say, objective. ¹⁴⁸ Here, however, Balibar adds that ' In both cases we are dealing with modes of communication: the very form which individuality takes is thus the result of a given mode of communication.' This addition complicates the theory of communication for which he is arguing, renders it more complex and more subtle. It is not the case that the shift from *imaginatio* to *ratio* is a move from a private to a public domain (there are also common notions in the imaginary), but a move *from one communicative regime to another*. This is because the notion of communication which Balibar identifies in Spinoza is primordial, and therefore itself takes on quasi-ontological characteristics.

This is a richly suggestive reading of Spinoza yet it seems to me that we must interrogate more closely the name which Balibar has chosen for this deeply inscribed sociability: that of 'communication'. At the root of Balibar's use of the term there obviously lies an appeal to language, and to the fact that language itself constitutes a kind of pre-given public space into which individual speakers must insert themselves. However he builds multiple other meanings on to this essentially metaphorical appeal to the social character of language. Thus, for example, as we have seen

above, 'communication' is also used to refer to generalized exchange among social subjects, of which linguistic exchange is then only one instance. And here I think we have to backtrack a little through Balibar's argument, and above all to investigate the significance of the appeal to singularity.

In a moment of rupture with philosophical tradition, Spinoza defined human essence as *desire*, above all the desire which is inscribed within *conatus*. Unlike Hegelian and Lacanian desire, however, for Spinoza desire does not express a lack ('*manque-à-être*' in Lacan's phrase) but instead constitutes a positive force. Here too, however, Spinoza has abandoned all classical conceptions of human essence deriving from a token-type ontology. As Balibar writes,

... 'essence' does not refer to a general idea of humanity, an abstract concept under which all individuals are subsumed and their differences neutralized. On the contrary it refers precisely to the power that singularizes each individual and confers on them a unique destiny. Thus, to affirm that desire is the essence of man is to affirm that every individual is irreducible in the difference of his own desire. We might say that it is a form of 'nominalism', since Spinoza considers the human species to be an abstraction. Only individuals exist, in the strong sense of the term. But this nominalism has nothing to do with atomistic individualism: to say that individuals are different (or better that they act and suffer in different ways) is not to say that they can be isolated from one another. The idea of such isolation is simply another mystificatory abstraction. It is the relationship of each individual to other individualities and their reciprocal actions and passions which determine the form of the individual's desire and actuate its power. Singularity is a trans-individual function. It is a function of communication. ¹⁴⁹

This is a remarkable passage, and vividly reminds us of all that is distinctive in Spinoza, and in the tradition of Spinozan commentary of which Balibar is very much part. However the phrase I wish to focus on here is the penultimate one: ' Singularity is a trans-individual function', followed by the last sentence in which this is in turn then identified with 'communication'. Balibar uses the term 'trans-individual' sparingly throughout SP, perhaps two or three times in total, and this is surprising since the concept which it refers seems to me to run throughout his entire reading.

We will later see in Line 2 how Negri, Virno et al celebrate Spinoza's repudiation of all categories

which derive from a transcendent foundation, most significant among these for political thought being the universal-individual doublet, and its derivatives of 'people' and 'class'. And we will see too how Negri comes to define multitude as 'a whole of singularities'. I think here, in Balibar's comment, we can see another characterization of *multitude* emerge: it is also the name of a *transindividualism*. And this in turn forces a further revision of the philosophical-political vocabulary in terms of which we distinguish actions and states as being either 'individual' or 'collective'. For transindividual phenomena, up to and including language itself, cannot actually be regarded as constituting 'collective' phenomena at all, since they can never attain the state of idealized totalisation and closure which this would require. And this is so because 'singularity' designates, like Duns Scotus' *haecceity*, a condition which is so causally distinctive and so temporally determinate that it constitutes *a continuous unfolding of difference*. It therefore seems to me that rather than the term 'communication' which Balibar proposes, it might be more appropriate to designate Spinoza's thought as *a philosophy of transindividualism*, and Balibar's reading as above all one which identifies this. At the same time, however, this *transindividualism* is the very ground of sociability in Spinoza, one that allows us to shed light on Spinoza's central ethical position that nothing is so useful to man as other men. Balibar writes

What is most useful to any man is other men, whose strength, when combined with his own, will provide him with greater security, prosperity and knowledge. "...men are reciprocally useful to one another not to the extent that they are identical and interchangeable (that each can take the place of the other and establish the maxim of his action as a universal law, but precisely insofar as they differ from each other in their 'temperament' (ingenium), that is, in their capacities and their characters. ¹⁵⁰. (*ibid*, 110)

And here, I think, we can also see how this *transindividualism* which runs through Spinoza's thought is once more intimately connected with the founding ontological principles, and in two ways: both to *conatus* (the above identifies precisely the ways in which this is served by a

common reciprocal utility which is founded in difference), and to the *dynamic interactionism* which I have suggested lies latent within Spinoza's ontology as a derivative of the principle of *composition*. If this is the case, then this provides further evidence of the presence of a temporal , process ontology lying at the heart of Spinoza's thought.

Right and Power

As we have seen above, the theme of power invests Spinoza's entire ontology, and unites the Ethics with both the TTP and the TP. However as Balibar shows us, it is important to place these texts in their precise historical relationship. Negri, as we later see, argues for a split in the Ethics, with the TTP marking the break between what I shall term E1, which in his reading has a strongly neo-Platonist character, and E2, in which imagination, antagonism and desire rise to prominence. Balibar, however, enriches this account of the interruption of the progress of the Ethics by the TTP with historical detail. Thus if the TTP was of the nature of an intervention, one prompted by concerns over the forces which were threatening the republican experiment presided over by the de Witt brothers, then the TP was written after the victory of those forces, and after the deaths at the hands of an enraged mob of the brothers themselves. And in Balibar's reading, this accounts for a difference of orientation and concern. He writes (*ibid*, 50)

Spinoza began work on the Tractatus Politicus (TP), which was left unfinished at his death, only a few years after he had completed the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus (TTP). Yet the two books seem to belong to two entirely different worlds. The TTP had used long, exegetical arguments to help its readers come to understand the causes of the crisis that loomed ahead of them and the means by which it might be averted. The TP has none of these. In their place is an exposition whose synthetic concision anticipates the 'geometrical' approach of the Ethics.

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Thus, while the TTP was above all conjunctural, an intervention in an impending crisis, the TP,

although incomplete, has to be understood instead as an inquiry into the very 'foundations of politics'. It is, moreover, an inquiry characterized by a new problematic: if we can characterize the TTP as essentially an investigation into the conditions and the functional benefits of tolerance, then the TP, with the memory of the collapse of the experiment of the Dutch Republic still vivid for Spinoza, becomes instead, for Balibar, a sustained reflection on the power of the multitude, a reflection which Spinoza, a creature of his times, has to carry out in terms of the dominant metaphor of 'social contract', metaphorical because it transposes from the juridical-commercial domain into the social, and from the domain of individuals to that of social multitudes.

As we have seen above, Spinoza refuses to oppose the private to the public, especially in the form of an opposition of privately held 'opinion' to 'public' political life. But there is also a further opposition which he refuses. Hobbes, like Rousseau, opposes the notions of 'right' and 'law' within a larger opposition between 'state of nature' and 'civil society'. Within the terms of this opposition, an individual's 'natural right' comes to be understood as a state of originary freedom in which acquisitive self-interest is pursued without any inhibition other than the limits of power, and since this is the case, then natural right is itself ontologically equivalent to actual power. This 'state of nature', however, therefore constitutes a state of perpetual mutual antagonism, a 'war of all against all' in which the possession of the fruits of acquisitiveness is itself constantly threatened. In the terms of this imaginary, it is this insecurity which drives the move towards the idealized (fantasized) moment of social contract, in which naturalized power comes to be replaced by civil-judicial right, guaranteed by a sovereign figure to whom the mass of warring individuals have surrendered their power in exchange (the other side of the 'contract') for civil peace and protected accumulation. As Balibar points out, however, in the 'figure of the sovereign, the 'Leviathan', what Hobbes does is actually to re-establish the equivalence of power and right (and along with this

equivalence, the *singularity* of the sovereign) but in alienated, projective form, such that the will of the majority is said to be 'represented' by the figure of the sovereign, a 'representation' of which, in the terms of the contractual metaphor, the masses, the multitude, are themselves the author.

As Balibar shows (*ibid*, 55), Hobbes' political theories (and of course those of Machiavelli) were in wide circulation at the time of the Dutch Republic, but were deployed, ironically enough, as a challenge to monarchical absolutism in the name of a juridical absolutism (the 'rule of law'), while for Hobbes, of course, the former was the very ground of the latter.¹⁵² What makes Spinoza's reworking of the contractual metaphor so distinctive, however is precisely his rejection of the opposition of natural to civil right, thereby calling into question the very concept of 'representation' and perhaps, therefore, the very basis of the contractual metaphor itself. In so doing, however, Spinoza comes to revise his understanding of the Regents' Republic. In terms of the threefold schema defined earlier, by the time of the TP he considers it is an 'aristocratic' regime, a regime of the powerful bourgeois oligarchs, one that therefore could not attain to the 'absolutism' postulated by the open-endedness of the processes of communication and circulation. Such 'absolutism', therefore, can only be obtained by the third member of the schema: by a version of democracy. However this has a further, almost tautological consequence. Balibar writes that ' This in turn leads him to a question that neither Hobbes nor Machiavelli ever asked themselves, and which the TTP had only treated from one angle: that of the basis of State power in the people, that is, in movements originating from within the ' multitude' itself'¹⁵³. Like Hobbes, Spinoza equates 'right' with 'power' : ' .. the right of an individual is co-extensive with its determinate power' (TTP, 23). Here , however, Balibar clarifies the nature of this equation, and he does so, as does Deleuze repeatedly elsewhere, by appealing to an *expressive* relationship between the two. Thus, he sees the word 'right' (*jus*) as being used to ' express the originary reality of power (*potentia*)'¹⁵⁴, with the crucial qualification that 'originary' here does not imply either ' proceeding from' or 'grounded

in', such that an interpretation of Spinoza's equivalence of right and power in terms of a grounding of right in power (' might is right') is thereby ruled out. Rather, Balibar understands the equivalence as instead being interpretable as meaning ' .. the individual's right includes all that he is effectively able to do and think in a given set of conditions '¹⁵⁵. Thus, we now have another expressive doublet to add to those we have already identified (*natura naturans* / *natura naturata*, *potentia* / *potestas* ..) : that of *power* / *right* .And here is how Spinoza develops his notion of natural right in the TP (II, 3-4):

By the right of nature, then, I mean the actual laws or rules of nature in accordance with which all things come to be; that is, the actual power of nature. Thus the natural right of nature as a whole, and consequently the right of each individual, extends as far as its power.

Thus, since Nature, as we have seen, is not an undifferentiated whole but is instead complex and compositional, made up of complexes which themselves consist of subsidiary complexes, then the notion of 'right' is here being treated as co-extensive with the concept of 'an individual': to be an individual is to possess certain capacities which are expressions of her/his portion of the general power of Nature. It follows that, in the human domain, there can be no such thing as 'unlimited right', since this would, by definition, be the expression of unlimited power. Moreover since the notion of 'right' is here co-extensive with the actual reality of an individual then, like Spinoza's notion of 'communication', it is inherently dynamic, referring necessarily to *activity*. Thus, for Spinoza, there can be no conception of 'rights' which are not in some sense manifest as activities, and thus any notion of 'freedom' or 'liberty' deriving from such a dynamic conception will necessarily be positive rather than negative, unlike the conception of negative liberty accompanying social-atomist paradigms which seek to separate private and public domains, as is most notably the case in the political thought of Isaiah Berlin. Thus too, there can be no abstract

rights which do not manifest in some way in activity, which suggests that constitutional definitions such as the 'right to the pursuit of happiness' are actually misleading and in need of further philosophical-political definition. All 'rights', for Spinoza, must define a capacity to act, which may, of course, be recognized and exercised or not, depending upon prevailing material and political conditions. As Balibar points out, such a dynamic conception of rights rules out two other conceptions. Firstly, it rules out a definition of 'right' as deriving strictly from a given, pre-existing juridical order, an 'institutional' or 'objective' conception of right. Secondly, it rules out any conception of right as being analytically derived from a prior conception of some human essence, such as that of 'free will', a 'universalist' or 'subjective' conception containing an implicit demand for recognition. Such a universalist conception, moreover, since it derives its force from some prior conception of human essence will tend towards definitions of rights and duties which purport to be valid for all time. Spinoza's conception of right, however, is more complex and more subtle, and is compatible with temporal development. This is so since it acknowledges a mixture of independence and dependence in the human subject, the former since his conception includes a right to the self-determination of action without constraint, the latter since the individual's right to such self-determination itself presupposes a complex network of dependency of powers, one whose composition will be in constant change. Thus if each individual's right is an expression of her/his power, then it will necessarily include this mix of dependency and of autonomy, such that the very conception of right includes a limitation upon power. In thus identifying the aspect of dependency not as in opposition to but as a *condition* of independence, Spinoza offers a complex, rich, *materialist* conception of the subject, one which avoids the suturing of powerlessness (a negative view of dependency) which we have identified in Lacan's imaginary, and which Althusser saw as itself the mark of humanist ideology. The Spinozan subject is not a self-contained and somehow self-generating centre of power but develops out of and through networks of power that

extend beyond itself.

Let us now return again to the theme of the 'state of nature' as it is deployed in Hobbes' account of social contract. As we have just seen, such a state for Hobbes represented a perpetual state of antagonism, a war of all against all in which individual powers are always and necessarily mutually incompatible. Here, however, Balibar challenges the atomism which Hobbes assumes and naturalises. Historically, such antagonism has actually engendered social groupings in which individuals cohere for reasons of mutual protection (tribes, sects, street-gangs, ...) against common enemies. Such defensive coherence, moreover, itself a form of dependency, should not be seen necessarily as a limitation on the powers of the individual : 'To be in the power of others, to depend upon their power, can also constitute a positive condition through which one can, up to a point, preserve and affirm one's own individuality.'¹⁵⁶ Here he identifies a principle at work in Spinoza's complex account of dependency/independence and of antagonism which once more resonates with the Ethics, and especially with its ethical and psychological positivism, using the term here in the sense of ' that which is positive rather than negative in impact'. This principle is that of the *multiplication* of powers, which provides Spinoza with the means both of distinguishing positive from negative interactions, and thereby a notion of *compatibility* of rights, and at the same time a refutation of the Hobbesian war of all against all. Thus, Balibar writes that 'Those rights are compatible which express powers that can be added or multiplied together; those rights are incompatible which correspond to powers that will mutually destroy one another.'¹⁵⁷ (*ibid*, 62)

At the same time as Spinoza sees the social subject as a complex mix of dependency and independence, and seeks to distinguish positive from negative forms of dependency through the principle of the multiplication of power, he also retains a positive value for independence. Just as the social subject is a complex mix of dependency /independence, so too s/he is a mix of passion

and of reason. And once more we can recognize here the strong, consistent theme of *adequation* from the Ethics: we remain passive subjects of the passions insofar as they are not causally comprehended through the power of reason. However, both passion and reason constitute 'rights' in Spinoza's sense: they are expressions of natural power. And yet these powers are not symmetrical. This is because, unlike the classically dualist scenario in which reason and passion are in some sense in conflict, a scenario which perhaps descends from an older conflict of spirit and flesh, for Spinoza reason, as a power, does not destroy passion (another power) but can exhibit superior power, according to the principle, which agains struck a chord with Nietzsche, that a given affect cannot be repressed but only overcome by a power greater than that of the affect . And this is because the orders of *imaginatio-ratio*, within the overall schema of *imaginatio-ratio-scientia intuitiva*, are in some sense sequential: the first is a condition of the second: passion is in some sense a condition of the operation of reason in that it is what reason must act upon, somewhat as for Althusser elsewhere Marxist 'science' must act upon ideology. In this Althusserian sense, therefore, Spinozan reason itself constitutes *a process of production*, and we can therefore refer not simply to reason but to *productive reason*. Thus passion and reason, although asymmetrical, are not qualitatively opposed in Spinoza, such that there can therefore, logically, be a synthesis of reason and passion: *a rational passion*. And it is this asymmetry of passion/reason which Spinoza employs to give positive value to independence, and to provide him with a definition of freedom, one that will be relative rather than essentialist since it remains within the complex dynamic of dependency/independence. Thus, as Balibar puts it 'Spinoza calls the right of an individual for whom reason is stronger than passion and whose independence is (therefore) greater than his dependency, freedom.'¹⁵⁸ But here the principle of what I have termed *productive reason* (I have just suggested the Althusserian parallels) then in turn relates back to the principle of the multiplication of powers which Spinoza uses to distinguish positive

dependency: it is reason that teaches us that a coalescence of powers will be to our mutual advantage, and that it provides the secure conditions under which sustainable independence can be pursued.

One fascinating consequence of all this is that Spinoza's account of independence, even though ultimately founded on singularity, carefully avoids what we might call the *logic of solitude*, of which Nietzsche was perhaps the most dramatic instance. I refer to it as a 'logic' since it seems to me that it is a conclusion drawn from certain axiomatic assumptions, which might be glossed as follows: that social being is inherently antagonistic; that there can be no compatibility of powers; that social being necessarily constitutes passive dependency; that dependency can have no positive forms; that individuals can overcome dependency by means of their own self-engendering power. This logic of solitude, moreover, as we can see in Nietzsche's case, at the same time appears both to wield considerable power within modernist culture and to have potentially destructive consequences. And as Balibar suggests, the difference between independence and solitude is a crucial philosophical and political question.

For Spinoza, then, reason can lead us to the principle of the multiplication of powers, and to the formation of social alliances and covenants. So far, however, Balibar sees here a continuity between the TTP and the TP. Thus, what we have here is really the spelling out of the consequences of '...a strictly immanent conception of historical causality in which the only factors which intervene are individual powers, composite powers founded on individual powers, and the reciprocal action of these two types of power.'¹⁵⁹ This implies that within such an immanent approach the state itself must be accounted for strictly in terms of a composition of powers (derived from the principle of the positive multiplication of individual powers) and interaction between this composition and the ontological source of such composition in the power of

individuals. However the composition of power which is the state requires further analysis. Spinoza refers to the state, perhaps figuratively, as itself an ontological individual, rather than simply the complex network of powers arising from certain specific configurations of interests, such as those which underlay the landed interest associated with the Orangists and the commercial-mercantile interests of the urban bourgeoisie which provided the social base for the Regents, for example. As an ontological individual, the state is therefore also endowed with its own *conatus*, its own drive towards self-maintenance. Now this is interesting since nothing so far actually licenses such a move from the principle of the multiplication of individual powers and their combined composition to treating the state as a single, individual entity, other than the principles of the general ontology combined with the abolition of the opposition of nature to culture (used here in a broad sense which will include political institutions). At the same time, we have already seen how Spinoza abolishes the separation of political and civil society, thereby abolishing too any transcendence which the State might seek to ascribe to itself. Although an ontological individual, therefore, it cannot constitute a sovereign, at least in Hobbes' sense of the term. Thus if the State is itself strictly a product of the multiplication of powers arising from the social pact, then neither the individual, nor the State itself can constitute a 'kingdom within a kingdom' since each entity will remain subject to the general conditions of the ontology which extends throughout nature. This is crucial since it means that the interactionism which I have argued for earlier will then extend into the political domain, and this has the consequence that, in a sense, the social pact and the resulting distribution of power *cannot be inalienable*, and therefore must be subject to continuous renegotiation and reinvention. Like the process of communication and circulation of information examined above, the composition of powers cannot in principle be finalised. As a result, neither the human individual nor the State itself possesses absolute autonomy and a mutual dependency is preserved. As we shall see below, therefore, Spinoza's version of the social covenant, of social

contract, uniquely, is one which is also necessarily based on an ongoing process of communication.

However there is an important distinction to be made between the power of the individual and the power of the State, which touches on the question of *duration*, whose uncertainty is a key feature of the *order of encounters*: while isolated individuals are incapable of guaranteeing their own preservation over long periods of time, the State is capable of so doing but only under condition that it continues to provide those guarantees which the isolated individual cannot. Balibar writes, summarizing the arguments in the TP

... in order to preserve their own lives, individuals need each other; thus they must be led, by the pursuit of their own interests, to will the preservation of the State (TP, VII, 4; VII,22; VIII, 24; VIII 31, X,6)In return, in order to preserve itself the State must seek to preserve the lives of individuals by guaranteeing them the security that is the fundamental condition of civic obedience ¹⁶⁰

Thus, two central features of the relationship between State and individual emerge: the first is a principle of reciprocity or reflexivity; the second is that the distribution of power can never be inalienable. Thus, states in which this reflexivity has been violated will thereby undermine the conditions of their own perpetuation, their own *conatus*. Spinoza writes (TP, V, 2)

For a political order which has not removed the causes of civil strife, where war is a constant threat, and the laws are often broken, differs little from a veritable state of nature, where everyone lives according to his temperament (ingenium) with great danger to his life.

And this is to say that within an existing composition of powers, a given state-form, there can be an actual regression to a state of nature in the Hobbesian sense, and in terms of the argument so far, this will occur when the ongoing process of communication becomes atrophied or ignored. This must be the case if, as Spinoza assures us, all tyrannies must inevitably collapse, and here he quotes Seneca favourably: *Violenta imperia nemo contunuit diu* (TTP, 42) : ' No-one who relies on violence can govern for long.' Here is how Balibar summarises Spinoza's argument on the

distribution of powers and on the 'transfer' of powers which takes place:

The concept of the State includes both the imperium and the respublica. In other words, the condition of the (social) subject presupposes citizenship, in the sense of activity (and therefore an equality which is proportional to that activity. This activity finds its fulfillment in the democratic State, where " nobody transfers his natural right to another so completely that thereafter he is not to be consulted; he transfers it to the majority of the entire community of which he is a part", so that " all men remain equal, as they were before in a state of nature (TTP, 243)¹⁶¹.

What seems to me to be crucial here is that within the process of democratization the equality of individuals which obtained within the state of nature is preserved. But this equality may derive from the theory of political communication which Balibar identifies in Spinoza: just as in Habermas's ethics of communication, so here the partners in the ongoing process of communication, the figurative 'state' on the one hand (actually a multiplicity of institutions and individuals, and of explicit and implicit networks through which information and power circulate), and social individuals and their groupings on the other, *essentially remain equal partners*. Discourses which ignore this essential equality, or which militate against it, will therefore constitute anti-democratic discourses, discourses which position social subjects in subservience.

We now move on to considering a further distinctively Spinozan category, that of *multitude* ('*multitudo*'), which has taken on particular relevance in the political theories of Negri and Hardt, and of other thinkers emerging from the operaist Marxist tradition, such as Cleaver, Virno and Lazzarotto. As we shall see, this category has been taken to imply a critique both of post-Hobbesian attitudes towards social masses, and of classical Marxist conceptions of social class.

Multitude

In the previous section, we have seen how for Balibar part of Spinoza's distinctiveness as a

philosophical-political thinker consists in his basing the power of the State in the power of social masses, based on a principle of composition of powers deriving from features of the general ontology. As we have seen too, Spinoza considers the state to be an ontological individual in the sense qualified above as a historical singularity, and therefore to possess the 'natural right' of its own *conatus*, its own drive towards self-perpetuation. However I have suggested too that ultimately this is quasi-figural, and operates as a form of metaphor, exploiting a certain ambiguity in the notion of *composition*: does an entity which emerges from composition constitute a unity (and if it does, in what precise sense, and what status do its constituent parts then have ?), or is it constantly reducible to its constituent elements? Such ambiguity, as we shall see in what follows, touches on the question of those other 'unities' which have been central to modern political discourse: those of 'people' and also of 'class'.

Once more here we should recall a key feature of Spinoza's political and historical analysis, one that resonates with the ' order of encounters' from the Ethics: the appeal to singularity and also to contingency, which I have suggested elsewhere introduces a 'conjunctural' dimension to Spinoza's thought, one that links him directly to Althusser. We have seen examples previously, in the analysis of primitive accumulation, of how fruitful such conjunctural ideas can be, yielding a form of Marxist historical analysis which devolves upon a principle of the contingent-become-necessary.

Balibar understands the term 'multitude' in two ways: firstly in a simple quantitative sense, as the simple majority of citizens, and secondly in a qualitative sense, as '...the collective behaviour of individuals who are brought together en masse'¹⁶². And it is in the latter sense that he takes Spinoza in the TP to be theorizing the basis of state-power in mass movements. But he then goes on to make a further, quite radical claim: the terms 'state' and 'individual', Balibar claims, do not represent real entities for Spinoza; rather, '... they are in fact abstractions, which only have meaning

in relation to one another. In the final analysis, each of them serves merely to express one modality through which the power of the multitude can be realized as such' ¹⁶³. Thus, he continues, summarizing a long chain of argument at TP, VII, 27, '... rulers and ruled, sovereign and citizens, all belong to the multitude. And the fundamental question is always, in the final analysis, whether the multitude is capable of governing itself, that is, whether it can increase its own power'.

At the heart of Spinoza's analysis of democracy, therefore, in Balibar's reading, lies the ultimate project of *the self-governance of the multitude*, which we might usefully define as *the vanishing-point* of his theorizing of political power and its composition.

However if it is the case that the term 'multitude', beyond the artificial, constructed opposition of state-individual, actually refers to the totality of all citizens, then what is actually being named, other than some entity such as 'the people, common to populist political discourse, which in practice elides crucial material differences, along with differences of information and power? I think there are several ways of interpreting Balibar here in such a way as to avoid this 'suturing' of class difference. The first, I think, is that this broad definition of 'multitude' may simply be a way of restating the thesis of the inalienability of power, and its consequence that political life must then be a continuous and inherently unstable process of interaction and communication. In this sense 'all belong to the multitude' because power/right remains inalienable, and what emerges is a continuous flux of power and counter-power such that any given state is necessarily involved in a process of continuous, immanent self-production. Thus, this apparent inclusiveness of the multitude derives ultimately from the positive nature of the general ontology, and above all from its (expressive) basis in power. Since this broad definition is a derivation from the general ontology, it should not be taken to be denying the empirical realities of hierarchical exclusion within specific social formations. Instead, it should be taken as describing a normative reality, or more accurately a determinate potentiality which is actually repressed and deformed.

There is also, however, another interpretation, one which hinges upon a definition of successful rule as the *establishing of social consensus*. What Balibar suggests here is that a central issue for democracy, and for Spinoza's political theory, is a concern with *process and procedure*: that is, of how we establish *valid processes of debate and of decision-making*. We have certainly seen how the former is a key issue for the TTP, with its central concern with communication and the circulation of information. Now Balibar's reading identifies a concern with *decision-making* processes in the TP, and with how *we can bring processes of debate to an end* such that action can ensue. It is in this way, for example, that he views the role of the monarch, or indeed any other monolithic figure, as being '.. the only individual in the body politic who has no opinion of his own..' ¹⁶⁴, or as he puts it, no 'interiority'. Thus it is that the figure of the king becomes '.. the mind of the city', and I have discussed above the 'monarchical metaphor' and the manner in which such a figure comes to constitute a form of projective power, and also the way in which it functions to sustain a certain subservient subjectivity. An alternative process of reaching decisions, however, is that of an assembly, which would characterize decision-making within 'aristocratic' regimes, which has the advantage over monolithic decision-making of being 'eternal' in the sense that they do not depend on individuals, who are replaced as they grow old and die. Such 'assemblies', given the general constraint of communication in the interests of establishing social consensus which runs throughout Spinoza's theories, while maintaining their exclusivity in defending the interests of a given ruling elite, must at the same time be as socially expansive as is feasible while maintaining its own power and position. For an aristocracy to be viable, therefore, Spinoza tells us that '.. [it] must enlarge the number of its members as far as possible'(TP, VIII, 3; X2). Such an aristocratic regime, therefore, with its decision-making processes consisting of closed assemblies from which information must not escape into the general populace, will constitute a ruling-class with a certain

built-in potential for expansion. And I think we can see here how relevant this Spinozan category of *aristocracy* is to a characterization of the normalized form of governance within liberal-capitalist democracies, and also of the decision-making processes which characterize them. What is of course interesting here, and which marks out the intrinsic limits of such systems, is that neither the restricted inclusivity (the obverse of their limited expansiveness), nor the closed circulation of information in decision-making, ever emerge as issues for a political logic of representation, founded as it is on the assumption of the transcendent sovereignty of government, based on the assumption of the full transfer of powers.

In this process-based approach to decision-making in terms of which he characterizes the TP, Balibar sees Spinoza's fundamental theoretical concerns as being twofold: on the one hand *institutional*, a concern with the establishing of an 'apparatus', a set of institutionalized procedures for decision-making which will also yield a taxonomy of political systems, based on the general need for interaction and for the circulation of information which follow on from the inalienability of power. The other, however, is a concern with how such an 'apparatus' can be progressively democratized, how it can come to realize its own 'perfection', its own progressively inclusive interactive complexity.

The value and distinctiveness of Balibar's reading of Spinoza, and of the TP in particular, I would argue, thus consist in a number of related themes. Firstly, it demonstrates the continuity between Spinoza's ontology and his normative political doctrines. Secondly, it demonstrates the extent to which Spinoza's thought urges us to closely consider the nature of social power and of its distribution, always within the unique political context which Spinoza has defined of *a politics of happiness* which is equated to a collective increase in power of action, a doctrine of positive liberty. Thirdly, and closely related to this, it views Spinoza as a profound theorist of state-power, and above all as one who, refusing the transcendence of such power to which Hobbes, Hegel and

Rousseau all subscribe in different ways, enjoins us to begin to see the relationship between subjects and state as one of continuous and active co-production, mounting a potential challenge to the widespread sense of passivity which seems an inevitable effect of a representational political logic. Lastly, and once again following on from this, through the concept of multitude, it enjoins us to critically interrogate the currently prevalent and quasi-managerial conception of 'governance', and to break with its imaginary. And here I have suggested that if for Spinoza the political presents us with an immanent and therefore dynamic field of social power, one transiently unified both through mutually advantageous association and through a progressively expansive circulation of information, then it opens up too a perspective which must always constitute an excessive remainder for that same representational political logic: the 'vanishing-point' of the self-governance of the multitude.

Having now considered the readings of Spinoza produced by Althusser and by Balibar which I have designated as Line 1, and which I have argued share the common influence of Lacan, we now turn attention to the readings of Deleuze and of Negri which I have grouped together as Line 2, and which, I argue, constitute in their different ways a form of neo-naturalism and neo-vitalism, but in which Marx, as for Althusser and Balibar, remains a common reference.

Line 2 : Deleuze and Negri

IV Deleuze

The Question of Tradition

As laid out in the introductory chapter, throughout this thesis I argue for two 'lines of descent' from Spinoza: one originating with Althusser, and continuing through Macherey and Balibar up to Badiou, the other originating with Deleuze and continuing through Negri up to Virno and Lazzarato, and beyond that to other thinkers emerging from the traditions of Italian *operaismo* and *autonomia*, now politically converging around the question of the politics of multitude. This is not, however, to suggest that these lines are homogeneous; as we saw in the previous section and will see throughout this one too, each line contains its own internal differences, its own specific composition. At the same time, however, as I shall also try to show, there are sufficient consistencies running through each of them to allow us to establish commonalities, even if these have the character of 'family resemblances' rather than strong thematic identities.

In this chapter, then, I mainly consider Deleuze's¹⁶⁵ and Negri's¹⁶⁶ distinctive readings of Spinoza, extending where relevant to include reference to other thinkers associated with the tradition of Italian *operaist* and *autonomist* Marxism. As Wright suggests, it may be important to maintain a distinction between the two traditions, rather than view them as continuous.¹⁶⁷ In connection with such thinkers, we will begin to turn attention towards such concepts as the *social factory*, *real subsumption*, *multitude*, *general intellect* and *affective labour*, themes which, I will argue, are reinforced by a reading of Marx *with* Spinoza as an alternative to Hegel.

As we have seen for Althusser there exists a submerged tradition of thinkers of an aleatory materialism, comprising Epicurus and Spinoza, Marx and Montesquieu among others. Likewise Deleuze seeks to discern/construct a tradition which is alternative to the dominant philosophical

lineage. Thus Massumi, in his 1988 introduction to Deleuze and Guattari's Thousand Plateaus, writes that Deleuze

.. discovered an orphan line of thinkers who were tied by no direct descendance but were united in their opposition to the State philosophy that would nevertheless accord them minor positions in its canon. Between Lucretius, Hume, Spinoza, Nietzsche and Bergson there exists ' a secret link constituted by the critique of negativity, the cultivation of joy, the hatred of interiority, the exteriority of forces, the denunciation of power. ¹⁶⁸

However what appears to distinguish the two lines provisionally sketched out in the Introduction, that of Althusser, Balibar and Badiou on the one hand, and that of Deleuze and Negri on the other, is of course the name of Marx, explicitly present in one case yet not quite so explicitly in the other, at least in the case of Deleuze. But here, once again, we must be wary of doxological assumptions, especially after Alliez¹⁶⁹ timely reminder that Deleuze's last planned work was to be precisely a major study of Marx in the tradition of his monographs, one that was to have, moreover, a clearly affirmative title: Le Grandeur de Marx. Thus, following Alliez, and others such as Thoburn and Mandarini, one aim of this chapter is to begin to examine Deleuze's relationship to Marx, a relationship which, Alliez suggests, even if the name of Marx constitutes an absent term, can enable new readings of Deleuze, and also ' induce an engagement with the 'virtual Marx' which traverses Deleuze's texts.'¹⁷⁰ As we shall later see in connection with the links made by Manuel Delanda and others between Deleuze's process-ontology and systems theory, it is also possible to draw out from this ontology an alternative political economy, ¹⁷¹ although one whose implications must be critically considered both in terms of an existing Marxist perspective, and in terms of its transformational potentialities. And the very possibility of such alternatives opens out the question of new beginnings which is also a particularly pressing one within Marxism itself, above all in this present period in which the Left is engaged in articulating a new composition,

faced once again with a deepening and far-reaching crisis within global capitalism. Such a perspective is in contrast to what has now come to be named and closed off as 'dogmatic Marxism', characterized by a tendency to behave as if Marxism itself constituted a philosophy of truth and disclosure, therefore a philosophy of *presence*, giving rise to a political practice which came to be inversely obsessed by error and deviation in an increasingly desperate attempt to maintain a *presence to the truth*, to the openness of an originary disclosure. As we shall see later, such a notion of truth and disclosure is in clear violation of ontological difference, and may be said to constitute a collapse into the ontic, and therefore to constitute too a form of *politics*, one which attempts to suture the non-foundation which must accompany the authentically political. In connection with such *ontic* Marxism, one of the merits of the alternative traditions proposed by both Line 1 and Line 2 is precisely to emphasise that materialist thought neither originated nor culminated with Marx, but has both a greater reach, and a longer history. As Althusser expresses it, such a tradition constitutes not a philosophy *of* but *for* Marxism.

As I hope to demonstrate in this and the subsequent chapter, a renewed, critical but *active* Marxism has emerged from this refusal to suture a foundation, one that does not replace Marx, but which explores and develops one of Marx's central themes: that of the abstract regime of general equivalence, one that is embodied both in the money-form and in the very possibility of wage-labour, and also in the consumerist hijacking and banalisation of desire.

In the case of both Deleuze and Badiou, as we shall see in detail as the thesis develops, a profound challenge is mounted to this 'regime of the Same' within the site of ontology, although in distinctive ways: in the case of Badiou, in the form of a set-theoretic ontology which inherently undermines 'the count-as-one'; in the case of Deleuze, in the form of 'an ontology of difference', which we will go on to examine in some detail in this current chapter. We should note, however, that in spite of the differences which will emerge between the two, both thinkers see themselves as

engaged in a materialist philosophical-political enterprise, one that recalls Marx's own characterization of nominalism as constituting 'the royal road to materialism'.

The main focus, however, here as elsewhere, is on the reading of Spinoza which Deleuze produces and as elsewhere, before going on to consider the ways in which Deleuze extends and transforms key themes from Spinoza in these and other ways, we first turn to Deleuze's exegesis of Spinoza, as developed in Expressionism in Philosophy : Spinoza.

Spinoza: Expressionism

Deleuze begins his Spinoza exegesis by pointing to Spinoza's own modest but recurrent deployment of the term 'expression', and its derivatives:

The idea of expression appears in the first Part of the Ethics as early as the sixth Definition: 'By God I understand a being absolutely infinite, that is, a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which each one *expresses* an eternal and infinite essence.' The idea goes on to develop increasing importance. It is taken up again in various contexts. Thus Spinoza says that each attribute expresses a *certain* infinite and eternal *essence*, an essence corresponding to that particular kind of attribute. Or: each attribute expresses the infinity and necessity of substantial *existence*, that is, expresses eternity (original emphases). ¹⁷²

However it is not only substance which is said to be expressive. As Deleuze is quick to point out,

Modes are in their turn expressive : ' Whatever exists expresses the nature or essence of God in a certain and determinate way' (that is, in a certain mode). So we must identify a second level of expression: an expression, as it were, of expression itself. Substance first expresses itself in its attributes, each attribute expressing an essence. But then attributes express themselves in their turn: they express themselves in their subordinate modes. ... the first level of substance must be understood as the very constitution, a genealogy almost, of the essence of substance. The second must be understood as the production of particular things. ¹⁷³

Thus, Deleuze establishes an early distinction between *expression*, and *production*, a term with which it might easily be confused, and employs this distinction in turn to redefine the static totality 'nature' into a language of dynamic process, one consisting of two poles: *natura naturans* (the

dynamic, generative pole) and *natura naturata* (the determinate, constituted product). He

writes¹⁷⁴

Expression is not of itself production, but becomes such on its second level, as attributes in their turn express themselves .. expression as production is grounded in a prior expression. God expresses himself in himself ' before' expressing himself in his effects : expresses himself by in himself constituting *natura naturans*, before expressing himself through producing within himself *natura naturata*. ¹⁷⁵

Deleuze also draws in other contrasting pairs of terms as he seeks to articulate this notion of ontological *expression: explication-implication, evolution-involution*, terms which carry with them strong neo-Platonist associations:

Implication and explication, involution and evolution: terms inherited from a long philosophical tradition, always subject to the charge of pantheism. Precisely because the two concepts are not opposed to one another, they imply a principle of synthesis, *complicatio*. In Neo-Platonism, complication often means at once the inherence of multiplicity in the One, and of the One in the Many. God is Nature taken 'complicatively', and this Nature both explicates and implicates, involves and evolves God. ¹⁷⁶

Referring to the pairs of terms just specified, Deleuze writes that

The interplay of these notions, each contained in the other, constitutes expression, and amounts to one of the characteristic figures of Christian and Jewish Neo-Platonism as it evolved through the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Thus expression has been taken to be a basic category of Renaissance thought. ¹⁷⁷

The term 'expression' however, seems itself ultimately to derive from a logocentric tradition which Laerke¹⁷⁸ associates with univocity: that principle of Dons Scotus according to which *being is said equally of all things of which it can be said*. Such a principle, however, is clearly subtended by a metaphor, one that has persistently theological implications, a metaphor which Laerke¹⁷⁹ himself identifies when he refers to ' the voice of being', but which he begins to deconstruct following Spinoza's own attack on the anthropomorphism of those ' .. who imagine God to be like a

man, having body and spirit, and being subject to passions.' Thus, as Laerke argues, again following Spinoza, 'Spinoza's critique of the divine names is then that the properties elevated into eminence, that is, the properties of God, do not express the nature of God. They are only nominal definitions, not real definitions. Only the definition of God as power is a real definition.'¹⁸⁰

However in Deleuze's account of ontological expression in Spinoza, and especially in the distinction between *expression* and *production*, we move from the assertion of being, from an ontological *description* of what is, and in this sense a real vocalization of being, to the *genesis* of being itself, such that *expression* here appears to take on those same logocentric, metaphorical qualities: to *express* being in this sense is therefore equivalent to the *production* of being.

Or at least this would be the case if we are dealing with some emanative and therefore transitive form of causality, a position which Deleuze goes on to refute:

The theory of expression and explication was .. developed in the Renaissance as in the Middle Ages by authors steeped in Neo-Platonism [but].. the idea of expression explains how Neo-Platonism developed to the point where its very nature changed, explains, in particular, how emanative causes tended more and more to become immanent ones.¹⁸¹

And we might add here: above all in Spinoza's hands.

Spinoza's relationship with Neo-Platonism, as we shall see when we come to consider Negri's reading of the Ethics, is thus crucial not only to an understanding of his philosophical context, the antecedent conditions which he inherited and transformed, but perhaps more so to establishing plausible inferences concerning his philosophical-political intentions. Thus, as we shall later see, Negri argues¹⁸² for a split in the Ethics, marked by the writing of the Tractatus Philosophico-Politicus, between an earlier Neo-Platonism and a later immanent materialism. And here too we see Deleuze arguing for a development from emanation and transitive causality towards a

transformed doctrine of expression characterized above all by an immanent causality. Arguably, however, such immanent causality renders the distinction between 'expression' and 'production', and the ensuing asymmetry between *natura naturans* and *naturata*, ontologically problematic. For example, such a distinction is logically required by any generative ontology, any ontology that would seek to give an account of the world as a dynamism, as recurrent self-production, since only such asymmetry would permit the *repetition or return of productive process*, since such generative power cannot be allowed to exhaust itself in its product. What the *natura naturans / naturata naturata* distinction effectively establishes, therefore, is perhaps ultimately an ontological distinction between *power* and *product*.

As Laerke has argued above, beyond anthropomorphosis, for Spinoza the only real definition of the essence of God is as *power*, and we must therefore employ this definition of essence to examine the contrasting notions of expression and of production, and the significance and validity of the distinction which Deleuze argues for. As we shall see, this raises central questions concerning modality, both in relation to necessity (expression posits a necessary relation between essence and existence) and potentiality, the latter especially forming a thread which will run throughout this chapter and through both Deleuze and Negri.

We therefore now turn to the central theme of power in Spinoza's ontology.

Spinoza's Ontology of Power

As we've just seen above, Spinoza identifies the real essence of God as power. In this sense, power is the foundation of Spinoza's ontology, power is *what there ultimately is*, Spinoza's answer to the Heideggerian *Seinsfrage*. However we should be careful here not to fall into modal confusion, or into ontological dualism:

To say that the essence of God is power, is to say that God produces an infinity of things by virtue of the same power by which he exists. He thus produces them by existing. .. It is not enough, then to say that God's power is actual: it is necessarily active, it is act. ¹⁸³

To put it succinctly: ' God does not produce things because he wills, but because he is.'¹⁸⁴

Thus, the identification of essence and power establishes a necessary connection between God's (substance's) existence and 'his' production: for God (substance) to exist is for God (substance) to produce an infinity of things. There is no question of *potentiality* here, and therefore of any gap between potentiality and act: *God's power is as act*, and it is this non-potential modality that is captured by the concept of *expression*. And here, although Deleuze and others have commented on Spinoza's Neo-Platonist antecedents, we should also note the clear Aristotelian parallels: Spinoza's expressive substance is necessarily not only productive but *self-productive* in just the same way as Aristotle's prime-mover. Thus, the identification of essence and power necessarily leads to a dynamism, since the very concept of power is *internally* connected to that of productive action. At the same time, however, in Spinoza the correlative of power is capacity to be affected. Deleuze writes that

..in Spinozism, all power bears with it a corresponding and inseparable capacity to be affected. And this capacity to be affected is always, necessarily, exercised. To potential there corresponds an aptitude or potestas; but there is no aptitude or capacity that remains ineffective, and so no power that is not actual. ¹⁸⁵

Spinoza's doctrine of power, then, is both subtle and inclusive: subtle since it is also necessarily connected to *capacity to be affected*, which thereby opens on to another major ontological category: that of *composition*, a capacity to interact and to combine into greater relational complexes expressing a greater degree of power; inclusive, since the same principles cover both the power of God as substance (substance consists in a capacity for modification, and therefore

can exhibit emergent properties) and the interaction and combination of modes. This 'dual-aspect' doctrine of power (as power to act and as capacity to be affected) thus profoundly modifies the inherited schema of power-and-act on the level of modes in favour of '.. two equally actual powers, that of acting, and that of suffering action, which vary inversely to one another.' ¹⁸⁶ And this principle of an inverse relation between these two 'equally actual powers' then allows an *ethical* dimension to emerge directly from the ontology, since it allows Spinoza to go on to evaluate forms of life in terms of these two aspects, and to enjoin those in which power is enhanced rather than decreased, augmented through the adequate exercise of reason or, as we shall later see, through forms of social association. As Deleuze puts it¹⁸⁷

Thus Spinoza can sometimes present the power of modes as an invariant identical to their essence, since the capacity to be affected remains fixed, and sometimes as subject to variation, since the power of acting (or force of existing) 'increases' or 'diminishes' according to the proportion of active affections contributing to the exercise of this power at any moment.

At the same time, however, the inclusiveness of the definition of power does not compromise the wider substance-modes distinction, since modes can have no latent residue of power, no power that is not actual. As Deleuze puts it, *at each moment they are what they can be*, thoroughly actualized, thoroughly determinate. And this same determinacy also constitutes a degree of perfection on a scale of increasingly complex inclusiveness, and is not strictly separable from the degree of modal power which constitutes its essence:

One should therefore distinguish between essence as power, that of which it is the essence, and the corresponding capacity to be affected. That of which an essence is the essence is always a quantity of reality or perfection. But a thing has the greater reality of perfection, the greater the number of ways in which it can be affected. ¹⁸⁸

Thus, the maximum state of perfection, from the dual-aspect doctrine, will also constitute a maximum capacity to be affected, although here the definition of substance as *causa sui*, as self-

caused and being not in another but in itself, will prevent the ontology from collapsing into impossible regress: God (substance) causes himself *at the same time* as he causes expressed beings. Conversely modal essence will not only consist in capacity for affection, but in relatively active power as well. The name which Spinoza's gives to this mix of powers is of course *conatus* , which determines a given mode's overall capacity to persist in its being. Such *conatus*, then, while consisting of capacity to be affected, and therefore to enter into composition with other modal beings, also has its active side, in which respect it also constitutes a principle of autonomy since, as Scruton puts it, it is *conatus* which then '.. causes an organism to stand apart from its environment, in a persistent and active self-dependence.'¹⁸⁹ Such *conatus*, moreover, will differ in degree, such that the greater the *conatus*, the greater the degree of perfection and of autonomy. The expression/production pair, therefore, and more generally the theory of power, appear to involve a major reworking of concepts of modality inherited from classical thought through their return and transformation in the Renaissance. It might even be possible to interpret Spinoza's doctrine of power, involving the two powers of capacity to act and capacity to be affected, as effectively removing the indeterminacy involved in the concept of potentiality: if a thing is *potential* then, as Agamben has insisted, it thereby contains the potential *not* to be as well as to be, and contingency *in this form* would of course violate Spinoza's other profound commitments to causal necessity:

.. there is no more a contingency of modes in relation to substance than a possibility of substance in relation to attributes. Everything is necessary, either from its essence or from its cause: Necessity is the only affection of Being, the only modality.¹⁹⁰

Here, however, we should also recall Spinoza's three orders: *the order of essences, of nature, and of encounters*. This tripartite schema plays a crucial role within Spinoza's overall ontology. In

relation to the contingency latent within the classical concept of potentiality, it allows Spinoza to maintain a *positive* doctrine of power (we have seen above both how expression identifies existence and self-production, and how modes, at any given moment, are all that they can be) by *displacing contingency on to the order of encounters*. The *order of essences* determines the degree of power which constitutes a given entity, governing both its active capacity and its capacity to be affected; the *order of nature* endows that same being with specific structure (for example, biological, and perhaps even psychological determinacy), which determines its combinatorial capacities, which Varela and Maturana¹⁹¹ refer to as 'structural coupling'; the *order of encounters* determines the opportunities for such 'structural coupling', such (power-enhancing or power-decreasing) combination to occur, and it is within this order that Spinoza inscribes contingency, it is here where such encounters may or may not occur. And what is distinctive in the schema of the three orders and of that of encounters in particular is that it constitutes a profoundly *materialist* account not only of contingency but of its associated affective, existential and political consequences, including those of failure and disappointment. And as we saw in the previous section, Althusser was to draw heavily on the order of encounters in particular, especially in his later work.

But Spinoza's reworking of modality has other far-reaching consequences. As we've just seen, Deleuze attributes Spinoza's necessitarianism to an inclusive disjunct: necessity *either* by essence *or* by cause. In this sense, we might detect a hairline fissure within the ontology running between the expressive doctrine of power, and the causal doctrine, since the first leads on to an immanent doctrine of causation, in which causes and effects must become mutually determining. Or rather: in which we must abandon the *linearity* of the causal relation, not in the sense that causes will cease to precede effects, but in the sense that causality is itself a multiple, complex, *overdetermined* relation, such that nominal effects can act back on their causes, as in the case of feedback loops

within complex systems. (and as they do, for example in Althusser's related notion of 'structural causality' considered in Chapter I above).

Thus the causal doctrine becomes indistinguishable from an epistemological doctrine, ordered as it is by an account of *knowledge of antecedent conditions*, and appears to set up a regressive movement towards a notion of *ultimate* cause, such that the concept of *causa sui* appears to take on a contradictory function: on the one hand as the self-generative power of *natura naturans*, and as a principle guaranteeing the return of generative process, and on the other as a *limit condition* upon causality, one that constitutes the resting-place of a chain of antecedence, and which *grounds* the causal process. I am not suggesting here, of course, that the generative doctrine of power and the causal doctrine are actually separable in Spinoza: knowledge of things *by their causes*, which Spinoza terms *adequate* knowledge, leads on to an enhancement of power, and therefore to autonomy of action. What I am suggesting is that the generative doctrine and the causal doctrine exhibit a certain tension, involving what Searle terms different 'directions of fit', and that it is the causal doctrine which may give rise to an effect of *grounding* in Spinoza's ontology with which Deleuze both will, and will not, take issue.

Thus, ontological expression leads necessarily forward into immanent modal production (it is in this sense that Piercey, for example, refers to power as ' .. a unitary, '*pent-up*' phenomenon whose nature is to *pass over* into modal actualisation ..' ¹⁹² - my emphasis); regressive in that the causal doctrine essentially works backwards with the aim of ultimately bringing the antecedent causal chain to an end in the *causa sui*. It is perhaps in this sense that Moreiras has come to speak of an effect of *nostalgia* in Spinoza, an ontological nostalgia provoked by this regressive movement of causal knowledge.

In any case Deleuze finds in Spinoza's 'dual-aspect' doctrine of power the basis for some kind

of non-linear and therefore non-hierarchical relation, one that implies an immanent causality such that causes and effects are mutually determining :

. if it be true that modes, by virtue of their power, exist only in their relation to substance, then substance, by virtue of its power, exists only in relation to modes: it has an absolutely infinite power of existence only by exercising in an infinity of things, in an infinity of ways or modes, the capacity to be affected corresponding to that power. ¹⁹³

But in this deployment of the dual-aspect theory of power, Deleuze is arguing for an *ontological mutualism* of substance and modes in a way that appears to weaken the double-articulation of expression and production: here, substance *is and only is* as modal production. As we shall see in the subsequent section when we come to consider Deleuze's own ontology, and the ways in which it both repeats Spinozan themes and also transforms and moves beyond them, what appears in the above quotation is evidence of Deleuze's concern to eradicate any lingering vestige of transcendence in the form of a prioritization of substance, and to render the substance-modes distinction strictly univocal, or even, as Deleuze later puts it, rather than have modes turn on substance, on the contrary *to have substance turn on modes*. And yet as we shall also see, there is evidence at the same time of a progressive-regressive movement within Deleuze's ontology as well: progressive in that, as we have seen above, Deleuze feels compelled to make substance turn upon modes, in a form of *expressive mutualism*, and yet regressive in that, driven by the peculiar modality of his doctrine of *virtuality*, he sets up a method of counter-actualisation (Hallward seeks to turn this method into an ethic) through which we can regress from the actual towards the virtual. As we shall also see, however, the political interpretation of this ontology of *virtual-intensive-actual* which Deleuze lays out for us, will crucially depend on the relationship between the virtual and the actual, and above all on how we are to understand *virtuality* itself.

But in terms of the first, *progressive* direction, the expressive one, the radical consequences of

Spinoza's 'dual-aspect' theory of power begin to emerge in a way that recalls the Zen koan: 'Is it the wind that moves or the flag that moves?' And as for Deleuze, it seems clear here that the anticipated answer is a non-dual one: it is a single expressive (productive) movement. In this way, in terms of the progressive movement, it might even be more accurate to refer to Spinoza's 'non-dualism' rather than to his 'monism', the conventional attribution, since the former term avoids the reductionist connotations of the latter, hinting too at a regressive movement towards a ground. It also perhaps more closely corresponds to Spinoza's actual philosophical practice, and to the ultimate significance of his insistence upon immanence, an insistence that brings him closer to what is philosophically interesting in the notion of dialectical relations: their non-dual movement, the positing of an order which precedes the constitutive separation of subject and object. At the same time the very singleness of this expressive movement remains a problem for Deleuze in Spinoza's ontology, a problem which, as Piercey argues¹⁹⁴, Deleuze will go on to attempt to resolve within his own 'ontology of difference' through an appeal to what he will term the *ungrounding* of substance. However Piercey also argues for a continuity between Spinoza and Deleuze, one that turns on two central features of Spinoza's thought: the structure of expression, and the double-articulation which it involves. And so before going on to consider Deleuze's own ontology, and above all this central concern with the 'ungrounding' of substance, I now consider these two interrelated features.

The Tripartite Structure of Expression

Triadic structure recurs throughout Deleuze's reading of Spinoza. Thus, he identifies 'a triad of substance', albeit one which appears to backtrack on the non-dual relation referred to above through an implicit appeal to linear causality, and which takes the following form:

.. the essence of substance as an absolutely infinite power of existing; substance as *ens*

realissimum existing of itself; a capacity to be affected in an infinity of ways, corresponding to this power, and necessarily exercised in affections of which substance is itself the active cause.¹⁹⁵

A further triadic structure is then also identified in the case of modes, one cited previously above:

'.. a mode's essence as a power; an existing mode defined by its quantity of reality or perfection, the capacity to be affected in a great number of ways.'¹⁹⁶ Such triadic structure recurs too, of course, in the schema of the three orders of *essence, nature and encounter* referred to above, but above all in the structure which overarches the entire Ethics: that of *substance-attributes-modes*, a structure which has given rise to considerable interpretative problems, and which Badiou identifies, in the attributes-modes relation, as the locus of a *suppression of the void* in Spinoza, and with it the suppression of a subject-position. Such criticisms however can, I think, be responded to, and I shall attempt to do so in the Badiou chapter.

We should recall here that what is striking for Deleuze in what he identifies as Spinoza's doctrine of ontological expression is precisely its tripartite structure of *expressor-expression-expressed*, one which, I have suggested above, in order to avoid logocentric connotations, might be interpreted along the lines of another such structure, that of *power-process-product*, a suggestion I will take up in greater detail when we come to consider Negri. And what intrigues Deleuze in this tripartite relation is the central ambiguity which leads to the mutual enfoldment of all three terms: what is expressed has no existence outside of its expression, and yet 'what is expressed' can be taken to refer either to the *expressor*, or at the other pole to the *expressed*. It is in terms of this structure that he understands the substance-attributes-modes distinctions, in which he also identifies a *double-articulation* which he will carry over into his own ontology of difference, one which we have already come across in the distinction between *expression* and *production*. Thus, as Piercey claims

For Deleuze as for Spinoza, 'expression has within it the sufficient reason of a re-expression (EP, 105, his reference).' When we say that Being expresses itself, we must distinguish two stages. First being determines itself into certain forms; next, these forms get actualized through the production of particular things. ¹⁹⁷

Thus the attributes, for us as human beings with a specific biological and therefore cognitive structure, restricted to those of thought and extension, are themselves potentially infinite, thus constitute in Deleuze's reading a stage of *formal determination*, corresponding to reality *under a certain description*. And as Scruton helpfully suggests here 'This is something like what Spinoza had in mind with his concept of an attribute: a complete account of substance, which does not rule out other, and incommensurate, accounts of the very same substance.' ¹⁹⁸

However the postulate of an infinity of possible attributes, an infinity of possible descriptions, therefore, as Scruton also points out, contains implications both for the open-endedness of our knowledge-claims, and for forms of reductionism : ' The world may be one substance, but there is no single theory of its nature, and in particular no way of reducing the mental to the physical.' ¹⁹⁹ Moreover it is here that Althusser (and Macherey) as we saw in the preceding section, draw parallels with Hegel: the infinity of attributes, like Hegel's category of abstract Being in the *Logic*, remains maximally indeterminate, such that this infinity becomes effectively indistinguishable from the maximal indeterminacy of non-being, which allows Althusser to suggest parallels between Spinoza's infinity of attributes and the Epicurean void.

As suggested above, then, although there is no doubt of Deleuze's commitment to Spinoza, there remains a certain discomfort in his reading of Spinoza over the question of ontological ground, and of the way in which, in spite of Spinoza's own commitment to immanence, and to the expressive doctrine, a certain regressive movement appears to emerge through the causal doctrine, leading back to a linear grounding in the *causa sui*, and therefore, perhaps , to a ghost of

transcendence.

And so we now turn to Deleuze 'in his own name', and to the 'ontology of difference' which he develops, and in particular, to his concept of ontological 'ungrounding' through which he attempts to resolve the progressive-regressive problems indicated above. As we shall see, however, in attempting to resolve these problems, Deleuze will actually end up with a progressive-regressive doctrine of his own, although as we shall also see, how we are to interpret the 'regressive' movement here will depend entirely upon how we are to understand the signature concept of *virtuality* which he develops.

The 'Ungrounding' of Substance

As we have seen in the preceding section, Atthusser constructs a 'subterranean' philosophical tradition, and as we shall also see in this current section, Deleuze similarly constructs an alternative philosophical tradition, although one comprising a different range of influences.

Concerning this alternative tradition, Rajchman suggests that for Deleuze philosophies

... have a kind of stratigraphic time. Thus, philosophy does not in fact divide up into epochs ... Rather, there is a sense in which what is new in philosophy remains so . Thus, in Deleuze's studies, each philosopher emerges with fresh features as a kind of 'contemporary', in the process exposing connections between or across strata ([such that] Spinoza joins hands with Nietzsche and Lucretius²⁰⁰

One way of thinking of this other tradition which Deleuze constructs is as a kind of echo-chamber, one that permits resonance-effects and cross-interpretations to emerge. A prominent example of this is the way in which he employs Duns Scotus' principle of *univocity* (' being is said equally of all things of which it can be said') as a means of interpreting Spinozan immanence. Such a principle, however, in Deleuze's view, must lead on to a radically non-hierarchical ontology, one which is at odds with the prioritization of substance inherent in the idiom of the 'modification of substance.'

The doctrine of expression, however, Deleuze sees as being so radical in its ontological implications that it is inherently fraught with the dangers of regress to a ground:

The doctrine of expression is repressed as soon as it surfaces. For the themes of creation or emanation cannot do without a minimal transcendence, which bars 'expressionism' from proceeding all the way to the immanence it implies. Immanence is the very vertigo of philosophy, and is inseparable from the concept of expression .²⁰¹

Piercey²⁰² identifies two ways in which Deleuze's 'ontology of difference' differs from that of Spinoza, while sharing its broadly 'expressionist' character, and which we have already come across: one is a difference in modality between Spinoza's conception of potentiality and Deleuze's own distinctive conception of *virtuality*, and the other concerns the question of the *grounding* of an ontology, and therefore of the setting up of some kind of ontological hierarchy. But before we go on to consider these, we shall first consider what it is that carries over from Spinoza into Deleuze. And here, I shall draw largely on Piercey's succinct summary of the key features of Deleuze's own 'ontology of difference', an ontology in which *determination* and *differentiation* constitute the defining characteristics. And this ontology of difference is strategically driven: it sets out to challenge and to replace what Deleuze sees as the long-enshrined paradigm of the self-identical in philosophy, a regime of the Same, and of representation as the 'image of thought' which is its necessary accompaniment. What it sets out to do, effectively, is to submit Identity (capitalized here as an ontological axiom, another answer to the *Seinsfrage*) to the temporal dynamics of repetition and difference. This concern with the subversion of the self-identical carries over directly into the political domain in the form of what Deleuze refers to as a 'minor politics', whose character and implications we will later consider in detail.

We have already seen how the consistent motif of tripartite structure repeats throughout Deleuze's reading of Spinoza, above all in the form of substance-attributes-modes, which

constitutes the basic architecture of the ontology. An equally fundamental tripartite structure underlies Deleuze's ontology too: that of *Being, the virtual and the actual*, which similarly constitutes a fundamental architecture, although as we shall see, a certain slippage tends to take place throughout Deleuze's works between the first two terms, such that, in a sense, Deleuze can be alleged to have transgressed *ontological difference* (the difference between Being and entities which Heidegger insisted on), and to have moved into the territory of something very like a ' philosophy of nature.' If so, however, as we shall also see, this mirrors developments within science and mathematics towards the theorization of non-linear systems.

To return to the repetition and difference of Spinoza in Deleuze, if it is a doctrine of power which ultimately subtends Spinoza (and along with Deleuze, I have argued throughout that it is), then in Deleuze the activity of such power is characterized as an activity of differentiation, ' a power of divergence or decentring' to which " the entire alternative between finite and infinite applies very badly" (DR, 264).²⁰³ This activity of differentiation, however, must be understood in various senses: as the general, expressive *self-differentiation* of Being, as differentiation ('dT' : a virtual and intensive process of divergence analogous to the determination of the attributes), and as differentiation ('dC'), which Deleuze himself defines as ' .. the actualization of [a] virtuality into species and distinguished parts.'²⁰⁴ But the analogies are clear: just as Spinoza's substance moves through determination under attributes towards modal particularity, so does Being in Deleuze move through virtual determination in ideal structures such as Ideas and Events (we will take up Deleuze's concept of the Event in detail in due course) towards differentiated (dC), extensive, actualized beings. Thus too, in the dT-dC relation, we see an effect of double-articulation analogous to the expression-production pair which Deleuze identified in Spinoza. As Piercey summarises it, ' The movement from Being to the virtual parallels that from substance to

attribute; the movement from virtual to actual parallels that from attribute to mode.'²⁰⁵ Both, however, consist in an activity of dynamic divergence which constitutes a *necessarily forward movement* and is therefore inherently *irreversible*. But as we shall see there is also a regressive effect within Deleuze's ontology, that of 'counter-actualisation', in terms of which we regress from what has been actualized back towards the virtual multiplicities from which that particular differentiated pathway towards actualization first emerged. As we shall see shortly, in terms of Bergson's understanding of virtuality at least, this can also produce effects of what I have termed above, following Moreiras, *ontological nostalgia*.

The dT-dC articulation, however, in fact underlies what Deleuze describes as two forms of repetition. The first of these is what he terms 'difference without concept', a 'bare, material repetition' which forms our primordial concept of the Same, and which occurs 'when we find ourselves confronted by identical elements with exactly the same concept'²⁰⁶, such as grains of sand, or drops of rain. But Deleuze goes on then to question the presuppositions of such 'non-conceptual difference' and argues that this material repetition of the Same '... appears only in the sense that another repetition is disguised within it, constituting it and constituting itself.'²⁰⁷ Thus it is that Deleuze comes to claim that '... resemblance, identity, analogy and opposition can no longer be considered anything but effects, the product of a primary difference, or a primary system of difference.'²⁰⁸ What repeats beneath the bare repetition of the Same, therefore, is difference itself, or rather *difference-in-itself* as Deleuze expresses it: '... an in-itself which is like a differentiator... by virtue of which the different is gathered together all at once rather than represented on condition of a prior resemblance.'²⁰⁹

Piercey comes to view Deleuze's ontology as involving a further tripartite schema, that of three 'fields' (he argues that the concept of 'field' is itself fundamental to the ontology) of two levels of repetition (of the Same, and of a difference that repeats), and of a third that lies between

the two: the field of *difference-in-itself*. However what also seems to emerge from Deleuze's ontology, originating from its primordially *temporal* dynamics, is commitment to an ontological concept of *system*, one which, consistent with the dynamic ontology Deleuze inherits from Spinoza, views material objects as the products of a *differential history*, a secret history of bifurcation and divergence:

A system must be constituted on the basis of two or more series, each series being defined by the differences between the terms which compose it. If we suppose that the series communicate under the impulse of a force of some kind, then it is apparent that this communication relates differences to other differences, constituting differences between differences within the system.²¹⁰

And within such differential systems, it is this second-order difference, the difference within and between differential series, which constitutes the driving-force of a *differenciator*, Deleuze himself providing the example of a '... coupling between heterogenous systems, from which is derived an internal resonance within the system, and from which is derived a forced movement, the amplitude of which exceeds that of the basic series themselves.'²¹¹ Evidence of the fact that Deleuze is here elevating the concept of system to *ontological* status is provided by what he sees as the range of its application: 'The intensive character of the systems considered should not compromise their being characterized as mechanical, physical, biological, psychic, social, aesthetic or philosophical..'

²¹² In addition, however, Deleuze also draws attention to the inherent *indeterminacy* of such intensively diverging systems, and here appeals, somewhat gnomically, to the role of a 'dark precursor' which constitutes, comparable to Lacan's 'objet a', an extra-systemic source of destabilisation, a vanishing-point towards which the system and its multiple series converge : '

There is no doubt that there is an identity belonging to the precursor, and a resemblance belonging to the series which it causes to communicate. This 'there is', however, remains perfectly indeterminate.'²¹³

Of all Deleuze commentators it is perhaps Manuel Delanda who has focused most intently on this *systemic* character of Deleuze's ontology. Thus, he draws on a number of concepts deriving from complex systems theory in an attempt to suggest the ways in which Deleuze's ontology might be used to provide the philosophical and ontological framework for such non-linear theory, and suggests various mappings from that ontology into the theory, above all in terms of virtual objects which are real but not actual: *multiplicity, phase-space, basins of attraction, symmetry-breaking transition* and so on. More generally, Delanda views Deleuze's ontology as one driven by a specific problematic: that of *morphogenesis*, the emergence of form within matter, and as motivated by the need to provide an alternative account both to Platonism, and to Aristotelian 'hylomorphism', in which form emerges from matter as its immanent teleology. Delanda views Deleuze's ontology, moreover, as constituting a thoroughly materialist one, albeit a materialism which requires the dimension of virtuality, an ontology not of individuals, but of *processes of individuation*. In the section below, I try to summarise the main features of this *systemic ontology*, concentrating in particular on Delanda's account of virtuality in Deleuze. I also suggest that there are important differences between this account and the version of virtuality which Deleuze inherits from Bergson, and go on to suggest that these differing versions can in turn also carry quite different political implications.

Deleuze's Virtuality: Delanda versus Bergson?

To begin with, both Bergson and Deleuze offer what can initially be characterized as a *process ontology*: an ontology which seeks to describe Being not as pre-constituted, but as *dynamic self-production*. In terms of the conventional dualism, both therefore constitute philosophies of

Becoming. To use Hallward's phrase, they both view reality '... as act rather than thing, production rather than product.'²¹⁴ In this respect, they also exhibit a connection with Marx's view of the social world as *praxis*, a connection I will take up in greater detail in the Conclusion to this thesis. The concept of virtuality goes all the way back to Duns Scotus, who argued that some of an object's properties, although real, are not actual, and gave as an example an object's identity through time, a property which could never be given as such to perception. The virtual, therefore, from this early usage, has retained, as we shall see, a close association with the *unpresentable*. Hallward, however, attributes Deleuze's concept of the virtual almost entirely to Bergson:

'Deleuze's decision to use the adjective 'virtual' .. follows first and foremost from his reading of Bergson. As Deleuze understands it, Bergson's whole project affirms the primacy of the virtual, understood as 'an absolutely positive mode of existence', as 'something absolutely simple that realizes itself precisely by differing from itself.'²¹⁵ And there is no doubt that for Bergson the very concept of the virtual was profoundly connected to temporality, and above all to a contrast between the continuous, flowing whole of the past, which Bergson termed duration ('duree'), and the present of actualization. Nor is there any doubt that for Bergson, as Hallward convincingly argues, the actualized present was assigned an inferior, derivative status as a locus of urgency, constraint and reflex: 'The present performs a severe constriction of time, and the more pressing the imperatives of present action, the narrower this constriction will be. The more urgent or automated the action – the more action comes to act like a reflex or like a purely instinctual response to stimulus – the more punctual the present compression of time.'²¹⁶ And this constraining, compressive and reflexive character contrasts sharply with the virtual past, which is viewed instead as a flowing and continuous whole, one charged with a creative dynamic, an inexhaustible capacity for producing novelty. As such, quoting Deleuze, any '... actual present is only the entire past in its most contracted state',²¹⁷ which Hallward takes to imply that the actual present is then little more

than a ‘.. more or less compressed, more or less de-virtualised facet of a virtual whole.’²¹⁸ But we should be clear that this past is not the past in any Proustian sense, time which has been lived and lost and which can perhaps recovered: it is instead the name of ‘ the intemporal being of time itself ’²¹⁹, the name of *a holistic becoming*. And although this virtual past, cosmic in its proportions, cannot form part of a lived, personal time, yet we find evidence here too of that same progressive-regressive movement which was identified previously in Spinoza: the forward movement of an expressive and here creative power, a ‘pent-up’ phenomenon driven towards actualization, and a regressive movement: in Spinoza’s case through the causal doctrine of adequation, also tied to effects of power and therefore back to progression; in Bergson’s to the immensity of the virtual, flowing whole, one that is accessible not to reason, as it is in Spinoza through the adequation doctrine, but exclusively to intuition. Thus, it seems clear that Bergson’s concept of the virtual is essentially holistic, oriented towards a cosmological flux of becoming, in fact towards ‘ an eternity that becomes.’

Although Hallward emphasises Deleuze’s Bergsonian inheritance, above all in relation to his conception of the virtual, at the same time he is aware of another approach to the virtual, one that seeks to relate Deleuze’s ontology, as we’ve seen above in connection with Delanda, to developments within non-linear science, and above all within the theory of complex systems. Such approaches, however (approaches which focus, in Hallward’s own words, on ‘.. the unpredictable, non-linear emergence of self-ordering trajectories and ‘dissipative structures from within fields marked by turbulence, disequilibrium, [and] delocalised resonances ..’²²⁰) are acknowledged but then immediately passed over in favour of what Hallward sees as Deleuze’s (and Bergson’s, and Spinoza’s) true provenance: that of *creative ontologies* which ‘ .. have been developed within explicitly theological frameworks, frameworks that rely on some sort of

transcendent creator or God'²²¹. This choice, however, to look back towards a theophanic tradition rather than forward towards the highly suggestive connections which those such as Delanda draw out between Deleuze's ontology and non-linear science, is one that might seem somewhat biased, a bias I will try to redress here by considering Delanda's account of the virtual as a possible alternative to what certainly appears to be Bergson's post-theological account.

Deleuze, Delanda and the Virtual

Various commentators have sought to draw close parallels between Deleuze's ontology and complex systems-theory : Massumi (1992 and elsewhere)²²², Protevi (2005 and elsewhere)²²³ and Manuel Delanda, on whom I shall concentrate in this section. The reasons for selecting Delanda in particular are twofold: firstly because of the fairly rigorous nature of the parallels which he attempts to lay out, involving appeal to an underlying mathematisation in the form of both differential calculus, and of the topological models of chaos and complexity theory; secondly because of the ways in which Delanda in particular seeks to extrapolate from Deleuze's ontology towards a theory of social formation and even towards a new form of political economy, one which seeks to provide an alternative to conventional Marxist political economy and which is replete with libertarian implications.

We now turn therefore to Delanda, and towards his interpretation of the virtual in Deleuze in particular.

Delanda begins his account of virtuality with an appeal to temporality, but within a scientific-theoretical context: that of the tensions within scientific theories between reversibility of process at microscopic levels and irreversibility at macroscopic levels, especially as these are deployed within classical and relativistic physics in the former case, and within thermodynamics in the latter.

As we have seen elsewhere, one way of characterising Deleuze's ontology is as an *ontology of individuation*, an account of the *systemic differential history* by which individuals are formed. As Delanda says: 'The Deleuzian ontology .. is .. one characterising a universe of *becoming without being*. Or more exactly, a universe where individual beings do exist but only as the outcome of becomings, that is, of irreversible processes of individuation.'²²⁴ As we've seen above, such processes of individuation are governed by processes of differentiation (dT) giving rise to actualised, differentiated (dC) entities. Such an ontology, however, stands in contrast to the reversibility required by statements of scientific law, in which 'reversibility' refers to the constancy of the laws under an idealised reversal of a given sequence of events, such as that of the motion of a ball being thrown upwards in a frictionless medium. Such reversibility, and the idealisation which it requires to sustain scientific laws, is criticised and rejected by Prigogine: 'The image of a stable world, a world that escapes the process of becoming, has remained until now the very ideal of theoretical physics.'²²⁵ Delanda, however, sees in Deleuze's ontology a means of moving beyond such reversibility/irreversibility duality precisely through the concept of virtuality which it deploys. And here he develops a highly suggestive account of the temporality of scientific law itself, one perhaps relevant to the theoretical structure of Spinoza's Ethics, in which the eternity-duration dyad has led some, such as Negri, to argue for a historical rupture, itself a kind of 'epistemological break'. Here, Delanda suggests, with reference to Deleuze's 'plane of immanence' (or 'plane of consistency', a phrase which he prefers) that the virtual form of time should be seen as involving *absolute simultaneity or absolute coexistence*, a concept which as we shall see below Deleuze develops in his thinking of the virtual. Such simultaneity is of course challenged by relativity, which argues that two events become non-simultaneous as soon as they become spatially separated. Here, however, Delanda argues that '...the temporality of the virtual should not be compared to that of the processes governed by the laws of relativity, but to the temporality of the laws

themselves.²²⁶ Thus

Although physicists do not usually speculate about the ontological status of fundamental laws, to philosophers these laws are supposed to be eternal, and to be valid simultaneously throughout the universe. In other words, in philosophical discussions fundamental laws enjoy the same form of timelessness as immutable essences. And it is this form of time that the virtual is supposed to replace.²²⁷

Delanda's reading therefore suggests that Deleuze's thinking of the virtual as absolute simultaneity, as a 'plane of consistency', may provide a solution to the eternity-duration division which remains highly enigmatic in Spinoza. I have suggested above, drawing on Piercey, that Deleuze inherits a certain ontological architecture from Spinoza: that of a tripartite structure which appears in Spinoza as substance-attributes-modes. I have also suggested that there is present in Spinoza a certain progressive-regressive movement, progressive through the doctrine of expressive power, regressive through the epistemological doctrine which involves working back through the antecedent causal chain. And what I want to suggest here is that it is the doctrine of virtuality which Deleuze develops which constitutes perhaps the most intimate point of connection between Deleuze and Spinoza: the development of the virtual-actual dyad as a *solution* to the ontological problem of essences-modes in Spinoza, and beyond that to the temporal-existential problem of the relation of eternity to time.

Roffe (2005)²²⁸ develops the suggestion that through his concepts of the virtual and the intensive Deleuze is seeking to provide a solution to the problem of *determinate modal essences* within Spinoza's ontology. However as he also suggests, the textual support in Spinoza for this move into the virtual and the intensive is somewhat tenuous, residing '...in a single claim made in both the Ethics and before it in the Short Treatise, that singular modal essences are 'contained' in the attributes without being in all propriety subject to division.'²²⁹ Thus, since the issue of

determinate individuation remains a latent problem in Spinoza (as it did, according to Deleuze, throughout 17th century thought) Roffe sees Deleuze as solving the problem 'on Spinoza's behalf' through the tripartite structure of *virtual-intensive-actual*. And Deleuze is explicit about the fact that he is strictly moving beyond Spinoza here. Thus, in EPS, cited by Roffe, Deleuze suggests that ' One may be permitted to think that, while he does not explicitly develop such a theory, Spinoza is looking towards the idea of a distinction or singularity belonging to modal essence as such.' ²³⁰, And if we recall here that Deleuze's entire ontological project in a certain sense turns on *the replacement of the essential by the virtual*, a characteristic which Delanda insists upon, then we can see the appeal to the intensive as the provision of the missing term in the movement from virtual to actual (alternatively from substance to modes), and therefore as the guarantor of the 'forward movement' required by ontological expression.

Delanda thus emphasises three principal features of Deleuze's ontology: its character as 'divergent universality', its anti-essentialism, and its concern with providing an account of the emergence of form within matter which is an alternative to both Platonic idealism and to Aristotelian hylomorphism, with its appeal to an immanent teleology. All three, however, are clearly internally related. Taken together, Delanda sees these as constituting a consistently *materialist* philosophy, albeit one which rests on a definition of the virtual as 'real but not actual'. Concerning the relation of virtual to actual, Deleuze views the distinction in a way that is quite consistent with his understanding of Spinoza's ontology as ultimately an ontology of power: that is, in terms of what I have proposed as a third possible tripartite structure of *power-process-product*. Thus, in quasi-Kantian terms, Deleuze views the actual, the extensive domain of actualized entities, as constituting what he terms an 'objective illusion' involving the elision of intensive, differential process under product. In this sense it is quite clear that above all he views his ontology as an ontology of *process*. This becomes particularly clear when he speaks of his philosophical method.

It is necessary, Deleuze and Guattari state, '... to return to the interior of scientific states of affairs, or [to] bodies in the process of being constituted, in order to penetrate into consistency, that is to say, into the sphere of the virtual, a sphere that is only actualized in them.'²³¹ A clear implication of such a method, and of the underlying process-ontology which it serves, is the assertion of the primacy of becoming, of differential history, over actuality. Another is that such historical determination refutes any Aristotelian appeal to natural types, and to the more primordial concepts of resemblance and identity on which such an appeal ultimately rests. As Delanda argues,

.. resemblance and identity should not be used as fundamental concepts in an ontology, but only as derivative notions .. We must show, case by case, how terms which purport to refer to natural categories in fact refer to historically constituted individuals.²³²

And I would also argue that here we can detect a further response to the *Seinsfrage*, in the strict sense of a theorisation of the ontological difference between Being as process and beings as actual, yet one which is still absorbed within an immanent, natural world, one in which there is no *Spaltung*, no Lacanian split demarcating the subject as such. But there is also further implicit reference to Heidegger in Deleuze's treatment of modality. As is now widely recognized, Deleuze's concept of the virtual constitutes a critical revision of the modal concepts of necessity, possibility, potentiality and actuality. I shall later take up the ontologically complicated question of negation in relation to potentiality, but for the moment simply cite that Heidegger, drawing out the implications of the 'metaphysical' question of why there is something rather than nothing, took this question to imply that there is therefore as much a potential not to be as to be, a doctrine taken up in turn by Agamben.

Modality, then, is central to the Heideggerian *Seinsfrage*, including the negative modality of non-being as a modal underpinning of contingency: of that which might or might not be. Here, Delanda pinpoints a weakness in conventional modal thinking, one that Deleuze's differential

process ontology seeks to overcome. He complains firstly of '... the complete lack of process mediating between the possible and the real in orthodox modal thinking.'²³³ But he then expresses a more profound dissatisfaction with the category of the possible itself, a category which, he argues

.. assumes a set of predefined forms which retain their identity despite their non-existence, and which already resemble the forms they will adopt once they become realized. In other words, unlike the individuation process linking virtual multiplicities and actual structures, realizing a possibility does not add anything to the pre-existing form but mere reality.'²³⁴

He goes on to cite a crucial passage from Deleuze, sufficiently important, and suggestive, to cite once again at length: Deleuze asks

What difference can there be between the existent and the non-existent if the non-existent is already possible, already included in the concept and having all the characteristics that the concept confers upon it as a possibility? ...the possible and the virtual are distinguished by the fact that one refers to the form of identity in the concept, whereas the other designates a pure multiplicity .. which radically excludes the identical as a prior condition For a potential or virtual object to be actualized is to create divergent lines which correspond to – without resembling – a virtual multiplicity.'²³⁵

The virtual, then, is posed as an innovative form of modality, as a means of accounting, modally, for the emergence of (relatively constant) form within matter, and thus as a requirement of a materialist account of such emergence from divergent, differential processes. Here, Delanda cites the concept of *state space* or *phase space*, in terms of which a mathematical representation is given of all possible states of a system over time, and goes on to pose several important questions in relation to such a representation:

.. if state space is a space of possible states, what is the status of attractors and bifurcations in relation to these possibilities? Can multiplicities be interpreted in terms of the traditional modal categories, the possible and the necessary, or do we need to postulate an original form of physical modality to characterize them?'²³⁶

The question is of course rhetorical since Delanda, on Deleuze's behalf, is suggesting that it is precisely the concept of virtuality which provides just such a modality. The term 'attractor' mentioned here is of course taken from systems-theory, and designates an equilibrium-state towards which a dynamical system evolves over time. And it is particularly useful to Delanda since it conforms to the definition of a virtual object: real but neither actual nor actualisable:

.. unlike trajectories, which represent the actual states of objects in the world, attractors are never actualized, since no point of a trajectory ever reaches the attractor itself. It is in this sense that singularities represent only the long-term tendencies of a system, never its actual states. Despite their lack of actuality, attractors are nevertheless real and have definite effects on actual entities. ²³⁷

And since entities are defined as consisting of their differential histories, as processes of individuation, thus too, as Badiou will object, they must consist of an ontological mixture of virtual and actual: '.. the virtual must be defined as strictly a part of the real object – as though the object had one part of itself in the virtual into which it plunged as though into an objective dimension' Here, however, Delanda suggests how virtuality, consistent with non-linear systems theory, may be interpreted in non-dualistic ways. He goes on in his articulation of Deleuze's virtuality to contrast two alternative positions on modality here: that of *actualism* and of *modal realism*, each implying both a different attitude towards science, and in particular towards how scientific theory defines both the history of its theoretical objects and therefore too the history by which theory constitutes itself, and cites Giere 1985 here to the effect that

.. As Quine delights in pointing out, it is often difficult to individuate possibilities .. But many models in which the system-laws are expressed as differential equations provide an unambiguous criterion to individuate the possible histories of the model. They are the trajectories in state-space corresponding to all possible initial conditions. ²³⁸

It is precisely here, in connection with the possible histories of a system, that Giere locates the choice between *modal actualism* and *modal realism*, with the former denying any reality to the possible trajectories and the latter taking the view that '... understanding a system is not knowing how it actually behaves in this or that specific situation, but knowing how it would behave in conditions which may in fact not occur' ²³⁹, such that knowledge of a system will have to include an element of counter-factuality. This counter-factuality becomes especially significant in the context of non-linear systems: that is, systems which possess more than one attractor, more than one tendentially stable state. As Delanda puts it, however, '... the problem for the philosopher becomes what ontological status to assign to these well-defined possibilities' ²⁴⁰. And here virtual modality has innovative impact on another modal dilemma: that which links necessity with determinism. Here, Delanda argues that our thinking has been misled by excessive attention to stable systems possessing a single attractor, a single equilibrium-state as asymptotic destination:

A state space with a single attractor, and a single basin encompassing the entire space, has a unique end-state for the evolution of the system. Concentrating on this atypical case, therefore, can mislead us into thinking that determinism implies a single necessary outcome. On the other hand, a space with multiple attractors breaks the link between necessity and determinism, giving a system a 'choice' between different destinies, and making the particular end-state a system which occupies a combination of determinism and chance. ²⁴¹

Interestingly too, given our interest in the status of *events* in Deleuze and in Badiou (and which I argue in the Althusser chapter then again later in connection with Badiou, while more directly descended from Lacan's 'petit objet a', may also be a remote descendent from Spinoza's 'order of encounters'), Delanda develops this idea of systemic choice a little further, and suggests that

...a trajectory may be dislodged from an attractor by an accident, a strong enough external shock pushing it out of one basin and into the sphere of influence of another attractor. Furthermore, which specific distribution of attractors a system has available at any one point in its history, may be changed by bifurcation. ²⁴²

By this point I think we have established enough of Delanda's account of the virtual to be able to do two things. Firstly, I think we can reassert a distinction between this account of virtuality as a dimension of the differential history of actualized objects from what I have suggested is a largely post-theological account of the virtual to be found in Bergson, in which the virtual becomes the name of a holistic dynamism which is totalising in scale, the name of 'an eternity which becomes', as cited previously above. Both accounts, however, do have features in common : above all, a view of the actual (the extensive, the metricised ..) as the (mere) product of a process.

However at several places above, an ambiguity has appeared as to whether we should characterize Deleuze's ontology as ultimately one of process (consistent with philosophies of becoming, such as those of Heraclitus, of Nietzsche, and also of Marx) or, as Delanda's work suggests, as a *systems* ontology: or rather, as an ontology which can be made consistent with systems-theory. What we now therefore have to consider is the nature of this distinction and its implications. To begin with, we should note that both terms are at the same time highly generic and essentially dynamic: 'process' and 'system' equally describe the interaction of entities at a high level of abstraction such that both can subsume a range of types of interaction which can include 'natural' interactions (those belonging to a pre-constituted domain (chemical interaction, weather-systems, fluid mechanics ..) and 'non-natural' or 'social' interactions : marriage and kinship, the exchange of CDOs on finance-markets, and circumcision rituals, for example. Although both vocabularies (that of process and that of system) share the ontological assumption of dynamic self-production, nevertheless there are connotative distinctions: while the vocabulary of process has *reductive* connotations which abolish the natural/social boundary in favour of a certain naturalization of the social, the choice of a *systems* vocabulary has the opposite effect: it treats

'natural' systems as instances of *systems in general*, and in this sense the choice of vocabulary can have certain perhaps unconscious philosophical implications: those of reductionism versus non-reductionism. One possible reason for this shift in vocabulary from process to system is technological: the development and spread of computational power has led to the power to represent the complex, interactive behaviour²⁴³ of 'natural' processes, and even to produce forms of artificial life through the interactions of populations of virtual organisms (using 'virtual' here in a non-Deleuzian sense), leading to a weakening of the natural/non-natural distinction.

However there is also a distinction to be made in terms of properties. The key generic properties which are said to define systems are those of complexity, self-organisation, connectionism and adaptation. Thus, at this level of abstraction, the concept of *system* transcends the natural/non-natural distinction. Reflecting this rejection of a natural/non-natural dualism, systems-theory has also been strongly trans-disciplinary. Emerging from the field of biology in the 1920s, and from an interest in the organized interaction of organisms in ecosystems, systems-theory has also been closely related historically to cybernetics, and to the intertwined concepts of information-processing, feedback and adaptation. This initial biological orientation, along with the trans-disciplinary character of systems-theory, becomes again explicit in the work on complex adaptive systems carried out by the Santa Fe Institute, and by such theorists as John H. Holland, Murray Gell-Man and Brian Arthur, who seek to situate systems-theory within an evolutionary perspective which takes the form of a 'generalised Darwinism', and who have applied complex-systems theory to the diverse fields of cellular automata, entropy, and also to economics. The biological connection is also made explicit in the work of Maturana and Varela, and in their key concept of *auto-poesis* or self-production cited elsewhere above. Moreover this biological orientation is clearly present in the work of Delanda himself, who proposes, developing out of Deleuze, a 'flat' ontology emerging out of 'populations thinking', one capable of preserving heterogeneity within complex wholes :

... while an ontology based on relations between general types and particular instances is *hierarchical*,_ each level representing a different ontological category (organism, species, genera), an approach in terms of interacting parts and emergent wholes leads to a *flat ontology*, one made exclusively of unique, singular individuals, differing in spatio-temporal scale but not in ontological status. ²⁴⁴

But implicit within such an ontology there remains the question of process in the more banal sense of the wherefore: ' .. the new approach demands that we always specify a process through which the whole emerges, a process which in a Deleuzian ontology is characterized as intensive.' ²⁴⁵

And in case we appear to drifting too far from Spinoza here, we should recall just how consistent this statement is not only with the principle of univocity which Deleuze applies to Spinoza (' Being is said equally of all things of which it is said.'), but also with the more strictly Spinozan ontological principle of *composition* (such that a coalescence of the powers of particulars can lead to the power of a greater particular) and also to that of the *ingenium* of particulars which guarantees their irreducibility to one another, or to some 'higher' ontological type. Along with this original biological orientation, however, and evidencing again the claims I have made above concerning the ways in which systems-vocabulary succeeds in moving beyond the natural/non-natural distinction, complex systems-theory has also evolved in the direction of both cognitive science and of A.I., in the direction of the theory of organizations (in which organizations are defined in terms of complex, dynamic, *goal-oriented* processes), and also in the direction of dynamic, adaptive social models in the form of a 'socio-cybernetics' which emphasizes the effect of feedback loops within complex systemic interactions, and which looks at the ways in which such multiple feedback can undermine the conscious intentions of atomistic actors. As such, systems-theory clearly emerges as a major alternative to methodological individualism. In addition, through the level of abstraction at which it defines the concept of system, it may also be said to constitute a *non-foundational* ontology, especially if hierarchy, and therefore the possibility of reductionism, is

taken as a defining feature of such foundational ontologies. This abstract transcendence of the natural/non-natural distinction is also emphasized in the work of Ilya Prigogine, who views the self-organisational capacity of complex-systems, their *emergent* properties, both as being analogous to those of living-systems, and as providing a general counter-tendency to entropy.

In connection with Deleuze's ontology, paralleling this rejection of a natural/ non-natural dualism, there is the theory of *assemblages*, broadly defined as irreducibly heterogeneous structures consisting of human and non-human elements, which form 'dynamic entities under constant reconfiguration'²⁴⁶ As such, as suggested above, we can view such assemblages as consistent with specific features of Spinoza's ontology: those of *composition*, *capacity for affect*, and of *singularity*. This dynamic property of assemblages, the fact that their structure is actively reproduced, therefore subject to *conatus*, means that we have to view them as '.. a verb as much as a noun, a process of becoming as much as a state of being.'²⁴⁷ Furthermore, although 'assemblage' is the commonly accepted English term, Deleuze and Guattari instead propose the French term *agencement*, in order to avoid the implication of a division between human agents ('the assembler') and the things which have been arranged within a given configuration. Deleuze's *assemblages*, as Palmas suggests, embody themes which are also developed within the Actor Network Theory (ANT) developed by Bruno Latour²⁴⁸, specifically, the problematising of the distinctions separating the technical from the social, and the human from the non-human. As such, both can be said to implicitly contain a *post-humanist* perspective on the human-social-technical nexus.

I should perhaps pause to explain here that there are a number of reasons why, having considered Delanda's reading of Deleuze in relation to complex systems-theory, I am now shifting attention on to Deleuze's theory of assemblages. The first is that it provides a dramatic example of

the way in which Deleuze, like Badiou, moves beyond the 'linguistic turn' (and thereby too, arguably, beyond a Heideggerian problematic of disclosure) to develop a *descriptive* ontology. At the same time however, as we shall see below, language is not simply elided but included within the description as a distinct ontological category: that of *expression*. Secondly, Deleuze's (and Guattari's) theory of assemblages also provides an instance of a major line of inquiry which runs throughout this thesis: *that of the nature of the relations between the ontological and the political*. Here, Delanda suggests a development out of Deleuze's theory of assemblages towards a fully-fledged account of political economy which is purportedly alternative to that of Marx: one based on a paradigm of 'Coltism' which emphasizes, as Chomsky does, both the close relations between the state and capital, and also the ubiquitousness of quasi-military relations of power. Delanda's 'populations' ontology, however, as it extends into the political, may well be 'flat' in more than the intended sense. Thus Protevi, whom one would expect to be sympathetic towards Delanda's project, since he too seeks to synthesise Deleuzian ontology with complex-systems theory, refers critically to its 'blandness', and attributes this to its apparent lack of concern with relations, above all with relations of *power*.

Here, I will try to use the Deleuzian theory of assemblage, and Delanda's own development of it, to provide a bridge from the more closely Spinoza-focused ontological exposition developed above towards an appraisal of Deleuze's political positions, and to a critical examination of the earlier ontology in relation to this. We now turn, therefore, towards a closer consideration of Deleuze's and Guattari's theory of assemblage.

Assemblage : from the Ontological to the Political

Deleuze and Guattari²⁴⁹ define an assemblage in terms of two axes: a 'horizontal' axis, consisting of two 'segments' of content and expression, defined respectively in terms of a 'machinic assemblage' of bodies and of an 'assemblage of enunciation', of theorisations, speech-acts and statements, and a 'vertical' axis which circumscribes stabilising ('territorialising/reterritorialising') and destabilising ('deterritorialising') forces. Moreover the general tendency of an assemblage, its *conatus*, so to speak, is towards the formation of relatively stable 'strata', which are defined as '.. historical formations .. made from things and words, from the visible and the sayable, from bands of visibilities and fields of readability, from contents and expressions.'²⁵⁰ Thus, such assemblages are characterised by a process of 'double-articulation' of content and expression, and also by an axis of stability-instability. Such a model of social and political-economic formations has a certain intuitive validity. Thus, if we apply it to the 'financialised' economy which has developed over the past several decades, we can see that it manages to provide something of an analysis of the formation. In terms of the process of double-articulation, the content-dimension would include everything from new categories of financial specialists such as mortgage-brokers, hedge-fund operators and quantitative analysts ('quants'), juridical changes, such as the abolition of the Glass-Steagal Act, permitting new forms of financial institution which conflated deposit and investment banking functions, high-speed computational technology and also compliant, instrumentalised political regimes. On the expressive plane, such content is accompanied by such discursive phenomena as monetarist economics, a new theorisation of risk in the form of 'risk-management', new quantitative finance-models such as the Black-Scholes model, and above all by a widely disseminated public discourse of property-and share-ownership, and of the market as a form of social organisation, accompanied by mediatic fantasies of hyper-wealth delivered up by a relentless cult of celebrity. Together, the planes of content and of expression perhaps succeed in concretising the *hegemonic* character of such formations. We should note, however, that if

successful, this is only a *descriptive* success: the model contains no explanatory principles which, in the case of the financialised formation above, would require broader and more detailed social and economic data in order to account for the genesis and evolution of the formation, even if this is an instance of Althusser's 'lonely hour of the last instance', the one that never comes.

In addition, the axis of stratification/ territorialisation intersecting these planes of content/expression provides us with a means of describing the growth of such formations in terms of an initial conjuncture of elements and circumstances, followed by the evolution of structure (stratification) followed by an increasingly defensive reproduction of structure threatened by two kinds of pressure: that of the uneasy co-ordination of elements (if relations are external, as Deleuze maintains, then they are subject to a kind of *centrifugal* force), and that of the threat posed by underlying flows or 'fluxes' (which Deleuze and Guattari term 'molecular' forces) to the stratified (or 'molar') structure. What seems to emerge in a Deleuzian account of such formations, therefore, is an ultimate opposition between flux and structure, with the former term privileged over the latter.

Although Deleuze's and Guattari's vocabulary here may appear somewhat arcane ('strata', 'molar', 'molecular' ..) as Palmas²⁵¹ reminds us, we should interpret the theory of assemblage in relation to Foucault's own work on discursive regimes, and specifically to Discipline and Punish (DP)²⁵², widely regarded as Foucault's most Marxist work. Deleuze himself regards DP as marking a new stage in Foucault's thought in that here the content of a given historically determinate discursive regime (specifically, the bodies and actions of the inhabitants of a range of 19th century penal, working and medical-psychiatric institutions) is not fully subsumed under the discursive regime (Deleuze's 'expression') and preserves a certain heterogeneity of elements. As with Althusser's concept of *conjuncture*, the relationship between content and expression remains a contingent one although, as the process of stratification increases and intensifies, such

assemblages can take on the appearance of necessity through a process of accretion and discursive naturalisation. However they remain in Deleuze's view essentially contingent formations through the ontological commitment to the doctrine of the externality of relations. Thus, as Palmas puts it, 'Deleuze is interested in the process by which content and expression, the panopticon and the concept of delinquency/law, co-emerged in a stable formation. While the result of this combination is extraordinarily effective, there was no external body – neither God nor king – who proposed a grand plan for assembling them. The merging of the two was contingent and spontaneous.'²⁵³

A number of key Deleuzian themes are implicated here. Firstly, there is an appeal to *immanent process*, the absence of an 'external body' which could provide a transcendent cause or point of origin. Secondly, there is an appeal to the *externality of relations*. In his early monograph on Hume²⁵⁴, Deleuze lays down a view of relations which remains a philosophical constant for him: relations between particulars are *external rather than internal*, as they are in the Hegelian dialectic, bound by ties of negation which take the general form of : *to be x is not to be y*, which for Deleuze entails a deeper presupposition of a pre-constituted self-identity of x and of y, and consequently an elision of their constituent self-difference. A consequence of this external view of relations is that unified totalities cannot be formed out of such externally related particulars, and thus, as in the case of assemblages as defined above, constituent elements remain heterogenous and unsubsumed. And there is a further point of convergence between Foucault and Deleuze: that of the apparent similarity of their answers to the question of how order emerges in the absence of a transcendent force providing a design for the assemblage. Foucault's answer is to appeal to the functioning of what he terms *dispositifs*, occasionally and perhaps misleadingly translated into English as 'diagrams', and perhaps more accurately as 'apparatuses'. We shall see that the distinction is an important one.

Commenting on Discipline and Punish, Deleuze writes that

... Discipline and Punish poses two problems .On the one hand, outside form, is there a general immanent cause that exists within the social field? On the other, how do the assemblages, adjustments and interpenetration of the two forms [of content and of expression] come about in a variable way in each particular case?²⁵⁵

Deleuze and Guattari propose a further term, alternative to Foucault's *dispositifs*, with which they seek to provide an answer to these questions: that of 'abstract machines'. And it is here that the choice of vocabulary between ' diagrams' and 'apparatuses', and between both of these and 'abstract machines' becomes crucial. The word 'diagram' is semantically ambiguous between 'abstract representation' and 'design', succeeding a given object or system in the first case and preceding it in the second. The reason this is important is that, taken as possible translations of 'dispositifs' in Foucault's usage as a means of generalising over a given distribution of power-relations, together with the institutional and discursive practices which maintain them, the proposed terms are non-generative in the first case but *in some sense* generative in the second (a design precedes and *originates* the object or system it describes). Now it seems to me that Deleuze's and Guattari's 'abstract machine' contains such generative implications in that a machine is nothing if not that which *produces* something. The term 'apparatus', however, does not carry such generative implications, but instead provides a means of generalising over a given distribution of what Foucault terms 'power-knowledge', and of the systemic character of a network of institutions, discourses and practices. What I want to suggest here is that Deleuze and Guattari's choice of ' abstract machine' pushes Foucault's *dispositifs* towards the diagrammatic in the generative sense, and thus establishes a quasi-ideal point of origin for such a distribution: that it constitutes a *virtualisation* of Foucault's *dispositifs*, in analogy with the tripartite *virtual-intensive-actual* extensively analysed by Delanda above. Thus, like the multiplicities which for Deleuze

define the virtual domain, and which as we have seen are capable of divergent realisation, so the discursive regime of the 19th century disciplinary institutions described by Foucault can be realised across a range of social institutions. Such an interpretation is in line with what Palmas suggests : ' Structures like the disciplinary institutions described by Foucault can emerge from immanent processes of becoming, which can be actualised in several social settings.' ²⁵⁶ The tripartite sequence is the same, but with the term 'structure' here substituting for the term virtual: *structure-immanent process-actualisation*. Now the ambiguity here turns on the word 'emerge'. Chaos and complexity theories, as we have seen above in connection with Delanda, and also previously in connection with Althusser's concept of conjuncture, use the term *emergence* to describe effects of self-organisation within complex systems, in which the interactive elements comprising the system clearly precede those effects. We have to be particularly scrupulous here over how we are to interpret the phrase ' immanent process' in the above. As we saw in the preceding section, Delanda proposes a reading of Deleuze's tripartite structure in which virtuality is interpreted as a property of systems in relation to which such phenomena as basins of attraction influence system-behaviour. In such a reading, however, the tripartite structure of *virtual-intensive-actual* is interpreted sequentially. However if we are to interpret Deleuze's and Guattari's assemblages in a similar fashion, then the conclusion seems quite clear: *structure precedes the process of realization*, conforming to what we have seen Althusser characterize as ' the logic of the accomplished fact'. The problem here is not only that this appears to posit a quasi-ideal point of origin for social formations, but that it appears to violate both the thesis of the externality of relations, and the accompanying *contingency of encounter* which is its inevitable consequence. We should also note that this to some degree complicates Delanda's mapping of complexity theory onto Deleuze's ontology, since the self-organised emergent effects of complex systems must by definition emerge *in and through* the intensive, differentiation process.

Zizek (OwB – in Online Sources) has made a similar point when he refers to a 'deadlock', in Deleuze's earlier ontology, one which compelled his own 'line of flight' towards the more overtly political experimentation of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Such a deadlock, Zizek argues, is a deep-seated and conceptual one, quite apart from its applications to the social world, between an ontology in which the virtual is in some sense an *effect* of material causes (as in the case of emergent phenomena within complex systems, and of the 'attractors' which underlie the modeling of the behaviour of metastable systems), and an ontology in which the virtual is in some sense *productive* of actual material entities. What Zizek suggests is that the move out of this ontological deadlock was achieved through an attempt to *politicize* the ontology, above all in the form of an *ontology of production*. Evidence supporting Zizek's criticism is perhaps supplied by the frequent appeal to the notion of '*quasi-cause*' throughout *Anti-Oedipus*, one which draws upon the concept of immanent causality identified by Althusser in his early discussions of structure, in which complex effects can then in turn act back on multiple causes, in an effect of overdetermination. In any case Deleuze's underlying ontology is an ambitious one, and seeks to cover a range of phenomena with the same paradoxically small set of ontological categories. Palmas²⁵⁷, citing Delanda, comments too on the wide range of phenomena which are subsumed by the categories, everything from hierarchical social formations and social classes to geological strata, such as sandstone. Protevi and Bonta suggest²⁵⁸, supporting what I have suggested elsewhere above concerning systems, that such range is a product of Deleuze's distinctive version of naturalism, which applies an overarching concept of *system* to both natural and social systems.

As Deleuze moves from an ontology of the natural world (as for example in *Difference and Repetition* - DR) towards the social (e.g. in *Anti-Oedipus* - AO), a change takes place in his ontological vocabulary through a proliferation of exotic-sounding neologisms. Thus, the tripartite-

structure of *virtual-intensive-actual* described previously, appears to be substituted by pairs of contrasting terms: *smooth* vs. *striated*, *deterritorialised* versus *(re-)territorialised*, *desiring* *production* versus *social production*, *abstract machine* versus *social machine*, and above all *molecular* versus *molar*. However if we take the axis *smooth – deterritorialised - desiring-productive - abstract machinic – molecular*, it is clear that it belongs to the virtual pole, just as the complementary axis belongs to the pole of actualisation. Overarching all of these, however, there is the *Body without Organs* (the phrase comes from Artaud), often abbreviated by commentators as *BwO*. This initially concerns the virtuality of the body, a latency of potential traits and affective capacities, with affect constituting a compositional disposition, an ability to compose with some but not with other entities, such that some compositions may actualise these potentialities. In this context, the BwO is deployed in contrast to the concept of actualised organism with its constituent functional organisation, and designates a *pre-organised multiplicity*, a virtual reservoir of tendencies and affective capacities at the level of the body. However in Anti-Oedipus²⁵⁹ the BwO is expanded to refer to a generalised virtuality, such that it there becomes a synonym for *plane of immanence* or alternatively *plane of consistency*, which as we have seen above is Delanda's preferred expression. And in this wider context, the BwO takes on some of the characteristics of Lacan's *petit objet a*. Thus, just as in Lacan the *objet a*, as persisting fragment of the real, is treated as an aporia which sustains desire by preventing representational closure, so in Anti-Oedipus the BwO also comes to function as a kind of limit-concept of maximum flux. Deleuze is of course committed to a process-ontology (or as I have suggested elsewhere, perhaps more accurately a *systems ontology*) in which ontological priority is assigned to intensive, differential process over actualisation. And in the transposition to the social domain in Anti-Oedipus and A Thousand Plateaus the broad ontological figure remains constant: that of flows and breaks in flow, intensive differential processes and bifurcations, or as Deleuze and Guattari

describe it in AO, of *flows and schizes*. Thus, as Deleuze and Guattari describe it in TP,²⁶⁰ 'The Earth is a body without organs. This body without organs is permeated by unformed, unstable matters, by flows in all directions, by free intensities or nomadic singularities, by mad or transitory particles.'²⁶¹ The world is thus constituted of flows rather than entities, and in the virtual dimension forms a world of endless because continuous flux. However at the limit, just as with Spinoza's infinity of attributes, the totality passes over into indeterminacy, and becomes ontologically indistinguishable from void. Thus the BwO here marks out a limit at which all distinction disappears, and takes on some of the annihilating features of death. Like Lacan's *real*, the BwO, for distinctive flows, and for particular living beings, constitutes the impossible, the unrepresentable. I suggested above that the tripartite structure of *virtual-intensive-actual*, which remains close to the surface in Difference and Repetition, seems to become obscured in the transposition to the social domain which takes place in Anti-Oedipus and Thousand Plateaus, and to be replaced by contrasting pairs of terms, effective dualisms such as *molecular-molar*, which still preserve the *virtual-actual* polarity. However it is perhaps possible to make out a transformation of the tripartite structure, even among the frequently puzzling array of alternates which run through these two books. Moreover this transformation would allow us to draw the two terms discussed above, *abstract machine* and *assemblage*, into an ontological schema. This schema would look as follows: *body-without organs - abstract machine - assemblage*, with *BwO* marking out the virtual pole, *abstract machine* corresponding to the productive process of the *intensive* in the original schema, and *assemblage* constituting a realised composition, one which can be composed of organic, technical and discursive-expressive elements.

However the problem of sequencing referred to previously remains here: are we to understand the virtual pole, or the correlates of the virtual-intensive as in some sense generative? Or, at least

as far the BwO is concerned, and as suggested above, are we to read it instead as having an aporetic function, and as forming a limit-concept? As we've seen elsewhere, Althusser attributes an immanent form of causality to Spinoza, contrasting with both expressive and transitive causality, and within such immanent causality, causes and effects can be mutually determining, such that effects can act back on causes to produce effects of *overdetermination*. I shall reserve a fuller discussion of these issues, and of the political content and far-reaching implications of Anti-Oedipus, for the concluding section of this thesis, in which we consider the combined effects of what I have termed Line 1 and Line 2 on the wider project of producing a consistently non-teleological reading of Marx. In the meantime, however, I will conclude this section with a brief summary of the main points made by Mandarinini²⁶² in a ground-breaking article which argues strongly not only against a depoliticised reading of Deleuze, but for a strong relationship between the Deleuze of Anti-Oedipus and Marxist theory. I will go on finally to try to assess the question of the political in Deleuze, and attempt to relate this to the above exposition of Deleuze's ontology.

Mandarini and Deleuze

Mandarini begins with a clear statement of his position:

The culture-industry continues to serve up, in an ever-increasing proliferation of introductions and commentaries, an insipidly apolitical Deleuze. That some of his solo works should permit such a reading is perhaps possible, but that even his writings with Guattari should suffer such a fate tells us plenty about the academy's willingness to ignore anything that might smack of Marxism, or that cannot simply be reduced to the politics of difference, warmed-over multiculturalism, or 'radical pluralism'.²⁶³

What he proposes instead then, is an analysis which deploys Deleuzian ontology to produce a renewed reading of Marx, one which will require, however, the abandoning of certain other pre-existing and perhaps even dominant readings. And the reading which Mandarinini proposes is

focused specifically on a theory of money:

What I wish to focus on here is Deleuze's call for a 'modern theory of money; at the same time, I hope that my reworking of such a theory will also provide a 'critique of Marxism' or, at least, of a certain Marxism . Such a critique, I contend, is a critique from within Marxism that does not seek to leave Marxism behind.'²⁶⁴

And such a reading is subtended by a further and perhaps surprising claim, one that invites us to critically reconsider the prevailing *doxa* concerning the exclusionary relation between post-structuralism and Marxism. Mandarini writes that

The relation between Marxism and poststructuralism is a complex one requiring serious consideration, which it has yet to receive. The conviction that underpins this article is that both Marxists and poststructuralists are mistaken in seeing themselves as coming from antithetical theoretical traditions.²⁶⁵

In the light of the preceding discussion of Deleuze's and Guattari's theory of *assemblages*, what is especially interesting in Mandarini's paper is that here he seeks to apply the theory to an analysis of money, not as a self-contained system, but to its function as *correlator* across different *planes* of the capitalist formation. It will be recalled from the previous discussion that assemblages are said to be characterised by *external* relations, such that they cannot be synthesised into finalized totalities. And Mandarini draws out the full implications of such externality both to suggest an account of money which endows it with a 'command-structure', and to yield an account of the capitalist formation which invests it with an inherent tendency towards crisis, a tendency which, as we shall see, along with the tendency for the rate of profit to fall which was identified by Marx, is also derivable from the ontology of assemblages. In doing so, Mandarini challenges both the abstract equivalence presupposed by money as a medium of exchange, the annulment of qualitative by abstract quantitative difference, and a view of the capitalist formation as ideally

tending towards equilibrium. He writes

By refusing the principle of synthesis and rationalization, we shall see money in the immediacy of its command structures, in its role as correlator coming from the outside, rather than as a quantifier of an abstract substance embodied in commodities and subject to a rational distribution in the service of equilibrium.²⁶⁶

This repudiation of equilibrium, moreover, invites us to read Marx more closely, above all in connection with the concept of *value*, a concept which Mandarini regards as subtending and sustaining capitalist economic models, and which has acted as ‘.. a rationalization of economics such that it (i.e. value) is seen as the common substance present in all productive activities and common to all commodities, as the materialization of abstract labour , as the ... principle of a rational distribution of labours within the different sectors of production.²⁶⁷ Against this presupposition of value as *substance*, and of money as its quantifier, then, Mandarini defines money as ‘*correlator coming from the outside*’, involving a correlation between two ‘*planes*’, a formalized plane of quantitative difference (the monetary plane) , and a plane of circulation and production, subject to regulation and discipline. Here Mandarini draws on both the Deleuzian theory of assemblages and on the theory of primitive accumulation in Marx. Like the later Althusser, the Althusser of *conjuncture*, Mandarini (and Deleuze and Guattari before him), sees Marx’s treatment of primitive accumulation as turning on two ultimately ontological themes: that of *contingency* (the non-teleological encounter between the owners of money and the dispossessed ‘owners’ of labour-power), and that of *force* arising from the originary antagonism of the encounter, the force which disciplined bodies within the evolving factory-system of early capitalism, a force disguised within the money-form through which labour-power was purchased through wages, and which for Althusser, as we have seen, becomes historically transformed into *juridical* power. Assemblages, however, are contingent in two senses: one in terms of their origin (they

constitute a conjuncture of elements which might or might not have co-arisen) , and secondly in terms of their persistent relations: since such relations are external, they remain essentially heterogeneous. And this has a strict consequence for how Mandarini, Deleuze and Guattari understand the capitalist formation. As we've just seen, Mandarini defines the function of money as that of correlation: it is a *correlator across disparate planes*. Moreover such correlation must be constantly repeated: 'This correlation is not carried out once only. The exteriority of the relations to their elements means that vigilance is required to maintain and enforce the correlation.'²⁶⁸

And it is this underlying heterogeneity, an inalienable aspect of the ontology of assemblages, which accounts too for the inherent tendency of the capitalist formation towards crisis, towards points at which correlation and convertibility (of value into price, of money into capital ..) break down.

Mandarini refers to such crisis as ' .. the zero-point of non-correlation, of non-communication', a point at which the idealised fluidity of production-consumption, partly an illusion of speed of flux, slows down to the point where ' .. the elements fall back on their own planes, reterritorialising on consumption and finance.'²⁶⁹ Thus the picture that emerges of the capitalist formation is one in which there is the perpetually repeated attempt, through correlation, communication and command, to effect ' .. a process of production of homogenisation of a differentiated, heterogeneous space' . This space is referred to elsewhere as an 'originary heterogeneity' , and this 'originary heterogeneity', founded on the contingency of external relations, involves the attempt ' .. to view the differentiation of planes and elements as a process with emergent effects produced by operations proper to each..' , and only then ' .. to attempt to think their intersection, correlation and segmentation.'²⁷⁰ Thus, in Mandarini's account so far we can trace several of the main features of Deleuze's and Guattari's assemblages: heterogeneity of elements (externality of relations), tendency towards stratification (involving displacement across planes), and counter-tendency towards destratification (return to the heterogeneity of planes). And we should

remember that another pair of terms subtends all of these, summing over these elements, terms which Deleuze and Guattari employ to describe the split and contradictory logic of capital: that of *derritorialisation-reterritorialisation*: expansion and breakdown of delimiting strata followed by a reactive recuperation of limits. And here, there can surely be no mistaking the reference to Marx, above all to the 'universalising' dynamic which Marx himself was the last to condemn, its 'cosmopolitan, universalizing energy' as Marx refers to it in Capital. Such energy, however, is restrained and recuperated almost as soon as it is released. Deleuze and Guattari, at least, are overtly aware of this connection:

In Capital, Marx analyses the true nature of the double-movement : on the one hand, capitalism can proceed only by continually developing the subjective essence of abstract wealth, or production for the sake of production, that is, " production as an end-in-itself, the absolute development of the social productivity of labour", but on the other hand, and at the same time, it can only do so in the framework of its own limited purpose as a determinate mode of production, " the production of capital", " the self-expansion of existing capital. ²⁷¹

Clearly, then, Mandarinini argues for a line of connection from Marx towards Deleuze and Guattari. But not only that: he argues too for conspicuous political consequences from features of Deleuze's ontology, above all those of the externality of relations, of contingent composition, of affectual predisposition and of stratification-destratification.

In the Conclusion to this thesis we shall take up once again the question of Deleuze's relation to Marx, not only with reference to the kinds of connection which Mandarinini argues for here, but with reference too to the more extensive work of Nicholas Thoburn, who seeks to argue not only for a relation between Deleuze and Marx, but more specifically for a perhaps surprising relation between Deleuze and Guattari and Italian operaist and autonomist Marxism in particular. Mandarinini also provides a connection with these traditions as Antonio Negri's translator and commentator, and it is Negri's name which is most commonly associated with these Italian traditions. I shall later argue,

however, along with Thoburn, that this focus is too narrow, and that the Italian traditions contain a wider range of political thinkers, such as Mario Tronti and Sergio Bologna whose names have become eclipsed by Negri's, but whose political thought deserves equal attention. Before moving on to consider Negri's thought, however, and his own relationship to Spinoza, I would like to round off the Deleuze chapter with some final comments on the distinction between *politics* and the *political*, a distinction which we have frequently adduced and which derives ultimately from Heidegger's rejection of a foundational ontology. As we shall see too, such a distinction also leads us on to a major theme in Negri's own political thought: that of constituent versus constituted power.

Deleuze, Politics and the Political

Heidegger's ontology circulates around a distinction between Being and beings, or between the ontological (that which properly pertains to the 'question of Being' itself, the metaphysical question of why there is something rather than nothing) and the *ontic*, or the acceptance of that which simply is as it is. This distinction came to be referred to as a theory of *ontological difference*, the difference between Being and beings, and constituted a radical rejection both of a foundational logos (as in Parmenides, for example: the assumed unity of thought and being, dismissed by Heidegger, and then later by Derrida as a 'metaphysics of presence'), and equally of what Heidegger critically rejected as a 'metaphysics of the subject', above all in the form of a *cogito* to which what is ontologically fundamental would disclose itself in unreserved transparency, giving rise its own self-certainty. Implicit within such *ontological difference* is the view that we cannot simply rest with some articulation and description of the real as such, one which would ultimately rest on the assumption of the transparency of thought and language to Being, but must move

instead towards a constitutive account of our capacity to comprehend the real, an account, in Heidegger's terms, of how it is that Being comes to disclose itself to the particular kind of being that we are, which he termed *Dasein*, and also, thereby, to acknowledge the limitation and non-finality of such comprehension, the fundamentally historical and epochal character of such disclosure.

We can see here too, I think, a clear resonance with Deleuze's prioritization of the virtual over the actual, with the virtual taking on some of the force of the ontological within Heidegger's ontological-ontic distinction, while actualization takes on a 'merely' ontic character. In this sense, as I have suggested elsewhere above, we might view Deleuze's signature doctrine of virtuality as itself a response to the Heideggerian *Seinsfrage*.

Crucially however, following such thinkers as Mouffe, Lacou-Labarthe, Nancy and also Stavrakakis, this Heideggerian ontological difference also transposes from the ontological into the *political* domain. Just as such difference refuses to collapse Being into beings, and thus opens up the prospect of an unfolding historical ontology, so do Lacanians such as Stavrakakis²⁷² refuse an ontic collapse into *politics*. Stavrakakis draws especially on Lacan's distinction between *reality*, absorbed into the symbolic order (corresponding to Badiou's *order of situation*), and the *real* as that which necessarily exceeds and undermines the symbolic), to invoke a parallel distinction between *politics* (the ontic domain of the existing organization of social reality, which Badiou refers to disparagingly as 'business-as-usual') and *the political as constituent power* emerging from what Stavrakakis refers to as ' the contingent force of dislocation'²⁷³. However it seems clear here that Lacan's symbolic/real distinction is itself a descendent of Heideggerian ontological difference, with Being and the real alike constituting *an untotalisable extra-being* which is necessarily in excess of language and the symbolic. Moreover the inextricability of the ontological and the political thus understood as constituent power is clearly stated by Mouffe: ' The political cannot be restricted to a certain type of institution, or envisaged as constituting a specific sphere or

level of society. It must be conceived as a dimension that is inherent to every human society and that determines our very ontological condition.' ²⁷⁴ And the underlying Heideggerian character of the politics-political distinction which Stavrakakis advances is also clearly stated in Lefort 1988 as constituting a 'double movement':

The political is thus revealed, not in what we call political activity, but in the double movement whereby the mode of institution of society appears and is obscured. It appears in the sense that the process whereby society is ordered and unified across its divisions becomes visible. It is obscured in the sense that the locus of politics (the locus in which parties compete and in which a general agency of power takes shape and is reproduced) becomes defined as particular, while the principle which generates the overall configuration is concealed. ²⁷⁵:

Thus, just as for Heidegger Being is both revealed and concealed in epochal disclosure (and disclosure for Heidegger, we should remember, is necessarily disclosure in and through language), so for Lefort here *the political as constituent power* is revealed and concealed in a double movement which produces, like waves washing up flotsam and jetsam on a beach, particular institutions and configurations of power, but which then, like those same waves and tides, must then withdraw once again. However there is a crucial implication of this constituent view of power: that it potentially gives rise to a *cyclical* movement of power, one in which, drawing on the tidal metaphor just employed, constituency will be both expressed and suppressed by its constituted effects, such that the ontic achievements of constituent power can only be partial and reified, and such that, as in anarchist insurrectionism, the active assertion of constituent power becomes in some sense an end in itself.

With such an appeal to constituent power in mind, we now move on, therefore, to the second member of Line 2, Antonio Negri. As previously, we will firstly consider Negri's exegetical work on Spinoza, then will go on to identify transformations of key Spinozan themes, above all that of *multitude*. We will consider too how Negri develops this same distinction between *constituent* and

constituted power out of Spinoza's *potentia* and *potestas*, a distinction which, I shall later argue, has its origins both in Spinoza and in Heidegger, in the form of the kind of 'double movement' which Lefort describes above.

V Antonio Negri: Spinoza and the Politics of Multitude

As stated above, this section will follow the same lines of development as the Deleuze section by firstly closely examining Negri's exegetical reading of Spinoza, drawing attention to what is distinctive in this reading, before going on to trace the derivations and transformations of key Spinozan themes which are then drawn out from it. We therefore turn now towards The Savage Anomaly, which constitutes Negri's principal work on Spinoza, comparable in its exegetical centrality to Deleuze's own Expressionism in Philosophy. Unlike E.P., however, which tends to focus on Spinoza's Ethics, since that is where Spinoza's ontology is most clearly articulated, Savage Anomaly ranges over Spinoza's entire corpus, to include not only the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus (TTP) and the incomplete Political Treatise (PT), but Spinoza's correspondence as well. And this is so not simply for reasons of thoroughness but because Negri's reading of Spinoza is driven by a specific thesis: that there is a dichotomy in Spinoza's thought which forms two separate 'foundations', and that if the Ethics is read diachronically, and within the context of the turbulent events of the Dutch Republic, then it emerges as a divided work, a work which records the passage from one to the other foundation.

Conjunctures

The circumstances in which Antonio Negri wrote The Savage Anomaly, are now as well-known as they were dramatic. Charged with complicity in the formation and direction of the various leftist armed groups operating in Italy during the 'years of lead' of the 1960s and 1970s, and in particular with complicity in the kidnapping and assassination of Aldo Moro (then Christian Democrat Italian Prime Minister) by the Red Brigades, Negri ended up serving a total of nine years in prison, and it was during his first period of imprisonment that The Savage Anomaly was written.

Such charges, for the record, in the absence of any concrete evidence connecting Negri to these groups and to these events, were eventually diluted to the accusation that he had contributed to a climate of political thought which had made armed struggle possible, a charge which prompted Foucault to remark that in that case, and in the final analysis, Negri was on trial, and had been imprisoned, simply for being an intellectual, albeit one who was committed to leftwing political militancy, one who vigorously challenged both the prevailing Christian Democratic *doxa*, and the ways in which the Italian Communist Party (CPI), through a certain reading of Gramsci, had sought and found an accommodation not only with the Christian Democrats, but with the capitalist system itself. However as we shall see in the Conclusion to this thesis, Thoburn's critical assessment will argue that Negri's own relationship to Gramsci is perhaps more complex and more ambivalent than these initial remarks might suggest.

In any case after Balibar's detailed historical account²⁷⁶ of the political conjuncture of the Dutch Republic in which Spinoza lived and wrote, repeated and amplified in Israel²⁷⁷, it is perhaps tempting to see parallels between Negri's situation of writing and Spinoza's own eventually precarious, threatened solitude. Both periods, after all, were characterised by major political turbulence, and by a correspondingly widespread extension and deployment of juridical powers aimed at the general suppression of dissidence. In the case of Spinoza, as Balibar details, such repression had direct impact on his immediate social circle: Adriaan Koerbagh, a close associate,

was sentenced to hard labour in an Amsterdam prison on charges of impiety after publishing 'freethinking' opinions of which Calvinist orthodoxy and the House of Orange alike disapproved, and died as a result.²⁷⁸ Similarly Franciscus van den Enden, Spinoza's ex-Jesuit Latin tutor, was executed by hanging at the Bastille charged, along with several lesser aristocrats associated with the Fronde, of fomenting insurrection in Normandy, aimed at establishing a democratic republic. King Louis XIV, however, had been informed that van den Enden in particular had sought 'to overthrow his monarchy with philosophy'.²⁷⁹

Such parallels remind us, as Badiou insists, both that philosophy is often an activity of thinking against the *doxa*, and also that such a *praxis* of thinking has not always been a risk-free affair. On the contrary: there have been times in the history of philosophical thought when the activity of thinking freely and against the *doxa* has also required living dangerously.

The circumstances in which Savage Anomaly was written, however, are also more directly relevant to the reading of Spinoza which Negri produces. Stylistically, SA, like Marx's Grundrisse, at times gives the impression of a work which has not been taken to a final stage of editing and refinement, one that is therefore characterized by certain digressive repetitions, above all those of key philosophical formulae which insist throughout the text. In places too it seems to lack logical articulation, in the sense of clearly developed chains of argument, creating effects of ellipsis which require supplementation. Such chains of argument are there, but left implicit, as if the text has been composed under conditions of urgency, both the urgency of the need to produce an inspired work on Spinoza which fits the perceived political needs of the times, and the psychological urgency of the production of a work whose daily act of writing is itself an act of resistance, a source of power by which the powerlessness of imprisonment is refuted and overcome. Instead of a rigorously analytical work like Deleuze's Expressionism (a work which bears all the traces of large

stretches of disposable time, therefore), the Savage Anomaly, composed under these inferred conditions of urgency, relies on other discursive qualities: the use of highly suggestive analogies (such as that, as we shall see, between ontological and social production, and between *potentia* and *potestas* and Marx's forces and relations of production); an acute awareness of Spinoza's historical situation, and a sense of its longer-term historical significance; implicit within this too, a view of early Modernity as both continuing and moving beyond the philosophical canon of the Renaissance; and a view of Spinoza as philosophical *antagonist*, as constituting an alternative to Descartes on the one hand, and to Hobbes and his contractualist descendants on the other, an alternative *which is both philosophical and political*, an alterity which, Negri argues, both accounts for Spinoza's historical marginalisation, and also for his subsequent rediscovery.

With this framework in place, we now turn to the reading of Spinoza which Negri develops in Savage Anomaly.

The Ethics: A Diachronic Reading

The Ethics constitutes an interrupted work. Begun in the period 1661 to 1665, the year of commencement of the second Anglo-Dutch War, Spinoza only resumed work on it in the period 1670 to 1675²⁸⁰, with the anonymous publication in 1670 of the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus falling between these two periods. Moreover although completed in 1675, Spinoza made the decision not to publish the Ethics, following the condemnation of the TTP by the Estates-General of Holland as 'heretical' and atheistic' in 1674²⁸¹, and against the backdrop of the failure of the democratizing experiment of the the de Witt brothers, and the return to theological and political reaction under the monarchic absolutism imposed by the House of Orange. In addition (employing Balibar's chronology once more) in the same year in which the Ethics was completed (1675)

Spinoza immediately began work on the Political Treatise, a work interrupted by his death in 1677, and which therefore remained incomplete.

Like Balibar, Negri brings this historical sequence to bear on his reading of the Ethics, arguing that the Ethics ‘..has not only a spatial dimension, a construction of different levels invested by different and differently organized internal relations. It also has a temporal dimension. It is the work of a life .. the Ethics is a philosophical Bildungsroman.’²⁸² Such a diachronic reading, however, appears to violate the strict logical-geometrical architecture which seems to guarantee deductive passage from definitions, through axioms to propositions and proofs, and on to a subtext of scholia through which these propositions are developed and extended. But before dismissing Negri’s diachronic reading as being in violation of Spinoza’s intentions and of the formal rules by which the text asks to be read (a violation which would make Negri’s reading of the Ethics an essentially deconstructive reading) we should perhaps recall that strain of critical commentary, such as Deleuze’s, which has cast doubt on the deductive rigour of the *more geometrico*, such that the scholia emerge instead as a kind of subversive subtext which has been smuggled in to the formal structure, and also, perhaps, past the scrutiny of Calvinist and Orangeist censorship. Negri, then, does not see the chronological break in the composition of the Ethics from 1665 to 1670 as simply forming an interruption after which the same threads are picked up once more, but as forming a radical break leading to a *refoundation*, a new philosophical orientation, one that abandons what he sees as a quasi-emanationist ontology inherited from neo-Platonism and moves instead towards ‘.. a logic that follows the constitutive processes of reality.’²⁸³ Such a logic, moreover, he sees as originating in the TTP, in which he traces a new *phenomenological* direction in Spinoza’s thought, and above all a new preoccupation with the foundations of sociality, with the social distribution of power, and with the nature of social contract. As we shall see, this concept of *constituent process* becomes central not only to Negri’s reading of Spinoza but also to a *politics*

of *multitude* which Negri continues to develop.

Rather than forming a unity, therefore, Negri sees the sequential relationship between the five parts of the Ethics as constituting instead a series of philosophical experiments, if not of actual *dislocations* through which previously argued positions are critically re-examined or even abandoned and replaced. As he develops this 'dislocated' reading of the Ethics, several terms and preoccupations of his own emerge as central: the concept of *constituent process* referred to above; a critique of standard versions of social contract and of the transcendent conception of state-power which he takes to underpin them; a view of the imagination as providing an instance of free, constructive power and as tied to a positive conception of desire; a concern with the composition of a collective social subject. The TTP, therefore, in Negri's reading, constitutes a new problematic informing the Ethics, one that requires the development of a second foundation, albeit one which continues to draw on the earlier definitions and axioms established as far back as Part 1. There is no doubt too that Negri's interest focuses on the later part of the Ethics, on everything that follows from what he views as the rupture brought about by the TTP. I shall therefore briefly consider Negri's account of the earlier Ethics, an account which can be quite succinctly summarized, before going on to a more expanded consideration of the 'second foundation' which attracts most of his attention.

The Two Foundations: Utopia and History

That Marxist thinkers as divergent as Althusser and Negri should have found Spinoza philosophically appealing is hardly surprising if we recall that Marx's thought is ultimately a political philosophy, perhaps implicitly an ontology, of *praxis*: of man's social *self-production*. As Negri comments 'Spinoza's metaphysics presents us with being as productive force'²⁸⁴,

arguing that this becomes more apparent as the Ethics progresses. Such a political philosophy, however, has been historically associated with a dialectical-teleological schema inherited from Hegel and organized, as Althusser reminds us, around the eschatological involution of origins and ends. What Spinoza therefore appears to offer such thinkers is an alternative ontological schema which does not presuppose the promise of a final destination, which on the contrary is radically non-finalistic. An important living implication of which is, of course, that such major historical shifts in social and economic organization as the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, or the Maoist or the Cuban revolution, carry no implicit guarantee of success: they may succeed, or succeed only partially, or succeed only for a while, or equally may drastically fail, the eventual outcomes depending on a complex and historically shifting causality, a causality which, as Althusser expresses it, drawing on the concepts of psychoanalysis, will be necessarily overdetermined. The long march, therefore, is potentially interminable, and other grounds have to be found for persistence in a project of social and economic transformation.

The principal attraction of Spinoza's ontology to such Marxist thinkers has therefore been, above all, its *radical immanence*, a position which is a necessary consequence both of its rejection of teleology and of the transcendentalism which is teleology's necessary accompaniment: the metaphysical presupposition that in some sense, theological or post-theological, our human destination is given in advance, already contained within a specification of origins. Hallward²⁸⁵ seeks to situate Deleuze, and Spinoza too, within a tradition of what ultimately must constitute a form of (theological or post-theological) mysticism, a *theophanic* tradition in which all beings and events are ultimately viewed as specific, even singular, *expressions* of a preceding and subtending unity, or in terms familiar from Scholastic thought, of a generalized substance which necessarily precedes all actual manifestation.

An alternative view, however, is that Spinoza's radical move was to take the notion of *substance* (*sub-stans, hypostasis*: that which stands beneath and persists), inherited from the Greeks and

from Scholastic thought, and to employ it to designate the totality of actual existence, a totality which, as immanent, must be said *to have no outside*, no transcendent cause or place of origin. Thus what Hallward's richly suggestive and rigorously researched account fails to take into account is precisely the connection between Spinoza's ontology of immanent, self-producing totality, and Marx's political philosophy of *praxis*. What it must therefore also fail to do is to provide an explanation as to why Spinoza has proven to be a source of inspiration to such a wide and divergent range of Marxist thinkers, one which has provided the stimulus for a renewed reading of Marx, a reading which, like Lacan's reading of Freud, may perhaps more accurately be described as a *return*, although, after Nietzsche, such returns can never constitute a return of the same. But there is also another central feature of Spinoza's ontology which also helps explain this appeal: its emphasis upon *power* as founding ontological principle, which Spinoza then extends both into the social domain (social beings, we are told, become more powerful, expand their *conatus*, through association) and into what can perhaps best be described as a *political psychology* in which the affects of joy and sadness are derived from increase or decrease in power, a position which Balibar suggests transforms happiness and unhappiness into an essentially *political* problem. As Michael Hardt, translator of Savage Anomaly comments in his foreword 'The recognition of the ontological density and the political centrality of Spinoza's metaphysical conception of power is perhaps Negri's most important contribution.'²⁸⁶ And as Hardt there states too, with obvious reference to Foucault, 'The investigation of the nature of Power has emerged as one of the central projects of contemporary theory ..', adding that 'Antonio Negri's interpretation of Spinoza is an important contribution to this project. His analysis attempts to demonstrate that Spinoza provides us with an effective "other" to Power'; arguing too that the distinction which Negri draws out of Spinoza between two forms of power, *potentia* and *potestas*,

together with their antagonism, ‘.. is an important key to appreciating the contemporary [political] relevance of Spinoza’s thought’.²⁸⁷ Hardt makes some valuable suggestions here, which help guide us through Negri’s rich but often seemingly digressive commentary on Spinoza, and which provide a thread in particular leading us through his account of the two foundations. Here, Hardt proposes a simple typographical convention to distinguish the two forms of power which Negri discerns in Spinoza, as revealed not only in the conceptual pair of *potentia / potestas*, but also in that of *natura naturans / natura naturata*: that of ‘power’ in the lower-case and ‘Power’ in upper-case, corresponding respectively to the first and second terms in each of the above pairs. This distinction of *power/Power* enables Hardt both to account for the split in the Ethics which Negri insists on, and also to bring both foundations into relation. Thus he argues that ‘ In the first phase of Spinoza’s thought Negri finds that the distinction between Power and power reveals an opposition between metaphysics and history.’²⁸⁸ Here, he focuses on the crucial sequence of propositions in Book 1 of the Ethics through which the concept of power (used generically here) is defined : Propositions 34, 35 and 36. And here Hardt argues that in this sequence Negri detects one of those subtle but strategically subversive reversals of argument which permeate Spinoza’s thinking. Thus while P 34 identifies God’s essence with power, and while P35 states the theologically conventional productive power of God, P36 goes on to enact a reversal by attributing this same productive power to all things: ‘ Nothing exists from whose nature some effect does not follow. ’²⁸⁹ On Negri’s behalf Hardt concludes from this reversal that ‘ God’s Power is not the possibility of producing all that is conceivable but the actuality of producing all that exists; in other words, nothing is made possible by God’s essence except what actually exists in the world.’²⁹⁰ Implicit here is the linking of a potentially self-contained but *external* Power to the modality of *possibility*, as if that Power retained the option of *not* passing over into modal expression; that is, as if it could be characterized anthropomorphically in terms of *will*. Since the modalities of possibility and, Hardt

suggests, of virtuality too, appear to be eliminated here in favour of the immanently actual, Hardt, summarizing Negri, concludes that ' God's Power cannot be other than God's power: within the ontology of the 'first foundation', no distinction can be drawn between the two forms of (generic) power. And it is this non-distinction which leads Negri to refer to the 'utopia' of the first foundation. At the same time, however, Negri demonstrates, as does Balibar, and Israel too, precisely the extent to which the political world of the 17th century was in fact pervaded by the attempt to establish, maintain or return to systems of Power in the transcendent, larger-case sense, and by a widespread philosophical-political project of establishing the theoretical legitimacy of such transcendent systems, one which includes, centrally, both Descartes and Hobbes, the former by establishing a form of territorial division between science and theology through his dualistic ontology, the latter through his doctrine of the surrender of powers to a sovereign which has had defining influence on social contract theory, which still largely provides the theoretical framework for representational theories of democracy. Thus Hardt writes that ²⁹¹ ' From the idealistic perspective of the Ethics, Power is recognized as an illusion and subordinated to power; but from the historical perspective, in Spinoza's world, power is continually subordinated to Power as political and religious authorities suppress the free expression of the multitude.' ²⁹²

Now while this approach of establishing such a distinction in the modalities of power in Spinoza is a fruitful one, as we shall soon see, at the same time it carries an opportunity-cost: it tends to underplay the significance of the profoundly anti-anthropomorphic and counter-metaphoric drive which runs throughout Spinoza's thought. Thus, rather than interpreting Spinoza's equation of substance with the totality of actual existence in terms of a schema of transcendent and immanent power, it is also possible to view the reversal worked through propositions 34 to 36 as being driven by an *anti-anthropomorphic naturalism*: as Spinoza expresses it in that persistently powerful figure,

as the abolition of the illusion of a kingdom within a kingdom. Such approaches are not exclusive, and may even be complementary, but as we shall see shortly, Spinoza's anti-anthropomorphism may pose serious issues for Negri's account of a change in Spinoza's attitude towards the imagination, which he takes to mark the threshold of the 'second foundation' in the Ethics.

Hardt, then, sees the *power* / *Power* distinction as providing the principal ground for Negri's account of the 'two foundations'. But we should also recall here Negri's remark cited earlier that the Ethics constitutes a '*philosophical Bildungsroman*': the 'two foundations' do not constitute two separate blocs of thought, but rather an open evolution, although one informed by the course of political events in which Spinoza and his associates were intimately involved. Hardt writes that

.. this opposition between power and Power, between metaphysics and history, does not block Spinoza's inquiry. In fact, as Negri follows the development of Spinoza's project to its mature phase, he discovers two strategies for destroying the opposition. Together they form a sort of chiasmus. One strategy progresses from power to Power, from metaphysics toward politics and history; the other moves in the opposite direction, from Power to power, from politics and history towards metaphysics. ²⁹³

And it is this suggestion of a *chiasmatic* structure which ends up uniting Spinoza's thought, and which in a wider sense permits an integration of ontology and politics.

Along with the *potentia-potestas* distinction which Negri derives from Spinoza, he also takes up two additional concepts which are crucial both to his reading of Spinoza, and to his own later political philosophy: those of multitude (*multitudo*) and constitution (*constitutio*). Concerning the former, it is now widely agreed that Spinoza inherits the concept initially from Machiavelli, and then in particular from Hobbes, a view of social being as a field of competing forces, an *antagonistic* social field in a neutral sense. As Negri himself comments, consistent with the ontology of power described above, such a social field can be viewed as a form of 'social physics', one which poses as the central political problem that of the distribution, negotiation and ultimately the *expression* of

power. However after Spinoza this social field becomes one in which the natural-right scenario of competitive egoism is superseded with significant political consequences, above all through the concept of *conatus* which Spinoza initially develops in Propositions 5, 6 and 7, but then again later in more socially expansive form in Propositions 35, 36 and 37. I shall reserve a fuller discussion of the radical implications of Spinoza's theory of *conatus* for a later discussion of social contract theory, and of its connections with representational theories of democracy, in a sub-section below; but for the moment I shall simply remark that it poses major challenges not only to political philosophies based upon an ultimate social atomism, but also, through Spinoza's epistemology of 'common notions', to their theoretical reflection in the form of methodological individualism. As Hardt comments here,

'.. we cannot be satisfied with any idea of power that remains merely an individual force or impulse, because power [lower case] is always organizing itself in a collective dimension .It is through this organizational project of power that the metaphysical discussion of human nature enters the domain of ethics and politics.' ²⁹⁴

However in Negri's reading of Spinoza the ontological principle of *conatus* (which for modes and for God alike is equated with their essence), understood especially in its socially expansive form, also provides the basis of the process which he terms 'constitution' (*constitutio*) : ' .. a process whereby social norms and right are constructed from the base of society through a logic of immediate, collective and associative relations.'²⁹⁵ Conjointly with this elaboration of a concept of *constitution* as politically constructive power of the multitude, Negri develops too a theory of the materialist *appropriation* of the world, summed up in the various theories of natural right articulated throughout 17 th century thought : ' ..seventeenth century thought, from Descartes to Hobbes, revolves around the thematic of the passional appropriation of the world'²⁹⁶ , and in this figure of appropriation, posing the human right to dispose of the world as utility, Negri detects not only a right to the passional appropriation of nature, but ' .. an ideological figure for the [nascent] capitalist

market and for primitive accumulation.²⁹⁷ This is so since the theories of appropriation then transform from the right to the utility of nature into juridical-political questions of property acquisition, ownership and security against expropriation. Moreover Negri relates this problematic directly to Spinoza's own historical conjuncture, thereby imbuing the Ethics with a directly *expressive* significance of its own. With reference to the events of 1672, he writes : ' Appropriation is a synonym for new productive force. But this new world is presented as a unitary and universal force only in ideological terms; in fact, structurally, it is a divided world. When the first crises arise, when the ideology and its collective emphasis dissolve, reality shows an appropriation reduced to egoistic interests and reveals the capitalist revolution as political conservation, as a mere functional transformation of the structures of domination.²⁹⁸ And of course within this problematic of the right to property and to its protection Hobbes stands out as major theorist: ' For Hobbes, appropriation is truly fundamental, and his physics [of motion and rest, surely implying, therefore an ideal political stasis] effectively constitutes the basis of metaphysics'. But here Negri finds an internal inconsistency in Hobbes' thought, a point of suture, which he expresses in the form of a question: ' Does not reintroducing the transcendence of obligation result in the negation, if not of the entire physics, at least of a credible image of man? Is not the relationship between passion and constitution entirely subordinated, almost as if he were frightened by what it might suggest ?'.²⁹⁹ This cluster of concepts, then, *appropriation-multitude-constitution*, is central to Negri's understanding of the radicality of Spinoza's thought, not only within its 17th century conjuncture, but as Negri will argue, also within our own.

Before going on, however, to consider the central concept of *multitude*, both in terms of its internal history within Spinoza's thought and also in relation to the ways in which Negri goes on to deploy the category as the name of a *new* social subject, I want first to focus on some key themes

in Negri's reading of Spinoza, themes which have direct bearing on what he argues is a split or rupture in the Ethics. Three principal themes emerge here: that of the significance of the *attributes* within Spinoza's ontology, and that of Spinoza's theory of the *imagination*, a theory whose changes, Negri claims, mark a new threshold in Spinoza's thought, a threshold at which the question of constitution becomes paramount, and lastly that of Negri's attitude towards the negative, especially insofar as this figures in Hegelian and Heideggerian thought.

The Attributes and the Place of the Subject

The theory of the attributes within the Ethics has attracted a great deal of critical commentary, occupying, as they appear to do, a transitional point between substance and modes, thereby seeming to support Negri's emanationist interpretation of parts 1 and 2 of the Ethics. Within a more analytical tradition of philosophical thought, as represented by thinkers such as Bennett and Howie, this debate has been focused on subjectivist and objectivist interpretations, and as we shall now see, this has continuing relevance to Negri's thesis of the split in the Ethics. Thus, while Spinoza states (E, P 9) ' The more reality or being which a thing has, the more attributes belong to it', which seems to imply a view of attributes as the *expression* of substance, at the same time in the demonstration following P10 he states that ' ..an attribute is what the intellect perceives concerning a substance, as constituting its essence.', which appears to open instead onto a human perspective, and ultimately therefore, onto questions of human epistemic constitution. Spinoza then goes on, however, to reintegrate the attributes within the overall ontology of substance when he states that ' .. there is nothing except substance and its modes (by A1, D3 and D5) and modes (by P25C) are nothing but the affections of God's attributes.' ³⁰⁰ As we have seen elsewhere, Badiou identifies here a gap in Spinoza's ontological system, a point of rupture in the plenum which marks out *the suppressed place of the advent of the subject*, a place which he sees as the opening

of a void, a void which for Badiou as for Lacan, is the condition of the emergence of a subject. Here, perhaps, paradoxically, Negri coincides with Badiou while not drawing out the same consequences, consequences which point Badiou in the Lacanian direction of a lack which founds the subject. Thus, Negri writes that ‘.. the subjective aspect of the attribute [as revealed in P10 cited above] can be considered only in terms of the revelation of the problem of the articulation of the absolute, as the index of the emergence of consciousness.’³⁰¹ Moreover Negri takes the locus of the attributes as marking out ‘.. a point where a strong tension is determined between the fluent order of being and the constitutive order of power.’³⁰² Here, we might characterize the split in the Ethics which Negri argues for as one between the ‘circular complexity’ and ‘ the infinite productive flux’, of an expressive process ontology (here, *potentia* is the higher term within the *potentia-potestas* pair, and *natura-naturans* the higher term within *natura naturans / natura-naturata* in order to guarantee the expressive return of process) and a strictly causal, and therefore power-based, *constitutive* account of human history. And in the first Negri identifies what he terms, with obvious reference to neo-Platonism, ‘ the emanative thematic of the first metaphysical foundation.’³⁰³ Within this first foundation, therefore, ‘ (1) The attribute appertains to substance and possesses an ontological identity with it. (2) The substantial identity of the attributes does not , however, afford formal reciprocity between [the] attributes and [the] substance; the substance is an infinity of attributes.’³⁰⁴ And here for Negri this begins to form a monism which, while remaining self-enclosed, begins to move beyond emanationism: ‘ (3) The attribute is therefore not an opening in or of substance; in its determinateness there is not emanation or degradation but simply participation in the versatility of the total [-ity of] being.’³⁰⁵

The history of exegetical commentary on the Ethics, as mentioned above, has yielded a divergence of interpretations tending to cluster around subjectivist and objectivist interpretations of

the attributes, and so there is nothing especially original in Negri's view of the attributes as 'an index of consciousness', cited above. What is distinctive, however, is what Negri then makes of this subject which emerges from the fissure of the attributes. One of Hegel's major criticisms of Spinoza was that he alienated in substance the dynamic powers which should have been attributed to a metaphysical subject, the *Subject* of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ambiguous between metaphysics, history and existence. And it seems to me that as Negri's interpretation of the Ethics develops, it begins to take on something very like this Hegelian agenda, such that all the expressive and constituent power which is attributed to substance in the earlier Ethics comes to be transferred, in Negri's view, to a *socially constitutive subject*. Within the structure of the Ethics, this comes to mark a threshold between Books 1 and 2, and Books 3,4 and 5, with Books 4 and 5 in particular being given the greater emphasis, books in which, for Negri, Spinoza develops 'an analytical phenomenology of the passions'. Thus, after marking the place of the advent of the subject in the Ethics as 'the index of the emergence of consciousness', thereafter in Negri's reading the attributes progressively fade into irrelevance. He writes ' To the extent that the Ethics opens onto the constitutive problem as such, the function of the attributes will become more and more residual. In effect, Spinoza's philosophy evolves towards a conception of ontological constitution that, touching on the materiality of the world of things, eliminates the ambiguous metaphysical substratum .' ³⁰⁶ This is understood as a complex movement, one involving three stages in which: ' Theology is [initially] subsumed by ontology, and [then] ontology by [a] phenomenology of human praxis.' ³⁰⁷ And as this 'constitutive problem' gathers momentum in Negri's reading, two philosophical issues rise to prominence: that of the imagination, and what Negri claims is a shift in Spinoza's attitude from a negative to a positive view of the imagination (and here again we shall find peculiarly Hegelian, or at least Sartrean, resonances); and that of a socially expansive *conatus*, especially insofar as the theory of *conatus* is deployed by Spinoza, and

by Negri, in order to critically undermine those prevalent versions of social contract theory originating with Hobbes.

We therefore now turn to the first of these: the significance which Negri attributes to what he claims is a new, positive view of the imagination in Spinoza, one which in part marks out the threshold of the split in the Ethics which he argues for, consistent with what he terms 'above' the problem of constitution.'

The 'Caliban Problem': Imagination in the Ethics

Evidence of a negative view of the imagination is not difficult to find in the Ethics. It is present, for example, in the schema of the three kinds of reasoning, with the *Imaginary* constituting a merely confused *Lebenswelt* of affective influence and *doxa*, one which must be left behind if we seek the emancipatory self-sufficiency that reason can bring. Similarly in the TTP it is imagination which governs that superstitious and anthropomorphic understanding of the world which is organized by theological orthodoxy, but which nevertheless possesses social utility through the production of obedience, the production of what Althusser terms 'juridical subjects', a socially obedient subjectivity. However it is Negri's claim that in spite of these broadly negative themes, nevertheless a positive and above all *constitutive* view of the power of the imagination emerges in Spinoza, one summarized in his account of a quasi-hallucinatory experience related in a letter to Pieter Balling³⁰⁸, and which provides the basis for what Negri refers to as 'the Caliban Problem'. In Letter 17, Spinoza relates to Balling, who has questioned Spinoza on the validity of omens and premonitions, claiming personal experience of a premonition of his own beloved son's death, that one morning just at dawn he had awoken from a very deep dream and that the images which came to him in the dream had remained present before him, '... as vividly as of they had been real things,

in particular the image of a black, scabby Brazilian' whom he had never seen before. In the rest of the letter Spinoza goes on to develop a view of the imagination which distinguishes between 'the constitution of body or of mind', such that while the former may be attributed to delirium, as in the case of fever, the latter may be attributed to 'the constitution of the mind'. Letter 17 is highly influential not only for Negri's reading of a changing theory of imagination in the Ethics, but also for what Montag³⁰⁹, following Balibar, refers to as a theory of *transindividualism*, one that provides a theory of the affects which implies a major rupture with methodological individualism, and with the entire philosophical paradigm of mental and affective privacy, itself perhaps derived from an even deeper naturalized paradigm of *ownership*. Thus, in Spinoza's account to Belling of how '... a father so loves his son that he and his beloved son are, as it were (quasi) one .. the father through his union with his son is a part of his son.' ³¹⁰, Montag detects both an instance of Spinoza's theory of the imitation of the affects, and a vivid and poignant instance of socially expansive *conatus*, one in which '...each participates in the affect or desire that marks their composition as a single individual, whose actual essence is lived by them as desire, and this affect or desire cannot be apportioned to one or the other.' ³¹¹ And a consequence of this impossibility of apportionment is that 'Images fluctuate between them without proprietorship or fixed origin'. I shall take up Montag's reading of this letter and its significance for the theory of *transindividualism* in due course, when we come to discuss Spinoza's category of *multitude*, and in particular the contemporary significance which Negri extracts from it, in a sub-section below. In the meantime, we return to Negri's claims concerning a shift towards a positive view of the imagination in the Ethics, therefore of a *positive* theory of imagination in relation to desire, in contrast, above all, to a Freudian conception of imagination as fantasy.

And there is certainly also evidence for this alternative thesis of the imagination in the Ethics. Thus, Spinoza describes a certain circularity in the relations between *conatus* and *imaginatio*. As

far back as P11³¹² Spinoza states that ' The idea of any thing that increases or diminishes , aids or restrains, our body's power of acting, increases or diminishes , aids or restrains, our mind's power of thinking.' He then goes on at P12 to argue that ' The mind as far as it can , strives to imagine those things that increase or decrease the body's power of acting.'³¹³ Much later, at P54, this early chain of reasoning culminates in the summarizing proposition that ' The mind's striving, or power, is its very essence (by P 7) ; but the mind's essence (as is known through itself) affirms only what the mind is and can do, not what it is not and cannot do. So it strives to imagine only what affirms, or posits, its power of acting q.e.d. '³¹⁴ We should note here that the apparent circularity isn't of a *logical* nature but of the nature of a *feedback effect*: the mind imagines those things which will enhance a sense of the body's power; the mind will then share in this enhanced sense of power; and so the mind will go on to imagine those things which will further enhance a sense of the body's power .. and so on. Negri himself describes this feedback effect as '.. the sequence *conatus potentia, potentia mentis, essentia mentis, conatus sive essentia*.'³¹⁵

Clearly then,emerging as early as P11 and P12, there is a *consistent* theme of the positivity of the imagination running through the Ethics, and this raises the question of whether the Latin term *imaginatio* may actually be designating two distinct theoretical entities: a shared *social Imaginary* (I use large-case here to distinguish this, a social Imaginary characterised essentially by anthropomorphism) and an imagination which feeds back positively into *conatus*. If such a distinction is valid, then this surely weakens Negri's claims for a radical shift in Spinoza's view of the status and function of the imagination, an argument which must assume a unified but changing theory in order to have validity. And this in turn must surely weaken Negri's argument for a diachronic split in the Ethics , given that the shift from a negative to a positive view of the imagination is argued for as a prominent symptom of this break. If valid too, what the distinction

suggests is that Spinoza's philosophical-political discourse exhibits *of necessity* certain coded tensions. Not a *bildungsroman*, then, but perhaps a form of discourse which *is forced to be contradictory*. And this perhaps suggests that a synchronic rather than a diachronic reading remains a defensible possibility. But we should be in doubt as to the significance which Negri attaches to the claim for a shift in attitude towards the imagination as itself marking such a break : ' .. those who refuse to situate the problem of the imagination as the keystone of the second and final stage of the Ethics have completely misunderstood this phase of his thought.' ³¹⁶ We have seen too above how Negri characterizes such a break, with the latter part of the Ethics, Books 4 and 5 , as opening up a new philosophical orientation, an orientation which he frequently characterizes as *phenomenological* , and which he sees as being inextricably linked to a theme of *imaginary constitution* . Thus, he describes ' .. a [new] research scheme orientated in a phenomenological direction, understood as identifying the level of reality that is constituted by the imagination. ' ³¹⁷ And we should perhaps recall here that for Husserl, major theorist of phenomenological method, the first procedure of phenomenology was to be that of the *epoché*, a bracketing out of the mere *Lebenswelt* in order to return ' to the things themselves' . And it seemed that phenomenology, in this sense closely linked to Cartesianism, worked with some difficulty on the problem of how moves could be made from this first-person singular conception of constitution (the noesis-noema relation, since it appeared to suspend the assumption of the ontological antecedence of the world , opened up the possibility of an idealist perspective of subjective constitution) towards an understanding of *social* constitution: an understanding of how collective social forces are actually constituent: of how, in Marx's historical-materialist terms, social forces who have had no power over the world they inherit, then go on to discover and create the power required to transform it. And yet this is a move which Negri attempts to make in his analysis of Spinoza's allegedly transformed understanding of the imagination: from the bizarre, hallucinatory

Caliban moment, towards a fully-fledged 'phenomenology of praxis'. But this move towards social constitution, as we shall see shortly, depends more on Negri's reading of the doctrine of *conatus*, and its implications for social contract theory, than it does on the theory of the imagination, and so the bridge from imaginative to social constitution appears to be provided by means of a suturing of constituent imagination to socially expansive *conatus*.

There is evidence, of course, in Letter 17 that Spinoza was working with some conception of imaginative constitution, as when he offers to Baling the alternative explanations of '..constitution by body or by mind.' But Negri views this reference to the constituent power of the imagination not as occasional and experimental but as belonging to a systematic development, moving from '..the analysis and identification of the imagination as a constitutive function of falsity and illusion, followed by .. the accentuation of the ambiguous , oscillating, fluctuating meaning of the imagination as a transcendental force; and finally a third level put into play by the analysis of the ontological .. basis of the action of the imagination.'³¹⁸ What he appears to be suggesting here, and which is borne out in the course of his own analysis, is that while the first analysis refers to the *Imaginary* (again large-case, and which I have characterized, following Althusser as a *social Imaginary*), the second accounts for the theorization of experiences such as those of the 'Caliban' moment cited in Letter 17, while the third, the fuller analysis of social constitution, is based on drawing out the ontological consequences of such experiences. Thus, he distinguishes between a 'libertine' deployment of a negative theory of the imagination (the *Imaginary*) as forming an essential part of an attack on the claims of theology, and an essentially *constructivist* account of socially constituent power which is drawn out from a phenomenology of experiences of the autonomous, creative powers of the imagination of the sort described in Letter 17. Thus, he suggests that Spinoza deploys an 'instrumental paradox' in his treatment of the imagination in order to bring about a

reversal from the 'libertine' position that 'imagination is illusion', and which he has employed in order to subvert the claims of theology, to a mature position in which, via a phenomenology of imaginary experiences, on the contrary illusion is viewed as constitutive of reality. Such a move is seen as ' .. a powerful operation [which] raises illusion to the level of truth'.³¹⁹

In his monograph on Hume,³²⁰ Deleuze frequently refers to social institutions and conventions as a form of *artifice*, not in a negative and skeptical but in a *positive* sense, as a form of open experimentation. He writes that ' .. the entire question of man is .. no longer, as with knowledge, a matter of the complex relation between fiction and human nature; it is rather a matter of the relation between human nature and artifice.'³²¹ Here, interestingly, Deleuze appears to be arguing for a form of displacement within Hume's thought very similar to that which Negri is arguing for within Spinoza's, one that moves in Negri's view from a broadly Machiavellian conception of political life to one of open experimentation. He writes ' On this plane we should emphasise immediately the transformation which the very conception of politics undergoes. It is no longer conceived as cunning and domination, but, rather, as imagination and constitution.'³²² Thus, even more strongly stated, ' Politics is the metaphysics of the imagination, the metaphysics of the human constitution of reality, of the world³²³.', and this is so since ' .. consciousness is constitutive, being is not only something found (not only a possession) but also activity, power. ' Whether such a constitutive account of social experimentation may be taken as amounting to 'a phenomenology of praxis', I shall leave open for the moment, but the comparison with Deleuze has, I think, allowed us to clarify the ways in which Negri seeks to link the imagination to a politics of social constitution in Spinoza, although as we shall see, this argumentation requires mediation by an analysis of *conatus*, and of the implications of this for standard forms of social contract theory. Before going on to consider these, however, I wish to develop a little further Negri's reading

of the function of the imagination in Spinoza, and will argue that this reading at times reveals a surprising appeal to negation in Negri's thought, otherwise insistent on a positive ontology. And as we shall see too, with reference to a richly illuminating article by Mandarin³²⁴, a problematic of the negative has actually remained a constant of Negri's thought.

Negri's argument on the imagination is made up of two strands : an appeal to the social effects of imagination as laid out in the TTP, and an appeal to the constitutive power of the imagination in a phenomenological sense, such as the *unheimlich* experience described by Spinoza in Letter 17. What I want to suggest here is that while Negri's argument for a shift towards the positivity of the imagination in Spinoza tends to conflate the two strands, they contain certain complexities which cannot neatly be merged on the way towards a socially constituent ontology in the way that Negri requires. At the same time Negri is aware of a complex progression in the interpretation of the transitional significance of the TTP which he is offering. Thus, he writes that

.. we can construct an outline of religion as imagination. This is how it is organized: in the first place, there is the differentiation of the negative imagination, which becomes superstition, from the imagination as positivity, which becomes obedience. Next, obedience is presented as the positive form of imagination because its content is peace; it is the possibility of establishing a contract-consensus among men. Then peace is posed as the basis of civil association, and represents a superior good of human life. Finally we arrive at the claim that any supercession of these values, any separation from them, can be given only in the form a superior foundation, the foundation determined by reason.' ³²⁵

And so we should note here a return to the superior foundation of reason, a foundation which surely remains consistent with the emancipatory dislocation from *imaginatio* to *ratio* which appears early in the Ethics. The difficulty for Negri's argument here is therefore precisely in the relationship between reason and imagination, and in the rupture which his argument implies between one and the other. And it seems to me here that to assimilate the socially beneficial *effects* of the superstitious imaginary (obedience to law) to the phenomenologically constituent imagination as

described in Letter 17 within a common positivity seems to have the effect of diminishing the significance of the consistent strain of anti-anthropomorphism in Spinoza's thought. Thus throughout the TTP, as mentioned above, the central metaphor of God as king, as sovereign power, is undermined from within then abandoned, this metaphor being in turn closely linked to another, also targeted elsewhere, that of a 'kingdom within a kingdom'. And in this critical-philosophical process of *undermining-from-within-then-abandoning*, we can surely recognize a developmental pattern which is then repeated in the Ethics. What does seem to characterize the TTP in comparison with the Ethics, however, is the audacity of the moves which Spinoza is prepared to make, and here we can perhaps detect a peculiar homology in the structural and philosophical logic of each work. Thus, while the Ethics begins with the laying out of an ontological grounding in a conception of God (albeit one which is expressively tied to the natural world), so does the TTP begin within a theological framework only to proceed to subvert the claims of theology *but within its own terms*. Thus, in an astonishingly materialist move, Spinoza writes that '... the method of interpreting Scripture is no different from the method of interpreting Nature'.

³²⁶And in connection with the first of the metaphors cited above, Spinoza argues that '... it is only in concession to the understanding of the multitude and the defectiveness of their thought that God is described as a law-giver or ruler, and is called just, merciful and so on ...'. ³²⁷This anthropomorphic imaginary, however, is then said to be socially justifiable, *to have social utility*, since 'The common people [note here this alternative to multitude] ... need to be acquainted only with those narratives that are most effective in instilling obedience and devotion.'³²⁸ And this 'obedience' is of course obedience to the socially instituted law, which Spinoza takes to be an essential condition of social organization in general. Thus, and here we see a concrete instance of the ontological principle of a socially expansive *conatus*, '... a state can subsist only if the laws are binding on all individuals. If

all the members of one society choose to disregard the law by that very fact they will dissolve that society and destroy the state.³²⁹ At the same too, like Montaigne, Spinoza is aware of an anthropological relativism in connection with such laws, and writes that ' Through this alone .. do nations differ from one another, namely in respect of the kind of society and laws under which they live and are governed.'³³⁰

Returning to this first strand of Negri's argument for the positivity of the imagination in the 'second' Spinoza, there is an essential (and quite Nietzschean - and Machiavellian) point argued for in the TTP : that laws require law-givers, and that such law-givers are not transparent observers of truth but are subjects defined themselves both by desire and imagination, and we have seen elsewhere how this desire is logically identifiable with *conatus*, and *conatus* in turn, through a feedback loop, with the imagination. Thus, in another audaciously deconstructive move, Spinoza writes that ' God is revealed to the prophets only in accordance with the nature of their imagination.'³³¹ And what is remarkable here is once again a certain consistency from the earlier Ethics: just as in the early theorization of the attributes there is the principle stated in the Demonstration to Proposition 10 that '.. an attribute is what the intellect perceives concerning a substance, as constituting its essence ..'³³² , so here this same *constructive* principle seems to recur when Spinoza turns his attention towards Biblical history .Once again, therefore, this appears to complicate Negri's argument for a ruptural refoundation of the Ethics.

Here too, then, in the phenomenological sense that Negri argues for, we have an appeal in Spinoza to the constituent power of the imagination: the prophets offer their ' word of God' as a *constructive synthesis of their living experience of the world*. Such a principle of the productivity of the imagination, however, is clearly subversive of any claim for the transparency of revealed truth other than that which ' the natural light' of reason can establish, since it will of necessity result in a truth which is ' .. faulty, mutilated, adulterated and inconsistent'³³³ Now the thrust of Spinoza's

argument here seems quite clear: that the books of the prophets are products of a creative imagination, and thus can make no claims to truth. However the combined effects of such books is to produce institutions which produce obedience to law and therefore have social utility. At the same time, however, the overall argument concerns precisely the disentangling of the claims of religion and faith, subtended by a religious imaginary, from those of philosophy and of reason. We might present Spinoza's broad argument here in terms of the following chain of reasoning:

- 1 Theology presents a metaphor of God as sovereign
- 2 Sovereigns impose laws
- 2 Metaphor is a product of the imagination, which is variable
- 3 This particular metaphor has social utility since it produces obedience to law
- 4 Obedience to law is a prerequisite of any social formation

Therefore

- 5 Theology, law and imagination have social utility

But

- 6 This utility is inferior to the (emancipatory) claims of reason

And there is also, as Negri points out, a vanishing point at which the power of these deep metaphors, and therefore the relevance of the correlative power of the imagination, begin to fade into irrelevance, along with the sovereign power which imposes law and demands obedience.

Spinoza suggests, in a politically significant conjecture, that ' .. if men were so constituted as to desire nothing but what is prescribed by reason, society would stand in no need of such laws'.³³⁴

This vanishing-point, however, coincides with the generalization of the practice of reason. What seems initially, therefore, to be elided in Negri's argument for the positivity of imagination *in*

this strand of argument, is that Spinoza is deploying the phenomenological productivity of the imagination as a means towards a certain *rationalization of the social utility of an anthropomorphic imaginary*, which is surely very far from constituting a positive assessment of the constituent power of the imagination in itself. This misplacing of the significance of Spinoza's appeal to the phenomenological productivity of the imagination (which we can also find in Montaigne, and in other 'moral psychologists' of the 17th century), *at least within this strand of argument*, perhaps therefore casts further doubt on Negri's claims that a shift in Spinoza's thinking from a negative to a positive view of the imagination marks a break in the Ethics and the beginnings of a second foundation, as expressed in the claim that '...the imagination represents the field in which a global inversion of Spinozan metaphysics emerges as a necessity.'³³⁵

On balance, it is perhaps accurate to say here that Negri is right in making these claims for the advent of a new theoretical field of the imagination in that Spinoza does adduce the productive power of the imagination in the TTP, but wrong in that he (Spinoza) is doing so in a manner that remains consistent with the early Ethics in continuing to maintain the emancipatory move from *imaginatio* to *ratio*.

Concerning the second strand of Negri's argument, that related to the kind of experience of the imagination described in Letter 17, we are presented here with a phenomenologically constituent power *tout court*: like the hallucinatory figure described by Spinoza, the mind is presented in this case with an image of something strictly non-existent. Here, the imagination appears to sever its causal, perceptual connections with the world and to present its own content. Elsewhere, however, Negri has insisted on the *positive* character of Spinoza's ontology, on its description of an immanent plenitude in which lack and negation play no part. And yet here too in connection with the imagination, and with the constituent power which Negri extrapolates from it, an element of negation appears here to find its way into the ontology. A comparison with Sartre's account of the

activity of the imagination may be relevant here, perhaps surprisingly. Sartre defined the imagination as a means of transcending the givenness of things achieved through enacting a kind of active negation: a denial and surpassing (the verb which Sartre typically employs here is 'depasser') of what is given in favour of what strictly is not, a *counter-factual power* which draws on the fact that consciousness, the *for-itself* in Sartre's account, inherently constitutes a form of non-being. Thus too, writing of the wider constituent power of which he takes imagination to be an instance, Negri describes '.. [a] human power ..set free on an open horizon. ..', with the consequence that ' the world is what no longer exists, it is the future, it is this projection.'³³⁶

We should note the striking parallel here: the abolition of the actual in a projective movement towards something non-existent, a version of which might be the emergence of the new. However there are clear Hegelian influences in the way in which Sartre conceptualizes imagination here, although broad and schematic in the sense that just as Hegel viewed any actual state as containing its own antithetical forces , thereby inscribing within it the power of the negative, so does Sartre's theory of the imagination, recalling Deleuze, constitute a form of *counter-actualisation*.

Judith Butler ³³⁷ has developed at length the rich transformations which Hegelianism underwent within post-war French thought, extending from Kojève through the thought of Hyppolite and of Sartre up to that of Lacan (and even, in a postscript, to that of Foucault in the form of a transgressive reason) , exhibiting the persistent theme of the *internal connections of desire, the imaginary and negation*, understood here in the sense outlined above as an active surpassing of the present.

In connection with Sartre, and with the interweaving of imagination and desire, we will recall here that we have also seen these same connections made above in Spinoza in what I have termed a 'feedback loop' of conatus and imagination, Butler writes that '.. desiring is always

coextensive with imagining. Desire does not attend to what is given in perception, but, rather, what is hidden in perception; it is, in a sense, an investigation into the significant dimensions of absence.' ³³⁸ What we should note here, however, is that while Spinoza appears here, like Kojève, to establish internal connections between desire and imagination, he does so in terms of an incrementation in power which is consistent with the fundamental axioms of the ontology. For Sartre, in contrast, as for Lacan, desire promises no such incrementation, and remains the expression of a lack-of-being which is intrinsic to what Sartre characterizes as the 'for-itself'.

Returning to Negri's theme of the phenomenologically disruptive and *autonomous* function of the imagination, there appears here a quite explicit connection with the phenomenological tradition. As Butler describes it, with clear allusion to the Husserlian epoché, 'In the imagination, the factic or perceptual world is also put out of play; the imagination is thus a kind of bracketing procedure to be found in the ordinary experience of consciousness.' ³³⁹ Thus in relation to the comparison drawn above between Sartre's account of the negating activity of the imagination and Negri's description of a generalized constituent power as one capable of abolishing the present ('... the world is what no longer exists'), we should note that both, although perhaps in different ways, involve moving into a register of negation.

What this implication then leads us on to is an assessment of the status and function of the negative in Negri's thought, especially given that, as mentioned above, he repeatedly repudiates the lure of the negative in the name of a positive ontology, above all in relation to Heidegger. The question of the status of the negative in Negri's thought therefore has to be posed in terms of his relation to both Hegel and to Heidegger. This comparison with Sartre on the imagination, then, has allowed us both to reconsider Negri's claim concerning the positivity of the imagination in Spinoza, and to consider the implications of this for a theorization of the function of the negative, both in Negri and in Spinoza, and also to consider the implications of this for any

aspiration towards qualitative social change. Just as the Sartrean imagination must sever its connections with the present and launch out into the non-existent, so must Negri's socially constituent power do something very similar. As we will see in the subsequent chapter, Badiou takes rupture and discontinuity as being what distinguishes his own political ontology from that of Deleuze. What we must now begin to explore is whether Negri's political ontology is similarly ruptural, and if so, whether such rupture is consistent with the positive ontology which he ascribes to Spinoza. We therefore turn now to the concept of *antagonism* in Negri's thought, a concept which, as we shall see, absorbs much of the force of the Hegelian and post-Hegelian discourse of the negative, but in a concrete form which is consistent with Spinoza's ontology of power.

Antagonism

In an article published in *Rethinking Marxism*, Jason Read³⁴⁰ clarifies the role which the concept of *antagonism* has played in Negri's thought. As he comments,

'...the thought, the word, or the figure of antagonism is critical, perhaps even central to the writings on philosophy, history and politics by Antonio Negri. The use of antagonism across the confines and borders of these disciplines would seem to give it the status of something like a foundational concept.'³⁴¹

Such a concept of *antagonism*, Read suggests, serves to disrupt the standard presuppositions of any conceptualisation of the relationship between thought and *praxis*, which will of course include the relationship between *speculation* and practice, therefore too between ontology and politics.

Read also argues here for a *negative* dimension in Negri's reading of Spinoza, a *pars destruens* which is inseparable from the positive, affirmative dimension, a form of '*simultaneous destruction and creation*' which Read claims informs Negri's entire reading of Spinoza.³⁴² Such destruction-creation, however, occurs at the very edge of the relationship between thought and *praxis*, which

Read interprets here as *invention*, the very edge of the emergence of the new. And we can perhaps begin to see here a certain resonance with the hallucinatory figure of Letter 17 which Negri invests with such significance: just as the Caliban figure forces on us an interrogation of the ontological status of the present, so more generally does the thought of *praxis as invention* interrogate any conceptualization we may have of static social being. Like Badiou elsewhere, and like Marx in his more nominalistic moments, Negri celebrates here a form of critical doubt, an interrogation of the *unity* of any conceptualisation of present being, but one which is critical in order to evacuate a space in which the new may emerge. This practice of doubt, therefore, in this sense of an interrogation of such conceptualized unity, is not skeptical; rather, it is '.. a social practice destructive of things, not simply of specters and unreal ideas.'³⁴³ . What Read suggests here in the context of Negri's reading of the Ethics is that such a *pars destruens* is directed towards the emanationist metaphysics which Spinoza inherited from the Renaissance, which would imply that the Ethics should perhaps not be construed so much as *Bildungsroman*, as Negri has himself suggested, but as a form of what Althusser described as a *theoretical production* in which a new theoretical apparatus operates on an inherited body of concepts in order to produce a new configuration, in this case, in Negri's reading, *a constituent ontology of praxis*. And here Negri proposes a shift in Spinoza's thinking from an essentially *spatial* conception of being in which everything is given simultaneously, *sub specie aeternitatis*, towards a conception which is dynamic, productive, temporal and *irreversible*, ' a metaphysics of time as constitution.'³⁴⁴ Thus, Negri argues that

The Spinozan problematic of spatial being, as spatial constitution..' comes to an end and is replaced by '.. a proposal for the metaphysics of time. Not of time as becoming, as the most recent Modern philosophy would have it .. Rather it is a proposal for a metaphysics of time as constitution.. a time that extends beyond the actuality of being .. a philosophy of the future.'³⁴⁵

Recalling the earlier comparison with Sartre, we must now raise the question of whether and in what manner Negri's account of such constitution, of which the Caliban moment provides a vivid and particular instance, presupposes, as Sartre's own account does, an appeal to some form of active negation of the present, thereby ultimately constituting some form of *transcendence-within-immanence*.

The Negative

Here we have to return to the *potentia-potestas* pair. As we have just seen, Negri characterizes the 'second foundation' as a 'metaphysics of time as constitution'. Such temporality, however, as it is for Nietzsche, is characterized above all by a dimension of *futurity*, not in the sense of what will simply be, a merely serial continuation of the present into the future, but in the sense of *a future which emerges*, but emerges *tendentially* in that this future is already causally latent within the present. And here Negri traces such a dimension of futurity back to the founding ontological principle of power, and to his own distinction between *potentia* and *potestas*. Thus, he writes that '... the inscription of power in being opens being towards the future.'³⁴⁶ Here, we might recall from the Deleuze section Piercey's reference to the 'pent-up' and therefore forward-moving characteristic of expressive ontological power. Moreover drawing on the expressive characteristics of such a power-based ontology, and of what Deleuze describes as the 'ungrounding' of substance in modal expression, Negri comments, in a surprisingly Hegelian passage, that 'The cumulative process that constructs the world wants a further time, a future. ...Being is temporal tension. If difference founds the future, then here the future ontologically grounds difference. This reciprocal relationship is the fabric of construction. And then, qualitatively, being is emancipation, that is..., the perfection of the tendency in future time.'³⁴⁷ And in particular the sense in which '... the future ontologically grounds difference is that the future itself is an expression of a pent-up *potentia*.

Negri also subjects the *potentia-potestas* pair to a further layer of interpretation, one derived from the forces/relations of production pairing inherited from Marx. Thus, proceeding from 'the identity of production and constitution'³⁴⁸, and from the move from 'nature' (consistent with the earlier 'spatial' ontological paradigm) to what Negri terms the 'second nature' of temporal constitution and social praxis, he goes on to argue that just as in the metaphysical interpretation the illusory transcendence of *potestas* is subverted by a more primordial *potentia*, so are the relations of production ultimately subordinated to productive force. Thus too, just as in Marx the forces of production reach a point of development at which they come to be constrained by the existing relations of production, so too does the relationship between being, production and constitution, constrained by various forms of transcendence, contain a welling up towards an emergent future. Thus Negri concludes that 'Spinoza's metaphysics of production defines on the theoretical terrain the conditions for the possibility of a phenomenology of collective praxis.'³⁴⁹ Now while Negri's argument here may appear to be based on a number of displacements and analogies, and on a simple assimilation of production to constitution, there is a consistent chain of reasoning at work. It goes something like this:

- 1 Being is founded on power
- 2 Power is expressive and therefore constitutive of what is expressed
- 3 Production (in a Marxist sense) is also founded on power
- 4 Production is therefore also constitutive in the wider sense asserted in 2

Therefore

- 5 Production (in the narrower sense) is an instance of constitution

And what is 'constituted' in the wider sense of 2 above, if we recall Spinoza's definition of power as 'capacity to be affected', a subtle and seemingly paradoxical definition which subtends his entire

thinking, then what is actually (and continuously) constituted is ' .. the mode or manner of sociality itself ..'³⁵⁰ , or what Balibar elsewhere describes in terms of a process of expansive communication.

This equation of production with constitution traced out above then allows Negri to go on to equate, following Marx in the Grundrisse, the category of *living labour* (roughly, labour in its transformative and social and co-operative dimension) from that of the mechanisms of surplus value. Thus, as Read puts it, capital itself then becomes ' .. a kind of worldly potestas that functions by separating power (potentia) from ' what it can do'. Capital continually subordinates the subjectivity and sociality of living labour to the constraints and demands of surplus-value.'³⁵¹ It is in this way that, then, that Negri produces a reading, not only of the Ethics but of Spinoza's wider thought, as an ontology, and a phenomenology, of *praxis*.

However the problem of the role of the negative in Negri's thought, and in particular within the emergent futurity which is an essential feature of the ontology of temporal constitution, a futurity founded on the abolition of the present, remains to be dealt with. We have seen above how Read refers to a process of 'creation-destruction' which he claims Negri identifies at the heart of Spinoza's thought, and which we have already encountered in Michael Hardt's account of a 'chiasmatic' structure informing the Ethics in particular. And in a highly illuminating article³⁵² Mandarini argues that in fact the problem of the negative has remained at the long-term core of Negri's thinking. Thus, he argues that 'For Negri, the question of metaphysics cannot be grasped independently of the question of politics, and vice versa. Moreover both the question of metaphysics and the question of politics are intimately related to that of the position of the negative.'³⁵³ And of course this 'position of the negative' , beyond Hegelian thought in which the negative became recoverable through an appeal to what Althusser has termed ' a logic of *Aufhebung*', has resurfaced in dramatic form in contemporary thought among a wide array of

thinkers influenced by Heidegger. That the negative, in the form of a concept of non-being ('Das Nichts'), is central to Heidegger's conception of the very possibility of metaphysics, and to the fundamental distinction drawn between *ontological* (Being) and *ontic* (beings), is quite clear. Thus in the Postscript to What is Metaphysics Heidegger writes that ' As that which is altogether other than all beings, Being is that which is not. But this nothing essentially prevails as Being .. Nihilation is not some fortuitous accident. Rather, as the repelling gesture towards beings as a whole in their slipping away, it manifests these beings in their full heretofore concealed strangeness as what is radically other with respect to the nothing [Das Nichts]. '³⁵⁴

However Mandarini also argues that we can only begin to see the significance of Negri's thinking on the negative, and what he sees as Spinoza's positive ontology, against the background of a debate which persisted in Italian political philosophy throughout the 1970s and beyond, a debate which focused in particular on Negri's response to the work of Massimo Cacciari (former collaborator of Negri's within *Potere Operaio* then turned political and philosophical antagonist) and to a lesser extent that of Agamben. Thus in his *Krisis*,³⁵⁵ published in 1976, Cacciari turns to Heidegger (and to Nietzsche, and to Wittgenstein) in order to develop, like, but very unlike Adorno, a version of negative thought ' .. which precludes any possible synthesis. ' ³⁵⁶, and which therefore, like Negri's thought, attempts to rethink social division beyond the ' recoverable contradiction' of Hegelian teleology. Thus, as Mandarini informs us, Cacciari coined the term 'negative thought' in the late 1960s specifically in order to ' .. differentiate it from the positivisation of the negative ' which had come to characterize Marxist dialectical thought. And in doing so, in Mandarini's narrative, Cacciari drew heavily on Heidegger, and on the central Heideggerian premise of the 'groundlessness' (*Grundlosigkeit*), or unfounded character of being, on what Mandarini describes as a ' .. self-founding as negative foundation', ³⁵⁷ an '*Ab-grund*'. As he argues

on Negri's behalf, however, Cacciari then went on, in a manner which contravened Heidegger in his critique of technological-instrumental reason, to derive a decisionist and ultimately managerialist political position from this premise of a negative foundation. As he puts it, summarizing Cacciari, 'The negative now surrounds, it delimits and constrains but in so doing, it renders reality all the more ready-to-hand.'³⁵⁸ That is, in the absence of all grounding, any ontological persistence of the antecedent, thought and language cut themselves loose from things, and become ultimately justifiable only in relation to how they serve and sustain a certain will-to-power. As Mandarini argues, 'For Cacciari, the rational lacks all exogeneous foundation. There is no Ratio to be sought in the world – all we have is a proliferation of rationalities, of 'language-games', of ideological structures irreducible one to another.. circumscribed by a nothingness.'³⁵⁹ And this synthesis of a Heideggerian unfoundedness, combined with a version of language-constructivism drawn from Wittgenstein, and with a concept of will-to-power drawn from Nietzsche, results, perhaps paradoxically, in a reinforcement of the actual, a regime of the 'ready-to-hand' and a kind of *technological presentism*. As Mandarini summarises it,

Here Nietzsche, Wittgenstein and Heidegger are indissolubly linked: will to power, formalization of language and metaphysics as the reduction of Being to formulated beings – technology and power. This is summed up in one of Cacciari's most memorable and unsettling phrases : " [To have] power is to be integrated into the system." '³⁶⁰

And this becomes all the more 'unsettling' if we recall that Cacciari is one of the leading intellectuals of the Italian left, initially associated with Potere Operaio, then with what was then the PCI. Negri, then, was a major critic of these 'left-Heideggerian' positions argued for by Cacciari among others, and linked them to a particular set of political consequences:

As Negri makes clear, what we are then left with [in the absence of foundation] is a calculable and manipulable set of elements, circumscribed by nothingness that delimits the serialized elements into language-games or rationalization procedures, all of which are organized by a

political decisionism .. that determines the historical necessity .. of a .. professional political class to which the management of of power is to be entrusted.' ³⁶¹

And in doing so, in tracing a path from nothingness through language-constructivism to a will-to-power, Cacciari thus in fact enacts a corruption and ultimate denial of Heideggerian thought, a perverse appropriation of Heidegger which culminates precisely in the kind of 'exact thinking' which Heidegger viewed as an ontic degeneration, against the 'essentialist thinking' required by the thinking of Being. As Mandarini puts it, ironically conflating Wittgenstein with Heidegger, 'It is as though Cacciari asks us to climb up through Heidegger's propositions on the meaning and forgetting of Being only to then throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.' ³⁶² Thus, the final destination of Cacciari's 'negative thought', routed through Heidegger and through Wittgenstein and Nietzsche, is actually thoroughly ontic: the management of a purportedly unassailable actuality, a serial presentism which enacts a general equivalence., a destination in *politics* rather than in the *political*. Thus, summarizing Negri, Mandarini writes that

Negri suggests that Cacciari pays a heavy price for having saved the negative from its positivisation in the development of the Capital-Geist – he effectively domesticates it. He has been able to maintain the insolubility of crisis and prevent any easy synthesis, but as Negri points out in his 1976 article, he has done so while losing any concrete conception of the negative..' ³⁶³

Recalling Read's earlier comments concerning the primordial nature of the concept of *antagonism* in Negri's thought, we should note here that this concept constitutes precisely such a *concrete conception of the negative*, and in fact constitutes a replacement of the comparable Hegelian concept of 'contradiction'. A further crucial feature of Mandarini's astute and obviously highly critical attack on Cacciari's 'negative thought' is that here any conception of *social subject* has been abandoned. Thus, paraphrasing Givone,³⁶⁴ he comments that '.. it is only once one has abandoned faith in a political subject as foundation of revolutionary change that one can rediscover

a professional political class that can take over the administration of the actual and bring change from above.'³⁶⁵

This question of a *foundational social subject* brings me on to the final subsection on Negri's thought: that dealing with *multitude*, the name of a subject which Negri inherits not only from Spinoza, but also from Machiavelli, a subject which reveals as we shall see, a certain ambivalence in Spinoza, and which also undergoes metamorphosis within Negri's thought to become the name of a new social subject of change and of the future.

Multitude

Montag³⁶⁶ reminds us that it was Althusser who identified the concept of *multitude* as being perhaps the single factor which made Spinoza 'so terrifying in his time', a concept so threatening as to explain, perhaps, the surrounding repression which led him to adopt such an abstract and subtle philosophical-political discourse, one which involved, as we have seen above, the repeated discursive strategy of *occupying, undermining and abandoning*. That 'time', of course, as we have seen, was a period of widespread social instability, preceded by the Thirty Years' War and coinciding with both colonial expansion and primitive capitalist accumulation, and with the rise of an urban and mercantile bourgeoisie whose interests clashed with those of traditional ruling elites. It was also a time in which a widespread theorisation of recognisably modern forms of political sovereignty was urgently being articulated, above all in the dominant versions of social contract theory associated with Hobbes and with Rousseau, and refined later, in different ways, by Locke and by Hegel. And so it was in this kind of context that the concept of *multitude* began to circulate, offering an alternative but ambivalent theorisation to other possible names of a newly conceived *collective* social subject: 'people', the *sub-ject* of sovereign institutions, and, alternatively, the name of a threatening excess which formed the insuperable remainder of such institutions, that of 'mob',

a name which has remained on the margins of conservative political discourse in one form or another ever since, pressing in upon it, both threatening and justificatory.

Montag places the concept of *multitude* at the very centre of Spinoza's thought, viewing it as ,
 '.. a node through which pass all the strands in Spinoza's thought.'³⁶⁷ Negri himself, of course, also gives the concept central place in Spinoza's mature thought, endowing it with ontological status, although of a distinctive kind: ambiguous between the *one* of a sovereign people and the unruled *many* of a mob. Commenting on this history, Negri writes that ' The way in which the concept of the people took shape within the hegemonic tradition of modernity is well known. Hobbes, Rousseau and Hegel have, each for his own part and in different ways, produced a concept of the people starting from sovereign transcendence.'³⁶⁸ We should note here the logic which Negri imputes to the concept: that the category of people is *derived from* a transcendent locus of power, and constitutes its supportive content. Yet such a logic appears to violate the primordial founding myth of social contract theory itself which serves as the fantasized justification of such a locus of power, and which assumes an atomised and conflictual state of nature in order to then narrate a *linear* transfer of power to a sovereign entity in exchange for the utility to be derived from the resultant state of powerlessness: that of the protection of life and of property. Such an apparent confusion and reversibility of logics, however, conforms to what Althusser has referred to as a 'specular theoretical image', one capable of a turnstile effect of alterity, and which characterizes all metaphysical narratives of origins and ends.

Here, then, we see emerge a strong theme in Negri's interpretation of Spinoza's concept of *multitude*: that the alternative category of *people* is derived from and is complementary to a transcendence, that of a sovereign power. And here too we can see a concrete instance of the *potentia-potestas* distinction, with the transcendent sovereign corresponding to a form of *potestas*,

or recalling Hardt's earlier distinction, an instance of *Power*. Moreover if the category of *people* is the passivised complement to the locus of a transcendent sovereign, and if Spinoza's *multitude* is, in Negri's reading, to be defined against such a category, then the concept of *multitude* must come to work against the claims of a transcendent origin, and yet *not in a dialectical but in an ontological* sense: not as presenting a reactive conflictual scenario such that the transcendent locus comes first and is then to be negated and surpassed, but as presenting of itself an *alternative account of social and political being*. Thus, Negri specifies the attributes of *multitude* as: ' .. the name of an immanence', a ' whole of singularities'³⁶⁹; as a class concept which names a class subject whose exploitation is ' beyond measure' since it is its social and communicative dimension which Negri argues now generates surplus value; as ' a concept of power' and a social subject which is inherently expansive and an ' .. agent of self-organisation'.³⁷⁰ However the category of 'people' to which Negri counterposes that of *multitude* should not be taken as homogeneous and irreducible. Recalling the earlier discussion of the social utility of the religious imaginary, we saw that its positive effect was to produce obedience to law, and to what Althusser referred to as the production of ' juridical subjects', subjects of rights and of property. Here, we see emerge another pairing, contained within that of *sovereign-people*, even more ontologically primordial: that of *universal-individual*, a pairing which has become so pervasive in juridical, philosophical and political thought as to have become effectively naturalised. And along with the transcendence of the sovereign-people pairing, Negri sees this 'metaphysics of individuality' as being subverted by Spinoza's *multitude*. Thus he writes that ' Transcendence is the key to any metaphysics of individuality as well as to any metaphysics of sovereignty. On the other hand from the standpoint of the body there is only relation and process.'³⁷¹ And we should note here that like Foucault, and like Nietzsche and like Marx, Spinoza is also very much a *philosopher of the body*. Montag, however, also imputes another dimension to the concept of *multitude*, one deriving from Spinoza's doctrine

of imitation of the affects and which we touched upon previously in our discussion of Letter 17 above: that of a *transindividualism* in which affect and desire cease to be the states of a private subject but circulate among subjects to the point of indistinction. As Montag then suggests at this point the concept of *multitude* comes to constitute

.. the unthinkable residue of a philosophical tendency that begins with Hobbes and includes, but does not end with, Adam Smith.. the right or power of mass movements beyond law and property, the transindividualism of desire and affect, and therefore of the *conatus* itself, in a movement that overflows and exceeds the confines imposed by the rituals and apparatuses that govern us. The calculable self-interest of the juridical individual, the foundation upon which rest the hopes and promises of an epoch, is fractured by the eruption of desires and pleasures that cannot be contained by either the individual as constituted in law or in the state.. ³⁷²

Above, we have seen how Negri counterposes a 'whole of singularities' to the concept of a sovereign people, and this concept of *singularity*, associated with that of *haecceity* from medieval thought, in particular with Duns Scotus, is also implicitly counterposed to that of 'individual'.

Thus, whereas the social individual is modelled on the more abstract ontological concept of the *particular*, which is held to instantiate universal qualities, a singularity exhibits instead a radical *non-instantiability*, just as the haecceity constitutes a non-qualitative property. In *Pure Immanence*,

³⁷³ Deleuze appeals to the example of young children to whom no concept of fully-formed individuality can relevantly apply, yet derives their distinctiveness from ephemera such as fleeting smiles and nuances of facial expression. This concept of *singularity*, as we have seen, is also consistently at work in Spinoza, both in the form of an appeal to 'singular essences', defined by their capacity for affect ('Different men can be affected in different ways by one and the same object, and one and the same man can be affected by one and the same object in different ways at different times.'³⁷⁴) and of the *ingenium* which ultimately drives the curiosity of communication.

However in the account of the nature and activity of *multitude* which Spinoza himself develops it is not the concept of *singularity* which is foregrounded, although this is given considerable emphasis

both by Negri and by Deleuze, but the more primordial concept of *conatus*, which he extends and develops in places in specific relationship to the nature of contract and to the political relationship both to a sovereign and between sovereigns considered as instances of contract. Both of these, however, are subtended by the concept of *commonwealth* since, consistent with the ontological principle of *compositionality*, a contractual alliance gives rise, at least temporarily, to a higher-order individual, in a combinatorial and dynamic sense which is quite distinct from the juridical individual discussed above. This concept of *dynamic combination* rests ultimately on the ontological foundation of power, and on the principle of *conatus* as a determination of the essence of a particular as a *degree* of power. In terms of this combinatorial dynamism we can establish a progression from lower to higher order individuals, in the sense just importantly qualified. Thus at the 'lowest' level (although the principle of compositionality can only come to rest in the ontological foundation of power itself which, as we have seen elsewhere, and indeed throughout Spinoza, is of course no resting place), we have the earliest statement of the principle at Propositions 6 and 7³⁷⁵. Proposition 6 states that 'Each thing, insofar as it is in itself, endeavours to persist in its being', while Proposition 7 qualifies this, in a progressive sophistication of thought which perhaps begins with Spinoza, to state that 'The conatus with which each thing seeks to persist in its being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing itself': all things are grounded in power. From this, we move on to the Axiom stated in Part IV,³⁷⁶ that 'There is in Nature no individual thing that is not surpassed in strength and power by some other thing. Whatever thing there is, there is another more powerful by which the said thing can be destroyed.'³⁷⁷ And what this axiom then implies, in an astonishingly original variation on the competitive egoism which Hobbes ascribes to the state of nature, and which capitalist anthropology has gone on to naturalise, is that this deficiency can be *compensated through social association*, which in turn

implies an entire political anthropology quite distinct from that presupposed by methodological individualism. Thus in Book IV in the scholium to P18, Spinoza writes that

To man, then, there is nothing more useful than man. Man, I say, can wish for nothing more helpful to the preservation of his being than that all should so agree in all things that the minds and bodies of all would compose, as it were, one mind and one body; that all should strive together, as far as they can, to preserve their being, and that all, together, should seek for \ themselves the common advantage of *all*.' ³⁷⁸

It is against this extensive and consistent ontological background that Spinoza's thinking on social contract takes shape. Such higher-order collective 'individuals' , however, are not necessarily permanent but may be dissolved, and this then opens the question of the status of the contract which has bound it together. Thus in the Political Treatise (PT), reflecting on the nature of contractual obligation involved in alliances between sovereigns, Spinoza writes that '..The treaty of alliance remains effective for as long as the motive for making the treaty – fear of loss or hope of gain – remains operative. But if the fear or the hope is lost to either of the two commonwealths, that commonwealth is left in control of its own right' This leads on too to Spinoza's argument for the *ius resistentiae*, the right to political resistance and ultimately to war. Thus in the *Political Treatise* Spinoza argues that ultimately '.. the rules that govern and give rise to fear and respect , which the commonwealth is bound to preserve in its own interests, have regard not to civil law but to natural right, since (by the previous Section) they are enforceable not by civil law but by the right of war' ³⁷⁹ . And on the mythical scene of the transfer of power which defines and shapes social contract theory, which also informs contemporary theories of representational democracy, Spinoza argues in the *TTP*, having first described the scene of such transfer, that " .. nobody can so deprive himself of the power of self-defence as to cease to be a human being', and that '.. nobody can be absolutely deprived of his natural rights, and that by a quasi-natural right, subjects do retain some rights which cannot be taken away from them without imperiling the state..' ³⁸⁰ Montag therefore

concludes that ' the social state retains its usefulness as long as .. the individuals are able through collective existence to do and think more than they could alone.' ³⁸¹ Furthermore there is in Spinoza's account of the social ' .. no need for any transition between a state of nature and a social state because these are not moments in a chronology that leads dissociated individuals to unite through the mediation of a contract into a nation; rather, they are two forms of causality that operate simultaneously..' ³⁸² , and one might add here, inextricably.

Now the nature of this immanent, combined causality reveals hidden complexities which raise questions concerning the nature of collective agency. In De Cive Hobbes, arguing from a strictly juridical perspective, and from within a theoretical framework which rests strongly upon methodological individualism, argues that ' a multitude cannot act' since it amounts to a sum of individual volitions and cannot thereby attain some collective will. Bull ³⁸³ compares the concept of *multitude* as Hobbes uses it here to that of the market, and to the kind of 'invisible hand' which Adam Smith imputes to it. And he situates this discussion of *multitude* within a wider contemporary crisis of political agency. A contrast emerges here between on the one hand a social model which aggregates the outcomes of individual volition, action and interaction to produce a *set of emergent effects* (and to which Althusser's *overdetermination* is conceptually related), and on the other a model resting ultimately upon a concept of *collective will*, which, like the moment of surrender of power within social contract theory, must surely constitute a fantasized moment. The latter model Bull associates positively with Hegel, who in turn acknowledged the influence of Rousseau and of the concept of sovereign will. In reasserting the concept of *multitude*, Bull argues that Negri (along with Hardt, and Virno et al ..) opens up a dichotomy between general will and general intellect on the one hand, and between state and civil society on the other. But here Bull proposes an alternative take on the Hegelian theory of the state, one which is revived in Negri's theorization of

Spinoza's *multitude*. Thus he argues that 'The enduring value of Hegel's theory lies not, as its earlier proponents and critics both imagined, in the totalizing power of the state, but in its innovative attempt to describe the state as a solution to the problems of political agency generated by social complexity.'³⁸⁴ And here Bull takes up an interesting analogy between the changing fate of the transcendent state, challenged in the early 20th century both by political pluralists such as Hobhouse, and also from the left by anarcho-sindicalism, and the concepts of complexity theory, namely those of *entropy* and *dissipative structure*. Recalling the former reference to two forms of agency, those of the will and those of the emergent effects of multiple interaction, while the former type of agency is assimilated to the state, the latter is seen as the emergent agency of the *multitude*. Here too he situates the revival of the political relevance of the concept of *multitude* to the increased pace of a self-conscious process of globalization and integration of markets over the past several decades, a development which operaist/autonomist Marxism, as we will see in the concluding chapter to this thesis, associates directly with a change in the means of production towards what they have termed 'post-Fordism'. Here, citing Gramsci, Ball suggests that there may be an 'anti-dialectic' involved in globalization, one which effectively decomposes Westphalian sovereign-state forms and redistributes power across global 'civil societies'. Thus, while the Hegelian state represented an increasing degree of order, the decomposition of its power-concentrations conversely can be compared to the increase in disorder associated with entropy. However as complexity theory argues, such dissipation can produce emergent effects of self-organisation: an unexpected and unpredictable genesis of order although on a different scale. Thus, Ball comments that 'What we have here is nothing less than an alternative route to a fully developed civil society, in which civil society is an emergent property of increasing entropy rather than an emergent property of increasing order'.³⁸⁵ Thus, Ball suggests that 'In these dissolutions of the Hegelian state can be discerned the proto-narratives of contemporary geo-political analysis'.³⁸⁶

The 'dissolutions' he is referring to here are those of the end of European empires, the fall of the Soviet Union, and the contemporary waning of American hegemony, which Ball considers as a de facto global state. Thus, 'The constituent elements in the emerging global civil society might include civilizations, intergovernmental networks, NGOs, churches, international corporations, academic networks, drug cartels, Al-Qaeda ..'³⁸⁷ in an open list. Bull's analysis here, that of the anti-dialectic, has several interesting consequences. One of these is that the contemporary 'war on terror' which has been declared is of course not a war of state against state, which assumption subtended Carl Schmitt's thinking on the state and on its transcendent power, but in effect a war against civil society.

Secondly, with reference to the EU, rather than a civil society on the dialectical path towards state-form, Bull suggests that in fact it may be '.. a dissipative structure of the entropy of the [American] global state.' He even goes so far as to suggest that 'On a global stage, the declining hegemon performs the role that Gramsci assigned to the dictatorship of the proletariat, the self-annihilating night-watchman state.'³⁸⁸ He concludes this suggestive but ambiguous analysis with a note of cautionary mixed optimism, an optimism founded on the emergent self-organisation which can appear within disorder. He writes that 'Invisible-hand explanations are usually preferred by those whom the tide of history appears to favour, while the defeated have to rely on the unity of the will. Here, the invisible hand invests the failure of utopia with the utopian promise of the failed state.'

To conclude this section then, we have seen a sharp contrast developed, through an analysis of Spinoza's concept of *multitude*, to Hobbes' conception of social contract, itself perhaps best comprehended against the historical background of a civil war in which a landed aristocracy and a rising urban commercial and mercantile bourgeoisie competed for ascendancy. Against this

conception of contract, Spinoza argues not for a linear transfer of power but for something more provisional and overdetermined, something more in the nature of a *collective political experiment*, but one in which there remain the two poles of multitude and sovereign, in Negri's terms *potentia* and *potestas*, existing in an uneasy and constantly renegotiated relationship, a contract which which is always revocable. As Spinoza argues in the Political Treatise, since '... the right of the political commonwealth is defined by the corporate power of the people, ... its right is to that extent diminished as it affords reasons for many citizens to join in a conspiracy.'³⁸⁹ Thus, as Montag puts it, '... like everything else in nature, the right of the state extends only so far as its power. The sovereign who faces rebellion [therefore] has no grounds for appeal.'³⁹⁰ And here we see a vivid instance of Spinoza's rejection in principle of any conception of the transcendence of law, and of what Deleuze has termed Spinoza's '*anti-juridicism*'. Instead, we have a scenario of *immanent social power*, one in which power configures, dissolves and reconfigures over time. And this movement of power, in Montag's view, takes central place in Spinoza's onto-politics: 'Spinoza places at the centre of his analysis the question of the causal processes and power-relations that will compel all those living in a domain to act in accordance with the law regardless of their intentions.'³⁹¹

Against this kind of background, one which clearly combines ontology and politics, Negri takes up Spinoza's category of *multitude* and, as we have seen above, proposes it as a new social subject, a subject whose time has come in this most recent stage of 'late capitalism', one which autonomist Marxism characterizes as 'post-Fordist', a characterization we will discuss in detail below in the Conclusion to this thesis. But prior to this there are several crucial questions involved in Negri's treatment of the category of *multitude*. The first of these, in connection with Marxism, is the central question of how it relates to the concept of class, in particular to that of *proletariat* and its contemporary theoretical definition, and therefore too to the question of the production of surplus

value. The second, following on from this, as we have seen above, is connected with the question of *agency*: the question of political power, and of the means towards its redistribution. And the third concerns the significance of the complexities and ambivalences in Spinoza's own attitude towards this ontologically defined social subject. But in the meantime we turn to the third question, that of Spinoza's own attitude towards *multitude*.

In connection with this, Montag³⁹² refers to 'Spinoza's own fear of the multitude.'³⁹³, revealed at those points in the PT and elsewhere where Spinoza too comes to refer to the anger of the mob, experienced vividly in the public murder of the de Witts. In connection with Negri's elevation of the category of multitude to the status of the name of a new transformational social subject, Montag argues that '.. Antonio Negri's work .. was to a great extent devoted not so much to the idealization of multitude, as is so often charged, as to a recovery of its productive or constituent power at the very historical moment that 'the fear of the masses' has reached its theoretical peak'. And here, recalling Mandarini's critique of the techno-managerial politics which he ascribes to Cacciari's 'negative thought', now ubiquitously recognizable, such fear is necessarily the other side of such a politics since, like the House of Orange in Spinoza's time, this politico-managerial elite described by Mandarini has also become impossibly and precariously divorced from its own real foundation in collective social power. And here Montag recalls Spinoza's remark that such a multitude is even more fearsome when itself afraid, as in a period of capitalist crisis like the present one. And it is here that we can perhaps begin to see the conjunctural relevance of Negri's *alternative political scene*, alternative to that of the surrender of power which is implicit within social contract theory, of *potentia* against *potestas*. Consistent with the ambivalence which Montag alleges, he goes on to trace Spinoza's shifting treatment of the category, and shows its unevenness, arguing that '.. from the inaugural moment of its textual inscription in TP 3.2, the

multitude as a concept pursues itself in search of its own true meaning, incessantly fluctuating between *imperium* [the sovereign state] and *cives* [the citizenry], between the terminal and starting points of political philosophy.³⁹⁴ And in some ways this very movement produces what Spinoza refers to elsewhere as *vacillation*, which is ultimately the psychological effect of a lack of power, itself a consequence of inadequate understanding, and one which may produce, in its very uneasiness, a condition of sustained crisis.

What Spinoza's distinctive political philosophy presents, founded on an ontology of power, as Balibar and Matheron have both argued, consistent with a transindividual social ontology, is the *mass base of politics*. As such, therefore, it presents a scenario, and a dilemma, which Negri has perhaps quite rightly identified in terms of an opposition of *potentia* to *potestas*, one in which an accumulated sadness and impotence (and which can be explained, rendered adequate, in Marxist terms, in relation to surplus value) in fact comes to constitute an accumulated demand for the joy which Spinoza tells us accompanies an access to power. And it is here that Spinoza's ontology of power, consistent with Negri's structural analogies between *potentia* and *potestas* and forces and relations of production, takes on something of the nature of a *materialist political psychology* which is nevertheless ontologically founded: as we have seen Balibar argue, with Spinoza, unhappiness, as an effect of powerlessness, becomes an essentially *political* problem.

Throughout this section, then, the name of Gramsci has recurred, along with references to the concept of an autonomous civil society within the context of a critique of social contract theory and of the representational political logic which it substantiates. We will return to this discussion, and to the politics of multitude of which Negri has become such a prominent exponent, in the Conclusion to this thesis. Before doing so, however, we now turn to the last of the thinkers this thesis will consider, the last reader of Spinoza, an exception in some ways to both of the lines of descent |

have now argued for: Alain Badiou. As we shall see in what follows, Badiou's exceptionality, among other things, consists in taking up a more ambivalent attitude towards Spinoza than any of the other thinkers we have considered so far. Nevertheless, as I shall go on to argue, the influence of Spinoza remains clearly discernible in Badiou's thought.

VI Badiou

In spite of the obvious 'lines of filiation' which connect Badiou to Line 1 of this thesis, I have reserved a place for his thought which is beyond both of the lines I have presented for several reasons. Firstly because Badiou does not have the same kind of direct and positively exegetical relationship to Spinoza exhibited by Althusser, Balibar, Deleuze and Negri in their various ways. Although I will later argue that Badiou's thought does contain lines of descent from Spinoza, at times this takes on rather the character of 'a distance taken', as if, in Althusser's terms, Spinoza at those times had taken on for Badiou the character of philosophical antagonist against whom he could define his own positions with greater rigour. Another reason for placing Badiou's thought as I have done concerns his relationship to Deleuze. Here the antagonistic relationship becomes quite explicit: Badiou seeks to offer his ontology as an alternative to what he alleges at certain times to be Deleuze's 'Aristotelianism', founded on *physis*, or an emerging into presence, and at other times to be a 'Platonism of the virtual'. To this, he opposes his own 'subtractive', set-theoretically founded ontology. Above all, however, the antagonistic distance which Badiou seeks to take up from Deleuze concerns the status of *events* and their place within each ontology: the ontological status of the new in relation to the antecedent. As we shall see, Badiou alleges both that Deleuze's ontology is incapable of admitting the new, and that this failure marks a significant *political* difference between their ontologies.

I therefore propose to structure this chapter as follows. Firstly I will try to provide a succinct overview of Badiou's ontology as it is developed both in Being and Event³⁹⁵, in Deleuze: The Clamour of Being³⁹⁶ and elsewhere. I will then go on to consider Badiou's own relationship to Spinoza, and will try both to trace Badiou's own lines of descent from Spinoza and also to respond to his central criticisms of Spinoza's thought. I will then go on to consider Badiou's relationship to Deleuze, and will focus in particular on their theories of *event*. Lastly, I will consider certain problems arising from Badiou's own theory of *event*, problems similar to those we encountered above in Line 1 associated with Althusser's conception of encounter, in particular the conception of future-as-void which he developed in his work on Machiavelli. We therefore now turn to towards an outline of Badiou's own ontology.

Badiou's Ontology

Like Althusser's thought, and like Spinoza's, Badiou's thought is founded on the conception of a break, an *axiomatic* break. And for Badiou this movement involves a moment of subjective decision; in fact the axiomatic moment itself is coincident with the advent of the subject. Thus as Roffe expresses it '... there is no question of referentially grounding philosophy for Badiou, whether in consciousness, the objective world, human custom or even unconscious drives. Philosophy begins with an axiomatic break, and proceeds on the basis of a fidelity with this break.'³⁹⁷ Thus, Badiou's conception of the axiomatic foundation of philosophy, like the Parmenidian *logos*, *indistinguishes* thought and being. And this is so since Badiou moves beyond the moment of the thought of being, a moment which opens up a place for a dislocated subject such as the *cogito*, to a further moment in which *the being of thought itself* becomes inscribed within the ontology. In this way although Badiou's axiomatic conception of philosophy is indistinguishable from the advent of the subject, it is in no sense subjectivist. Here Badiou argues

that 'Identifying the being of thought with a subject endows this being with a constitutive interiority which refers both to itself (reflexivity) and to its objects, which are given as being heterogeneous to interiority.' ³⁹⁸ Rather, the indistinction of thought and being which characterizes the decisionist, axiomatic moment which founds ontology relates back to Badiou's conception of its mathematical foundation, and to the distinction which he argues for between a description and an *inscription* of being, a conception which in turn relates to Lacan's conception of the matheme, and to the 'cut' of the symbolic. As Roffe expresses it ' .. [for Badiou]mathematics does not describe being. His view – an initially surprising one, but the only one befitting a materialist philosophy – is rather that mathematics is the literal inscription of being. It refers to nothing other than itself, it embodies nothing, it reveals nothing.' ³⁹⁹ And it is in this sense too that Badiou's ontology can be characterized as both subtractive and *performative*: in a movement paradoxically recalling the Husserlian epoché, being is *reduced* to the inscriptive minimum of the axiomatic moment, to the cut of the matheme, and to a ' decision-deduction complex'. ⁴⁰⁰ Such an ontological orientation clearly repudiates all ontologies of presence, those founded on *physis* as full emergence into presence. Thus, ' It is not the plenitude of being that answers to ontological thought, but the almost-nothing of the letter'. In other words, there is no ontology of presence for Badiou, the presencing of presence in thought, but instead an ontology which marks the absence of being qua being in and through the agency of the letter.'⁴⁰¹

But it is not an appeal to the agency of the matheme in general which founds Badiou's ontology but a particular mathematical theory: that of Cantor's set-theory, later developed and progressively axiomatised by Zermelo, Fraenkel and Bar Hilel, and later still by Paul Cohen. Badiou's choice of such a mathematical model, however, is motivated by a prior decision: that of the in-existence of the One, a unifying and totalizing principle of being, and of a correspondingly materialist

commitment to the multiple. And here, Nietzsche marks a decisive threshold : ' .. the only really contemporary requirement for philosophy since Nietzsche is the secularisation of the infinite.'⁴⁰² Thus Badiou concludes that ' The One is not, there are only actual multiplicities, and the ground is void.'⁴⁰³And here, in this founding conception of the multiple, we can begin to identify Spinoza's influence, that of the conception of a natural infinite secured by the ontological principle of composition, a principle which accounts for infinity in terms of a combinatorial dynamic giving rise to an ontology of transient, nested complexes, ' an order of perfection'. Such a dynamic, however, has no resting place, no foundation, and it was perhaps precisely this aspect of Spinoza's thought which Cantor himself recognized and was provoked by, a long-term preoccupation detailed by Newstead.⁴⁰⁴ Such a dynamic, moreover, as I have argued elsewhere, also involves an implicit principle of contingency-for-us in the form of the 'order of encounters': the precise combinations which take place are unpredictable, and therefore the complexes-of-complexes which form are therefore of an ultimately indeterminate character.

Set-theory shares such an ontology of complexes, and also acknowledges the arbitrary nature of their formation. Thus, Cantorian set-theory asserts a purely *extensional* definition of set-membership: a set is determined solely by its members and not by its (intensional) conceptual definition. As such, it constitutes a version of radical nominalism. And such an extensional definition of set-membership, as conceived initially by Cantor and then developed by his successors, runs counter to the versions of set-theory developed by Frege and by Russell, for whom membership is determined intensionally by falling under the range of a concept. A consequence of such extensional definition, however, is that the qualities of and relations between set-members, and their ordering, become irrelevant. Thus the set { a,b,c }, extensionally considered, is functionally equivalent to the set {c,b,a }. Or to other permutations of the variables. Such an extensional definition of sets also challenges mathematical intuitionism, which demands

well-formed criteria for set-membership. Moreover a central development within Cantor's set-theory is that of the *power-set*: the set which includes all possible compositions of sub-sets and their members, all complexes of complexes. And it is precisely Cantor's conception of the power-set which constitutes for Badiou a moment of philosophical rupture, an *event* whose consequences still have to be articulated. And this concept of the power-set arose precisely from Cantor's own attempts to deal with the concept of the infinite, a concept which he had recognized in naturalized form in Spinoza in the doctrine of the attributes, defined as 'infinite in their own kind'. For Cantor, the conception of a natural (actual) infinite was troubling, since it potentially implied commitment to a 'principle of plenitude' according to which all that was possible was actual, a principle which therefore left no place for transcendence. Yet at the same time he was not prepared to accept infinity simply as an indenumerable limit-concept which would remain mathematically unspecifiable. Thus, he went on to demonstrate that for any denumerably infinite set, an infinite series of ever-greater sets could be constructed. And it was precisely this consequence of an endless, pervasive and natural infinite which led him to attempt to establish continuity between these different orders of magnitude such that the size or *cardinality* of the second order of magnitude would coincide with the cardinality of the power-set of the first denumerable order of magnitude, and it was this which came to be known as the 'continuum hypothesis', or CH.

The consequences of CH, and of its failure, as Hallward demonstrates,⁴⁰⁵ were philosophically massive: if provable, it would provide the mathematical basis for Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason; if unprovable, then the consequence would follow that the greater of these orders of magnitude would be left without foundation, and could not be reliably placed within the hierarchy of sets. Cantor was unable to prove CH, and subsequently Paul Cohen demonstrated that CH was actually unprovable from the set-theoretic axioms, and that it depended instead on a decision.

Crucially, what Badiou takes this failure to imply is *an excess of being over measurement*.

Thus, following on from the limitless excess of the greater order of magnitude produced by the power-set theorem, Badiou interprets this as an unavoidable excess of possible *belonging over inclusion*, an excess which is described as *inconsistency*. Moreover if, from the extensional axiom, all belonging is ultimately arbitrary, then any convocation of a given set, any declaration of belonging, must constitute a form of action upon the world, must constitute an *operation*. On its own, therefore, the extensional axiom, and its essential arbitrariness, cannot establish a foundation for set-like distinctions. Moreover the concept of infinite sets contains a familiar logical paradox: if there is an infinite set *S* which by definition includes all things, then that set must thereby include itself. In order to prevent this paradox of self-inclusion, and for the set-hierarchy to be logically well-founded, set-theory therefore postulated the empty or null-set, uniquely defined as the set containing no members. This null-set then functioned as the point at which the otherwise infinite regress of counting down from set to member to set to member (a regress which as suggested above, Spinoza's ontological principle of composition may be subject to), was brought to an end. The zero or null-set therefore constitutes the heterogeneous point at which the counting stops. It thus constitutes what Hallward characterizes as the 'ur-element' of set-theory. Combined with the axiom of foundation, which states that for any set *x* there will be an element *y* (the zero-set) such that *y* has no elements in common with *x*, this then allows sets to be convoked. Thus, just as in set-theory the axiom of the zero-set introduces a certain logical heterogeneity into the set-system in order to arrest the potentially endless process of composition, so in Badiou's ontology the concept of void plays an analogous role: 'There is no God. Which also means: the One is not. The multiple-without-one – every multiple in its turn nothing other than a multiple of multiples – is the law of being, The only stopping point is the void.'⁴⁰⁶ Such convocation of multiples, however, and this is crucial for Badiou, will always be accompanied by a lingering excess of being over

membership.

Within Badiou's ontology, such sets are designated as *presentations*, actions of making present through an operation of counting, such that membership of such sets constitutes what Badiou terms a *count-as-one*, and such presentations also constitute a first-order act of counting. Such counting, however, such declaration of belonging, is always threatened by that which it operates on: the immensity of combinatorial possibilities allowed by the power-set. As Hallward puts it, ' Though it cannot be directly perceived as such, pure or inconsistent multiplicity is the inevitable predicate of what is structured, since structuration, i.e. the counting as one, is an effect .. inconsistency, as pure multiplicity, is simply the presumption that, prior to or above the count, the one is not. ' ⁴⁰⁷ But if presentation is a first-order count, a count-as-one which engenders what Badiou terms a *situation*, there is also, within Badiou's ontology, a second-order count: the inevitably unstable attempt to count just this multiplicity; that is, all the potential sub-sets which will be regarded as legitimately included, and this second-order count Badiou refers to as *representation*, as *state-of-situation* or as *representational regime*. And the tension between presentation and representation, between belonging and inclusion, allows Badiou's ontology to transpose directly into the political domain, a transposition whose ease might lead us to suspect the presence of something very like a political metaphor within Badiou's central ontological vocabulary. But in any case if we consider systems of social classification, according to age, race, tax status and so on, which usually operate in order to define the set of rights and duties accruing to citizens, the socially included, it is the operation of the state-of-situation which determines such inclusion. Thus too we can see that this is the domain in which ideology will operate, subtended, as Althusser has shown, by mechanisms of interpellation and identification, and functioning in order to distinguish legitimate and illegitimate social subjects. The essential categories of Badiou's

ontology, as we have developed it so far, thus consist in a series of contrastive pairs: belonging and inclusion; presentation and representation; situation and state-of-situation. Such an account, however, remains incomplete until we address two further categories, categories which account for the unstable heterogeneity within situations, and which are essential to Badiou's understanding of events: those of *void* and *singularity*.

As we have seen above in Line 1, Althusser also appeals to the concept of *void*, which he derives from the thought of Epicurus and Lucretius, and we have seen too that in the thought of Epicurus, it forms the originary term within a three-term sequence of *void-atoms-clinamen*, a sequence which, I have argued, implies a future-inclined temporality. And here we can see very clearly one of the lines of filiation which associates Badiou with Line 1. In Badiou's ontology, unlike the null-set within set-theory, void comes to represent within situations not a point of theoretical-procedural rest but on the contrary a point of fundamental instability. In an earlier stage of his thought, Badiou was working with a conception of void which was (as it is for Althusser in his work on Machiavelli, and as it is too for Foucault in his earlier work) defined as being *outside-place*, a conception which he develops in the Court traite d' ontologie transitoire⁴⁰⁸, in which void is defined as ' the without-place of every place'.⁴⁰⁹ By the time of Being and Event, however, and beyond, void is always a *void-of-situation*, the 'irremediable excess of belonging over inclusion within the count of a given, concrete situation'. In this sense Badiou's project might be described as the philosophical transformation of Cantor's mathematical theory of sets into an *ontology of situations*. However there appears to be a certain ambiguity associated with the concept of *void* in Badiou. At different times, he appears to move between a concept of void as limit-concept, functioning like the null-set within set-theory to arrest the potentially infinite process of composability; at other times, however, the concept of void as excess of belonging over inclusion appears to subtend the inclusive expansiveness of situations, and to guarantee a certain tendentially equalizing dynamic.

And it is in the former sense of the void as limit-concept that Badiou comes closest to Lacan, both in his (Lacan's) doctrine of the absence which the advent to language institutes, and in that of the *objet a* as limit to (re-)presentation. Here, Badiou comments that 'the void is what can only be said or grasped as pure name.'⁴¹⁰, formally represented as the barred zero : \emptyset . Hallward comments here that 'By thus founding his ontology on the letter \emptyset , Badiou can fairly claim to fulfill Lacan's program: 'It is this 'instance de la lettre', to use Lacan's expression, an agency (instance) indicated by the mark of the void, that unfolds thought without one.'⁴¹¹. He suggests too that 'In its literal insistence on the void, Badiou's ontology is perhaps the only consistent formulation of Lacan's purely symbolic register, in which 'nothing exists except on an assumed foundation of absence. Nothing exists except in so far as it does not exist.'

To repeat: there appear, then, to be two senses in which Badiou deploys the concept of void: that of void as ontological limit *deriving from the nature of the symbolic per se*, just discussed with reference to Lacan, and also another sense, that of the 'errancy of the void', in which it designates (recalling perhaps, Spinoza's infinity of attributes) an excess of composability, such that it is the sheer excess of inconsistency which is unrepresentable, in which case the barred zero serves as the mark of an *unrepresentability inherent to immanent multiplicity itself*. In this latter sense, what emerges is an acosmic ontological register which in-distinguishes multiplicity and void, infinite and finite, in a manner which recalls the concept of *sunyata* of Buddhist, and especially Mahayana Buddhist ontology.

Two final and closely related terms must be added to this necessarily brief account of Badiou's ontology: that of 'singularity' and, closely related to this, that of 'evental site'. Badiou, as we have seen, proposes what essentially amounts to an ontology of situations, one which accounts for their structuration, their attempts at self-maintenance, and also, given the prominence of the appeal to

inherent inconsistency, to their instability and ultimate ontological failure. The doubling within situations enacted by the state-of-the-situation, effectively a doubling of the count, engenders an order of inclusion over belonging. Such a doubling, however, is always precariously maintained, since within each situation there will be a latent excess of belonging over inclusion, the latency of an aberration which falls outside the count. Such an aberration Badiou refers to as a *singularity*, occupying a nameless place within the topology of a given situation, a place to which Badiou attaches the name of 'evental site': the site of an exception which threatens the consistency of the (doubled) count. And it is precisely here that we can see the operation of an interpretation of void which runs counter to the Lacanian interpretation of void as limit-concept on the symbolic per se: an interpretation which instead deploys a concept of void-in-situation as a vector of change. Here, Badiou distinguishes between 'normal' and 'historical' situations: the former characterized by an approximation between belonging and inclusion, the latter characterized by marked disparity between them. Such a distinction, moreover, is clearly relevant to Althusser's thinking on conjuncture: a situation of conjuncture is perhaps measurable in terms of the extent of the disparity between belonging and inclusion which Badiou's thought articulates. The connection between Badiou and Althusser is also apparent in the way in which, according to Badiou, all situations will attempt to bring about the approximation of belonging and inclusion. As Badiou has argued in his Ethics, an obvious means towards this is that of formal declarations of rights, above all, perhaps, declarations of human rights. In this case we have an imaginary approximation of belonging and inclusion but within which the real disparity persists. And this in turn raises the question of ideology, a question to which it can perhaps be said that Althusser pays excessive attention while Badiou pays none. As we shall see below, Badiou's is an *exceptionalist* philosophy of militancy, in which there are only subjects-of-truth, subjects engendered by the exposure to the evental site within situations, and who (which) respond to such an exposure, such an *event*, by

recognizing the instability which it introduces into the situation and following this instability through to its conclusions.

Having now laid out the basis of Badiou's quite distinctive ontology, one which, like Spinoza's, is replete with political consequences, we now turn to the question of Badiou's own relationship to Spinoza, and in particular to the ways in which Badiou takes his distance from Spinoza: specifically, the allegation that Spinoza's ontology represents the attempt to bring belonging and inclusion into convergence and, following on from this, that this ontology leaves no place within itself for the emergence of a subject, a subject which, as we have just seen for Badiou, must emerge initially as a subject of uncertainty, an *evental* subject which responds to the exposure to a void-in-situation through a quasi-Pauline investigation of truth. 'Truth' and its requisite commitment, thus emerges within Badiou's thought, as self-certainty did within Descartes', as definitive of an essentially *isolated* subject. Thus, while Badiou's ontology serves the interests of a progressive and egalitarian view of the political, it does so, perhaps under Lacan's influence, through an appeal to an evental subject-of-truth which, in its first-person singular epistemic privileges, and in its existential isolation and exceptionality, is in some ways comparable to the *cogito*.

Having now summarized the principal features of Badiou's ontology, remarkable in its intricacy, in its range and in its axiomatic coherence, we now turn to the question of Badiou's own relationship to Spinoza.

Badiou's Relationship to Spinoza

Like the structure of Spinoza's Ethics, as we have seen above, Badiou's philosophical method in Being and Event is essentially axiomatic-deductive. Influenced by set-theory, Badiou's thought draws out the consequences across a wide range of domains from a core of rigorously defined and

interrelated axiomatic concepts. Gillespie also notes this methodological affinity: ' Both Badiou and Spinoza depart from a rational determination of being, and both begin with an axiomatic system which posits being in and through the resources of thought itself. For each thinker, thought's ability to posit axioms of being is tantamount to the equivalence between thought and being.'⁴¹² As suggested above, however, comparison with Spinoza can also be drawn in relation to the central problem within set-theory of the potentially infinite regress of composability permitted by the power-set, a regress which only the null-set can arrest. There, I drew attention to a similar (perhaps self-same) problem within Spinoza's ontology, in relation to the potential acosmism which can arise from the principle of composition, such that compositional wholes become subsumed as elements of higher-order wholes coming to an end only in the *facies totius Universi* , which Spinoza presents as an instance of a (mediate) infinite mode. I also suggested that the appeal to an infinity of attributes alludes to just the same kind of excess over structuration which remains central to Badiou's thought.

Such recognition of Spinoza's ontological problematic, however, goes back beyond Badiou to Cantor himself. Anne Newstead demonstrates both how Cantor's mathematical thinking was profoundly influenced by metaphysics, those of Plato, and of Leibniz, but of Spinoza in particular, and also how Cantor's mathematical theorization of sets exhibited a ' parallelism between the logical difficulties confronting rationalist metaphysics and set-theory'.⁴¹³ She also demonstrates how Cantor, influenced by Spinoza's ontology, subscribed initially to ' a principle of plenitude' , according to which ' everything possible is actual',⁴¹⁴ a principle which allows all possibilities, therefore, to be gathered into a single set, resulting in an 'inconsistent multiplicity', since it will include, for contingent propositions, both affirmatives and negatives. Newstead thus summarises Cantor's central theoretical problem as follows: for any set (V), then there must be a power-set

($P(V)$) which defines all possible combinations of elements of V . However the cardinality of $P(V)$ must then be greater than (V) since power-sets are by definition greater than the sets which they subsume. Yet if (V) is all-inclusive, then $P(V)$ must constitute a sub-set of (V) , which violates the very definition of a power-set. Newstead's article, therefore, provides historical evidence of the influence which Spinoza's ontology exercised over Cantor, documenting, for example, Cantor's own careful study of Spinoza's Ethics as a graduate student in mathematics, to the extent that in his oral examination of 1868 Cantor delivered a presentation of his own mathematical theories as constituting a refinement of Spinoza's *more geometrico*. Moreover as Newstead argues, although there initially only appear to be grounds in Spinoza's thought for 'one truly infinite thing' in the form of substance, closer consideration shows that Spinoza's thought recognizes actual, non-absolute infinities in the form of the attributes, which allow for domains which are 'infinite in their kind'.

Thus, while Cantor resolves the problem of the actual (natural) infinite by developing a conception of infinity as mathematically determinate as a set while still retaining the character of infinity, he does so through an interrogation of the concept of actual infinity implicit within Spinoza's theory of the attributes.

More generally Newstead traces Cantor's struggle with the actualizing and necessitarian consequences of 'the principle of plenitude', one in which, on theological grounds, he sought to maintain a distinction between two forms of an actual infinite: an absolute concept of infinity, 'an infinity in the abstract', which he sought to identify both with Spinoza's *natura naturans*, and mathematically with a domain of 'transfinite order-types' and cardinals, and a transfinite 'concrete' infinite, which he assigned to an actualized *natura naturata*.⁴¹⁵ Perhaps ironically, bearing in mind the theological pressures on Spinoza at the time of the Dutch Republic, she also describes the kinds of theological, and especially Thomist pressures which Cantor was placed under in order to avoid the potentially actualizing, 'pantheistic' consequences of a doctrine of actual infinity.

Since, therefore, there is such well-documented evidence of Spinoza's influence on Cantor, and since Cantor in turn had such formative influence on Badiou's ontology, it seems reasonable to infer that Badiou's own relationship to Spinoza will contain hidden complexities, and while he most certainly cannot, like Althusser or Deleuze in their different ways, be said to have been directly inspired by Spinoza, nevertheless Badiou's own relationship to Spinoza remains highly significant. And as Gillespie points out, there is immediate evidence of this in the structural placement of Badiou's 'meditation' on Spinoza in Being and Event: Meditation 10, placed after both the meditations on Plato and Aristotle, which Badiou deploys in order to establish above all a fundamental difference in philosophy between *poesis* (understood in the original sense of production-construction) and the matheme, and after the early outlay of principles (void, mark, point of excess, metastructure, natural versus historical situations) which provide the conceptual architecture of his own ontology.

At the same time however, Badiou makes fundamental criticisms of Spinoza's ontology. Such criticisms are far-reaching but can be quite succinctly stated. As Badiou puts it in Being and Event , and recalling the distinction drawn within his own ontology between presentation and representation, ' Spinoza's is the most radical ontological attempt at identifying structure and metastructure .. belonging and inclusion.'⁴¹⁶ Thus as Gillespie expands the point,

If one maps these set-theoretic terms onto Spinozism, the fact that there is a perfect transitivity at work in Spinoza ensures that everything presented in substance is also represented (individuated) as singular modes, and everything individuated as a mode is individuated as well insofar as modes constitute substance.'⁴¹⁷

As we have seen too in the outline of Badiou's ontology presented above, structuration, presentation, the initial count-as-one, necessarily trails excess in its wake, an unrepresentable multiplicity which cannot be reduced to the count. And this count-as-one, in Badiou's reading of

Spinoza, is secured by causality, by appeal to an infinitely *regressive* causal chain ('regressive' both in the sense of causal antecedence (| x causes y, then y is 'included' in x) and in the sense that it is discerned by the activity of an epistemic subject) such that any given modal cause ' can neither exist nor be determined to produce an effect unless it is determined to exist and produce an effect by another, and so on to infinity.'⁴¹⁸ Thus, Badiou claims, *tout court*, that ' For Spinoza, the count-as-one of a multiple, structure, is causality.'⁴¹⁹ Such an infinite causal chain, however, both precludes the void (which would constitute its interruption) and disguises a ' radical disproportion between the infinite and the finite' At the same time, it erases the present, which is always the present *for a subject*.⁴²⁰ However, this appeal to an infinite causal chain, which begins in the productivity of substance and extends into finite modes, Badiou argues, thus contains within itself a radical inconsistency in the transition which it assumes from infinite to finite. It is precisely here that Badiou locates a ' rift between infinite and finite', a radical disproportion and inconsistency in which the void is situated. Thus, in what must constitute a somewhat uncomplicated account of the substance-modes relation in Spinoza, he argues that

.. if a collection of things themselves form a thing that does not qualitatively differ from any one of its parts, the counting of terms never amounts to anything excessive to substance, given that the count of terms is nothing other than the ' inexhaustible, immanent productivity of substance itself.' (BE, p.131)'⁴²¹

Here, however, Badiou appears to be conflating two logics: a non-linear and potentially indeterminate 'expressive' logic of power, and a linear and determinate logic of transitive cause, and as I have argued in the Deleuze chapter above, such logics appear to have what Searle describes as different 'directions of fit': the former a forward movement corresponding to what Piercey refers to as the 'pent-up' quality of power, the latter working backwards as *knowledge for a subject* through the antecedent causal chain, a knowledge which in turn has empowering effects

which feed into freedom of action.

Now Badiou's critique of Spinoza involves abolishing such a distinction between directions of fit in the claim that Spinoza's conception of causality is inherently circular. Thus he argues, commencing from the ontological postulate of the multiple, that since a composition of multiples can produce a 'one-effect', that is, from the principle of composition, can come to constitute a higher-order individual, a complex-of-complexes, then structure is 'retroactively legible' and 'the one of the effect validates the one-multiple of the cause'. Such a conception, Badiou argues, is circular since if 'I can only determine the one of a singular thing insofar as the multiple that it is produces a unique effect, then I must already dispose of a criterion of such unicity.'⁴²² However it is precisely such a distinction between directions of fit, I shall later argue, which opens up the space for a subject in Spinoza, a space which Badiou denies. I would also like to suggest here that Badiou is ignoring another philosophical (and political) alternative, one which seeks to bring together the non-linear logic of expression, power and productivity, with the linear logic of transitive cause: that of Althusser's *structural causality*, discussed in Line 1 above, the practical and political effect of which is to open up a concept of causal complexity in the social and political domain which allows for emergent effects.

In contrast Badiou's insistence on a concept of linear, transitive causation seems peculiarly classical, not to say philosophically conservative, a fact which suggests quite different approaches: whereas Althusser sought to develop beyond Spinoza, Badiou treats him instead, at least at times, in a quasi-Hegelian move, as a fact of history, something to be viewed as a self-contained failure from the vantage-point of the present, and from the perspective of his own mathematically inscribed ontology. We should note here too that Althusser's conception of structural cause also theoretically absorbs Badiou's concept of void: the combinatorial effect of structure is always

described by Althusser as 'an absent cause'.

In any case, the expressive logic of power carries with it an inherent excess, a term which, for Badiou as for Lacan, is all but synonymous with void. However the alleged transitivity between substance and modes implies for Badiou that the void is effectively foreclosed. Here, he argues that since substance is defined as immanently self-productive, and since it can, as *potentia*, produce beyond actualized modes, then it may be considered to constitute an excess over the causal count. Rather than confront the ontological consequences of such an excess, however, Badiou argues, Spinoza instead attempts to suture the excessive productivity of substance, the 'continuous excess of unrepresented being'⁴²³ to actualized modes through an appeal to what he (Badiou) regards as an impossibly hybrid category, that of attributes and infinite modes, of which Spinoza offers various instances: rest and motion, the infinite power of thought, as instances of immediate infinite modes, and the *facies totius universi* as an instance of a mediate infinite mode. Such infinite modes, however, in this function of suturing inconsistency, Badiou regards as constituting mere empty names, names which themselves thus inscribe the void which they set out to cover over. Badiou's critique of Spinoza therefore, as developed thus far, seeks to 'in-distinguish' what I have suggested are two distinct directions of fit within Spinoza's ontology: an expansive, expressive, 'ungrounding' movement of power on the one hand, and an *epistemic* tracing back through the causal series on the part of an *epistemic subject* on the other. At the same time Badiou is aware of this tension, and refers to it in the distinction which he draws between 'a *principle of totality*', and 'a *principle of the One*': '... the principle of the Totality which is obtained by addition ad infinitum, has nothing to do with the principle of the One by which substance guarantees, in radical statist excess, however immanent, the count of every singular thing.'⁴²⁴

Here, Badiou appears to open up the kind distinction I have argued for, although couched

in terms which embody his critique. Thus he seems to acknowledge here a tension or even conflict of principles which ultimately refer to non-linear and linear logics, the latter through appeal to such concepts as causal chain, causal series and ultimately to the concept of counting itself. At the same time, however, he sees the appeal to infinite modes as serving to demarcate the productive excess of substance and the modal domain, since for him Spinoza must seek to avoid 'any direct causal relation between the infinite and the finite', which would generate 'measureless errancy of the void.'⁴²⁵ That is, if an ontological boundary between infinite and finite is not maintained, then Spinoza's ontology collapses into acosmism, and the finite so to speak vanishes under the infinite, or in Badiou's terms, the multiple slides away into the void. And it is the infinite modes which constitute such a boundary by forming what Badiou terms a 'doubled' causal chain, 'the chain of infinite modes, immediate then mediate',⁴²⁶ such that the serial count-as-one of causality can be maintained.

Badiou's judgement on Spinoza's ontology is therefore that it seeks to graduate a transition from infinite to finite, substance to modes, through the infinite modes, thereby holding the excessive productivity of substance, an excess which has the effect of a void, at bay. Here Badiou also appeals to a psychoanalytic conception of the effects of repression, and argues that the refusal of the void means that it must return elsewhere: 'One could say that the infinite mode is where Spinoza designates, despite himself – and thus with the greatest unconscious awareness of his task – the point (expressly excluded everywhere by him) at which one can no longer avoid the supposition of a Subject.'⁴²⁷ And this nexus of void and subject which Badiou argues for, and which he denies to Spinoza, is particularly focused on the attributes since they constitute of themselves a locus of choice and decision in the most direct sense possible: that of their existence or non-existence: 'The first possibility creates an underworld of infinite things, an intelligible place

which is totally unrepresentable, thus a void for us .. [while] the second possibility directly creates a void.' ⁴²⁸ Now the inflection of the 'for us' in the above is crucially significant. For in spite of the fact that Spinoza is a systemic and necessitarian thinker, one who affirms that ' Things could have been produced by God in no other way and in no other order than they have been produced' ⁴²⁹ , a necessitarianism which at the same time consistently denies free will of God, since

.. if things could have been of another nature, or could have been determined to produce an effect in another way, so that the order of Nature was different, then God's nature would also have been other than it is now, and therefore (by P11) that [other nature] would also have had to exist, and consequently, there would have been two or more Gods, which is absurd (by P14C1).

At the same time, however, we have seen elsewhere alternative interpretations of this necessity in terms of what Althusser has termed 'the always already there', the *es gibt*, the sheer immanent givenness of facticity. Against such a necessitarian backdrop, one which presents the possibility of viewing the order of nature *sub specie aeternitatis*, that is, as subject to a scientific presentation and therefore as subtended by an intricate and far-reaching causality, Spinoza appears to discount contingency at P33 Schol. 1: ' .. a thing is called contingent only because of a defect in our knowledge .. because the order of causes is hidden *from us*' [my emphasis], at the same time there are two places in Spinoza where, crucially, things might or might not take place, two decisional places, in Badiou's terms, therefore places for a subject. The first of these is the place for an epistemic-affective subject emerging from a disengagement with the *Lebenswelt* of *imaginatio* and from the adoption of a causal understanding of the world. Such a move, however, is not itself a necessary one, since remaining within the *Lebenswelt* of *doxa* may well have its own attractions and rewards . Yet such a break with the *Lebenswelt*, Spinoza argues, gives rise to a transformed subject, a subject emerging from such a break, one characterized by an increase in power, in autonomy (defined by Spinoza as an enhanced power to act upon the world) and

therefore too by an increase in joy : ' .. insofar as joy is good, it agrees with reason (for it consists in this, that a man's power of acting is increased or aided) and is not a passion except insofar as the man's power of acting is not increased to the point where he conceives of himself and his actions adequately.' ⁴³⁰ And one can't help but speculate here on what might provoke such dislocation from the passively received comforts and affects of the *Lebenswelt*, and something must, since a move into *ratio* and *adequatio* cannot precede itself, and must therefore surely represent a point of decision, therefore of rupture and dislocation. Such a 'something' is therefore perhaps comparable in its effects to Badiou's *event*, suggesting the possibility of comparisons here between what seems to emerge as Spinoza's 'subject-of-a-break', and Badiou's own subject-of-truth.

However there is also a second place for a subject within Spinoza's thought, emerging from within the ' three orders of nature', particularly emphasized by Deleuze. Here, Spinoza distinguishes between an order of essences, of composition, and of encounters, while Deleuze suggests the following succinct interpretation of these three orders: ' We must, in any existing mode, distinguish three things: its essence as a degree of power; the relation in which it expresses itself; and the extensive parts subsumed in this relation. To each of these orders there corresponds an order of nature.'⁴³¹ Thus, while the order of essences is determined by degrees or intensities of power, the order of composition (or of relations) ' determines the eternal conditions for modes to come into existence, and to continue in existence while the composition of their relation is maintained.'⁴³² Thus, while all relations are combined *ad infinitum*, up to the composition of the *facies totius universi*, any given relation cannot be combined at random with any other but only with those which assist its continuation or lead to its expansion, since *conatus* can be associative. Yet such an order of composition also includes negative and destructive relations,

leading to the decomposition of a given relational complex, and the occurrence of such relations are of course inherently unforeseeable. And it is precisely here that Spinoza situates the order of encounters which determine, in Deleuze's words ' .. the moment when a mode comes into existence (when the conditions set by the relevant law are fulfilled), the duration of its existence, and the moment of its death or destruction.'⁴³³ Spinoza himself defines such encounters as ' the common order of nature', as 'an order of extrinsic determinations', and as the order of passions.⁴³⁴ And as Deleuze suggests, it is the order of encounters ' which determines the affections we experience each moment, which are produced by the external bodies we encounter.'⁴³⁵ Spinoza himself refers to such an order as 'fortuitous' rather than contingent, since the intensities of power (the essences) at work, and their compositional predispositions, are themselves entirely determinate. What is 'fortuitous', therefore, is the occurrence of relations and their consequences for existing complexes. As Deleuze puts it, ' .. the laws of composition no more themselves determine which bodies meet, and how, than essences determine the laws by which their relations are combined'. And here, we can perhaps detect in Spinoza's order of encounters a source of influence on Deleuze's own doctrine of the externality of relations. As such, the order of encounters, so to speak, hollows out a zone of uncertainty within Spinoza's otherwise very certain ontology, one in which is situated the ultimate question of decomposition (using the term ontologically here, although Spinoza's ontology perhaps does not in fact license such a distinction between ontological and biological meanings of the word, thus its enigma): that of death itself, and of how we are to understand it and reconcile ourselves towards it. And here again we have evidence of what I have suggested elsewhere is a certain 'parallax' condition in Spinoza (to employ Karatani's and later Zizek's term), a condition which is split between *system* (operating by causal laws, however we are to determine them) and *subject*, a finite subject characterized by affect, by exposure to external forces, and as we also see here, by uncertainty. Deleuze once

again sums up such a 'parallax' condition quite succinctly : ' .. there is no death that is not brutal, violent and fortuitous; but this is precisely because each is altogether *necessary* within the order of encounters.' ⁴³⁶ And as Badiou expresses it, vis-à-vis such a parallax condition,⁴³⁷ and vis-à-vis Deleuze in particular, ' .. death is, above all else, that which is simultaneously most intimately connected to the individual it affects and in a relationship of absolute impersonality or exteriority to this individual. In this sense it *is* thought, for thinking consists precisely in ascetically attaining that point where the individual is transfixed by the impersonal exteriority that is equally his or her authentic being. '

What I want to suggest here is that such a 'parallax' condition (one which was taken up by Althusser, and by structuralism more generally, although in quite different ways) precisely opens up a locus for a subject, but a subject which maintains its vulnerable place, its uncertain duration, within a causally determinable natural order in which death is an inevitable outcome, yet this is a place, and an order, which we must somehow learn to affirm. Understood in this way, Spinoza's 'order of encounters' not only installs a place for a subject within the *more geometrico* , but, like the Stoicism which undoubtedly exerted its influence on him, endows such a subject with a certain existential heroism, a heroism which once more it appears to share with Badiou's subject-of-truth. And we should also note here a third point of reference between Spinoza and Badiou: that of Pascal, who like Spinoza and unlike Descartes, establishes the ontological conditions for a subject of uncertainty rather than for a subject of certainty.

Having now considered and responded to Badiou's criticisms of Spinoza, and having had reason once again to refer to Deleuze's reading of Spinoza, we now move on to a similar consideration of Badiou's refutation of Deleuze's ontology as constituting a covert return to the One. Here too, although such a refutation is far-reaching, it can also be succinctly stated, and in developing and

responding to Badiou's critique of Deleuze, I shall focus in particular here on their treatment of the ontological status of *events*.

Badiou's Critique of Deleuze : The Parameters

Further evidence of what I have argued is Badiou's own complex relationship to Spinoza appears right at the commencement of Deleuze: The Clamour of Being⁴³⁸ where he writes, having distinguished their preferences in mathematical models (Deleuze's for calculus, for Riemannian manifolds, but also, as mentioned in Burchill's (translator's) introduction, for Markov chains; his own for algebra and for set-theory) , Badiou cites Spinoza as a point of intersection between them, but then goes on to abolish it as such with the comment that ' ..' his' Spinoza was (and still is) for me an unrecognizable creature.' ⁴³⁹

As I have suggested above in connection to Badiou's relationship to Spinoza, so with his relationship to Deleuze, it appears to be a relationship of productive antagonism, that of ' a distance taken'. As Badiou puts it : ' I gradually became aware that, in developing an ontology of the multiple, it was vis-à-vis Deleuze and no-one else that I was positioning my endeavour.' ⁴⁴⁰

In particular, Badiou directed his critical attention, in their correspondence of 1992-94, to the refutation of what he saw as a neo-Stoic conception of virtual totality, arguing on set-theoretic grounds, that ' there can be neither a universal set, nor All, nor One.'⁴⁴¹ The consistent thrust of Badiou's critique of Deleuze thus focuses on his signature doctrine of the virtual, and in particular on the allegation that such a doctrine is necessarily committed to an ontological principle of antecedent and overarching metaphysical unity, to the effect of a *grounding* in virtuality. And here, Badiou focuses more on Deleuze's Logic of Sense, than on Difference and Repetition, since it is there where Deleuze develops his conception of a 'sense-event', one with which Badiou sharply contrasts his own conception of eventual rupture. And there is no doubt that there is evidence of an

appeal to a totalizing virtual event which is Badiou's target : ' ..one single event for all events; a single and same *aliquid* for that which happens and that which is said; and a single and same being for the impossible, the possible and the real.'⁴⁴² Such a concept of a virtual totality, moreover, is clearly subtended by the principle of *univocity*, Deleuze's supplement from Duns Scotus to Spinoza's doctrine of immanence, which states that Being is said equally of all things of which it is said. Here, at this juncture of immanence, virtuality and univocity, Badiou claims that Deleuze, while most certainly posing the question of Being (a fact which Badiou recognizes, and which he sees as placing both Deleuze and himself outside of, or perhaps *beyond* the post-modern), responds in a manner which uncritically identifies philosophy with ontology, as opposed to Badiou's own conception of the importance of *anti-philosophy*, which purportedly opens, via a performative appeal to mathematical inscription, onto the real itself. Thus, in terms of the intersection identified above, Badiou writes that ' Parmenides maintained that Being and thought were one and the same thing. The Deleuzian variant of this maxim is: ' it is the same thing which occurs and is said' (The Logic of Sense, p.180).⁴⁴³ And concerning Deleuze's expressive and productive reading of Spinoza's ontology, involving the central conception of the *ungrounding* of substance-as-power in modal multiplicity, Badiou writes that ' Conceived as the immanent production of the One, the world is thus, in the same way as for Plato, a work and not a state. It is demiurgic'⁴⁴⁴, a position which Hallward takes up and develops at length in Out of this World , in which he, following Badiou, takes up a relationship to Deleuze (and to Spinoza) which views him not as a philosophical and political resource for the present, but as a self-contained and surpassed historical product, and as a token of a type, in this case of a distinctive philosophical tradition of creationism. And if we recall the significance which the term 'state' takes on within Badiou's own ontology, in which it connotes not just the operation of a primordial count but also that of a quasi-Heideggerian givenness, an *es gibt* which so impressed the later Althusser in Wittgenstein's

Tractatus, we can begin to see how, on this interpretation, profound differences appear to emerge between the two ontologies. A significant feature of this 'expressionism' or 'creationism' (one which recalls Heidegger's criticism of a tradition of *ousia*, a 'metaphysics of presence') is that of what Badiou alleges to be Deleuze's ultimate allegiance to an Aristotelian tradition of *physis*, here understood as an emerging-into-presence. However Badiou's own post-Heideggerianism at the same time raises questions as to the compatibility of his own ontology with the Marxism with which he remains sympathetic: how does an ontology whose fundamental term is the givenness of a *state* (in Badiou's specialized sense of a state-of-situation) combine with an ontology of *praxis*, which precisely emphasizes the productivity of social being, and therefore the *production* of such a state in the first place? In this sense Badiou's ontology may be subject to the criticism that it is itself paradoxically foundational, although in a form which, like Heidegger's, inscribes absence within itself.

Badiou goes on to articulate his own ontological difference from Deleuze through a critique which demarcates a number of 'nominal doublets': '... the virtual and the actual (doctrine of the event); time and truth (doctrine of knowledge); chance and the eternal return (doctrine of action); the fold and the outside (doctrine of the subject).'⁴⁴⁵ What I shall now try to do is bring together the first, third and fourth of these doublets through an examination of Badiou's critique of Deleuze's conception of *event* and simultaneous (dialectical?) articulation of his own conception. Developing out of this, I will argue that the 'ontological difference' between Badiou and Deleuze is not as great as at times Badiou is driven to suggest, and that one way in which Deleuze's doctrine of virtuality takes on political relevance for the present is in terms of how it may be applied to our conception of history, and to the latent possibilities which remain implicit within the historical present, understood as the *Geschichte* which Althusser was to emphasise in his later work, and as

the *kairos* which Negri was to develop in his own critique of capitalist time. In this sense the later Althusser may constitute a means of narrowing the ontological difference which Badiou sets out to establish between himself and Deleuze.

Virtuality and Events

Much of Badiou's criticism of Deleuze's concept of virtuality focuses on Duns Scotus' principle of univocity, frequently cited throughout this thesis, and which constitutes a supplement to Deleuze's reading of Spinoza. As Deleuze presents it in Logic of Sense, 'The univocity of Being signifies that Being is Voice, that it is said as a *logos*, and that it is said in one and the same 'sense' of everything of which it is said. That of which it is said is not at all the same, but Being is the same for everything about which it is said.'⁴⁴⁶ A consequence of such a principle, however, Badiou argues, is that multiple being, that of which Being is repeatedly and discreetly said, must then take on the character of formal distinction, as 'local degrees of intensity or inflections of power that are in constant movement.'⁴⁴⁷ Elsewhere too, we have considered Deleuze's concept of 'ungrounding', according to which the being-of-substance becomes a 'pure dispersion', the same term which Badiou employs to describe an irreducible multiple. Such a dispersion into the multiple, Badiou argues, is impossible within Deleuze's ontology due to a 'double-determination' which remains present within the substance-modes distinction, one which Badiou characterizes elsewhere as '.. the double movement of descent and ascent, from beings to Being, then from Being to beings,' such that 'Univocal Being is indeed nothing other than, at one and the same time, the superficial movement of its simulacra and the ontological identity of their intensities.'⁴⁴⁸ Badiou therefore views Deleuze, in spite of the prominence which he appears to assign to difference *per se*, as remaining within a grounded, foundational ontology, with the ground constituted by a virtual totality in which '.. the One is the infinite reservoir of dissimilar

productions.⁴⁴⁹

Badiou argues too that such double-determination is inherited from Bergson, and from an 'intuitive method' held to be capable of grasping the complex, dual movement of duration, a temporal movement in which time divides into ' .. two dissymmetrical jets, one of which makes all the present pass on, while the other preserves all the past.'⁴⁵⁰ And it is this postulate of a past-as-totality, as what is *always-already-there*, which links the temporality of duration to the virtual-actual distinction and to the process of actualization itself. However, Badiou argues, if the being of the actual is actualization, and if actualization is the process of the virtual, then there results a dualism such that ' the virtual must be defined as strictly part of the real object – as though the object had one part of itself in the virtual into which it is plunged as though into an objective dimension.'⁴⁵¹ Deleuze is of course himself aware of this latent dualism, and seeks to resolve it through the complex conception of 'ungrounding', and also through an appeal to a formula of 'distinct but indiscernible' which he partially derives from Albert Lautmann's work on the virtual-ideal character of mathematical problems and on the *internal* connections between such problems and their solutions. For Badiou, therefore, the virtual-actual relation, and the dynamic account of actualization which it supports, ends up mired in a dualism whose only resolution is the ontological prioritization of the virtual over the actual, and in Spinoza's terms, of substance over modes: that is, a return to groundedness and to the One.

At the same time, however, Badiou remains resolutely classical in his critique of Deleuze, just as he is in his critique of Spinoza developed and responded to above, where we saw that his critique rests essentially on a linear and transitive conception of causality. In Line 2 above, however, we have seen how Delanda proposes an interpretation of the virtual-actual relation in a way which seeks to map it into non-linear theories of change, above all in connection with complex-systems theory, and which suggests ways in which the modal conception of the virtual may be developed

beyond the Bergsonian appeal to a 'totality which becomes', and towards a scientific conception of morphogenesis, one which assumes that actualized objects may be said to contain within themselves a virtual dimension in the form of their own constituent differential histories, an *intensive* process of actualization. Viewed in this way, the modal concept of the virtual succeeds in doing two things: it reminds us that actualized objects are ontological *products*, and represent *sums over histories*, and transposed to the historical-political domain, it reminds us of the contingency of the actualized present, therefore that the actual present both might have been and still might be *otherwise*. I shall go on to develop this defence of the virtual in the conclusion to this thesis, especially in connection with Thoburn's work on Deleuze's relation to Marx, and to themes which this takes up drawn from Italian operaist/autonomist Marxism.

Throughout, this thesis has sought to investigate the intimate connections between ontology and ethical and political domains: following Spinoza's lead in the Ethics, it has therefore sought to demonstrate how a position on how things *should be* may be derived from a coherent ontological account of how things *are*, which implies, of course, a certain normative judgement. This connection between the ontological and the political is nowhere more apparent than in Badiou's criticism of Deleuze's conception of the *event*. Elsewhere, I have argued that such a conception of ruptural, qualitative change has been influenced by complex systems-theory, and by Prigogine in particular. But in any case since Marx and since Nietzsche, and also since Freud, such a conception of ruptural innovation has become a leading concern in contemporary 'continental' philosophical-political thought.

Developing from his critique of Deleuze as in effect regressing to an ontology of 'the One', Badiou also develops a rigorous critique of Deleuze's conception of 'events', and seeks to demonstrate that Deleuze's ontology is incapable of delivering an account of the radically new. As

we have seen in this section, Badiou's own ontology gives privileged place to such ruptural innovation in the form of an inconsistency within the 'count' of situations, which is characterized in terms of a void inscribed within them. Here, Badiou seems to focus, just as he has done in relation to their two readings of Spinoza, on the precise nature of the differences in their ontologies. He writes that 'The idea [of the event] is central in Deleuze as it is in my own enterprise – but what a contrast! .. It effectively contains a dimension of structure (interruption as such, the appearance of a supernumerary term) and a dimension of the history of life (the concentration of becoming, being as coming-to-itself, promise) . In the first case, the event is disjoined from the One, it is separation, assumption of the void, pure non-sense. In the second sense, it is the play of the One, composition, intensity of the plenum.'⁴⁵² Here Badiou revives, along with his many influences (Cantor, Marx, St. Paul, Pascal, Lacan ..) another significant one: that of Sartre. In relation to Sartre's Transcendence of the Ego, Badiou draws the conclusion, obviously influenced by Lacan, that such 'transcendence' constitutes an 'Outside', something which exceeds the imaginary system which a subject has developed in order to sustain itself as it seeks to be. Such an 'Outside', however, like Lacan's 'objet a ', clearly then has irruptive power, the power to forcefully introduce the inconsistent. Thus, as Badiou puts it, '..one of the names of the Outside is 'event''.⁴⁵³

We begin to see here the precise contours of the difference in the conception of the event which Badiou seeks to introduce: between a generic concept of discontinuous, emergent change on the one hand, and a concept of an inevitable self-consistency on the other. Badiou goes on, in the same Parrhesia article, to propose a series of axioms ' on Deleuze's behalf ', and a series of counter-axioms, from which I will select the most salient. These proposed axioms (and it has to be said that Badiou is indeed proposing these ' on Deleuze's behalf ') draw attention to the influence of Stoicism on Deleuze, above all in connection with the 'incorporeality' of events, and with their abstracted, virtual status. However they also draw attention to Deleuze's Bergsonian inheritance,

and to the conception of an unlimited becoming, and to the always-already-there of the past. Here in particular is where Badiou focuses his attack:

The event is the ontological realization of the eternal truth of the One, the infinite power [puissance] of Life. It is no way a void, or a stupor, separated from what becomes .. This is why there is no contradiction between the limitless of becoming and the singularity of the event. ⁴⁵⁴

And what this interpretation of course proposes is that any singular event 'e' will always be subsumed under the higher-order event of Becoming 'E', such that $E \ni e$. And to this alleged absorption of the singular event within the larger event of virtual becoming, Badiou counterposes the view that 'An event is never the concentration of a vital continuity, or the immanent intensification of a becoming. It is never co-extensive with becoming. It is, on the contrary, on the side of a pure break with the becoming of an object of the world.'⁴⁵⁵ And to these differing conceptions of *event*, according to Badiou, there correspond radically differing conceptions of a subject. Since Parmenides, Badiou argues, a problematic of the subject has remained suppressed and latent within the paradigm of a *logos*, of a disclosing rationality and a naming of Being. Here, Badiou associates Deleuze with Heidegger in their common rejection of an overt metaphysics of the subject, and implicitly associates himself, no doubt via Lacan, with a tradition of the *cogito*, of which he writes that '...identifying the being of thought with a subject endows this being with a constitutive interiority, which refers both to itself (reflexivity) and to its objects, which are given as being heterogeneous to interiority.'⁴⁵⁶ Such identification, however, runs counter to the thesis of univocity: 'To isolate the subject ontologically, and then inquire as to how its being belongs to Being spells the ruin of univocity, which is necessarily a primary thesis.'⁴⁵⁷ Following Lacan in the tradition of the *cogito*, for Badiou the subject is an effect of heterogeneity, in this case of exposure to the radical inconsistency within situations: to the void which they seek to suppress

and cover over. Such heterogeneity Badiou also describes as 'the Outside', as that which, like Lacan's *objet a*, has the irruptive power to disturb representation and to install aporia, and writes, as we have seen, that 'one of the names of the Outside is 'event'.⁴⁵⁸ Again following Lacan, what Badiou seems to be arguing for here, however, is a *dislocated* conception of the subject, one which leaves it deprived of constitutive interiority, an 'empty' subject-position, a *locus of the subject*, in Lacan's terms, which for Badiou will go on (or equally fail to go on: a subject-of-truth may not in fact emerge) to develop along an axis of fidelity to the truth-of-situation revealed by the aporetic event, an axis which is not therefore so different from the 'abstract line' of a life which Deleuze proposes in his own version of subtracted subjectivity.

In contrast, Badiou alleges quite a different view of the subject emerging from within Deleuze's ontology. The thrust of his critique here seems to be that he views this ontology as in effect producing an ontological description which, like Parmenides, *elides* a problematic of the subject, but which, again in the same psychoanalytic figure which he brings to bear on Spinoza, then returns elsewhere in the form of what we might term a *subject-effect*, and this is nowhere more apparent for Badiou than in Deleuze's ontological figure of the *fold*. Thus in his study of Foucault (Foucault, 1988⁴⁵⁹) Deleuze comes to speak of an 'inside-space' which is 'completely co-present with the outside-space on the line of the fold', and states too that to think is itself '... to fold, to double the outside with a co-extensive inside'. Such an interiorizing effect of the fold, an abstracted and disseminated subject-effect, consistent with the account of events which he imputes to Deleuze, one in which a *logos* is repeatedly recovered as *sense*, a 'sense-event', Badiou dismisses as 'a chimera, an inconsistent neologism', one which for Badiou implies that Deleuze's ontological project thus collapses into another interiority, that of language itself. Considered as temporality, such a folding of events within the always-already-there of the virtual antecedent implies for Badiou that

The event is a synthesis of past and future .. the ontology of time, for Deleuze as for Bergson, admits of no figure of separation. Consequently the event would not be what takes place between a past and a future, between the end of a world and the beginning of another. It is rather encroachment and connection; it realizes the indivisible continuity of Virtuality.⁴⁶⁰

Thus, in terms of such a repeatedly recovered logos as sense, ' we can say that the subject (the inside) is the identity of thinking and being' ⁴⁶¹, that ' .. the Fold is finally 'subjective' because it is exactly the same as Memory, that great total memory that we have seen is one of the names of Being' and that ' at the point of the fold, thought and time are the same thing.'⁴⁶²

Hallward, meanwhile, draws further consequences from this Deleuzian logos. Interpreting Deleuze's ontology as one which essentially *opposes* the virtual to the actual, the deterritorialising act of creating to actually situated creations, one which thereby derives what we might describe as an *ethic of counter-actualisation* from such opposition, Hallward argues that

The notion of a constrained or situated freedom, the notion that the subject's own decisions might have genuine consequences – the whole notion, in short, of *strategy* - is thoroughly foreign to Deleuze's conception of thought. Deleuze obliges us, in other words, to make an absolute distinction between what a subject does or decides and what is done or decided *through* the subject [my emphasis]. By rendering this distinction absolute, he abandons the category of the subject altogether. He abandons the decisive subject in favour of our more immediate subjection to the imperatives of creative life or thought.⁴⁶³

Thus, according to Hallward, Deleuze develops a peculiarly *subtractive* form of vitalism, one which, while celebrating the creative force of the virtual does so, consistent with the ethic of counter-actualisation, by means of a 'line of flight' which *withdraws* the subject from its situational engagement. Such a withdrawal, Hallward argues, ends up installing an essentially contemplative subject, one which is consistent with the appeal to an overarching creative force: 'Deprived of any strategic apparatus, Deleuze's philosophy thus combines the self-grounding sufficiency of pure force or infinite perfection with our symmetrical limitation to pure contemplation or in-action'⁴⁶⁴, a

subject which reveals once more the profound influence which Stoicism has had on Deleuze. Thus too, Hallward argues, every strategic question of what is to be done can be transformed into a question of power: into a question of what we *can do*, with the constant provision that such power is never our own, but derives from the groundedness of Being in virtual power:

An individual's power or capacity is also its 'natural right', and the answer to the question of what an individual or body should do is again simplicity itself – it should go and always will go 'as far as it can' (WP, 74; EP, 258). But on the other hand, we know that an individual can only do this because its power is not that of the individual itself.⁴⁶⁵

Thus, summarizing Hallward's account of this subtractive Deleuzian subject, '...living contemplation proceeds at an immeasurable distance from what is merely lived, known or decided. Life lives, and creation creates, on a virtual plane that leads forever out of our actual world'⁴⁶⁶, giving rise to what Hallward seeks to characterize as an 'inhuman' philosophical naturalism'.⁴⁶⁷

To Deleuze's conception of the Fold as we have just developed it above, one in which, allegedly, the new is constantly re-absorbed within the virtual past, Badiou opposes a radically different temporality associated with a ruptural conception of events:

The event would not be the inseparable encroachment of the past on the future, or the eternally past being of the future. It is to the contrary a vanishing mediator, an intemporal instant which renders disjunct the previous state of an object and the state that follows.' We could equally say that the event extracts from a time the possibility of another time. This other time, whose materiality envelops the consequences of the event, deserves the name of a new present.'⁴⁶⁸

In the concluding section below, I will try to show that both Deleuze's conception of foldedness, at least in the form in which Badiou has interpreted it here, and his own conception of discontinuous temporal rupture as just presented, are in a sense relationally, 'antagonistically', dependent, and that another conception of event, with another accompanying temporality has emerged both from more recent commentary on Badiou, and from Negri's thinking on *kairotic* time,

as developed in his Kairos, Alma Venus, Multitudo.⁴⁶⁹ Once again here, perhaps paradoxically, we see how an effect of Spinoza's influence has been to reinstall such questions of temporality within ontology.

Fold, Rupture, Limen

If Badiou's major criticism of Deleuze's theory of event is that it must fail to break with the virtual past, then there is also emerging criticism of his own conception of ruptural event that it fails to emerge from within the present. And here, in the growing body of commentary on this, commentary which is consistent with Negri's conception of kairotic time, it is perhaps possible to detect what is now a certain 'return of the repressed' of dialectical reasoning, at least in the form of 'not one, but two'.

In his development of the concept of *event* in Deleuze, Hallward develops a contrast with Foucault, one which, having earlier identified certain convergences, goes on to specify their profound differences: 'Whereas Deleuze seeks to write a philosophy of creation without limits, Foucault writes a philosophy of the limit as such – a practice of thought that operates at the limit of classification, at the edge of the void that lies beyond every order of recognition or normalization.'⁴⁷⁰ And we have frequently come across such an appeal to the negative, here as that which annuls the normalized present, and which reveals such normalization as ultimately contingent, by flirting with a transgression of its frontiers. In some ways this recalls the kind of experimental transgression advocated by Wittgenstein in the Philosophical Investigations, in connection with the 'deep grammar' of forms of life, itself a version of what Russian Formalism described as *ostrananiye*, a process of making-strange. Such a conception of 'making-strange', as we shall see below, also appears in the growing body of positively critical comment on Badiou's

own concept of ruptural events, especially in connection with the concept of *limen*, or threshold, drawn from anthropology. Thus, in connection with Bataille, Roussel, Artaud and others, Foucault attempts to garner such transgressive experiences, experiences of subjecting existing empirical regimes to the void (or plenitude) which exceeds them. Here, at least in Foucault's early work, we find what Hallward characterizes as ' an ' absolute void' or ' essential emptiness' left by the dissolution of the classical subject that resonates in Foucault's early work.'⁴⁷¹ And we have come across such a conception of void elsewhere too: in Althusser's later work on Machiavelli, in which we saw an appeal to a sought-for emergent event as a void in the present. There too, I suggested that one weakness of such an appeal to a void which exceeds the present is that, just as Hallward has alleged of Deleuze's conception of virtual event, since it cannot generate any causal mapping from the present into the future, any *strategy* as Hallward has characterized it above, then it too comes to constitute, quite literally, a form of *utopian* desire which is strictly comparable to Deleuze's own lines of flight and deterritorialisation. There appears here, through the contrast which Hallward develops between Deleuze and Foucault, a remarkable convergence between Foucault's, Althusser's and Badiou's conception of the transgressive nature of events, one which appeals to a radical negation in the form of *void*: that which exceeds, violates and annuls the limits of the present, and which also reveals the common influence of Lacan, especially in the form of the aporetic *objet a*. Such an appeal, however, and such a temporality of radical rupture, as Hallward alleges of Deleuze's conception of events, may equally have the effect of annulling causal and strategic relations between present and future. Thus, as Nick Srnicek argues , ' While Alain Badiou's resuscitation of the subject has provided continental philosophy with new possibilities for political activism, its reliance on rare events has also paved the way for a potentially paralyzing pre-evental situation.'⁴⁷² Srnicek goes on to argue that Badiou's conception of subjective agency, that of fidelity-to-truth, is by definition *post-evental*, and that ' ..for all the militancy of post-evental

fidelity, Badiou has avoided any systematic discussion of the question of what is to be done beforehand, instead offering only fragmentary insights.⁴⁷³ And in terms of mapping a strategy from present to future, Srnicek cautions further that ' Badiou's own conception of the event (as a radically unpredictable supplement) appears at first to suggest that there is nothing (beyond management) one can do while waiting for an event.'⁴⁷⁴ Once more, then, an ethic of militant but essentially utopian *yearning* for an event. Badiou's conception of ruptural event, therefore, like Althusser's in his work on Machiavelli, and the accompanying conception of future-as-void, therefore comes to constitute an appeal to a *transcendence* of the present, and to a *transcendental* conception of break with the present, not unlike that ascribed to experiences of religious conversion, such as that of St. Paul on the way to Tarsus. And as Srnicek comments, such implied transcendence requires a *dialectical* response, one which brings present and event into dynamic relationship rather than leave them simply in static opposition, the need for which Badiou is himself aware of. Thus, for Badiou, such ruptural events are always events *within situations*. As Srnicek argues, they will occur within 'evental sites' within situations, such that this site will command a minimum of *ontological consistency* within a given situation.⁴⁷⁵ Moreover, as he also argues, Badiou's conception of event, following Paul Cohen, is based on the conception of *the forcing of a generic set*, and Badiou has himself repeatedly insisted that it is the generic which is at the centre of his philosophical-political project, such that events come to constitute the *immanent* working through of their effects as traces of exposure to a truth. As such, strictly speaking, the event in itself never ceases to be anything but a void which leaves trace-effects.

Moreover as Badiou's thought progresses, it takes on more of a *topological* character, in some ways anticipated by Deleuze's *fold*, such that one might eventually speak of a *torsion* of truth-effect. Thus, Srnicek suggests, such an appeal to topology proposes a version of dialectical

treatment in which ' there is no radical disjunction between truth and knowledge but instead a subtle, dialectical interplay carried out by the aleatory path of a truth-procedure.'⁴⁷⁶ Moreover as he also points out, ' the state-of-the-situation is not reducible solely to a single political state': there can be other counts-of-the-situation which may be relevant in the contemporary conjuncture, and within this conjuncture the very conception of a single state-of-situation, somewhat like Althusser's conception of a structure-in-dominance, may itself prove to be ultimately anachronistic since the conception of identity which the count-of-the-situation yields gives way instead, in contemporary financialised capitalism, to a scenario of 'competitive and non-competitive spaces within which largely deterritorialised flows of capital can be invested.'⁴⁷⁷ Thus, consistent with Badiou's appeal to an ultimate inconsistency, ' there is no Whole, no Universe within which the heterogeneous situations could be composed together', and the resultant heterogeneity of situations offers the possibility that ' situations outside of the political state can be employed as a space to pre-eventally (sic) construct and mobilize potentially irruptive movements,⁴⁷⁸ involving an attempt to find a point that would ' stand outside of the temporality of the dominant order.'

Elsewhere above, in connection with Althusser's work on Machiavelli, we have made reference to a conception of 'liminality' drawn from anthropology⁴⁷⁹, one which refers to a transient condition of passage between socially determinate states (or structures, or counts-of-situation), such as the passage from adolescence to socially recognized adulthood, and up to and including, in the *bardo* state of Tibetan Buddhism, the passage from life into death. Such *liminality* describes a condition in which all normative conditions and assumptions are suspended, therefore a condition which is interstitial: *in-between*. As we have seen above, Mackenzie deploys thus conception of liminality in connection with Foucault, and with what, as we have just seen, Badiou appeals to as Foucault's conception of 'the Outside', as ruptural excess and/or void. As we have just seen too, such a conception implies a certain transcendence of situations, a transcendence-within-immanence, so to

speak, as I have suggested elsewhere, in this case leading to a causal disconnection between present and emergent future which renders questions of strategy in a sense irrelevant in favour of an event of utopian rupture. The conception of liminality, however, suggests another temporal and political strategy: that of adopting (and living out, like Badiou's subjects-of-truth) a temporality which 'stands outside of the temporality of the dominant order', a temporality of *exodus*, as Negri has characterized it , and a time of *kairos*. Thus, in Kairos, Alma Venus, Multitudo⁴⁸⁰, within the wider context of a critique of a 'tautologous' capitalist time which accompanies the regime of the money-form as installing general equivalence in exchange-relationships, the temporality of an ultimately endless repetition-of-the-same, Negri articulates a counter-temporality, one which, somewhat like Badiou's event, involves a '.. time of the instant, the moment of rupture and opening of temporality .. a singular and open present .. a modality of time through which being opens on itself, attracted by the void at the limit of time' , and accompanied ' by a decision to fill that void.'⁴⁸¹ Here, however, Negri moves away from Badiou's and Althusser's conception of the void of the Outside and from its intrinsic appeal to an *indeterminate* futurity and returns to what must constitute a form of temporal logos:

Can it be said that in *kairos*, naming and the thing named attain existence 'at the same time', and so are in reality the ' this here'?' Such a this-here, however, is further qualified not as a full presence, an *ousia*, but as a ' 'being on the brink', a "being on the razor's edge"⁴⁸²

Moreover such a 'leaning out over the void of the time to come' is then recuperated as productivity, by a decision to fill the void, such that *kairos* then becomes '.. generation, that it is being (*einai*) in the form of generation (*gignetai*)'⁴⁸³ . Now such a conception of void as a *void-to-be-filled* moves beyond those quasi-transcendental conceptions of the 'Outside' which we have found in Foucault, in Althusser and in Badiou, and also suggests an interpretation of desire (inscribed within the

Hegelian tradition traced by Judith Butler in Subjects of Desire as active negation), which moves beyond the Lacanian conception of a Heideggerian and quasi-foundational lack of being to a conception of desire which embraces negation as an annulment of the present but at the same time, dialectically, begins to fill this vacancy with the experiment of the new. Such a temporality, therefore, is consistent both with a productivist ontology in which a vacuum cannot be allowed to remain so for long, consistent both with a materialist conception of immanence, with an ontology of power (characterized by Piercey, as we have seen repeatedly above, in terms of a 'pent-up' quality of power), and with an *experimental* ethics which can come to pervade all levels of social being. As such, Negri's kairotic time is consistent both with the conception of liminality which McKenzie appeals to in relation to Foucault, and with Srnicek's remarks above: the possible opening of an interstitial state constituting a space between structures, a zone of uncertainty and of possibility, precisely the kind of conditions in which the new may emerge. The advantage of such a conception is that it provides a means of resolving what we have seen is a major conceptual and political problem inherent within the conception of *evental emergence*, present equally within Althusser's later work on Machiavelli in the form of the future-as-void, and within Badiou's own conception of the ruptural event: the problem that if we define change as sudden and unforeseeable irruption, as a catastrophic point of change, then clearly *such a point of change cannot precede itself*, and we are therefore deprived of a means of causally mapping a desired future from within the present, leaving us in a condition of indeterminate utopian yearning. Such a conception of ruptural emergence also carries with it a strict separation of past and future which is perhaps ultimately politically unsustainable. As Negri comments,

.. the past appears to be that which is 'finished (*finito*) here', while the future appears to be that which from here onwards is 'un-finished (*in-finito*)', to which he objects that ' It makes no sense to call that enormous mass of being that precedes us finished (*finito*) or to call 'un-finished' (*in-finito*) that which is not yet'⁴⁸⁴

And this suggests a persistent, causal relationship between past and future. Thus in the place of an unknowable, ruptural futurity (and such a conception of the future was a long-term political problem which lay dormant within structuralism, and which Althusser himself only came to confront in his later thought), he proposes instead a thought of that-which-is-to-come, and implicitly a strategy of the incubation of a future within the present through an actively experimental politics.

Negri writes, in a manner that recalls Althusser's appeal to *Geschichte*,

The everyday sense of life confirms the definition of that 'which is coming' as *to-come*, rather than as future. It is indeed in the struggle for the free appropriation of the present that life opens itself to the *to-come*, and desire perceives – against the empty and homogeneous time in which all is equal (including, and in particular, the future) - the creative power of *praxis*.¹⁴⁸⁵

What Negri appears to be arguing for here is an understanding of the future, that which is to come, as being actively incubated within the present, *created* within the present, but only through a political practice which is prepared to disengage from a given structure (that of capitalism, *tout court*, which is to be understood, perhaps above all else, as a hegemonic and ubiquitous structuring of time), and to set about establishing zones of indeterminacy within this structure from within which a sought for future can be modeled and projected. And we can see here the consistency between such an experimental politics and the conception of liminality which McKenzie argues for: just as such a politics implies the creation and nurturing of spaces of indeterminacy within a given (political and economic) structure, so does the concept of liminality involve a zone of uncertainty, a place *in-between* in which hegemonically structured identities are suspended and as a result new possibilities are exposed. As I shall suggest in the conclusion to this thesis, such a conception is consistent with the 'minor politics' which Thoburn ascribes to Deleuze and Guatarri, with Balibar's conception of the proletariat as a 'non-class', and also in particular with the political

practice of Italian operaist and autonomist Marxism. This problem of strategy has been common to all those strains of thought which share, no matter how remotely, the common influence of structuralism, and therefore too the problem of the deterministic hegemony of structure: Althusser and Foucault, and, through the influence of Foucault's doctrine of 'the Outside', as we have seen, Badiou himself.

What we must therefore be wary of in Badiou's doctrine of the ruptural event, as Kenneth Surin has cautioned⁴⁸⁶ is a certain 'political romanticism' which inscribes a longing for the extraordinary, and which may end up reintroducing, just as Badiou alleges of Deleuze's doctrine of Virtuality, an element of transcendence, which we have encountered above in the 'topological problem' of how we are to relate 'interior' states of a system or structure to the historical fact of systemic change. Along with Surin, and with Žižek as we shall see, Daniel Bensaid expresses similar concern over Badiou's conception of exceptional event, and describes ' .. a philosophy haunted by [a] sacralisation of the eventual miracle ' which he characterizes as ' a philosophy of majestic sovereignty, whose decision seems to be founded upon a nothing that commands the whole'⁴⁸⁷, objecting too that ' The absolute incompatibility between truth and opinion, between philosopher and sophist, between event and history, leads to a practical impasse', and to ' a pure voluntarism which oscillates between a broadly leftist politics and its philosophical circumvention.'⁴⁸⁸

At the same time more recent (critical but positive) commentary on Badiou's conception of ruptural event, commentary which ' .. turn[s] to Badiou against Badiou',⁴⁸⁹ or perhaps better, which ' ..read[s] Badiou in light of Badiou', suggests not only that there are inconsistencies in this conception of irruptive event, but that they can also be resolved in Badiou's own terms, although such a resolution will mean that the extremity of the contrast which Badiou has argued for between Deleuze's *fold* and his own *event* , and perhaps therefore, ultimately between being and becoming, may turn out not to be so stark or so irreconcilable as he attempts in places to argue. Thus Srnicek,

as we have seen above, seeks a way within Badiou's own thought of mapping the *pre-evental* onto the evental, thus opening up the question of strategy. And he manages to find several grounds within Badiou's thought for such mapping. The first of these concerns the fact that any given event is an event *within and for a particular situation*. Thus, 'An event must have some minimum of ontological consistency in order for it to appear',⁴⁹⁰ and such minimal consistency means that for any given situation, there will be an 'evental site' which ranges over all possible represented and presented members in terms of a generic belonging and which, Srnicek suggests, recalling Balibar's account of the proletariat as a non-class, '...resonates with the common descriptions of mass movements, whereby the mass itself is presented as a mass..', such that '...none of its elements appear in their particularity.' However as Srnicek also comments, given Badiou's own commitment to radical ontological inconsistency, '...the unrepresented elements of one situation may simultaneously be the fully counted elements of another situation', and thus, '... what constitutes an unpredictable rupture from one perspective is simply a culmination of various determined causal paths at another level.'⁴⁹¹ That is, there can be within the ontology no ontologically privileged *generic* situation.

The second of these grounds concerns the function of *naming* of an event, corresponding to Cohen's structural forcing and to Badiou's own conceptions of truth-procedure and subject-of-truth. Here, Srnicek comments that 'It is not the event that does the ontological work here; rather, it is the statement or naming of the event and the subsequent generic set .. that does all the work of ontological change. In this way, an event is entirely specific to its situation and is not simply a transcendent intervention.' Crucially, Srnicek goes on to propose a *topological* figure capable of representing the fundamental nature of events, one capable of connecting the pre-evental to the evental: that of a *torsion* which is 'produced by a truth-procedure on the situation.'⁴⁹² Like

Rene Thom's points of catastrophic transformation, Badiou's *events* will then come to represent thresholds at which a given object or structure can shift into a radically new object or structure. What is particularly significant in Srnicek's appeal to the topological figure of *torsion* is that it is consistent not with an ontology of structure *per se*, implying a homeostatic reproduction within which change becomes problematic, but of *system*, consistent with a conception of homeostatic states as being defined in terms of a range of being closer to or further from states of equilibrium, such that on the contrary *persistence* of structure becomes instead problematic. What is significant too is that it is the figure of *torsion*, thus understood, rather than that of irruptive event, which must be compared to Deleuze's contrasting figure of *fold*, and such comparison must involve an account of how these figures theorise a relationship to the *past states* of the system.

At the same time Phelps⁴⁹³ reminds us that Badiou himself repeatedly cautions against what he terms a 'speculative leftism' accompanied, somewhat like the 'Year Zero' of the Khmer Rouge, and also like Nietzsche's 'event which will split the world in two', by a belief in the absoluteness of new beginnings. Here, Phelps returns to one of Badiou's own major influences: that of St. Paul, and focuses on the doctrines of Marcion, heterodox follower of Paul who, according to Badiou himself, while postulating like Paul an evental break between Judaism and Christianity, the advent of a new universalism in which 'There is no longer Jew or Greek, [there is] no longer slave or free , [there is] no longer male or female..' ⁴⁹⁴, took such advent to the point of arguing that a new gospel was then at work, and even a new deity. As Phelps reminds us, Badiou himself comments on Marcion that while Paul undoubtedly emphasizes 'rupture rather than continuity', 'this is a *militant* rather than an *ontological* thesis.' ⁴⁹⁵ Such a disparity between ontology and ethical (/ political) posture, we might note, is at the same time paradoxically consistent with Badiou's own core doctrine of inconsistency, for which truth is always hazardous, always 'militant' in this sense. At the same time, Phelps draws attention to Badiou's doctrine of 'evental recurrence', 'an evental between-two' by

which a truth-procedure draws out connections with events of comparable magnitude, such that the new event ' evokes the previous situation(s) and uses them precisely to create its own rationality.' Such evental recurrence gives rise to what Badiou terms 'evental sequences', such as the sequence 1872-1917-1968, with subsequent events imbuing previous events with new significance. Phelps thus concludes that ' evental recurrence means that there are no absolute beginnings', and that ' The introduction of novelty in any situation, the interruption of becoming for the sake of the new, is always relative, relative to the situation in which the new occurs, *and* to past evental sequences' [emphasis mine].⁴⁹⁶ If we recall the emphatic character of Badiou's critique of Deleuze, and of his doctrine of the *fold* with its inherent character of repetition, the repetition in the present of the virtual past, the extent of the distance which Badiou seeks to place between himself and Deleuze must here begin to diminish as an effect of the doctrine of evental recurrence itself.

In a review of Badiou's more recent Logiques des Mondes in which he (Badiou) tries to address the absence of relationality in the formerly strictly extensional ontology of Being and Event, Zizek argues, as we have seen Negri argue too in his thinking of kairotic time, that the future, in Badiou as in Althusser the time *from which the event comes*, must be seen as itself emerging not only from the past, but from a political struggle to appropriate the present, and that the future to which one must be faithful is in fact ' the future of the past itself', even if only in the sense of a future ' which continues to haunt us' as the product of the very failures of the past.⁴⁹⁷ Such a temporal *mobilization* of past, present and future, also comes very close both to what the later Althusser sought in Marx's *Geschichte*, and which we have seen Negri develop in his conception of kairotic time. Zizek goes on to conclude that precisely for these reasons we should turn towards Deleuze rather than Badiou, since it is Deleuze and not Badiou who installs a temporality in which

a potentiality of the past virtually remains, based upon what Žižek there describes as the proper Deleuzian paradox'

.. that something truly new can only emerge through repetition. What repetition repeats is not the way the past 'effectively was', but the virtuality inherent in the past and betrayed by its past actualization. In this precise sense, the emergence of the New changes the past itself; that is, it retroactively changes (not the actual past – we are not in science-fiction) but the balance between actuality and the virtuality in the past.

Thus, as Phelps concludes, '.. perhaps we can begin to look for a way to think Badiou and Deleuze together, rather than as ' two extreme and absolutely hostile poles'. Perhaps in the end the differences are a matter of taste, as Badiou suggests⁴⁹⁸. Eventually [however] we must move beyond taste to politics, which would seem to require looking for points of contact between these two thinkers, if they truly represent the options we are left with today for a politics of liberation.'⁴⁹⁹

Coda

We might also add a coda to all this. As we have seen in the opening chapter of this thesis, Althusser, like Cesare Borgia, another 'man of nothing', found himself facing ' the emptiness of beginnings', and seeking in the future-as-void for a new principality which could fill the immense loss of the past, a loss both political and deeply personal. What Žižek reminds us of here, however, and reminds us of through Deleuze, is that the virtuality of the past cannot be reduced simply to its actualizations, reduced therefore too simply to its failures: something persists, a path, a multiple of paths not taken, which invests those actualizations with contingency, and with something very like counterfactual potential. Thus, in an interpretation which favours Deleuze, Žižek invites us to think virtuality *together* with repetition, and repetition *together* with the new. Now whether we are to derive political hope from such potential, and from such repetition, or from the flat, endlessly open terrain which Althusser saw as a landscape in which encounters could occur, must surely

depend on an ontological choice: between a conception of objects as productions in the former case, therefore as in some sense containing their virtual histories, and the logic of the fact to be accomplished on the other, in which the structures which we know as objects, the *Sachverhalten*, have no existence other than the encounter.

VI Conclusion

Hegel or Spinoza ?

This thesis has argued that thinkers such as Althusser, Balibar, Deleuze and Negri, saw in Spinoza the resources with which to counter the long hegemony of Hegelianism within leftist philosophical-political thought, both in the historicist and humanist versions of Marxism which Althusser actively challenged, and in the Hegelianism of desire as represented, for example, by Hyppolite, by Sartre, and also by Lacan, all sharing the wide-ranging influence of Kojève, a hegemony which Judith Butler has impressively chronicled in Subjects of Desire. But not only this: several of the thinkers featured in this thesis also saw in those same resources the means by which *new* readings of Marx could be produced, readings which would expose and run counter to the pervasive and ultimately idealist teleological schemata which Marx had inherited from Hegel, replacing them with a materialist logic which would draw on Spinozan immanence, and which the later Althusser would characterize as being consistent with an 'aleatory materialism'.

Althusser and Balibar in particular, in Reading Capital, thus deployed Spinoza's central ontological categories (immanent cause, composition, conatus ..) to provide the support for a new attempt to read Marx *against* Hegel, constituting a return to Marx in just the same way that Lacan sought to present a return to Freud; that is, a return which, through repetition, would also enact a

renewal. We have also seen elsewhere the kinds of conjunctural theoretical and political tensions which formed the backdrop to such a return: the widespread fideistic orthodoxy of economism and historicism inscribed in the monolithic 'dialectical laws' of DIAMAT, and in what Althusser came to refer to as 'an idealism of matter'; the humanist Marxism which saw itself as challenging such orthodoxy but which Althusser saw as being instead its specular partner; lastly, what Althusser saw as the urgent need for the PCF to renew itself in radical ways in order to become once again a revolutionary party, beginning with the ways in which it understood and promulgated Marxism itself. Thus, just as in Althusser's earlier conception of 'theoretical production' Marx sought to read classical political economy through the conceptual apparatus of Hegel in order to engender a new theoretical configuration so, arguably, do Althusser and Balibar read Marx himself once again but this time through the conceptual apparatus provided by Spinoza.

At the same time we should be careful to avoid a certain excessive partisanship through which Hegelianism becomes anathemised and Spinozism correspondingly elevated to an endless reserve of truth and affirmation. While we may recognize along with Althusser that philosophies are often antagonistic, and engaged in a form of strategic manoeuvre, at the same time such antagonism may give rise to effects of identification and also to a corresponding 'alterisation' of which we should be wary. Butler's study cited several times elsewhere, shows how rich and versatile Hegelianism has been, above all, perhaps, through its transformations within French philosophical thought, and I have referred elsewhere to what I have termed the 'uncoupled negative' which underpins Kojève's theory of desire, uncoupled from any teleological resolution, and which influenced both Sartre's theory of an inalienable freedom appropriate to 'a being which makes itself a lack of being'⁵⁰⁰, and also to Lacan's conception of a split, 'unfounded' subject whose desire endlessly pursues 'the impossible in the mundane without promise'.⁵⁰¹ Rather than

simply opposing Spinoza to Hegel in the form of the party of the good to that of the bad, therefore, perhaps a richer, more materialist, and more philosophically rewarding approach is to bring them into relation, and to focus on the historical detail of this relationship, while bearing in mind that the antagonism towards Hegelianism in Althusser, Balibar, Deleuze and Negri is ultimately driven by an antagonism towards Stalinism and all of its consequences.

This, at least, is the approach taken by Macherey in his Hegel ou Spinoza⁵⁰², in which he considers precisely the consequences for Marxism of submitting it to one or the other influence. While sharing Althusser's broad interpretative framework according to which Hegelianism constitutes an idealism of the Subject, thus implying both transcendent causality and teleological schemata operating at various scales, Macherey also argues that Hegel and Spinoza at the same time shared common positions, and that Hegel was also aware of their philosophical proximity. Precisely for this reason Macherey argues, again consistent with Althusser's conception of philosophical antagonism, Hegel had to establish his own difference from Spinoza precisely through a *misreading*.

Initially, then, Macherey draws attention to what Spinoza and Hegel have in common. And the first commonality is that they share a view that thought and matter are not ultimately opposed: that there is an underlying unity: a unity *in some sense*, of ontology and epistemology. However in Macherey's account what distinguishes Spinoza from Hegel is that as attributes of substance, thought and extension are different but not opposed: '*non opposita sed diversa*'. Moreover as Read emphasizes, in Spinoza 'Thought is a property of Substance, not of a subject; in place of Hegel's transcendental subjectivism, Spinoza offers a kind of immanent objectivism.'⁵⁰³ Thus too for Spinoza, beyond all appeal to a Subject, the material universe is in itself inherently intelligible, over and beyond the *sense* that it may have for human subjects. And the absence of any vestige of such a Subject also endows Spinoza's thought with a radical anti-anthropomorphism, one which is

also accompanied by a decentring of the human subject, since human being for Spinoza, against a theological and post-theological tradition of the *exceptionality* of the human subject, a tradition which encompasses the *cogito*, the Lacanian subject (which has its locus in the split opened up by language) and also the decisionist subject of Badiou, is itself ultimately absorbed within the order of causes, albeit as a being endowed with the distinctive capacity for thought. For Spinoza thought itself is thus demystified, constituting a *power or capacity* pertaining to a given form of life. Moreover in the form of the *common notions* on which Spinoza bases knowledge, constants derived from the manifest qualities of particular things, he proposes a view of knowledge which is both inherently social (thereby avoiding the skeptical problematic arising from the postulate of mental privacy) and action-oriented, since there is a feedback loop between an increase in causal knowledge and increased autonomy, defined as freedom of action. Through this refusal of human centredness, as Holland suggests, Spinoza's 'naturalism' (I have suggested above in the Deleuze chapter that perhaps we should rethink such naturalism with reference to systems-theory, a paradigm which transcends the natural/non-natural distinction) may be '.. offering a form of anti-humanism which is perhaps more thorough-going than Althusser's.⁵⁰⁴ As such thinking human subjects, as beings endowed with the capacity for thought, we are faced with a subtle and complex causality which we may come to understand; however this is a causality which remains ultimately independent of the knowledge we may acquire of it, an excess guaranteed by the principle of perfection, although the underlying causality will be shared by events in the world and the knowledge which we form of them, in a manner which recalls the appeal to 'concatenation' in Wittgenstein's' Tractatus. And such a relationship places the human subject in a locus comparable to what Lacan describes as one of 'extimacy', involving the aporetic insistence of the real in the symbolic. Such 'extimacy', as I have suggested in relation to Althusser, enjoins a certain *ethics of*

alterity, an ethics which invites us to move beyond our own subjectivity and assume a wider and perhaps also less personal perspective, the cultivation of a *counter-subjective* viewpoint. With obvious reference to the displacement which Spinoza enjoins us to make from *imaginatio* to *ratio*, a displacement which integrates ontology, epistemology and ethics, Read comments that '... for Spinoza, it depends on humans [sic] overcoming the subjective limitations of the first kind of knowledge through critical reflection, thereby enabling a second kind of knowledge to approximate more closely the 'objective' thought inherent in Substance itself'.⁵⁰⁵ Now in connection with Lacan's 'extimacy', and in connection too with his conception of desire as a lack-of-being, an impossible yearning for a debarred jouissance, what Spinoza's displaced subject presents (a subject which, as an effect of displacement, may also be said to be strictly non-foundational) is the possibility of a definition of the human subject both in terms of *epistemic deficiency* and of a corresponding *deficiency in power of action* rather than an ontological lack, with the provision that such deficiency is *corrigible* in Spinoza, and access to adequate knowledge (knowledge of things by their causes) carries the pay-off of an enhancement in power and therefore in autonomy.

Another commonality between Hegel and Spinoza is the prominence given to desire, and we have seen how Butler places Lacan within a line of descent from Kojève, and from what I have termed ' the uncoupled negative'. But we should remember that for Spinoza just as for Hegel and for Lacan, desire is definitive of human being. As we have seen, however, Deleuze and Guattari and Negri all take their distance from Lacan's desire-as-lack in the name of a *productive* theory of desire which they develop, and which Negri assimilates to an ethical posture of affirmation, consistent with a positive ontology. Such distance, however, as I have suggested elsewhere in the thesis, should perhaps be submitted to some further complication. Thus, in Anti-Oedipus⁵⁰⁶, Deleuze and Guattari refer to ' Lacan's admirable theory of desire [which] appears to us to have

two poles: one related to 'the object small a', as a desiring machine, which defines desire in terms of real production, thus going beyond both any idea of need and any idea of fantasy, and the other related to the 'great Other' [grande Autre] as a signifier, which reintroduces a notion of lack.'

Such lack, moreover, Deleuze and Guattari insist, is not ontological but *political* in that it is 'counter-produced' by the social system in which our positive desires are invested: along with excess of wealth and of commodities, capitalism counter-produces scarcity and lack. Such a complication of the relationship between Deleuzian (Spinozan ?) and Lacanian theories of desire offers rich possibilities for further research, and raises interesting questions concerning the relationship between a quasi-Kantian theory of productive desire, and a Hegelian theory of desire as uncoupled negativity as it appears and is transformed in the theories of desire in Hyppolite, Sartre and Lacan. It would also raise interesting questions concerning the structure of Lacanian theory as indicated by Deleuze and Guattari above, and also concerning the *political* implications of a theorisation of desire, and especially of its implications for a broader *theory of action*, a model of which is provided in Spinoza's account of the relationship between imagination, desire and power of action, and of what I have argued, in connection with this, is essentially a *feedback* model.

What seems apparent is that Spinoza's ontology of power, entailing a social *multiplication* of power, makes it particularly well-suited to a theorisation of desire in connection with such theory of action. Such a theory would have to provide several things. Firstly, it would have to provide an account of the relationship between desire, intentionality and outcome, therefore an account of the causality of the intentional, a complex issue within Spinoza's dual-aspect monism; secondly, it would have to provide an account of the *social multiplication* of desire and intentionality, of whether and how collective action is possible in non-random ways. And lastly, it would have to provide an account of failure and disappointment, above all of how, once metaphysical teleology has been abandoned, such failure can be philosophically and ethically absorbed. And in this context we can

see the ways in which a Lacanian theory of desire, set in motion by a split on the far side of which there remains an irrecoverable *jouissance*, must in some sense already carry within it such a sense of failure as a kind of fate.

Another direction might be provided by Žižek's remarks on the compulsive character of pleasure within consumer-capitalism, of the fact that within the contemporary social formation, in Freudian terms, and in a paradoxical reversal, desire and pleasure have taken on something very much like obedience to a super-egoic function of *command*. Such considerations, however, would have to be balanced with the complex and highly political theory advanced by Deleuze and Guattari (a theory which itself purports to be an urgent and contemporary form of political economy) concerning the social *counter-production* of lack and scarcity, as mentioned above, a political rather than an ontological thesis.

Returning to Hegel's relationship to Spinoza once more, Read briefly summarises Macherey's argument as follows: ' Hegel's defensive misreading of Spinoza thus takes on ' the value of a symptom', in that it constructs ' Spinoza' as deficient because Hegel's own teleological-subjective-idealist premises prevent him from seeing his precursor's non-finalistic, anti-subjective materialism.⁵⁰⁷ There is now growing evidence of Marx's own interest in Spinoza⁵⁰⁸, which permits Read to make the interesting counterfactual suggestion, *contra* Hegel, that ' Spinoza represents not a moment that could be simply cancelled-retained-surpassed (*aufgehoben*) by the march of philosophical progress, but a *road not taken*'; and recalling Žižek's remarks cited elsewhere concerning the virtuality of the past, we might add here: but a road now being taken through what I have argued is a reading of Marx *with Spinoza* undertaken by several of the thinkers we have considered in this thesis. And concerning the notorious strategy taken by Marx of the materialist *inversion* of subjective idealism (itself, surely, a figure of thought which belongs above all to the

Baroque), Read comments that such a 'materialism' .. nonetheless retains both the transcendental subjectivism and the teleologism: classes act as transcendental subjects in the historical dialectic of class struggle'.⁵⁰⁹ Macherey critically interrogates such a conception of 'historical dialectic', and opens up the question, as do Althusser and Negri, of how this conception of historical dialectic would emerge from an *immanent* re-interpretation, one which, analogous to Occam's razor, cuts off all appeal to deferred being and to impending synthesis. Both Althusser and Negri have suggested the kind of vocabulary in which such a re-interpretation might be delivered: one which treats the social as a field of forces, and also re-interprets 'contradiction' as 'antagonism'. And here we can perhaps situate the ultimate significance of the turn to Spinoza in leftist philosophical-political thought which this thesis has traced: as we have seen in particular in the readings of Balibar, Deleuze and Negri, Spinoza offers us *an explicit ontology of power* with which we may re-interpret the social field. However unlike other similarly immanent perspectives such as that of Hobbes, Spinoza's ontology, uniquely, brings with it a principle of sociality through the doctrine of the *combination* of powers. For this reason, Spinoza's ontology offers, in the place of the prospect of a war of all against all, perhaps an alternative prospect of a war of many against some. As such, the ontology also offers a prospect for the future, but one which places the difficult demand upon us to *dislocate*, to decide *against* the imaginary, which is today perhaps both more and less difficult than it was for Spinoza: Spinoza had to take a gamble, recalling Pascal, against the promise of personal immortality; we merely have take a gamble against the capacity of capitalism to carry all of us, all beings, over into a sustainable future; but *this* dislocation, as both Lacan and Althusser have shown us, and as Deleuze and Negri also insist, requires dislocation into *a different kind of subjectivity*, and perhaps also a different relationship to desire. And as Jameson has commented in connection with the disaster-movie genre, it may be easier today, at least less troublesome, to contemplate Armageddon than to contemplate an alternative to capitalism. And this must surely

leave us wondering why this is so.

As Read also comments above, the 'materialist inversion' of Hegel produced a new version of the metaphysical *Subject*: that of a *teleological* definition of class, one which implies, strictly speaking, that the class, this particular social subject, has in a sense always been there, involving a logical-temporal confusion in which the past, the thinkable past, is always reinvested with its own pre-history, its own presupposition. However as Balibar has commented, 'The analysis of primitive accumulation thus brings us into the presence of the radical absence of memory which characterizes history.'⁵¹⁰ This has major implications for a Marxist theory of class and of social subject. Such implications, as we have seen elsewhere in this thesis, are profoundly implicated with Althusser's thought on the significance of the theorisation and the positioning of *primitive accumulation* within Capital, a significance which suggests an interesting possibility: that of a possible (virtual?) theoretical and political re-convergence between the later Althusser and Italian operaist Marxist thinkers such as Tronti, Bologna and Negri.

Primitive Accumulation

Althusser comments on the peculiar placing of Marx's account of primitive accumulation within Capital: towards the end of a long sequence in which capital is analysed as a synchronic, structural whole, commencing with the nature of commodities and of value. Yet if we recall the interpretation of Althusser's later work as constituting a concern with *conjuncture*, with the ontological conditions governing the *genesis* of structure, then what Althusser argues is a formal reversal in Capital may also characterize the evolution of his own thought: an evolution from the synchrony of structure towards the diachrony of its inception. As we have seen too, as Althusser presents it, the 'moment' of primitive accumulation constitutes one in which the capitalist mode of production is formed by a singular historical conjuncture, an *encounter* of the owners of money and

those who have only their labour-power to sell. Such a moment, however, takes place under a determinate set of conditions: the enclosure of common land, the break-up of hierarchical feudal relations tying peasant labourers to the land, the passing of draconian laws against vagabondage and so on. However the encounter itself remains contingent: as Deleuze and Guattari also argue, 'The encounter might not have taken place, with the free workers [Marx qualifies this freedom as that of being *vogelfrei*, as free as birds since they are without property, and living on air] and the money-capital existing 'virtually' side by side.'⁵¹¹ And such contingency is a strict consequence of the abandoning of teleology, requiring us to think in terms of *the immanent logic of the fact to be accomplished* rather than in terms of the retroactive logic of the accomplished fact. This focus on primitive accumulation, common to Althusser, to Deleuze and Guattari, and to Italian operaist Marxism, opens up possibilities for new readings of Marx in several directions.

Firstly, it forces on us a new *immanent* understanding of history, and therefore forces us to think a history without teleological guarantees, 'a process without a subject', as Althusser famously characterised it, therefore a history which cannot be understood in terms of fixed laws but instead in terms of a complex, *tendential* causality, and as Althusser and Balibar have argued, on the study of singular historical cases. The focus on primitive accumulation also opens up a renewed questioning of the role and function of the state within capitalism. And once again it is Spinoza who opens up the perspective of an immanent understanding of the state and of its power, a *critical* understanding which refuses its presupposed transcendence. Here, Balibar's detailed readings of the TTP and TP, and Negri's theory of constituent and constituted power which he derives from Spinoza's *potentia* and *potestas* reveal the extent to which such an immanent perspective shifts the onus onto state-theorists to provide justification for such massive concentrations of political

power. At the same time too Althusser, adopting such an immanent perspective, and clearly influenced by Spinoza, invites us to reconsider the process by which sheer power is transformed into consensual *juridical force*, a force which requires the production of passivised juridical subjects. Through Montesquieu and Machiavelli, Althusser draws an analogy with surplus value when he speaks of the *surplus of power* constituted by the state, and with reference to Machiavelli, suggests that it may be fruitful to view the state and its institutions as themselves arising from a process very like that of primitive accumulation itself, involving in this case an accumulation of territory, wealth, men-under-arms, political alliances and so on. Thus, in his work on Machiavelli, Althusser lays out what we might term the *ontological presuppositions* of the state, and in proposing, following Montesquieu, that we view the state as in fact constituted by a *surplus of power*, he is in fact proposing an alternative to the entire contractualist tradition which enshrines in the mythical moment of the surrender of powers, a version of democracy which extends up to the present, since representational democracy may be said both to periodically ritualise such a surrender, and also to organise a static distribution of power and of powerlessness.

Neo-liberalism to the contrary, the focus on primitive accumulation thus reminds us of the profound connections which have always existed between capitalism and the state, and invites us to consider too, beyond Hegel in whom the state becomes identified with a redeemed civil society, what conception of the state and of its surplus of power we are left with once its assumed transcendence has been ontologically invalidated: that is, once it has been submitted to the radical critique imposed by Spinozan immanence. As Marx writes, 'The rising bourgeoisie needs the power of the state, and uses it to regulate wages i.e. to force them [industrialized workers] into the limits suitable for making a profit, to lengthen the working-day, and to keep the worker himself as his normal level of dependence.'⁵¹² The focus on primitive accumulation thus opens up new critical perspectives on the conception of the state and its relation to capital, and also of its

monopolization of force. Such a focus also invites us to rethink within Marxism the entire conception of a 'mode of production' in relation to the assumed transcendence of the state. And here too, once more, we find a convergence between Althusser and *operaist* Marxism in its refusal to separate production from *reproduction*, thus from aspects of institutional power, of law and education and ideology, from the structuring of subjectivity, and from an entire ensemble of pervasive power-relations. In connection with this, Foucault suggests that there is a nascent *technology of power* in Marx: 'One can find between the lines of Capital an analysis, or at least the sketch of an analysis, which would be the history of the technology of power, such as it was exercised in the workshops and factories.'⁵¹³ Such a technology of power, moreover, does not simply appear with primitive accumulation to vanish once more, but comes to pervade the workplace as a form of an increasingly normalized 'disciplinary regime.' As Read summarises it, '... it is possible to glimpse in Marx's theory of primitive accumulation a 'non-economistic' account of the mode of production in which the mode of production does not simply designate a particular economic relation which has its linear effects on other social relations, but rather is the dense point of articulation of power-relations.'⁵¹⁴ And if we thus refuse to separate production from reproduction in the conception of a mode-of-production, thereby giving prominence to an ensemble of relations of power/force within the social field, we can then begin to see once again Spinoza's crucial contemporary political relevance.

Lastly, the rethinking of primitive accumulation, and the accompanying ontology of the genesis of structure, reminds us that if the encounter of the elements which came to form capitalist structure was historically contingent, then so too is their structural continuation, their *conatus*. As we have seen previously in connection with Deleuze and Guattari, and with Mandarini, the concept of *assemblage*, combined with the doctrine of the externality of relations, imbues a given formation

with a certain centrifugal tendency towards separation, therefore a tendency too towards crisis, a tendency which is as much *ontological*, and therefore structural, as it is economic. As Read succinctly puts it, and as Mandarini also suggests in his assemblage theory of capital, ‘.. because the different elements of a mode of production – the social, technological and political conditions - have independent histories and relations.. this independence threatens any mode of production with its dissolution or transformation.’ Thus, the focus on primitive accumulation in Althusser, in Deleuze and Guattari, and in Italian *operaist* Marxism implies too that ‘ The encounter is not only the contingency of the origin but also the uncertainty of the future’.⁵¹⁵ As such, the emphasis on the contingency of the encounter at the origin of capital also brings with it a potential for change and transformation through the very ontological independence of the elements which have combined in its structure.

The last of the commonalities of which Macherey reminds us is that Spinoza and Hegel were both *thinkers of totality*, in Hegel the totality of an absolute-which-becomes, implying, therefore, a finalism in the destination of a Subject which will become self-consistent. In Spinoza, however, as Althusser above all has demonstrated, there is instead a thinking of totality as an *immanent causal field*, one that lends itself particularly to a thinking of social wholes as fields of forces, a dynamic, shifting weave of coalescent and antagonistic power-relations. In his conception of structural causality and of a ‘structured whole in dominance’, Althusser effectively extended Spinoza's ontology towards an ontology of social structure, a structure which is also subject to *conatus*.

This finally takes us on to what will close this thesis: a critical summary of the conception of the main theoretical positions developed within Italian *operaist and autonomist* Marxism to which I have alluded throughout, and which I will now try to relate to Spinoza and to the various readings of Spinoza we have considered. This will also involve a necessarily brief appraisal of Thoburn's

account of Deleuze's relationship to Marx, since it is this which provides the clearest bridge between the readings of Spinoza we have considered and the Italian *operaist* tradition. I shall also then try to draw out the consequences of these convergences in relation both to state-theory and to what Lapavistas (2008) argues constitutes a major contemporary mutation within capitalism: that of what he terms 'financialised' capitalism. This in turn will allow me to end with a claim concerning Spinoza's peculiarly contemporary philosophical-political relevance.

Class Composition and Multitude

Any consideration of the influence of Spinoza and his interpreters on historically recent Italian political thought, and of the new readings of Marx which it has produced, must take into account the events which thinkers such as Althusser, Balibar and Deleuze shared as contemporaries with *operaist* thinkers such as Tronti, Bologna and Negri. Both groups faced comparable political exigencies in the form of their relationship to the PCF on the one hand, and to the PCI on the other, and both were similarly involved in a critical engagement with Gramscian appeals to a politics of hegemony, based upon the presupposition of an autonomous civil society. Moreover there were also common political and intellectual networks which connected both groups of thinkers. At the same time I would hesitate to argue for any formative influence of the new readings of Spinoza then being produced by French thinkers such as Althusser and Deleuze on the new readings of Marx which *operaist* thinkers were beginning to produce in the nineteen-sixties. Rather, I would approach the question of such influence from the opposite direction. I therefore take the view that the new readings of Marx being developed by the *operaist* thinkers grouped initially around *Quaderni Rossi*, and especially in connection with the Grundrisse , are more likely to have

developed independently of such influence, and in response to the exigencies of their own complex and politically turbulent political situation. Once such theories had been developed, however, and once the new readings of Spinoza then began to circulate more widely throughout the nineteen seventies, there is no doubt that there was then a resonance, a resonance which has been mutually enriching, and which has led on to the consideration of *multitude* as a class category among thinkers descended from the *operaist* tradition, as a means of renewing and enriching the concept of class-subject. Such resonance, moreover, continues up to the present, and to the conception of a *biopolitical subject* with which some Italian thinkers such as Negri and Lazzarotto have more recently been working. I would argue here that the Spinozan concept of *multitude* which has gained such prominence over the past several decades has at times been misinterpreted as if it were being advanced as an alternative to the Marxist category of *proletariat*, and would argue instead that the concept constitutes *a means of immanently rethinking the category of proletariat*, that is, within *the logic of the fact to be accomplished*. This will perhaps become clearer if we try to relate the concept of *multitude* to the *operaist* conception of *class composition*.

With reference to this conception, Moulier writes that 'class is a quality linked to dynamics and a field of force', or as Thoburn expands it, it is 'the effect of a more machinic co-functioning and variation of social, economic, technical, political and cultural processes',⁵¹⁶ employing the term 'machinic' as we have seen elsewhere, to designate the emergent, combinatorial effects of a play of differential elements. As we can see, therefore, as opposed to the teleological conception of class-subject critically discussed in the Althusser chapter, a conception which is thought *together with its presuppositions* in the logic of the accomplished fact, and which is also given in its essentialist and finalistic entirety, the alternative conception of class-composition is both *immanent* and *emergent*, signifying not a self-consistent social bloc, but a differential, combinatorial process. As such, it conforms to what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the *molecular* as distinct from the

molar, bringing with it what they also characterize as an immanent 'minor' politics, as opposed to the 'major' politics associated with identities assumed to be already-there, already in place rather than in process. Such a conception of class-composition, moreover, is closely tied to a further *operaist* theoretical position: *the reversal of perspective* thesis according to which each stage of the technical and organizational development of the structure of capitalist work will be met by a new class-composition accompanied by its own organisational and praxiological forms: skilled-worker, mass-worker, socialized worker, knowledge-worker and so on, related to changes in the technical nature of work and especially to workers' relationship to machines and to technology. Moreover within the theory of class-composition, as Thoburn puts it, '.. struggle is a primary, inventive force in any arrangement, and revolutionary force is gauged by the degree to which capital has trouble reconfiguring around working-class composition.'⁵¹⁷ As such, class-composition endows labour with a creative force and power of initiative which it is denied as the passive, dialectical product of capital, and which places it in a position of actively destructuring capital and also of potentially disturbing its valorization process.

A third central concept is that of the *social factory*. This concept was first elaborated by Mario Tronti around the same time as Althusser and Balibar were working on Reading Capital, appearing in an edition of Quaderni Rossi⁵¹⁸ in 1962. In this article Tronti describes a scenario in which '.. the whole society becomes an articulation of production [-consumption]', and in which, in a later formulation, '.. capital raises itself to a general social power'⁵¹⁹, exhibiting a voracious capacity to absorb and subsume all of social space. Here, we should note two crucial implications: firstly that this runs counter to Gramscian strategic claims concerning the relative autonomy of 'civil society' from capital; secondly, and as a strict consequence of this, that the entire social field becomes pervaded by capitalist relations, that capitalism, if we accept Marx's and *operaist* claims

concerning real subsumption, is an assemblage which itself aspires towards totalisation. Thoburn cites Bologna here to describe a ‘.. process of composition of capitalist society as a unified whole [which].. no longer tolerates the existence of a political terrain which is even formally independent of the network of [capitalist] social relations.’⁵²⁰ Such a position, as Thoburn points out, ran directly counter to the ‘politics of hegemony’ then being advanced by the PCI under a certain interpretation of Gramsci, a politics which precisely assumed the relative independence of a ‘civil society’ and of a correlated social subject. I shall here risk quoting the accompanying analysis of these claims at some length, since it is crucial to the understanding of the contemporary relevance of the ‘social factory’ thesis. Thoburn summarises Tronti’s argument as follows:

Capital’s process of socialization’ becomes ‘the specific material base upon which [the process of development of capitalism] is founded’ (Tronti 1973 : 98; emphasis added). Though analysis at the level of individual moments may show the breakdown of one firm, or the composition of the exchange-value of one commodity, at the level of social capital we see a continuity of circulation ... where social capital operates like ‘ a ramified factory system’. This process is only possible, of course, insofar as tendencies towards competition are matched with a collective ownership, and hence both Panzieri (1976) and Tronti (1973) stress the importance of Marx’s understanding of *the socialization of ownership of capital ... through share-holding and credit ..* [emphasis mine] such that profit will be a division of total social surplus value (not the value the individual firm extracts ..’⁵²¹

What is particularly significant in the *operaist* conception of class-subject is that it is thought strictly within *the logic of the fact to be accomplished*: it is a compositional subject in process, and one that is *immanent to capital*, forming within what Deleuze and Thoburn term its ‘cramped space, a space which it must attempt to open out antagonistically and expand towards political autonomy. Thus, it does not possess some pre-constituted ‘molar’ identity but is instead a *molecular subject in process*. This subject of class-composition, therefore, shares with the interpretations of *multitude* which we have seen in Balibar and in Negri, the characteristic of constituting a dynamic, relational nexus, one that is in open-ended, relational evolution. And

from such a nexus, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, ' the people is missing' , just as it is missing in Spinoza's denial of the full transfer of power required by social contract theory and by the representational political logic which it subtends, a denial which leaves the *multitude* as excessive yet self-empowering remainder.

Concerning the social-factory thesis, I would argue that this attention to a massified, quasi-social dimension of capitalist development, constitutes a major threshold in Marxist analysis, one that, as the Tronti quote argues, is linked to a certain socialization of capital in the form of share-ownership and access to credit. As such it may help us to begin to make sense above all of the current state of *financialised* capitalism, as analysed more recently by those such as Lapavistas (2008) referred to elsewhere. Such quasi-socialised ownership of capital in the form of shareholding and credit can perhaps be clarified with reference to Deleuze's and Guattari's claims concerning machinic surplus value. As Thoburn (2003) ⁵²² argues, in its widest sense the concept of *machinic surplus value* is closely related to the theory of the *social factory*, which in turn derives, as we have seen, from *operaist* readings of Marx's concept of *real subsumption* developed in the Grundrisse. Here, the 'Fragment on Machines' takes on particular prominence, in which Marx speculates on a stage of capitalist development in which a fully dispersed and socially absorbed technology comes to constitute ' .. an automatic system of machinery, set in motion by .. a moving power that moves by itself, this automaton consisting of numerous mechanical and intellectual organs, so that the workers themselves are cast merely as its conscious linkages.' ⁵²³ This concept of socially disseminated technological process, especially one which serves an accelerated cybernetic flow, can therefore supplement Deleuze's and Guattari's concept of the *machinic*. At the same time, however, as Thoburn is keen to point out, this is only one interpretation of Marx's comment in the ' Fragment on Machines', which he terms Interpretation 'A'. Interpretation 'B' points instead towards a dimension of the increased *social dissemination* of capitalist relations, one in which ' ..

general intellect [the ensemble of social and communicational capacities, together with practical-technical skills, together with epistemic accumulation] and the practices of the *social individual* themselves come to be valorized as work – as forces immanent to a social-machinic system.’ (Thoburn, DMP, 84). Thus, as Thoburn argues, ‘ ..a whole series of capacities and knowledges ..[become]..productive and exploitable’(Thoburn, DMP, 84).

In the Deleuze chapter above, we have discussed Deleuze's and Guattari's concept of *abstract machines*, in which discussion they were critically compared to Foucault's concept of *dispositifs*, generalized schemata of power-distribution such as the ‘panopticon’, which Foucault presented as the schema of power-knowledge systems within disciplinary societies. We also critically assessed their theory of *assemblages*, which I then argued shows clear lines of descent from ontological principles deriving from Spinoza, and I suggested there a particular contemporary exemplification of such in the form of the system of informatised financialisation. Moreover, as we have seen, Mandarini argues that such assemblages may be generalized into a more general theory of capital itself, in which the capitalist formation may be viewed as consisting in *disparate, composite and ultimately non-totalisable planes*, each with a centrifugal tendency towards its own relative autonomy, an autonomy that becomes apparent during times of *structural crisis*. This is of particular relevance in relation to the character of the current, post-Lehman's crisis, and of what appears to be an emerging relative autonomy of finance from productive capital, a relative autonomy which Lapavistas (2008)⁵²⁴ attributes in part to the ability of businesses to raise capital on open markets, and in part to a blurring of the functions of productive and finance capital, with productive corporations increasingly diversifying into financial activities, as exemplified by Enron.

Thoburn draws these various themes together in his account of the relationship he argues for between Deleuze (and Guattari) and Marx. There, he argues that Deleuze's and Guattari's joint

works effectively constitute a theory of the '*capitalist socius*': the lived ensemble of capitalism, the nexus of its relations, and that such a theory combines '... an exploration of the capitalist abstract machine, axiomatics, machinic surplus value and post-disciplinary control.' The latter term of 'post-disciplinary control' refers to what both Foucault and Deleuze regard as a contemporary configuration of power-knowledge, a contemporary *dispositif* which has come to replace that of the disciplinary society of the panopticon, in which, as Massumi⁵²⁵ characterizes it, there is a pervasive 'release' of discipline across the entire social body resulting in a voracious movement of enclosure which is intolerant of spaces which are outside of capital-relations, corresponding to what Marx described as a stage of 'real subsumption'. At the same time, however, Deleuze views such a distribution of power-knowledge as pertaining to the post-war capitalist formation, one governed for Deleuze and Guattari not by the paradigm of the factory, as it was for the Italian *operaists*, but by that of *business*, a totalizing 'social business', or pervasive *enterprise paradigm*, as Thoburn suggests. Such an *enterprise dispositif*, in Thoburn's words constitutes '... a form of control that arises with the collapse of distinct enclosure [such as the factories, barracks, hospitals and schools of Foucault's disciplinary society, although clearly such institutions continue to exist, especially as one moves away from the capitalist heartland – my comment] in ever more fluid productive space, the 'enterprise' comes to be the site of productivity across the social as a modulating capture of energies that is able to remove the stabilities of large-scale production and compose forms of identity and self-control in varying and changing fashion.'⁵²⁶ In this way Thoburn seeks to establish a connection between Deleuze and Guattari's theoretical-political writings and Foucault on the one hand (a connection that is by now quite well established, and which I have also argued for in this thesis) and a connection with the Italian *operaist* and *autonomist* traditions on the other, one which is much less familiar. This appeal to the figures of 'dispositifs' and 'abstract machines' thus constitutes an attempt to theorise the pervasive and would-be totalizing character

of the contemporary capitalist socius. As such, Deleuze and Guattari's characterization of the 'enterprise society' perhaps has greater consistency with more recent theorisations of changes in the form of the capitalist state. Thus Cerny (1997)⁵²⁷ and other theorists such as Hirsch (1998) and Palan (2000) argue for the development of a new state-form which they term ' the competition-state'. Cerny et al argue that

..in contrast to the Post-Fordist perspective..[competition-state theory] puts less emphasis on the physical forces of production per se and more on both (a) other factors of capital, especially globally mobile finance capital, and (b) the emergence of relatively autonomous, globally aware, transnationally linked elites and other groups in both the state and the private sector (including fractions of labor), who adopt the discourses and practices of globalization in order to pursue their own goals and values on a wider field of action (1997,1).

Here, competition-state theory distinguishes itself from the 'post-Fordist' account of the nation-state under conditions of globalisation deriving from Regulation Theory (itself related to structural Marxism) which argues for the perpetuation of a version of the nation-state through the geographical rootedness of real production. Moreover the competition state-form they argue for does not represent a decline of state-power:

. .this process does not lead to a decline of the state but may be seen to necessitate the actual expansion of de facto state intervention and regulation in the name of competitiveness and marketization (ibid, 1)

This describes the apparent paradox of a more authoritarian state imposing economic deregulation, a paradox which was first embodied in Pinochet's Chile, the first major neo-liberal experiment. Moreover such a state-form also carries an ideological dissemination, one which promulgates ' an emphasis on personal responsibility, an economic and political acceptance of the correctness of market outcomes and, paradoxically, an increase in pro-market regulation and intervention' (ibid, 1). Thus, Cerny et al's 'competition-state' contrasts significantly both with

the Keynesian 'command-state' analysed in Negri (1999), and with the allegedly distributed, post-nation state, 'Toyotist' reconfigurations described by Negri and Hardt in Empire (2000).

In contrast too with the post-Fordist state-form analysed by Regulation Theory, Cerny argues that the *competition-state* is accompanied by a shift in emphasis from productive capital towards finance:

..in contrast to the Post-Fordist perspective, it [competition-state theory] puts less emphasis on the physical forces of production per se and more on both (a) other factors of capital, especially globally mobile finance capital, and (b) the emergence of relatively autonomous, globally aware, transnationally linked elites and other groups in both the state and the private sector (including fractions of labor), who adopt the discourses and practices of globalization in order to pursue their own goals and values on a wider field of action .

Lapavitsas suggests that such a shift in emphasis in fact constitutes a major mutation in contemporary capitalism, a centrifugality within its assemblage, leading to the relative autonomy of finance from productive capital:

Banking and finance have been transformed during the last three decades. Banks have turned their attention to individuals while becoming more distant from industrial and commercial capital. Meanwhile, open financial markets have expanded, with the participation of vast non-bank financial intermediaries: pension funds, money funds, hedge funds, equity funds, and so on. For banks this has meant opportunities for financial market mediation, that is, for facilitating transactions and drawing fees. This too is a characteristic feature of financialisation, and related to direct exploitation (2008, 3)

And such 'direct exploitation' refers to '..the increasing penetration of formal finance into the transactions of ordinary life: housing, pensions, insurance, consumption, and so on' in a broad strategy (*dispositif?*) which constitutes the privatisation of social reproduction itself.

As such, 'direct exploitation' constitutes a form of capitalist value-extraction which has developed over the past several decades and which is both additional and alternative to classical Marxist accounts of the extraction of surplus-value from labour. It also provides a concrete mechanism

by which 'real subsumption' is achieved: the potential penetration of capital-relations into all areas of life. In addition too, the massification of credit which Lapavitsas describes also constitutes a form of social control, since those under a credit or mortgage burden will have good reason for hanging on to their jobs, regardless of real wages and working-conditions. Thus Harvey, reminding us that production requires consumption, and that wage-repression of the sort that characterised the 'jobless recovery' of the 1980s in turn leads on to a demand-problem, comments that '... the gap between what labour was earning and what it could spend was covered by the rise of the credit-card industry and increasing indebtedness' (2010, 17)⁵²⁸. Thus what Lapavitsas terms 'direct exploitation' takes on the same character of power-relationship which *operaismo* attributed to the wage-relation itself. Here too, arguably, in this supplementation of the wage by finance, we have what essentially constitutes a new, two-tier system of the wage-relation in which the first layer, the wage itself, provides access to the second layer of the credit-supplement, but with employer and bank sharing complementary contractual claims on the worker-debtor's time and goods. Moreover just as Cerny describes above an ideological dissemination appropriate to the 'competition-state', so does Lapavitsas describe a dissemination appropriate to financialisation:

Financialisation, finally, has allowed the ethics, morality and mindset of finance to penetrate into the deepest recesses of social and individual life. Social values have been affected by the outlook of the financier (calculating, distant from production, always looking for the main chance, constantly worried about liquidity) as well as the rentier. Waves of greed have been released by the transformation of housing and pensions into 'investments', dragging individuals into financial bubbles. When these burst, the inherent callousness of finance comes to the fore (2008, 4).

At the same time, however Lapavitsas rejects any ready assimilation of financialisation and its implicit direct exploitation to the figure of the classical *rentier* as analysed by Marx. Like Tronti (cf. p. 289 above), he draws attention to the source of such finance within personal incomes, albeit under the pressures of the overall strategy of the privatization of the costs of social maintenance

and reproduction:

The limited relevance of the rentier as owner of loanable capital and at loggerheads with the industrial capitalist is even more apparent in relation to institutional investors. Pension funds, insurance companies, investment funds, and so on, collect idle money leaked from the personal income of broad layers of people, not from a small group of 'moneyed' rentiers. These intermediaries engage in financial investment in order to generate returns for those who ultimately own the funds, thereby creating scope for direct exploitation (2008, 30).

The *operaists'* social factory thesis that all areas of social life had become functional to capital was also accompanied by a critique of classical Marxist theories of surplus-value. Thus, for example, Panzieri challenges the ultimate quantifiability of the individual sale of labour-power (as does Negri extensively elsewhere), and argues instead, consistent with the conception of the *social factory*, that surplus value is no longer extracted atomistically but *collectively*, both through the *social* character that labour takes on within contemporary capitalist work-relations, and also, as we seen above, through the quasi-social, financialised character which capital takes on in the form of massified stock-ownership and access to credit. Here Panzieri argues that 'Co-operation in its capitalist form is .. the first and basic expression of the law of surplus value'.⁵²⁹ This is a far-reaching claim: that surplus-value, while continuing to derive from 'living labour', does so in contemporary conditions through a form of organized, pervasive socialization which is functional to capitalist valorization within and beyond the workplace. Thus, within many contemporary workplaces (many, by no means all), informatised infrastructure renders the nature of work inherently social-communicative, to the extent of imposing a *constant communicative demand* on workforces, along with an equally constant access to information-flows of news, consumer-advertising, and of updates on the valorization process itself in the form of data on currency and stock-movements, usually integrated with news programmes.. Evidence of the importance of this *social* and *communicative* character of work, one which in *operaist* terms

constitutes a new class-composition, should be apparent to anyone who has been employed in any of a wide range of work-environments over the past several decades, in which training-regimes have inculcated the value of 'teamwork', and of 'communication skills' to the point where these have all but collapsed into cliché.

Expanding on Panzieri's argument here concerning the socialized character of work Thoburn comments in an important footnote, ' This is the directly 'capitalist' process where the super-adequate power of collective labour is manifested after the sale of individual labour at its necessary price (cf. Marx 1976: 451).'⁵³⁰ And by extension here, it is arguable that the living and creative capacity of labour-power so emphasized in the Grundrisse can perhaps be indentified precisely with this emergent social dimension.

The *social factory* thesis, then, argued that all areas of social life had become functional to capital, thereby placing in question the assumption of an autonomous civil society argued for by Gramsci and by the PCI in particular. Formulated in the 1970s, in an attempt to provide the theoretical justification for an expansion of factory-based struggle into the wider society, the theory has proved to be remarkably prescient in relation to the agenda of neo-liberalism as it has subsequently developed, and to what has come to be regarded as its voracious movement of enclosure. Moreover the thesis was accompanied by a further claim: that just as production could not be separated from consumption, nor could it be separated from *social reproduction*, an argument which problematized the classical Marxist distinction between productive and unproductive labour, and which led, among other things, to the 'wages for housework' campaign associated with Mariarosa dalla Costa, and beyond that, challenging the naturalized social ontology of classical liberalism, to demands for a generalised 'social wage'. The *social factory* thesis also led on to claims for a new class composition succeeding that of the mass worker, that of

the 'socialised worker' (*operaio sociale*) argued for by Negri (cf. Wright, 2002) and which, as the new readings of Spinoza began to circulate in Italy (including, of course, Negri's own), became increasingly assimilated to the more general social ontology of *multitude*. We have already seen in the Balibar chapter how such an ontology takes on expansive and communicative dimensions which gave it increasing relevance as communication technology became socially pervasive. Thus the Spinozan category of *multitude* came to provide the philosophical provenance and the social-ontological support for the conception of an expanded proletariat subsumed by society-wide capitalist relations.

The social-factory thesis, and the corresponding claims for the compositional figure of the socialized worker, however, should be approached with some caution. On the one hand the thesis provides insight into the totalizing character of the contemporary capitalist *socius*, and in naming this, it succeeds to some extent in denaturalizing it and rendering it visible. At the same time while there is no doubt that informatised infrastructure does change the character of work, rendering it necessarily social-communicative, nor that such a social-communicative dimension is now functional to capital, other forms of work-organisation, such as that of the closed factory associated with the mass-worker, of course continue to be widespread in many parts of the world, together with their typical forms of exploitation and extraction of surplus-value. Here, Negri's tendency to take the most advanced human-technical mutation as representative perhaps reveals a certain lingering vanguardism, as Thoburn suggests.

However the argument implicit within the social factory thesis for an expanded conception of proletariat, following on from the problematizing of the productive/unproductive distinction, and from the balancing of production with social reproduction, is surely a valid one, and takes account of such contemporary realities as autonomous, service, and especially precarious work, along with disvalued forms of work such as housework, and of course of the unemployed, the other side of the

capitalist wage-relation. Arguing too for an expanded conception of proletariat, Balibar argues, consistent with Badiou's ontology, that 'In reality, the concept of the proletariat is not so much that of a particular 'class', isolated from the whole of society, as of a *non-class*, the formation of which immediately precedes the dissolution of all classes' (1995, 54). In this sense too Zizek speaks at the Marxism 2009 conference of an increasing process of 'proletarianisation', and even of an 'existential proletariat' which is being systematically deprived of its biological substance: in effect, a *biopolitical* proletariat.

Consistent with such a problematizing of the production/reproduction and productive/non-productive/distinctions, *operaist* theorists went on to draw the far-reaching conclusion from this quasi-socialised character of surplus-value which they argued for that the theory itself had to be restated in non-atomistic (and perhaps even non-quantifiable terms,) as *the generalized character of the wage-relationship under capital*. Furthermore *operaismo* in particular emphasized the inalienable character of the wage as a *power-relationship*, above all against the constant background of the threat of unemployment, and I have argued above that Lapavistas' 'direct exploitation' by finance has now come to share with the wage this same character. Such a *politicization* of the wage-relationship involved the rejection of the classical Leninist position that economic and political struggle should be qualitatively distinguished, and by extension, perhaps the relation of direct exploitation by finance can be similarly politicized, such that this new relationship can of itself, potentially, produce such a transformation.

This view of surplus-value as now deriving from the *quasi-socialised* character of work, while deriving directly from the *operaist* conception of the social factory, is also consistent with Deleuze and Guattari's conception of *machinic* surplus value, defined as that of a *combinatorial surplus arising from a multiplication of the heterogeneous*. As Thoburn reminds us, 'Deleuze and Guattari

argue that the capitalist *socius* depends increasingly less on the extraction of a surplus of labour-time and quantity than on a *complex qualitative process*'⁵³¹. Such a qualitative process, over the past several decades in particular, has increasingly depended on a capture of consumerist desire, a desire which has been linked both to property acquisition (the results of the long-term deregulative project going back to the Reagan-Thatcher years of the creation of 'a property-owning democracy') and as Lapavistas has shown, to the massification of credit and to the dissemination of a neo-rentier sensibility.

As we have seen, such radical transformations of the orthodox 'quantitative' (and therefore ultimately atomized) theory of surplus-value are also connected to readings of 'The Fragment on Machines' from the Grundrisse. Thoburn traces this precise reference in Deleuze's and Guattari's text in Anti-Oedipus: ' In Anti-Oedipus, Deleuze and Guattari suggest, much like section 'A' of the Fragment, (and they reference the text at this point), that alongside 'human' surplus-value, machine-rich production sees the emergence of a 'machinic surplus-value' of constant capital.'⁵³²

So far, then, we have two elements which can enter into a definition of 'machinic surplus value'. The first is the more abstract, and more ontological, definition as *emergent product of a multiplication of the heterogeneous as such*. The second is a historically grounded definition as the extra-value arising from the socialized character of work, above all within the contemporary capitalist *socius*. Now while we should bear in mind here that these theories were principally formed in the decade of the 1970s, although subsequently modified and refined, at the same time we should also note that Deleuze and Guattari, in their call for a new Marxist theory of money which would take into account new versions of *credit-money*, were also apparently aware of an emerging *neo-financial dimension* within capital, one which would precisely draw upon the capture of desire and of the imaginary in connection with consumption and which would be supplied by the massification of credit. As such, it represents a darker and also more materialist side of their

account of desire and of imagination, a side which Badiou perhaps ignores. Such new theories, as we have seen, are now beginning to emerge in the kind of assemblage-theory explored by Mandarinini which we have considered above, and above all in the work on financialised capitalism being carried out by Lapavistas and others.

In addition to the connections which Thoburn argues for between Deleuze's and Guattari's theorization of the capitalist *socius* and the Italian theorists of *operaismo* and *autonomia*, McInerney has also speculated on a potential convergence between Tronti and Althusser⁵³³. As he states with reference to the shared political background which I have alluded to above, 'the affinities between Althusser and Tronti stand out most clearly with respect to their shared opposition to both Eurocommunism and Stalinism.' The first of these affinities concerns a common defence of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. Like Althusser, in the Strategy of Refusal, a paper cited by McInerney, Tronti takes the position that 'capitalism is constituted in the State (which represents the class-dictatorship of the capitalist class), and that this fact necessitates the party as a means of destroying the dictatorship of the capitalist class.' There, McInerney summarises Tronti as in effect arguing that it is in the *political*, not the economic, that capitalist relations are in fact constituted as *relations of power*. 'capitalism is constituted as such at the political level, by the state machine which transforms the reversible, aleatory and fluid battle between classes into a relatively stable structure of capitalist domination'⁵³⁴, and with a counter-machine of working-class organisation constituting 'the proletariat as a movement that abolishes the existing state of things'. McInerney thus characterizes Tronti's 'strategy of refusal' as one in which a political subject is constituted through a *refusal to constitute capital*, a decisional refusal to submit to its composition and valorization-process. Moreover Althusser shared with *operaist* theorists such as Tronti a major theoretical shift away from Marxist analysis of production *per se* and towards *social*

reproduction, a process in which, as McInerney argues, both Althusser and Tronti viewed the state as being constitutive. However whereas Althusser viewed ideology as being central to such reproduction (although largely leaving open the question of how such pervasive ideology could be politically short-circuited, other than through the promulgation of the 'counter-subjective' perspective of Marxist science), *operaist* theorists like Tronti in fact paid little attention to the function of ideology in reproducing capitalist relations: like Badiou's subject-of-truth, the emergent subject of refusal appears to be founded in a hazardous, and irreversible political decision. Beyond these particular convergences between Althusser and Tronti, McInerney also proposes a wider convergence which would embrace Deleuze and Foucault, much in the ways in which I have suggested in this conclusion.

The Capitalist State: from Imaginary to Real

I would now like to try to draw together this concluding discussion with specific reference to Spinoza, in order to end with a claim concerning Spinoza's distinctive contemporary philosophical-political relevance. In order to do so, we begin with the claim made by Habermas⁵³⁵ that in the attempts to solve its periodic and cumulative economic crises, capitalism would end up confronting a major legitimation crisis in the public sphere. However the effects of globalization (the later stage of a longer imperialist and also ambivalently universalizing capitalist dynamic, profoundly deterritorialising-reterritorialising in its effects), as we have seen in Cerny's analysis of the competition-state, has been (against the backdrop of the long boom and the accompanying post-war Keynesian settlement) to leave this neo-capitalist state-form peculiarly vulnerable to such crisis. As Cerny argues,

By prioritizing the promotion of international competitiveness, the state over time loses its

capacity to act, in Oakeshott's (1976) term, as a "civil association" and comes more and more to act merely as a promoter of various "enterprise associations; the " hollowing-out of the state" leads to the loss not just of its previous interventionist role, but of much of its *raison d'être* (1997, 1).

As I have argued throughout this thesis, it is a standard version of social contract theory, a 'naturalised' version mainly historically attributable to Hobbes and to Locke, which provides the ultimate philosophical-juridical framework, and the genetic myth, of capitalist parliamentary democracy, a justification too of its underlying representational political logic and of its intrinsic distribution of power and of powerlessness. However social contract, ultimately modelled as Althusser has argued on mercantilist, maritime law, assumes a principle of *quid pro quo*: it is precisely based on a principle of *exchange*, of taxes for social investment and its accompanying benefits, of visible return in the form of quality of life for the widespread sense of powerlessness which is the necessary accompaniment to the mythical surrendering of powers to a representational sovereign. Contract-theory is thus structurally connected to the axiomatic, juridical presupposition of voluntary agency in terms of which classical political economy also represents the buyers and the sellers of labour-power as equals in exchange. In this sense social contract theory may be said to constitute the *political imaginary* of the capitalist state.

At the same time, however, Althusser presents us with an alternative version of the state, one influenced by Marx, by Montesquieu, and by Machiavelli, and also by Spinoza, one which views the state, *tout court*, as constituting a surplus of power deriving from a surplus of wealth, a version which constitutes the intrusion of the real within this imaginary, one corresponding to Engels' 'body of armed men'.

And it is the interpretation and significance of primitive accumulation which in a sense provides the hinge between these specular accounts of state-power.

What seems to me to be unique in Spinoza's account of the state and of sovereign power is that it

succeeds in accounting for and in spanning both the real and the imaginary of the state, corresponding to what Balibar has argued is precisely the relation between *jus* and *lex* (Jus, Pactum, Lex in NS, 2008), with the real of *jus* alternating in specular fashion with the imaginary of *lex*, which retroactively engenders a volitional political subject structurally necessary for the surrender of power to be held to take place. In Spinoza's insistence that power is never fully alienated in the sovereign, and that the social and political field therefore remains a field of negotiable, antagonistic/co-operative force, of 'communication' to use Balibar's term, Spinoza challenges not only the surplus of power which constitutes the state, ontologically dispersing it back into the *multitude*, but implicitly also challenges the prevailing political logic of representation, which is precisely premised on the periodically ritualized alienation of power. We have seen too how for Spinoza the expansion of power, equated with freedom and range of action, thereby involving a positive doctrine of liberty, constitutes the primordial political motivation, and that correspondingly, it is powerlessness, and the sadness which accompanies it, which becomes the central problem of political life.

As we have seen, Cerny et al argue that the Keynesian nation-state has mutated, under globalizing pressures, into the 'competition-state', driven in part by the growing preponderance of finance, and that such a state-form is both withdrawing from its function as institutional embodiment of 'civil association' in the political imaginary, while at the same time enhancing its interventionist powers in the promotion of a generalised marketization, precisely the encroaching privatisation-commodification of all areas of life emphasized in the *operaists'* social factory thesis. In thus abandoning the dimension of 'civil association', this new capitalist state-form is also therefore abandoning its imaginary, a historical ideological consensus which is essential to its continuing legitimation. Here, Spinoza reminds us that contracts, up to and including the social

contract, are not immutable, and have legitimacy only so long as they continue to serve the interests of their parties, and expresses the *political* form of dissolution of contract in the *ius resistentiae*.

Lapavitsas suggests that financialisation (and direct exploitation) has arisen in response to problems of real accumulation stemming from the energy-crisis of the 1970s, partly too the result of the increase of disseminated 'shareholder interest', another instance of that ' [quasi-] socialization of capital .. through share-holding and credit' referred to by Tronti above. Thus,

Shareholder value' prompts corporations to be run with an eye constantly on the stock market, thus aiming for short-term results rather than long-term performance. More complexly, corporations during the last three decades have been encouraged to 'downsize and distribute', that is, to cut costs and distribute profits to shareholders, rather than 'retain and reinvest' earnings (2008, 26).

Harvey, meanwhile, places this new dispersion of finance within the larger framework of what he terms a 'surplus absorption problem': the driving need of excess, accumulated capital to find new forms of profitable investment, always under the pressure of the 3% annual compound growth which he presents as capital's axiomatic. Thus he writes that

Real problems of finding adequate outlets for surplus capital began to emerge after 1980.. The difficulties were in part resolved by the creation of fictitious markets where speculation in asset values could take off unchecked by an regulatory apparatus (2010, 217).

And the production of the kind of deregulation which would favour such financial speculation is of course what Cerny et al identify as one of the main priorities of the 'competition-state'. More generally, Harvey views this new functioning of finance, one that involves, as Lapavitsas argues, the relative separation of finance from productive capital, as being of major potential significance, speculating that ' There may be no effective long-term capitalist solutions (apart from reversion to fictitious capital manipulations) to this crisis of capitalism' (ibid, 217), and suggests too that we

may therefore have reached an 'inflexion-point in the history of capitalism.' Drawing all of this together, it may therefore be the case that the current crisis of capital (as we have seen, the effect of a longer term problem of accumulated surplus capital combined with a strategy of wage-repression over the past three to four decades, one whose effects have been supplemented by the massification of credit) may well therefore come to assume the form of a crisis of political legitimacy: an ideological crisis not only of the legitimacy of state-power, but of the political logic of representation itself.

The popular groundswell which has taken place recently in Spain and in Greece lends such a possibility some weight, regardless of their ultimate outcomes, which are of course unpredictable *this side of change*. While the underlying causes are clearly economic (in the case of Spain, 41% youth unemployment, draconian laws governing mortgage-debt and house-repossessions, major cuts in social investment in the unwinding of the Keynesian state which Cerny et al describe; in the case of Greece, the most dramatic instance within Europe of the application of what Naomi Klein has described as 'the shock doctrine', in which advantage is taken of disaster, natural, military or economic, to attempt to push through a rapacious neo-liberal political agenda of privatization and 'structural adjustment'), the manifestation has been profoundly political. This has been expressed as a rejection of the Spanish and Greek political systems as presently constituted and of their narrow, bi-party-rotational options, as a rejection of the state-finance-corporate nexus, and as a demand for participatory (and/or direct) democratic processes. In the case of Spain, such groundswell resulted in the spread of local popular assemblies throughout Spanish towns and cities, assemblies engaged in continuing debate on the undemocratic nature of the existing political process and on how it can be transformed, and equally on the nature of the economic crisis now facing Spain, and of how this arises from the distribution of power and of

powerlessness enacted by representationalism. What is significant here is that these are of the nature of nascent assemblies, not protests: whereas protests make demands of a sovereign power implicitly recognized as legitimately transcendent, such assemblies call that sovereign power itself into question, and in doing so begin to arrogate that power to themselves, thereby implicitly rejecting the logic of representation itself. As such, they constitute the early, faltering moments of what Negri describes as 'constituent power'. In the case of Greece, we have an even more dramatic example of such a rejection of the transcendence of state-power, and of a rupture with the political imaginary of the social contract. Greece and Spain therefore (as do Tunisia, Egypt and Syria, although in different and more historically complex ways), apart from embodying the real crisis of neo-liberalism, and the collapse of the 'social factory', perhaps also suggest that we are now approaching a certain liminal dimension of the capitalist state, a dimension within which new forms of democracy become conceivable once again.

While there is no way of predicting whether these early, complex, constituent movements will dissipate or instead gather momentum (this too will depend on the evolution of appropriate strategy, discussed below), they are valuable both as symptoms of the nature of the current deeply *political* character of capitalist crisis, and also as evidence of the widespread effects which Lapavistas' direct exploitation can produce. The early nucleus in the Plaza del Sol encampment in Madrid seemed to go on to draw in more and more varied layers of the population, perhaps reflecting the social extent of this new form of exploitation and of its consequences in crisis, just as the assembly in Syntagma Square in Athens went on to draw in more and more ostensibly disparate social layers, revealing the extent of the devastation wreaked by the neo-liberal agenda in time of crisis. Such a complex, antagonistic social subject, therefore, perhaps begins to take on some of the contours of Zizek's 'existential proletariat'.

Interestingly too, recalling Balibar's account of Spinoza's ontologically constituted political theory

as 'communicative democracy', thereby implying what I have described as a *social-cybernetic* principle, the original nucleus of this movement, as in the 'Arab spring', has emerged from online-networks, and as such has (initially at least) bypassed the essentially Keynesian institutions (politically aligned trades unions) which normally control such processes. This also raises the question, of course, of the ongoing struggle for control of the Internet, a potentially strategic instance of the contestation between a 'commons' and neo-liberal enclosure, since it is the open Internet which provides multiple channels of communication and therefore temporally accelerated feedback loops on such nucleated initiatives. We should note here that as in the model of the Leninist party, these movements also begin with a nucleus: the difference is that they are cybernetically and therefore temporally accelerated. As such they appear to present the perhaps paradoxical form of 'horizontal' rather than vertical hierarchies, one which depends upon technologically rich communication to disseminate and amplify initiatives.

Accompanying the complex issues of the contemporary definition of proletariat and the closely related question of the more complex nature of surplus-value, there is also the question of *strategy*. On the one hand there is the strategy of building up towards an ultimate seizure of state-power through the patient construction of a vanguardist party, a strategy ultimately premised on the qualitative distinction between economic and political struggle. As we have seen too, the question of the party and of Leninist strategy in general remained an ambivalent issue within *operaismo* and *autonomia*, with Tronti eventually entering the PCI, thus ultimately sharing with Althusser the view of the need for a revolutionary party, as McInerney (*ibid*) points out, following on from their shared analysis of the pervasive, *structural* character of the capitalist state.

Counter to this, and historically associated with left-libertarian positions, there is an alternative strategy of 'prefiguration', one which argues that there can be no quasi-teleological deferral

towards a future, and that the relevant strategy is therefore to create spaces which are autonomous to capital in the present, a strategy of seeking out the cracks and interstices in the 'social factory' and occupying, broadening and combining them in a movement of (Deleuzian-Guattarian) molecularisation (we should note, though, that the phrase was originally Gramsci's). Subtending these contrasting strategies, as we have seen in the Althusser chapter, there are two contrasting logics: one involving a logic of deferral towards a future but which is accompanied by a paradoxical retraction, and which Althusser has termed the 'logic of the accomplished fact, and a contrasting logic of the immanence of the future within the present in the second, corresponding to a 'logic of the fact to be accomplished', and to the temporality of *kairos* and to *Geschichte*.

While the first of these logics situates itself after what Althusser has termed 'the take', the second positions itself before such a take within a dynamic, antagonistic present. These contrasting logics raise fundamental questions concerning what we might term the *ontology and the temporality of political change*: a theory of the general character of such change, over and beyond its particular incidence, a theory which Althusser first identified in Lenin's concept of conjuncture. What I have argued for in this thesis, drawing (non-reductively) on complex-systems theory, is a theory of *emergent* change which is consistent with conjuncture, a dynamics of increasing interactive complexity driven by an increasing social dissemination of information, a dynamic which produces feedback-loops which amplify a further-from-equilibrium process. I have suggested too that such ontological modelling of social change, in which concepts such as hysteresis, emergence, feedback, supervenience and interconnectivity can become *politically* relevant categories, constitutes an area in which Marxism can begin to make inroads, in explorations which have the capacity to transform political practice.

As such, and perhaps contrary to Badiou, such a dynamics takes up in contemporary form Spinoza's concern with causality, and also with what is unknowable, and therefore *contingent-for-*

us, within such processes. Here, Engels reminds us that

We have seen that the many individual wills active in history for the most part produce results quite other than those intended – often quite the opposite: that their motives, therefore, in relation to the total result, are likewise only of secondary importance.⁵³⁶

Such a theory of change, therefore, has a consequence: that the point or *threshold* of change within the system is strictly unknowable to its immanent participants. Such a moment can be conceived of, imagined and desired, and struggled for, but emergent change itself must constitute an *ontological blind-spot* from within the system, since it would otherwise constitute a transcendent outside from which the system itself could be considered in its totality. As such, it presents the same kind of *ontological* limit as pointed to in Wittgenstein's comment in the Tractatus that we do not live to experience death, itself therefore just as likely to be a comment on the nature of change as on the nature of death. However what *can* be known is the nature of close-to and far-from equilibrium complex system-states, which can also perhaps provide us with models for the study of complex, systemic change. As such, in Badiou's terms, such an emergent threshold is clearly evental, but surely must constitute *close to the threshold*, rather than in retrospect, an event in which the Pascalian wager which also accompanies Badiou's concept of the hazardous subject perhaps takes on much clearer odds, close to which too the model of the coalescent and communicative powers of *multitude* is perhaps more relevant to the political theorization of change than that of a subject-of-truth.

Such an *ontology of change* is evident in Althusser's concern, early and late, with structure and with the contingency of encounter, just as it is evident in the figures of *rupture*, *fold* and *limen* which have woven throughout this thesis but which we have considered especially in connection with Foucault, figures which are themselves descendents of Epicurus' and Lucretius' *clinamen*. And we

can also perhaps see Badiou's highly sophisticated ontology as a response to the question, following Althusser, of *why socially pervasive structures change*. These ontological figures, however, of *rupture*, *fold* and *limen*, are at the same time condensations of the history of left-wing movements. In particular they condense the tensions which have emerged historically between a ruptural Leninist strategy of seizure of state-power referred to above, requiring the intervention of a centralizing, hierarchical party, one which accepts an instrumentalist political-ethic which separates means and ends, and as we have seen above too, a *prefigurative* strategy which has been defined as '... the embodiment, within the ongoing political practice of a movement, of those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture and human experience that are the ultimate goal.'⁵³⁷ As such, arguably, prefiguration perhaps constitutes the same kind of indistinction of the ontological and the political which for Balibar constitutes Spinoza's uniqueness. Prefiguration, therefore, can perhaps be understood as constituting *an immanent form of the political*. Such a prefigurative tradition is historically embodied in anarcho-syndicalism. Within Marxism it is also embodied by the council-communism associated with Pannekoek and Goerter, and also in the theories of the party developed by Rosa Luxembourgh which were expressed as 'a dialectic of spontaneity and organisation', one in which, 'in the middle of the fight we must learn how to fight.'⁵³⁸ , an immanent view of political action which resonates with the words of the Spanish Republican poet Antonio Machado: 'wanderer, there is no road, the road is made by walking.' What the latter political traditions have in common is an insistence on the self-active nature of the emancipatory political project and on direct or participatory democratic processes deriving ultimately from an *ontological* refusal to view the future as transcendent to the present, a refusal too, therefore, of the instrumentalist separation of means and ends. What they also had in common was criticism of the Leninist conception of the vanguardist party as essentially *representational*.

Both *operaismo* and *autonomia* were similarly (and at times ambivalently) engaged with a

critique of Leninist forms of organization and of the role of political intellectuals. As Bologna comments, ' The Italian *operaisti* aimed to be neither 'class vanguard' nor political class or 'small party', and thus experienced to the bitter end the contradictions of exercising political theory whilst simultaneously refusing traditional models of organisation.'⁵³⁹, contradictions which led Bologna to suggest, perhaps in a more pessimistic moment, that there might be a permanent contradiction between the exigencies of political organisation and of class autonomy, a contradiction, however, as we have just seen above, which Rosa Luxembourg at least refused to acknowledge.

After the recognised demise of *operaismo* and *autonomia* in the 1980s (cf. Wright 2002) their critical-theoretical innovations have had a second and profound resonance in the alter-globalisation movement (more appropriately 'movement-of-movements') one which, tracing back to Seattle, constitutes the most significant, popular upsurge in explicitly anti-capitalist forces to have arisen since 1968, and which constitutes too a major and pervasive challenge to the neo-liberal project which we have analysed above. And it is in an attempt to characterise the complexity of this 'movement-of-movements' that the Spinozan category of *multitude* has been taken up once again (not always appropriately since, as I have argued above, it is essentially a class-category, albeit one which describes an expanded conception of proletariat) along with other theoretical figures derived from *operaismo* and *autonomia* such as general intellect, social worker and immaterial labour, along too with their insistence on the *strategic* importance of developing alternative communicational networks.

The question of strategy remains an open one. Thus, as Carl Boggs comments

The dilemmas of modern prefigurative movements came from the legacy of the entire prefigurative tradition, which in contrast to Leninism and structural reformism sought to affirm the actuality of revolutionary goals. In rejecting a vanguardism, they often ignored the state and the problem of power; in stressing the prefigurative side, they downplayed the task of organization. And like the organized Marxist movements, they ultimately failed to articulate a

democratic-socialist theory of transition.' (*ibid*, online document, no page reference)

However against the theoretical, *ontological* background of the threshold of emergent change I have argued for, such a 'theory of transition', *can only* assume an immanent, prefigurative form, one which is critically attuned to the dangers of instrumentalisation, and to the separation of means and ends which this entails. Spinozan immanence has the strict consequence that one cannot map one's way towards the future-as-void. Thus it is the figure of *limen*, of the in-between state and the opening up of alternative possibilities which accompanies it, which I would argue constitutes the most relevant of the ontological-political figures of change we have considered, together with its intrinsic temporality of *kairos* and of *Geschichte*. Such a figure, however, is by no means inconsistent with the *clinamen*, or indeed with rupture itself.

Against the background of this ontology of change which I have attempted to develop in this thesis, one which has its paradoxical roots in Spinoza, the only conclusion can be that the question of strategy remains open. However beyond teleology, beyond the 'logic of *Aufhebung*', the onus must now be on state-theorists, against the historical background of Leninist totalitarian failure, to provide an *immanent* justification for the centralizing party-form. Moreover within the immense, communicative expanse of the alter-globalisation movement, such arguments will have to be deeply convincing, since what they will have to convince the widely varied constituent movements of, is the *right* of the Leninist form to political hegemony; to convince, in other words, a *multitude* to become, in some sense, a *people*. There is, however, a purely *temporal* reservation here. Against the background of intensifying economic, social and environmental crisis, there may simply be not enough world and time for such a labour of patience to produce its deferred effects.

At the same time I would also argue that such strategies are by no means necessarily exclusive. As Rosa Luxembourgeois theory of the 'the dialectic of spontaneity and organisation' argues, they

can also be interpreted as mutually interrogating and enriching. The need to produce such syncretistic organizational form, however, is a pressing one since, as Boggs also argues, 'The instability and vulnerability of dual power necessitates rapid movement toward a broad system of nationwide revolutionary authority; without this, as history shows, local structures are unable to translate popular energies into a sustained movement that is both prefigurative and politically effective.' (*ibid*).

The point I wish to end on is this: that if the capitalist state, under pressure of capitalism's long-term and accumulated contradictions, has effectively abandoned its historically founded political imaginary, that of the social-contractual state, unwinding this through what Cerny et al have characterized as the 'competition-state', and if it therefore reverts, under pressure of the current crisis (one which Harvey has suggested may constitute a historical 'inflexion-point' for capital) to a more or less visible social field of forces, then Spinoza, marginalized for so long, for reasons which Althusser, Balibar and Negri all argue are essentially ontological-political, provides an invaluable resource not only for a critique of existing political institutions and their fading social-contractual imaginary, but also for this field of forces which the 'competition-state' has exposed. Beyond this *pars destruens*, however, Spinoza's political ontology also opens up towards the creative imagination of what democracy may come to mean and may *in fact* be capable of becoming.

More generally if the real, ontological source of the presumed transcendence of political power in the state is ultimately the fear of death, fear of an ultimate powerlessness which is sutured to the fantasy of the all-powerful, a fear which theology has historically exploited precisely in the interests of constituted power, then Spinoza is existential testimony to the fact that such fear can be overcome. And if it can, as has been demonstrated throughout the events of the Arab spring, then

the true goal of politics in the present, of what politics is capable of becoming, is that of the dissemination of power, of communication, and of an immense, transindividual potential. As such politics, in the authentic form of *the political*, following Spinoza, is therefore profoundly connected to the ethical enigma of human happiness. It is perhaps in this sense that we can make sense in the present of Spinoza's comment that ' A free man thinks of death least of all things, and his wisdom is a meditation of life, not of death'⁵⁴⁰, a wisdom that perhaps emerges at the threshold of change, a wisdom too, therefore, which is also inextricable from political desire and from the *positive* power of the political imagination.

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