
Expression, Immanence and Constructivism: 'Spinozism' and Gilles Deleuze

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to explicate the relationship between Spinozist expressionism and philosophical constructivism in Deleuze's work through the concept of immanent causality. Deleuze finds in Spinoza a philosophy of immanent causality used to solve the problem of the relation between substance, attribute and mode as an expression of substance. But, when he proceeds to take up this notion of immanent causality found in Spinoza in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze instead inverts it into a modal one such that the identity of substance may be said only of the difference of the modes. Complicating this further, Deleuze and Guattari claim in *A Thousand Plateaus* that substance, attribute, and mode are each, themselves, multiplicities. *What is Philosophy?* takes up immanent causality once again, this time through a constructivist lens aimed at resolving the question of the relation between philosophical multiplicities: 'plane,' 'persona,' and 'concept.' By following the different formulations of immanent causality in these works this essay hopes to discover the relationship between Spinozist expressionism and philosophical constructivism in Deleuze's work.

Keywords: expression, immanence, constructivism, Spinoza, Deleuze, philosophy, Badiou

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

I. Introduction

Deleuze's notion of Spinozism and his invocation of the concept of immanence have been subjected to considerable critical attention in recent years (Agamben 1999; Hardt and Negri 2000; Smith 2001; Gillespie 2001; Badiou 2004; Beistegui 2005). But this attention makes apparent several ambiguities in Deleuze's thought. In part this is because Deleuze's concept of Spinozism is blatantly not consistent throughout his work. From *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* to *What is Philosophy?* the concept of immanent causality, far from remaining homogenous, undergoes several modifications that render it much more internally dynamic than it was originally conceived. How are we, for instance, to understand Miguel De Beistegui's claim that immanence is the source of Deleuze's thought when the concept of immanence has been articulated quite differently in each of Deleuze's works (as substantial expression in his Spinoza books, as modal expression in *Difference and Repetition*, and as constructivism in *What is Philosophy?*)? Even Dan Smith's excellent essay on the medieval philosophy of univocal or immanent causality and its relation to Deleuze's thought ends its history early on focusing almost entirely on *Difference and Repetition* and neglecting Deleuze's later Spinozist constructivism. But more importantly how are we to take seriously Alain Badiou's poignant criticisms of Spinoza's 'closed ontology' he claims Deleuze inherits, when such a conceptual inheritance is in such obvious metamorphosis throughout Deleuze's oeuvre? (Badiou 2004: 81).

Badiou claims that Spinozism excludes the 'event' by precluding excess, chance and the subject, and opts unequivocally for a geometrically closed ontology. The 'there is' in Deleuze and Spinoza, Badiou claims, is indexed to a single name: absolutely infinite substance or life. But such a reading neglects the explicit transformations Deleuze's Spinozism makes away from such a single substance vitalism throughout his work. In particular, Deleuze and Guattari's final constructivist formulation of Spinozism bears uncanny resemblance to Badiou's own positive reading of Spinoza. In Badiou's critical reading of Spinoza the intellect is the infinite mode that includes all others in-itself and thus both secures itself as the foundation of a subjective truth procedure and establishes Substance as absolutely infinite. This self-inclusion is an illegal interruption into pure multiplicity that Badiou claims Spinoza does not want to admit, but instead 'naturalizes' as substance. Thus, insofar as the coupling function of the intellect's interruption is 'natural' or 'inevitable' it closes off all future evental interruptions. Deleuze

Expression, Immanence and Constructivism 203

however, does not require that Spinoza meta-reflectively know his own plane of substance *qua* interruption (for Deleuze a thinker cannot conceptualize their own plane as long as they are on it). Instead, Spinoza's constructivism is to have drawn up 'a plane of immanence' or substance immanent *only* to its own creative interruption (and not to a naturalized transcendent referent). Badiou's argument is further unraveled by Deleuze and Guattari's Spinozist inspired claim in *A Thousand Plateaus* that there are multiple 'planes of substance': not a typical Spinozist kind of claim. Deleuze thus reads Spinoza's monism as 'a' plane of consistency (perhaps called, 'a' consistent truth procedure in Badiou's vocabulary) not a closed ontology or representational count of the count (as in Badiou). Interestingly both Badiou and Deleuze understand Spinoza's constructivism in terms of an undecidable intervention into pure multiplicity via the reciprocal presupposition of intellect/substance/modes, that 'sets up' a certain consistency. Badiou's reservations about closure still remain crucial: the 'always already' effect of substance is the consequence of a subject's intervention, and to the degree that it is not recognized as such risks becoming the totalitarian seal of representation and closure. Deleuze and Badiou both recognise this danger and create new concepts to avoid it. But in order to really assess the relevance and strengths of Badiou's criticisms of Deleuze's Spinozism it is necessary to examine the transformations these concepts undergo throughout Deleuze's oeuvre: something Badiou fails to do. While Badiou (as well as many other scholars) has certainly contributed greatly to a better understanding Deleuze's work, none as of yet have attempted to tie Spinoza's expressionism to Deleuze and Guattari's constructivism in a way that would take into account the significant changes that occur to the concept of immanent causality throughout Deleuze's work. Through this neglect, Spinozism and immanence have been rendered inert.

In order to understand the relationship between expressionism and constructivism without assuming the homogeneity of the concept of immanence we must proceed by marking four distinct formulations of this concept in Deleuze's work. While the formulations found in Deleuze's reading of Spinoza's expressionism and Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical constructivism will naturally receive the most attention here, their relationship cannot be understood apart from the two intermediary articulations found in *Difference and Repetition* and *A Thousand Plateaus*.

(1) Deleuze's first formulation of the concept of a Spinozist immanent causality is to be found in his 1968 book *Spinoza et le problème*

204 Thomas Nail

de l'expression (translated as *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* in 1990). Here Deleuze demonstrates that Spinoza utilises the concept of 'expression' to resolve the problem of the relation between substance, attribute and mode. As opposed to eminent or analogical causality, immanent causality or 'expression' posits an equality or reciprocal presupposition of substantial self-causality within attribute and mode, such that God is said of His creatures in the same sense in which the creatures are said of God. This heretical position is what we may call Spinoza's 'substantial expression'.

(2) The second formulation is found in *Difference and Repetition* (also published in 1968). This time however, Deleuze criticizes Spinoza's substance for remaining 'independent of the modes, while the modes are dependant on substance, but as though on something other than themselves.' (Deleuze 1994a: 40) *Difference and Repetition* remedies the problem by inverting the substantial relation in a 'general categorical reversal according to which being is said of becoming, identity of that which is different, the one of the multiple' (Deleuze 1994a: 40). 'Substance must itself be said of the modes and only of the modes.' (Deleuze 1994a: 40) According to this position Spinozist immanent causality should be understood as a 'modal expression' rather than a 'substantial expression'.

(3) Deleuze's third formulation occurs in *A Thousand Plateaus*, co-authored with Félix Guattari in 1980. Here, instead of insisting merely on the inversion of substance and modal multiplicity, Deleuze and Guattari multiply substance, attribute and mode: making each a multiplicity in their own right. 'Thus each individual is an infinite multiplicity, and the whole of Nature is a multiplicity of perfectly individuated multiplicities' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 254). 'A continuum of all substances in intensity and of all intensities in substance...all BwO's pay homage to Spinoza. The BwO is the field of immanence' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 154). It is significant that Deleuze describes Spinozist substance in the plural or multiple: as 'substances'.

(4) Deleuze's final formulation of Spinozist immanence occurs in 1992 in *What is Philosophy?* also co-authored with Guattari. Just as Spinoza had used the concept of immanent causality to resolve the problem of causality between substance, attribute and mode, Deleuze and Guattari here employ it in order to resolve the problem of constructive causality within the philosophical milieu: planes of immanence, conceptual personae, and concepts. This time however, following *A Thousand Plateaus*, each term has become a multiplicity

itself. Spinoza's substance becomes one plane among others: he draws out its concepts and personae based on the presupposition of his plane. But Spinoza remains different from the others. He is the 'prince of philosophers', the one who drew up the 'best' plane of immanence because he alone begins by reciprocally presupposing his plane, persona and concepts immediately without deducing them from each other or from some other transcendent source. Each is both distinct yet immanent to the other. This new constructivist position reaffirms a version of Spinozist immanent causality while simultaneously multiplying planes of substance.

II. Spinoza and the Problem of Expression

It is with Spinoza that the problem of expression, originating in medieval philosophy according to Deleuze, is for the first time resolved through the concept of immanent causality. However, it is also with Spinoza that expression becomes most what it is: a problem, a paradox, a vertigo. Spinoza's immanent expression is both one in relation to what expresses itself, and multiple in relation to what is expressed. Causality must move in two directions at once. But how can something which has its being in itself and is not dependant on anything allow itself to be determined by that which is dependent upon it? Spinozist expression, for Deleuze, presents us instead with a triad, a third term linking each pair:

In it we must distinguish substance, attributes and essence. Substance expresses itself, attributes are expressions, and essence is expressed. The idea of expression remains unintelligible while we see only two of the terms whose relations it presents. Substance and attribute are distinct, but only insofar as each attribute expresses a certain essence. Attribute and essence are distinct but only insofar as every essence is expressed as an essence of substance. (Deleuze 1990: 27)

Substance and attribute are distinct but only insofar as they express the essence of the other. This mutual expression of God and creatures stands opposed to the necessity of a God remaining beyond His creatures and creating them by emanation or analogy.

Spinoza poses the problem of relation between substance and attribute in the first page of the *Ethics*. First, he defines substance as 'what is in itself and is conceived through itself, that is, whose concept does not require the concept of an other thing, from which it must be formed' (1994: I, D3)¹. Substance is the immanent condition thought gives itself to think itself: it is in itself and conceived through itself—a radical form

206 Thomas Nail

of immanent self-reference and positing. ‘By attribute’ Spinoza says, ‘I understand what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence’ (1994: I, D4). Attributes express the essence of substance as perceived from within the attribute of thought itself: the intellect. The intellect thus perceiving itself from within itself, as an attribute of substance, also expresses an immediate form of self-positing. But what is the relationship between substance and attribute? According to definition six, substance is absolutely infinite and consists in an infinity of attributes, which express the infinite essence of substance. But, as Descartes had reasoned, ‘if each of the attributes is really distinct as a separate thing, then for each really distinct attribute there would be a distinct substance whose essence they would express’ (Descartes [1637] 2000: 363). How is it then that each attribute does not entail a distinct thing which would then entail yet another substance? And how is it that substance can have an infinity of attributes that are distinct and yet still be indivisible (as substance)? Or as Edwin Curley frames the question, ‘How can we remain true to Spinoza’s language, which regularly speaks of substance as a complex, in which each of the attributes is an element, without suggesting that substance could somehow be decomposed into its various elements, or that some of these elements might exist apart from the others?’ (Curley 1988: 30).

The relation of the attributes to substance has always posed an enormous problem for Spinoza scholarship. Jonathan Bennett, in *A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics*, understands the difference between substance and attribute as a difference between two distinct countable things by suggesting that Spinoza has, ‘carried this too far by implying that attributes are substances’ (Bennett 1984: 64). Bennett can only draw this conclusion if he has understood ‘distinct attribute’ as a distinct thing, which necessarily entails a relationship to another ‘distinct thing’, in this case many distinct substances. But this is not the only way one can read Spinoza. Propositions eight, nine, the scholium to proposition 10, and definition six are the most important in relation to the question of substance’s essence as expressed through the attributes. It is here that Spinoza must demonstrate the possibility of a substance with infinite attributes that are both distinct and indivisible as constituting the essence of a single substance.

Although two attributes be conceived as really distinct, that is, one without the help of the other [*unum sine ope alterius*], still we cannot deduce therefrom that they constituted two entities, or two different [*diversas*] substances. For it is in the nature of substance that each of its attributes be

 Expression, Immanence and Constructivism 207

conceived through itself, since all the attributes it possesses have always been in it simultaneously, and one could not have been produced by another; but each expresses the reality or being of substance. So it is by no means absurd to ascribe more than one attribute to one substance. (1994: I, P10, Scholium)

What does this notion of ‘real distinctness’ entail that does not make them ‘two constituted entities’? There is no temporal or ontological priority of substance or attribute, neither has any existence outside the other, and yet they are still really distinct. Since ‘every substance is necessarily infinite’, (1994: I, P8) and ‘the more reality or being a thing has, the more attributes it has’, (1994: I, P9) then of course, ‘an absolutely infinite being, that is substance consisting of infinite attributes’ (1994: I, D6) must have reality. If there were several substances and one had attributes the other did not have then this other would be finite, which is absurd (1994: I, D6).

But the problem, Bennett suggests, is that the notion of a substance composed of infinitely distinct parts seems to indicate an aggregate of a kind that Spinoza clearly denies (Bennett 1984: 64). Spinoza’s says, an ‘absolutely infinite substance is indivisible... By ‘a part of substance’ nothing can be understood except a finite substance, which by (1994: I, P8) implies a plain contradiction’ (1994: I, P13, Scholium). If one attempts to think only part of being, then this implies that the whole of being is not part of this part as thought, in which case we have only parts and no whole. The difficulty of the Spinozist problem of substance and attributes is similar to the Parmenidian problem of the One and the Many. The difficulty of both lies in beginning from a principle of identity and unity to understand difference rather than showing how this ‘identity’ or unity emerges or is generated from an immanent differentiation.

In *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* however, Deleuze claims that Spinoza resolves the problem of substantial relation by employing the concept of immanent causality. As Deleuze shows, since for Spinoza neither substance nor attribute had ever been considered a discreet thing, one produced or deduced from the other, both Curley and Bennett’s positions are misguided from the outset. If substance is defined through itself as itself (self-caused) and the attributes perceived through themselves (qua intellect) as themselves the essence of substance, both simultaneously presupposing the other without any relation of direct emanative causality, how then are we to understand this a relation? While it may seem strange to Spinoza scholarship, Deleuze suggests that such a reciprocal expression of essence between substance and attribute

208 Thomas Nail

in the opening pages of the *Ethics* constitutes the rare and unique philosophical position of immanent or expressive causality. Instead of deducing substance as a discreet object of common sense and attempting to further deduce its attributes of thought and extension as aggregates or parts of this thing, Spinoza proceeds in a wholly different manner. His method relies not only on a mutual self-positing but on a distinction of two kinds taken from Descartes (according to Deleuze) and turned against him: numerical and real.

Deleuze thus recounts Spinoza's argument in the scholium to proposition eight in the following way to account for a single univocal substance with an infinity of attributes:

1) Numerical distinction requires an external cause to which it may be referred; 2) But a substance cannot be referred to an external cause, because of the contradiction implied in such a use of causal principles; 3) So two or more substances cannot be distinguished in numero, and there cannot be two substances with the same attribute (Deleuze 1990: 27). Thus if Numerical distinction is never real [or qualitative]; then conversely, real distinction is never numerical. Spinoza's argument now becomes: attributes are really distinct; but real distinction is never numerical; so there is only one substance for all attributes. (Deleuze 1990: 27)

Thus to answer the question of how substance can be both composed of an infinity of attributes and also be indivisible, we must think the attributes as indivisible qualities, in the sense that they cannot be numerically distinguished or counted; rather, they are infinite, in the sense that they express truly distinct essences. Deleuze claims, 'There is one substance per attribute from the viewpoint of quality, but one single substance for all attributes from the viewpoint of quantity' (Deleuze 1990: 31). Substance is self-caused and thus cannot be numerically divided. One way to think of this is as a figure-ground gestalt. In the case of a single image in which both a young woman and old woman can be seen in the same drawn lines, there is one image composed of two simultaneous and yet distinct images. The old and young woman's images exist as distinct attributes but not as different countable 'things' separate from a single image, which is both. Under each image, young woman or old woman, the picture is given in its full being, yet they are distinct in some sense. Are there two images or one in the gestalt? The 'same sense' of expression is the sense in which old woman and young woman are the same images: two attributes of the same substance.

What then is the relation between substance, attribute and mode? Spinoza sets out his description of modal production by saying that, 'in

Expression, Immanence and Constructivism 209

the same sense that God is said to be self-caused he must also be the cause of all things' (1994: I, P25, Scholium). Just as substance and attribute had been said in the same sense of their reciprocal presupposition, so substance, as cause of itself, is said in the same sense as it is the cause of the modes. The causal relation between 'substance as self-caused' and 'substance as cause of the modes' is the same immanent causality in which all three, substance, attribute and mode are simultaneously and distinctly presupposed, or mutually 'self-caused' qua the expression of the essence of substance. Not only does substance produce while remaining in itself (as cause of itself) but its affections (modes) are said in the same sense as this causality: that is, immanently self-caused. Substance is at once distinct from the modes as their cause and yet immanent to them in their mutual self-positing (as they express its essence). Opposed to this, emanation and equivocity (two different 'things') entail that substance must be caused in a different sense than it is the cause of its modes. In this way substance places itself beyond its effects.

Much of Spinoza scholarship, however, continues to disagree with Spinoza's account of the relationship between substance to its modes. Curley, in *Behind the Geometrical Method*, says that, 'If we can form no clear concept of substance in abstraction from its attributes, then there will be nothing interesting to say about the relation between substance so conceived and its modes' (Curley 1988: 38). Again the problem seems to be the way in which the difference between substance, attribute, and mode is configured as either a strict identification or a strict separation. With a strict identification between substance and mode there would be no differentiation and hence no production in a completely closed and absolute system; on the other hand a strict separation (the 'clear concept' Curley is calling for) would make their causal relation impossible.

But why does substantial expression entail modal existence? Spinoza provides two arguments: the argument from understanding and the argument from power. 'God acts with the same necessity by which He understands himself, that is, just as it follows from the necessity of the divine nature that God understands himself, with the same necessity it follows that God does infinitely many things in infinitely many modes' (1994: II, P3, Scholium). God must produce as He understands; if there were something God did not produce but understood He would be finite, and this would be absurd. So if God understands an infinity of things, then as He understands He produces that infinity. Thus all modes are expressive of God's understanding, and He is the cause of Himself in the same sense in which He is cause of the modes. Spinoza's second

210 Thomas Nail

argument, the argument from power, is that, ‘God, or Nature, acts from the same necessity from which he exists’ (1994: IV preface). The more power a thing has, the more it can be affected in a greater number of ways. And if God by necessity has an infinite power of existing, then God is affected in an infinite number of ways. In the same sense in which God is the cause of Himself, so the attributes produce an existing modal infinity.

The movement of expression is thus complete: substance is essentially expressed in the attributes, which also express the essence of substance in the same sense as they were expressed (as immanently self-positing). The attributes then re-express themselves in the modes in the same sense as substance expressed the essence of the attributes. The modes then express the essence of the attributes in the same sense in which the attributes express them (as immanent modifications). Substance then can be said to express itself in the modes in the same sense in which the modes express substances’ self-causality. In each moment there is a double expression or mutual presupposition wherein each requires the other. Rather than beginning with three separate elements (substance, attribute, and mode) and attempting to deduce or produce them in terms of emanation, Spinoza instead begins with their expressive simultaneity (essence) and demonstrates their immanent causality or ‘unity’ of expression qua substantial self-cause.

III. Modal Expression in *Difference and Repetition*

Deleuze’s second formulation of Spinozist immanent causality, presented here, is found in *Difference and Repetition*. While Deleuze’s monograph on Spinoza describes in great detail the way in which Spinoza employs a theory of immanent causality to solve the problem of relation between substance, attribute and mode, in *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze expresses reservations regarding this formulation. Substance is not said of the modes in as equal a way as the modes are said of substance. Spinoza’s theory of immanent causality thus remains ultimately too substantial: the identity of substance in Spinoza comes prior to modal difference.

Spinoza’s immanent causality is based on the mutual presupposition of both substance and mode in the same sense: expression. This same sense, however, remains a substantial one. Modes are modifications of substance. Thus, according to Deleuze there remains in this first formulation of Spinozism a vestige of the superiority and independence of substance in relation to the modes his own critique rejected. Spinoza

 Expression, Immanence and Constructivism 211

is not a thinker of emanation, but in *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze argues that Spinoza has not thought radically enough the constructive power of difference in the finite modes that produced his substance. In Spinoza, modal difference remains dependent upon a strictly substantial expressionism. Deleuze says,

Nevertheless, there still remains a difference between substance and the modes: Spinoza's substance appears independent of the modes, while the modes are dependant on substance, but as though on something other than themselves. Substance must itself be said *of* the modes and only *of* the modes. Such a condition can be satisfied only at the price of a more general categorical reversal according to which being is said of becoming, identity of that which is different, the one of the multiple. (Deleuze 1994a: 40)

Deleuze's inversion of Spinoza is to make Spinoza's modal multiplicity the creative and productive composer of substance: to make substance said of modes. Or, as Dan Smith has suggested, we can consider *Difference and Repetition's* 'inversion' a 'Spinozism minus substance, a purely modal or differential universe' (Smith 2001: 175). This, of course, forms part of the more general project in *Difference and Repetition* of making identity said of difference: or what Deleuze calls 'repetition' (Deleuze 1994a: 41). In this sense the identity of Spinozist substance becomes a 'secondary power' whose identity is only the return or differential repetition of 'the different' itself: modal multiplicity (Deleuze 1994a: 41). Understanding this criticism of Spinoza is key to understanding *Difference and Repetition*, but also to understanding the significance of the further modifications made to the concept of Spinozist immanent causality in Deleuze's work.

The reversal is philosophically transformative. 'All Spinozism had to do for the univocal [substance] to become an object of pure affirmation was to make substance turn around the modes—in other words, to realise univocity in the form of repetition in the eternal return' (Deleuze 1994a: 304). A single and same univocal substance for the thousand voiced multiple. The concept of difference in-itself is based on the inverted immanent causality of Spinoza: a modal, differential creative multiplicity.

IV. Immanent Causality in *A Thousand Plateaus*

Twenty-two years later with the 1980 publication of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze's account of Spinozist immanent causality changes once again. Rather than the substantial expression of *Expressionism*

212 Thomas Nail

in Philosophy: Spinoza, which made the modes said of substance, or the modal expression of *Difference and Repetition*, which made 'substance said of the modes' as 'identity is said of difference in itself,' *A Thousand Plateaus* makes all three: substances, attributes, and modes each multiplicities. This time Spinozist substance is identified in the plural form, as substances. Just as Spinoza had used the concept of immanent causality to resolve the relation between substance, attribute and mode, and Deleuze had used it in *Difference and Repetition* to resolve the relation between identity, difference and repetition so Deleuze and Guattari employ a similar version of immanent causality to resolve the problem between the 'body without organs' and the 'intensities' that pass across it.

There is a continuum of all of the attributes or genres of intensity under a single substance, and a continuum of the intensities of a certain genus under a single type or attribute. A continuum of all substances in intensity and of all intensities of substance. The uninterrupted continuum of the BwO, immanence, immanent limit. Drug users, masochists, schizophrenics, lovers—all BwO's pay homage to Spinoza. The BwO is the field of immanence of desire. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 154)

There is a 'formal multiplicity of substantial attributes' that compose the quantitative unity of a single substance. Their reciprocal presupposition or 'immanent continuum' is said to constitute a vital homage to Spinoza. But what is confusing about these passages is that the quantitative unity of a single substance, which had been previously defined in Deleuze's Spinoza book as 'numerical distinction' has become multiple. Numerical distinction meant that substance was one in terms of quantity yet multiple in terms of quality or its attributes. The claim that there could be a multiplicity of substances would seem absurd to Spinoza. Substance does not require the concept of another thing for its formation (1994: I, D3). Likewise, in both *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* and *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze never dared to utter such an absurdity. How are we to understand the significance of this new formulation of Spinozist immanent causality?

Since Deleuze and Guattari do not announce their new formulation of Spinoza as explicitly as Deleuze had in *Difference and Repetition* a reconstruction is required. While it seems clear that Deleuze and Guattari do not abandon the thesis of *Difference and Repetition* entirely when they say, 'what we are talking about is not the unity of substance but the infinity of the modifications that are part of one another on

Expression, Immanence and Constructivism 213

this unique plane of life' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 254), they have also more completely drawn out the implications of the concept of immanent causality qua multiplicity. Numerical and real distinction now become two kinds of multiplicity: qualitative and quantitative. If substance is said only of the multiplicity of the modes, it certainly seems to follow that substances too would become multiplicities composing and composed of other multiplicities. 'Each individual', they say, 'is an infinite multiplicity, and the whole of Nature is a multiplicity of perfectly individuated multiplicities' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 254). True to their claim that 'all they talk about are multiplicities' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 4), substance, attribute and mode have all become immanent to one another as multiplicities composed of other multiplicities: modal, attributive, and substantial multiplicities.

But the immanent ontology of multiplicities in *A Thousand Plateaus* also comes with a new dilemma. Given such a pure multiplicity of immanence, how is any particular multiplicity or arrangement of multiplicities (*agencement*) composed or constructed? What are the particular conditions, elements and agencies that make it work? What kinds of dangers and thresholds does it have? Not only does *A Thousand Plateaus* radically multiply substance, attribute and mode in a new way that diverges from previous 'Spinozisms', but it also reorients the entire task of thinking their relation toward a more general logic and politics of their arrangement (*assemblage*). While *Difference and Repetition* attempts the difficult task of 'raising the cry of the multiple',² *A Thousand Plateaus* begins a more sober and political constructivism. 'In truth', Deleuze and Guattari say, 'it is not enough to say, "Long live the multiple." Difficult as it is to raise that cry... The multiple must be made' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 13). This is accompanied by a more general move from the logic of the 'is' to the logic of the 'and' or what they call, 'the overthrow of ontology'.³ In an interview given after the publication of *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze described the central theme of his and Guattari's current work as follows: 'The analysis of assemblages, broken down into their component parts, opens up the way to a general logic: Guattari and I have only begun, and completing this logic will undoubtedly occupy us in the future' (Deleuze 2006: 177).

Consistent with this expression of a commitment to a constructivist logic Deleuze and Guattari's final book together, *What is Philosophy?* takes up immanent causality one last time to resolve the relation between the philosophical components of this constructivism.

V. Immanent Causality in Deleuze and Guattari's Philosophical Constructivism

Twelve years after the publication of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari, take up the concept of Spinozist immanent causality once more. This time, however, they employ it as an element of a philosophical constructivism in order to resolve the relation between philosophical components: plane of immanence, conceptual personae, and concepts. Just as Spinoza had used this concept to resolve the problem of the relation between substance, attribute and mode, so Deleuze and Guattari use it to resolve the problem of the relation between the plane of immanence, conceptual personae, and the concepts. But instead of a 'substantial' or 'modal' expressionism, the philosophical constructivism of *What is Philosophy?* continues the changes begun in *A Thousand Plateaus* toward a more immanent and developed constructivist logic. While *A Thousand Plateaus* undertook to develop a general logic of assemblages in almost every milieu (from geology to music) it left out one very important domain: philosophy itself. *What is Philosophy?* attempts the final and most developed account of a constructivist logic by drawing on one of the oldest and most important concepts in Deleuze's work: Spinozist immanent causality.

The problem of *What is Philosophy?* is how to think the creative practice of philosophy. How is it that so many philosophical systems succeed each other in history? In relation to what do they create their concepts and map out the conceptual personae that populate these conceptual worlds? What are the elements of philosophical practice and how do they function in relation to each other? Against definitions of philosophy as reflection, contemplation or communication, Deleuze and Guattari define philosophical practice as constructivism, that is, as 'the creation of concepts'. Philosophical practice, they claim, is composed of three distinct elements each considered for themselves, that is, unconditioned by any source external to their own:

Philosophy presents three elements, each of which fits with the other two but must be considered for itself: the pre-philosophical plane it must lay out [tracer](immanence), the persona or personae [les personages philosophiques] it must invent and bring to life (insistence), and the philosophical concepts it must create (consistency). (Deleuze and Guattari 1994b: 74)

(1) In order for philosophy to occur, thought must situate itself in relation to some basic condition, which allows for thought to occur.

Expression, Immanence and Constructivism 215

But how can thought set a condition for itself if the condition is necessary for thought's creation of the condition? This problem, according to Deleuze and Guattari, entails a paradoxical self-positing of both thought and its condition at once. They define this positing as a 'presupposition' or 'plane of immanence' that philosophy poses for itself. It gives itself its own 'image of thought'. For example, 'In Descartes it is a matter of a subjective understanding implicitly presupposed by the 'I think' as first concept; in Plato it is the virtual image of an already-thought that doubles every actual concept' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994b: 40). In Spinoza it is his 'plane of substance' (Deleuze 1990: 11). A philosophical 'plane of immanence' like Spinoza's substance is laid out immediately and defined through that which it is the condition for, 'what is in itself and is conceived through itself', as Spinoza says. 'Concepts', Deleuze and Guattari say, 'are like multiple waves, rising and falling, but the plane of immanence is the single wave that rolls them up and unrolls them' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994b: 36). As such, the plane is thought everywhere in thinking but does not appear as a specific concept within thought. It is thought's immanent condition for itself.

(2) But philosophy also requires a way to connect the concepts it creates to the philosophical plane that is its condition or presupposition. Deleuze and Guattari call these 'conceptual personae'. Considered in themselves, they act as operators or connectors between the plane of immanence and its concepts. 'Concepts are not deduced from the plane. The conceptual persona is needed to relate concepts on the plane, just as the plane itself needs to be laid out. But these two operations do not merge in the persona, which itself appears as a distinct operator' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994b: 76). There are many examples of personae in the history of philosophy: the Idiot, the one who wants to think on his own and can take on another meaning; the Madman, who discovers in thought the inability to think; or, the Friend who has a relationship with another but only through the thing loved, potentially producing the Rival. Socrates is the conceptual persona of Platonism. The Intellect is a conceptual persona of Spinozism. The infinite intellect is defined as a mode of the attribute of thought which has an idea of infinite substance. The paradox of the intellect in Spinoza though is that it must presuppose itself as infinite in order to prove an infinite substance, yet infinite substance must be presupposed for there to be an intellect having an infinite power to discern an infinite substance. Thus the conceptual persona of the intellect must perform an immanent connection between mode and substance through the attribute of thought: all three presupposed simultaneously.

216 Thomas Nail

(3) Most importantly, philosophy is defined by its creation of concepts. Philosophical concepts, Deleuze and Guattari say, ‘populate’ the plane bit by bit, constituting its ‘skeletal frame or spinal column’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1994b: 36). While the plane is ‘the breath’ that suffuses them. Concepts have components as well. For example, Descartes’ ‘cogito’ is a concept. It has three components: doubting, thinking and being. ‘Myself who doubts, I think, I am, I am a thinking thing’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1994b: 31). The concept of the cogito holds together three heterogeneous elements (doubting, thinking, being) which condense to form the ‘I’. Given Descartes’ presupposition of subjective understanding, the cogito and its components form the basic elements or working parts of this understanding: doubting, thinking, being. The modes are concepts in Spinoza’s philosophy. Just as each modal body in Spinoza composes and is composed by at least one other modal body, so each concept in philosophy has components that define the endo- and exo-consistency of a conceptual body.

But the problem of philosophical constructivism is thus: How is it that a single plane of immanence or presupposition can be one in relation to what is expressed and yet multiple in relation to what expresses it (personae and concepts)? If each of the personae are really distinct as separate things, then why doesn’t each really distinct personae entail a distinctly different philosophical plane of immanence or presupposition? If philosophical concepts are distinct elements why can’t they be composed separately from their plane of immanence? If philosophy is the creation of concepts, and these concepts form its ‘working parts’, why is the plane of immanence not just another concept like the others? Torn between the absolute identity and absolute separation of these elements, Deleuze and Guattari face similar problems to those of Spinoza in the *Ethics*. However, just as treating each of these elements as discreet numerical things has misled Spinoza scholarship throughout the ages, so we should not be so misguided here.

Just as Spinoza had begun the *Ethics* with the rapid un-deduced definition of substance as ‘what is in itself and is conceived through itself’ (1994: I, D3), a self-caused thing, so Deleuze and Guattari tell us that philosophical concept creation ‘has no reference; it is self-referential; it posits itself and its object at the same time as it is created’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 22). Just as in Deleuze’s Spinozism neither substance, attribute, or mode are ever deduced or induced from one another in any relation of eminent causality, so Deleuze and Guattari say that, ‘Since none of these elements are deduced from the others [plane, personae, concepts], there must be a coadaptation of the three. The philosophical

Expression, Immanence and Constructivism 217

faculty of coadaptation, which also regulates the creation of concepts,' they say, 'is called taste' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994b: 77). Not only is the plane of immanence a presupposition considered for itself, its very presupposition also presupposes the conceptual personae and concepts required to connect it up and maintain it (Deleuze and Guattari 1994b: 78).

Spinoza displays a similar 'taste' in the concept of expression. Within the first page of the *Ethics* Spinoza simultaneously presupposes the immanence (self-causality) of substance, attribute, and mode connected together, in the same sense, through 'expression'. That is, substance, attribute and mode form a reciprocal presupposition required for each other's being in an immanent expressionism. Similarly for Deleuze and Guattari, 'the plane of immanence and the conceptual personae presuppose each other' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994b: 75). Deleuze and Guattari's usage of the concept of 'reciprocal presupposition' and philosophical 'taste' thus follow Spinoza's own usage of expressionism or immanent causality in the first book of the *Ethics*.

It is important however, not to confuse philosophical taste with rational pragmatism. 'It is certainly not for 'rational or reasonable' reasons that a particular concept is created or a particular component chosen' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994b: 78). In fact, it is not a matter of a 'willed choosing' at all. Philosophy does not rationally consider, debate, judge or reason which concepts are best to solve whichever problem it would like. Philosophy may be a constructivism, but this does not mean that it may be employed by any means whatever. Constructivism renders incoherent all forms of directed intentionality which would pre-exist its concepts. What meaning can rational utility have if problem and solution are given at the same time? Unconditioned by any external reason or transcendent cause, their coadaptation is rather one of taste.⁴

Philosophical 'taste' and 'reciprocal presupposition' bring us back to the exemplary case of Spinozist immanent causality. Just as Spinoza had used a qualitative difference to reconcile the unity/multiplicity of substantial expression, in *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari use a qualitative distinction to reconcile the unity/multiplicity of philosophical creation. 'Constructivism has two qualitatively different complementary aspects: the creation of concepts and the laying out of a plane' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994b: 36). Rather than considering each constructivist element as a distinct quantitative thing, Deleuze and Guattari posit each for-themselves as qualitatively distinct. But considering a plane of immanence as qualitatively multiple and not a quantitative unity does something different than Spinoza. In *What*

218 Thomas Nail

is Philosophy? Deleuze and Guattari claim that there are, in fact, a multiplicity of planes of immanence (something which Spinoza would never have claimed). There is a different plane of immanence for each thinker succeeding and merging with each other in history, each with their own immanent logic and construction of the plane (Deleuze and Guattari 1994b: 39).

Despite the modifications that Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical constructivism makes to the Spinozist notion of immanent causality, there remains something 'princely' in Spinoza's thought. For Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari write, 'immanence does not refer back to the Spinozist substance and modes but, on the contrary, the Spinozist concepts of substance and modes refer back to the plane of immanence as their presupposition' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994b: 148). It is not as if immanence refers primarily to substance or mode. Substance and mode (in Spinoza) refer only to their own immanent reciprocal presupposition. Spinoza never looks to illusory transcendent sources to deduce his concepts. It is by weeding them out that he (immanently) fulfills the conditions of philosophical constructivism: hence he is the prince of philosophy (Deleuze and Guattari 1994b: 48). This final constructivist formulation redeems Spinoza not for his substance or mode at all, but for the immanence of his philosophical constructivism.

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Expression, Immanence and Constructivism 219

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Notes

1. All citations for the *Ethics* unless otherwise noted will be by Year, Book (I, II, III etc), Proposition (P1, P2 etc), Demonstration (D1, D2 etc), and scholium. EX: (1994: I, P12, D3).
2. ‘Only there does the cry resound: “Everything is equal!” and “Everything returns!”’ ‘A single clamour of Being for all beings’ (Deleuze 1994a: 304).
3. See Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 25. On the claim that, ‘there is no ontology of Deleuze’ see François Zourabichvili 1996.
4. Philosophical taste should not be confused with aesthetic taste. Philosophical taste has to do with the coadaptation of concepts, while aesthetic taste has to do with the coadaptation of percepts. ‘Since none of these elements are deduced from the others, there must be coadaptation of the three. The philosophical faculty of coadaptation, which also regulates the creation of concepts, is called taste That is why it is necessary to create, invent, and layout, while taste is like the rule of correspondence of the three instances that are different in kind’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1994b: 77).