5. GILLES DELEUZE: FROM HUME TO SPINOZA (AN ATTEMPT TO MAKE GOOD ON A POPKIN REQUEST)

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Richard Popkin taught intellectual historians that context matters, and that context changes. More to the point, context matters precisely because it is always changing. So, in an effort to pay homage to this methodological disposition, let us begin with some comments about the original, shifting context of this Popkin-inspired inquiry into the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and its debts to Hume and Spinoza, respectively. In the academic year of 2004–2005, the context of my work, a dissertation on Spinoza and twentieth-century French thought, underwent a shift of its own when developments in my personal life brought me away from my home campus Berkeley to Los Angeles for my first year of dissertation work in earnest. During that year, I had the opportunity to work as Popkin's research assistant to supplement my fellowship stipend. Fresh off my Ph.D. exams, I was familiar with Popkin's work on skepticism, and I also knew that in recent years he had devoted serious attention to Spinoza. When I read the notice from UCLA's history department that Popkin was in need of an assistant I sent the revered scholar an eager email, outlining the details of my own work and of course its indebtedness to his. It is only now, when my debts to Popkin are increasingly apparent as I pursue my own research, that I can admit to what was merely nervous exaggeration at the time. As luck would have it, in January 2005 Popkin responded to my message with the news that he was glad to meet me and that he looked forward to working out some sort of research assistance arrangement.

Sadly, the arrangement turned out to be brief, but every moment was delightful and invigorating for me as I had the opportunity first hand to experience this mind in action. I worked for Popkin four afternoons per week, from January until his death in April of that year. The primary effort and discussion centered on the object of his research at that moment, namely the *Chissuk Emunah* of Rabbi Isaac ben Abraham of Troki and the geographically wide-ranging legacy of this critique of Christianity through the Enlightenment and into the late nineteenth century. Inevitably, however,

our conversations steered far and wide over the history of philosophy. They usually found their way to Spinoza, and turned to my insistent efforts to have Popkin understand what was historically specific and significant about Spinoza's importance for recent French thought, ranging from certain thinkers in mathematics and philosophy of science, such as Jean Cavaillès, to the Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser to, of course, Gilles Deleuze. Popkin would listen to my arguments, and he would check my naïveté often. My efforts to lump various thinkers together under simple formulas always met resistance. He often confounded my expectations for a sympathetic ear when he pressed me on essential questions, asking me why I found Spinoza so attractive and why I thought so many in France did as well. With quick recourse to a hypothesis that I have since come to view as inadequate, I told him that, for me personally as for some of the subjects of my dissertation, it was a reaction against the Hegelian pretension that history is necessarily going somewhere, and, more disconcertingly, that that direction might be discernable to the human intellect. Popkin grunted, and in a phrase I will always remember, he said: "You may not be certain that it's going somewhere, but you can't be certain that it's *not* going somewhere either." Popkin changed my understanding of Spinoza profoundly, and he altered the course of my research by teaching me that, well beyond differences among various thinkers, even the thought of Spinoza himself could not be reduced to a single coherent formula. Popkin's ability to remain committed to a guiding thread in his research – e.g., the challenge of skepticism – yet all the while to remain open to the historical record as a mitigating force on his own hypothesis has served as an inspiration for me in my own research into the persistence of rationalism in twentieth-century French thought. This Popkin stance, this refusal to whitewash, will away, or assimilate apparent tensions and contradictions is captured clearly in his chapter title for Spinoza in *The History of Scepticism*, "Spinoza's Scepticism and Antiscepticism."

Spinoza was a hot topic for us, always, and we discussed various readings of his philosophy. Popkin did not express much interest in the Althusserian version of Spinoza, but he did evince a growing interest in Deleuze. I had thought Popkin might find something stimulating in Deleuze, the famed philosopher of difference, who evidently refused the limits of identity to celebrate a sort of pure difference in philosophical work. Over the course of our time together, I would bring in copies of Deleuze's books on Spinoza and read aloud to Popkin. He would close his eyes and listen intently, and after a page or two, he would begin shaking his head, waving his arms, and, tongue between his lips, he would produce a violent raspberry sound. I would take this as my cue that our Deleuze reading was finished for the day, and we should perhaps move on to less obscure matters, such as a sixteenth-century Lithuanian Caraite's critique of Christianity. One day, however, I mentioned to Popkin that Deleuze's

first major work was on David Hume, and that it was published in 1953, well before Deleuze gained any notoriety in France or abroad. I wasn't sure this comment registered, but the next day, when I showed up for work, Popkin asked me about it. He said he was in France in the early 1950s, the period in his own life when he was most focused on Hume and his Pyrrhonism, and that he recalled Hume receiving scant attention in France. He was curious to know how Deleuze came to Hume, and more to the point, if and how Deleuze's interest in and work on Hume was connected with the later importance he attached to Spinoza, two very different philosophers, united, in Popkin's view, primarily if not only by their critique of revealed religion.[1] I fumbled my answer to this question at the time, floundering as I was in the initial stages of my research. The paper that follows is my attempt to make good on this request. The method of proceeding, and the tentative quality of the arguments, are themselves to be read as my own personal tribute to Richard Popkin, and his influence on me at a critical stage in my own education.

The importance attached to Deleuze's work in certain quarters of Anglophone and French academia is matched by the idiosyncrasy of his thought, and the difficulty we have placing it in the trajectories of recent French intellectual history. The temptation, ever since Deleuze burst onto the Anglophone scene with the translation of his "Capitalism and Schizophrenia" volumes co-authored with Félix Guattari, has been to group Deleuze under the heading of "poststructuralism."[2] Aside from the fact that this term is an Anglophone invention more than a French product, it is misleading in Deleuze's case for two main reasons. First, although his book *The Logic of Sense*, first published in 1969, involved a sustained interrogation of certain concepts prevalent in the French vogue of structuralism – such as genesis, relation,

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[1]For Popkin's inquiry into the relationship between Hume and Spinoza, see Richard Popkin, "Hume and Spinoza," *Hume Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2, November 1979, pp. 65–93. For other useful attempts to gauge the historical utility of reading these two philosophers in dialogue, see the following three essays in Genevieve Lloyd, ed., *Spinoza: Critical Assessments*, Vol. IV: "The Reception and Influence of Spinoza's philosophy" (London and New York: Routledge, 2001): Chapter 8, Wim Klever, "Hume Contra Spinoza?", pp. 138–153 (first published: *Hume Studies* 16, 1990: 89–105); Chapter 9, Wim Klever, "More About Hume's Debt to Spinoza," pp. 154–171 (first published: *Hume Studies* 19, 1993 55–74); and, Chapter 10, Annette C. Baier, "David Hume, Spinozist," pp. 172–187 (first published: *Hume Studies* 19, 1993: 237–252). Klever, in particular, positions his interpretation with regard to Popkin's.

[2]The two volumes are Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane, trans. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1983) (first published in English, by Viking Penguin, 1977), and Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Brian Massumi, trans. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

and of course the concept of structure itself – Deleuze's interlocutors in this study ranged from the Stoics to Lewis Carroll to Edmund Husserl.[3] With the exception of Jacques Lacan, the local manifestations of French structuralism do not appear to have exercised Deleuze very much, although he was largely sympathetic to the emphasis on the category of relation within structuralist thought.[4] Second, unlike so many so-called poststructuralists, not to mention existentialists before him, Deleuze did not devote much energy to Martin Heidegger's critique of epistemology; in fact he once likened Heidegger's thought to the 'pataphysics of Alfred Jarry.'[5] As Deleuze greatly privileged play over anguish, it should come as no surprise to note that Deleuze preferred the latter.

It is not least of the ironies of Deleuze's thought that for all of his efforts to demarcate philosophy as a mode of thought distinct from others, knowledge as such was never Deleuze's primary concern.[6] Deleuze belongs in the school of modern vitalist philosophers that privileges life against knowledge, that is critical of epistemology as first philosophy and any attempt to achieve "perfect knowledge" as a philosophical goal. This is not to say that Deleuze did not concern himself with literary matters, or mine historical and anthropological volumes in his efforts to produce new philosophical concepts.[7] To be sure, Deleuze displayed a wide breadth of reading in all of his works, and the historical and anthropological evidence presented, for example, in *A Thousand Plateaus* has come under heavy fire from critics of the co-optation of such Deleuzian concepts as "nomad," "line of flight," and "rhizome," in contemporary

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[3] Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, Mark Lester with Charles Stivale, trans., Constantin Boundas, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

[4] See his essay, "A quoi reconnaît-on le structuralisme?" in Gilles Deleuze, *L'Île Déserte et autres textes* David Lapoujade, ed. (Paris: Éditions du Minuit, 2002), pp. 238–269. The essay is a reprint of one of Deleuze's contributions to François Châtelet, ed., *Histoire de la philosophie, t. VIII: le XXeme siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1972), pp. 299–335. The other contribution to this project was an entry on Hume, about which see below.

[5] Gilles Deleuze, *Essays: Critical and Clinical*, Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco, trans. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), Chapter 11, "An Unrecognized Precursor to Heidegger: Alfred Jarry," pp. 91–98.

[6] For the fullest explication of the claim that philosophy entails the production of concepts as a means of confronting chaos, see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy*?, Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

[7] For a useful guide to the sheer breadth of Deleuze's interests, see Stéfan Leclercq, ed., *Aux sources de la pensée de Gilles Deleuze* 1 (Paris: Vrin, 2005) (Mons, Belgium: Éditions Sils Maria). The entries cover cinema, architecture, and various philosophers and writers. Ordered alphabetically, they range from "Anaximandre" to "Jacob von Uexküll."

postcolonial studies.[8] It is no secret that Deleuze played fast and loose with artifacts of cultural production; but for a philosopher contemptuous of any "representational" model of philosophy, the viability or suitability of his sources was hardly a cause for concern. More important were the effects produced by encounters with such sources rather than any naïve correspondence with historical truth, or any representational accuracy. Never to be restrained by anything as trifling as context, what mattered was creation itself, the inexhaustible production of the new against staid theoretical limits.

This creative approach did not produce itself *ex nihilo*, however. Deleuze once claimed to be the last of a generation "bludgeoned to death," by the history of philosophy in official French education, the effect of which was to remind students that nothing original need or could be said that had not been said before.[9] The first fifteen years of Deleuze's career were devoted to the production of a uniquely Deleuzian, seditious history of philosophy, a highly selective reading of a select group of philosophers who were critical of the "negative," who cultivated joy and privileged the creative force of life against the closure and strictures of modern knowledge claims.[10] In a characteristically transgressive metaphor, Deleuze once responded to a harsh critic that he conceived of his history of philosophy as a bizarre love affair, in which his philosophical lovers were buggered to produce a monstrous offspring that was at once his product and that of the philosopher in question.[11] Despite the rather crude evocation of a Hegelian model here, probably intentional, Deleuze's *bête noire* in this life-long project was indeed Hegel, an ascendant figure in French philosophy as Deleuze was coming of age. He distrusted Hegel's dialectic of negation, which did away with the excess that could not be included in the advance of humanity's knowledge of itself and the world. Of course, a true Hegelian would say it is all included, nothing is left behind in the synthesis; but Deleuze did not see it that way. In the act of sublimation, with its metaphorical movement upward and its claims to transcendence,

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[8] See in particular the critique by Christopher L. Miller in his book *Nationalists and Nomads: Essays on Francophone African Literature and Culture* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), Chapter 6 "Beyond Identity: the Postidentitarian Predicament in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*," pp. 171–209, and the ensuing quarrel with the Deleuze scholar Eugene W. Holland in the pages of *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 34, 2003, nos. 1, 3, and 4.

[9] Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations,* 1972–1990 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 5.

[10] Ibid., p. 6. For an analysis of Deleuze's take on the history of philosophy, see Manola Antonioli, *Deleuze et l'histoire de la philosophie (ou de la philosophie comme science-fiction)* (Paris: Kimé, 1999).

[11] Deleuze, *Negotiations*, p. 6.

Deleuze saw limitation and foreclosure, the sacrifice of immanent play to the demands of conceptual labor. Even worse, for all of its talk of difference, Deleuze saw Hegel's logic, and philosophy more generally, tied to a limited notion of identity, which could not accept that identity was always fictive and always fleeting. Repetition of the same was never precisely that, because in the mere act of repetition the thing from before is no longer. Of course we can say A = A, as long as we note that the expression is analogical, that when we say that, we are saying two different A's. With this critique of Hegel in mind, we understand better the title Deleuze chose for the supreme statement of his own thought, one of his most notoriously esoteric works, his first attempt to elaborate a philosophy not beholden to the logic of identity, a book titled *Difference and Repetition*.[12]

The philosophers courted in Deleuze's historical critical project leading to this major work included his two key references for understanding temporality and repetition, Henri Bergson and Friedrich Nietzsche,[13] but this phase of Deleuze's career is bookended by two figures who could not be further apart in the conventional history of philosophy, David Hume and Benedict de Spinoza, arch-empiricist and arch-rationalist. Deleuze passed the *agrégation* in philosophy in France in 1948, which was most likely where he first engaged seriously with Hume, a philosopher not foreign to this imposing state examination. Louis Althusser's biographer has noted that, indeed, Hume was a philosopher on the exam in which the 1947–1948 school year culminated.[14] Popkin's recollections notwithstanding, there was an upsurge of published work on Hume in the early 1950s, which, following a bibliographical trend in twentieth-century France that Alan Schrift has aptly noted, can most probably be linked to Hume's presence on the

[12] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Paul Patton, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

[13] The key works are Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, Hugh Tomlinsom and Barbara Habberjam, trans. (New York: Zone Books, 1988), and Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Hugh Tomlinson, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

[14] Yann Moulier Boutang, *Louis Althusser, une biographie: La formation du mythe,* 1945–1956*: ruptures et plis* (Paris: Grasset, 1992), p. 400. In a passage where he discusses Althusser's consideration of potential philosophers for his *Doctorat d'État*, Boutang writes: "In 1947, when he had the good fortune to meet the English historian Douglas Johnson during his two-year stay at the École (Normale Supérieure), [Althusser] had asked him for some "tips" on the British specialists on Hume, who was on the program that year, and who interested him as a possible subject" [my translation].

exam in 1948.[15] At any rate, as noted before, Deleuze's first major work was on Hume, and that book, entitled *Empiricism and Subjectivity: an Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*, was published in 1953.[16] This is not to say that Deleuze published nothing prior to that year. Oddly enough, in my attempts to procure Deleuze's early works and papers while I was in Paris, I learned that Deleuze had a provision in his will that nothing prior to 1953 was to be included in the collection of his published works preserved at the Dominican library, the Bibliothèque du Saulchoir in the fourteenth arrondisement.[17] It is ultimately not surprising that Deleuze's estate would be preserved by a theological library – more on that later – but more disconcerting for any Popkin-inspired investigation is why this limit imposed on his posthumous reception? No satisfactory explanations have been forthcoming in my own research on this question. Nonetheless, many of these early writings – the published ones at least – are still accessible at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Deleuze provided a preface for Diderot's *La Religieuse* in 1947, and introductory matter for an obscure work, *La Mathèse ou anarchie et hiérarchie de la science* by the nineteenth century doctor of romantic medicine Jean Malfatti de Montereggio.[18] The spiritualist tendencies of this treatise make Deleuze's later untimely celebration of Bergson less surprising. Most notably, he assembled a group of texts to be included in a series designed for young philosophy students, the title of his assemblage paying tribute to his interest in Hume at the time, *Instincts et Institutions*.[19]

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[15] In addition to Deleuze's work, cited and discussed below, see André-Louis Leroy, *David Hume* (Paris: PUF, 1953). For Schrift's argument that the institutional bases of recent French thought in such domains as the *agrégation* bore a determinant influence on French philosophical trends, see the opening essay in his *Twentieth-Century French Philosophy: Key Themes and Thinkers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), Part 1, pp. 1–81. Schrift contends that the amount of effort put into the study of a given philosopher for the *agrégation* often led the students who sat that exam to produce a book on that thinker early in their careers.

[16] Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: an Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*, Constantin V. Boundas, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

[17] Personal communication to the author from Stéfan Leclercq, 2 Feb. 2006.

[18] Denis Diderot, *La Religieuse*, introduction de Gilles Deleuze, texte intégral (Paris: Collection de l'ile Saint-Louis, 1947), introduction pp. vii–xx; Jean Malfatti de Montereggio, *La Mathèse ou anarchie et hiérarchie de la science*, traduction de Christien Ostrowski, introduction de Gilles Deleuze (Paris: Editions du Griffon d'Or, 1946), pp. ix–xxiv. The introduction to the Malfatti volume has been translated into English by Robin Mackay and reproduced in the journal *Collapse*, Vol. 3 (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2007), 141–155.

[19] Gilles Deleuze, textes choisis et présentés par, *Instincts et institutions* (collection: textes et documents philosophiques: collection dirigée par G. Canguilhem) (Paris: Hachette, 1953).

At this stage, I suspect mainly pride in this posthumous request, as there is nothing in these brief writings that compromises Deleuze's later, more mature philosophical contributions. If anything many of his concerns are already discernable in these early texts, from his praise for literature's positively mystifying aspects in his introduction of Diderot to the desire for a non-representational model of philosophy which marks Deleuze's account of Malfatti's preference for anarchy over hierarchy in the sciences.

In 1952, months before the publication of his own long essay on Hume, Deleuze published jointly with André Cresson a short book entitled, *David Hume: sa vie et son oeuvre* that contains in embryo many of the arguments that Deleuze would develop further in *Empiricism and Subjectivity*.[20] So what was Deleuze's take on Hume, this Scottish empiricist who barely had a foothold in a France where rationalism was battling it out with the alluring German import of phenomenology? First off, the conventional opposition of empiricism to the rationalism that preceded it held no water for Deleuze, a fact he was to reiterate again when he returned to Hume later on, in his contribution to François Chatelet's edited history of philosophy in 1972.[21] Assuming the tones of the alchemist, Deleuze argued that empiricism held other secrets beyond a critique of rationalism; the power of imagination at work in Hume's empiricism made it a sort of science-fiction *avant la lettre*, by emphasizing the created aspect of the universe alongside the creative.[22] We can see the future contours of Deleuze's project ourselves in the title of the opening chapter of his Hume book: "The Problem of Knowledge and the Problem of Ethics."[23] The problem, as it were, for Deleuze with the history of modern thought had to do with the attempt to derive the latter, ethics, from the former, as if knowledge itself could ever be established on some solid base. Hume's virtue was to throw out the notion of assured and certain knowledge altogether. As Deleuze states it suggestively, Hume was the first to laicize belief, giving it pride of place over knowledge.[24] Lacking knowledge, we are left with belief, which itself derives from repetition and habit. But lest this lead us to the conservative Hume familiar to students of political theory,

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[20] André Cresson et Gilles Deleuze, *David Hume: Sa vie, son œuvre, avec un exposé de sa philosophie par Cresson et Deleuze* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1952).

[21] See Gilles Deleuze's entry, "Hume," pp. 65–78 in François Châtelet, op. cit, note 2. This essay is reprinted in Deleuze, *L'Île Déserte*, op. cit. note 4 as well, pp. 226–237.

[22] For the fullest explication of Deleuze's relationship to empiricism see Bruce Baugh, "Deleuze and Empiricism," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 24 (1), 1993, pp. 15–31. See as well, chapitre 1, "De la philosophie comme science-fiction" in Antonioli, op. cit., pp. 13–27.

[23] Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, op. cit., pp. 21–36.

[24] Ibid., p. ix.

Deleuze moves elsewhere in Hume's thought, not to habit as entrenchment of the old, but, rather, as production of the new.

Deleuze reads Hume to argue that the mind is not and cannot be an object of thought itself, nor is it to be posited as the cause of effects that proceed from it. Clearly there is to be no "transcendental subject" à la Kant in Deleuze's philosophy, but this is not to say that "transcendental" as an adjectival qualifier is to be banished altogether. What Deleuze posits instead via Hume is the heuristic notion of a transcendental empiricism, an oxymoronic phrase to say the least. Empiricism, in Deleuze's reading, becomes a sort of abstracted code word for experience itself, the experience of time and difference, prior to any sort of conceptual unification. Deleuze does not deny that the intellect has a tendency to conceptualize and lead us to perfect knowledge in a Kantian or Hegelian sense. After we sit on enough chairs, we do develop a conceptual, functional definition of what a chair is. But, against this conceptualizing tendency Deleuze posits the latent subversive power of empiricism, a disposition which never confirms, but rather destabilizes. Deleuze uses an example from basic grammar; Hume privileged the infinite, connective power of the AND over the limited, subsumptive power of the IS, that is, in other words, parataxis over hypotaxis. Any attempt to end the phrase in a grammatical IS, will be overturned by the introduction of new, disruptive ANDS.[25]

The most profound implication of this empiricism, then, concerns subjectivity, the title's second term, which derives in Deleuze's reading from Hume's emphasis on the merely associative, rather than causal, quality of ideas. Deleuze summed up his argument nicely in the preface he wrote to the English translation of his book: "[Hume] created the first great logic of *relations*, showing in it that all relations (not only 'matters of fact' but also relations among ideas) are external to their terms. As a result, he constituted a multifarious world of experience based upon the principle of the exteriority of relations. We start with atomic parts, but these atomic parts have transitions, passages, 'tendencies', which circulate from one to another. These tendencies give rise to *habits*. Isn't this the answer to the question 'what are we'? We are habits, nothing but habits – the habit of saying 'I'. Perhaps, there is no more striking answer to the problem of the Self."[26] So, consistent with his distrust of the philosophical concept of Mind, Deleuze wants the self, the "je" to be posterior to a prior, one is tempted to say – though Deleuzian temporality prohibits it – more primordial notion of experience. It seems here that the problem of knowledge and the problem of ethics are predicated on a deeper problem, that of ontology and the nature of Being itself.

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[25] See Boundas' discussion of this point in the translator's introduction to Ibid., p. 8.
[26] Ibid., p. x.

Here we are flirting with Heidegger's critique of western metaphysics, and the best way to articulate what distinguishes Deleuze's ontology from Heidegger's is to turn to his fundamental resource for thinking through these foundational problems. The philosophical touchstone is of course Spinoza. Deleuze had previously marshaled Bergson's *élan vital* and Nietzsche's "will to power" and eternal return, to develop a non-conceptual or rule-bound notion of time and experience that would continue the disruptive qualities of Hume's sci-fi empiricism. But it was Spinoza who became and remained Deleuze's favored reference in this task, the philosopher who, in Deleuze's own words, always gave him the sense of taking flight on a witch's broom.[27] Moreover, unlike others, Spinoza garnered two studies in Deleuze's oeuvre, the minor thesis of his *doctorat d'état, Spinoza et le probleme de l'expression*, submitted with the major thesis, *Différence et Répétition* in 1968, and a shorter book in the 1970s, which he augmented in the 1980s, entitled, *Spinoza: philosophie pratique*.[28] In his reading of Spinoza, Deleuze broke with French precedent, which in his view had focused too heavily on the rationalist Spinoza of the concept of books 1 and 2 of the *Ethics*, preferring instead to focus on the vitalist Spinoza of affects and passions in the later books.

The Spinoza of the affect was the practical Spinoza Deleuze celebrated in the shorter work, and it was primarily this Spinoza who would go on to inspire multitudinous contemporary ruminations on Spinoza as a resource for a global left politics.[29] But it is the thicker volume which contains Deleuze's most sustained engagement with Spinoza's thought. Expression was the key term for Deleuze in his study precisely because Spinoza himself had *not* defined it in the *Ethics*, and yet it occupied the nodal point between the three key terms of "substance," "essence," and "attribute" in Spinoza's ontology; the Spinozist term "mode" being reserved for an argument later in the book about qualitative vs. quantitative intensity. Deleuze's goal was to understand the full richness of expression in Spinoza's philosophy. Substance was the expresser, or *l'exprimant*, and essence was what was expressed, *l'exprimé*. The attribute, however, whether it be thought or thing, does not involve a term in noun form, but is effectively the verbal movement of expression itself. Pierre

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[27] Gilles Deleuze, with Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 15.

[28] These two books are available in English translation as Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, Robert Hurley, trans. (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 1988), and Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, Martin Joughin, trans. (New York: Zone Books, 1992).

[29] See in particular Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), and their sequel to this volume, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004).

Macherey in a short article on Deleuze condensed the argument into the following expression, which it helps to quote in the original French: "[l'attribut] est ce … qui permet à l'exprimant de s'exprimer dans l'exprimé."[30] The stakes involved in this dense formula are those of an effort to avoid an emanative notion of ontology, such as that of Plotinus, where the fundamental quality of Being produces diminishing returns the further we get from the origin.[31] Deleuze wanted to avoid recourse to origin altogether, something that distinguishes his thinking from Heidegger's as well, and the latter's fondness for the concept of origin as *Ursprung*. Nothing ever "*springt*" from the "*Ur*" – the *Ur* itself is contained in, part and parcel of, nothing but the "*springen*" itself. Or, to borrow the phraseology from our discussion of Deleuze's Hume: there is no content to the *Ur*, or prior Being, apart from the relational aspects involved in the transitive qualities contained in any verb whatsoever, the French *exprimer* or the German *springen*.

Evidently, Deleuze is not so much concerned to maintain a distinction between form and content as to deny the validity of such a distinction altogether by maintaining that since there is no such thing as static form, there can never be any grasp of certain content either. As a result of this view, epistemology and ontology cannot be opposed to each other as contending "-ologies" concerned with different theoretical objects. Everything is collapsed into ontology for Deleuze, and yet, in his work on Spinoza, Deleuze pursues his concern with the twin problems of knowledge and ethics – arguably Spinoza's primary concerns as well – that occupied the first chapter of his book on Hume. In an evocative passage that he returns to often, Deleuze discusses Spinoza's discussion in chapter four of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* of Adam and his ingestion of the apple.[32] According to Deleuze, according to Spinoza, in that moment when God, that is, Nature, revealed to Adam the effects that resulted from eating the apple, Adam, with his limited "human" faculties, mistook the momentary revelation of knowledge – the apple produces bad effects – for a law-like *fiat* from above, a prohibition of evil understood in place of the mere disclosure of something bad. This account is allegorical of course, but it speaks to the knotted imbrication of epistemology, ontology, and ethics Deleuze wants to take from Spinoza. Law, as morality,

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[30] "Deleuze dans Spinoza," pp. 237–244 in Pierre Macherey, *Avec Spinoza: études sur la doctrine et l'histoire du spinozisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992). In translation, the quotation, found on p. 242, reads, "The attribute is what allows the expresser to express itself in the expressed."

[31] See Joachim Lacrosse's entry on "Plotin" in Leclercq, ed., op. cit., pp. 161–169.

[32] In *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, see pp. 22–25; in *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, see pp. 263–265.

wants to be permanent, transcendent, elevated above immediate experience and universally communicable. By contrast, ethics, with positive connotations, is rooted in and indistinguishable from immediate experience, fully immanent in it, and the formation of an idea of that experience that necessarily accompanies it. This is where Spinoza's rationalist notion of the "idea of the idea" jibes with Hume's notion of associative and non-causal ideas, both of which are fleeting, links in an infinite chain of becoming. Is the resultant "knowledge" communicable? Perhaps. Can it be universalized? Not really. The only thing transcendental is the nature of the relation itself.

The point is that ultimately Hume and Spinoza become assimilated in the production of Deleuze's own philosophy, a Spinozist ontology of immanent causality where all is in all and nothing is the same in a Humean logic of relations and associations. Absent from Deleuze's twin invocation of the two thinkers is any sustained discussion of what they most evidently have in common, namely the critique of traditional religion. Popkin himself published an article entitled "Hume and Spinoza" in 1979 where he explored the affinities of their work on this score.[33] But like the French scholar Gilbert Boss, who compared Hume and Spinoza in a mammoth two-volume work, Popkin was content not to force an assimilation of the two wildly different philosophers, but rather to point to the fundamental incommensurability of their thinking as evidence of the myriad ways one can do philosophy.[34] Hume privileged order against the inconsistencies of vulgar thought; Spinoza saw order as itself a fictive product of the human intellect. For Hume, skepticism was the antidote to dogmatism; for Spinoza, recourse to the sedated dumbfounded posture of skepticism was not unlike recourse to God, the "asylum of ignorance." A sustained twin reading of Hume and Spinoza reveals many affinities, and of course we must pay attention to the contextual differences of terms such as order, God, and nature in their respective works. Deleuze for his part never denied the selectivity of his readings; in fact he often reiterated it. But is it not disconcerting to find our celebrant of difference forsaking this cherished feature of all existence for an emphasis on the similar, if not the same?

In his post-1968 radicalized work with Guattari, Deleuze was fond of speaking not of desire per se, but rather of "desiring production" and "desiring machines." Desire was a keyword for both Hume and Spinoza of course, and Deleuze shares with them the understanding that although desires are real, they are often themselves the source of error, leading to the confusion of causes and effects, the positing of ends when there are none in nature,

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[33] See note 1.

[34] See Gilbert Boss, *Les differences des philosophies: Hume et Spinoza*, 2 vs. (Zurich: Éditions du Grand Midi, 1982).

and various other epistemological dead-ends. But in the "desiring-machines" of *Anti-Oedipus*, desire is never reactive but always transformative, and productive. And yet the machine metaphor is apt for Deleuze's project in general; other thinkers get put through the Deleuze ringer, and they come out as products of the Deleuze machine, shorn of many of their distinguishing characteristics. For all his talk of difference, concepts and figures in Deleuze's philosophy have an assimilative function, smoothing out space, leveling out the steppes for the nomads on their lines of flight.

Concomitant with Deleuze's contemporary importance is the depth and value of the criticism his work has received of late, not only for its non-falsifiable theological underpinnings, but also for its lack of any mediation and its resultant lack of any viable concept of political or ethical activity.[35] In France, one of Deleuze's chief interlocutors, Alain Badiou, has come down hard on Deleuze for the inescapable notion of oneness which lies at the heart of Deleuze's celebration of becoming against being, and infinite production of difference against the sameness of identity.[36] This curiosity of Deleuze's thought is no mystery for readers of *Difference and Repetition*, a book that ends by proclaiming the univocity of Being. Though the term is not to be confused with the closure of unity – Deleuze says "opening is an essential feature of univocity" – all the same, univocity means Being speaks with one voice, in Deleuze's image, "a single and same ocean for all the drops."[37] Popkin has taught us that the histories of theology and philosophy cannot be distinguished so easily. So perhaps it should not be too disconcerting to see that Deleuze's other key source for the concept of univocity, alongside Spinoza, was none other than the medieval theologian, John Duns Scotus.[38] The fact that the Frenchman now includes two Scotsmen as central to his thought perhaps points to an under-explored Edinburgh/Paris connection. But there are substantive gains too for making sense of Deleuze's thought through Duns Scotus's, such as

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[35]The most compelling critique along these lines is also the most complete: Peter Hallward, *Out of this World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation* (London: Verso, 2006).

[36]Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: the Clamor of Being*, Louise Burchill, trans. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

[37]Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 304.

[38]See Ibid., p. 303. Note too Stéfan Leclercq's entry "John Duns Scot" in Leclercq, ed., pp. 61–66. For John Duns Scotus' definition of univocity, see Thomas Williams, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to John Duns Scotus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 58n14: "I call that concept 'univocal' which is so unified that its unity is enough for a contradiction in affirming and denying it of the same subject; it also is enough to play the part of a middle term in a syllogism, so that the extreme terms are united as one in the middle so that their unity with one another can be deduced without a fallacy of equivocation."

the evident influence of the latter's distinction between *haecceity*, or thisness, and *quiddity*, or whatness, which we can map onto to Deleuze's preference for the AND over the IS. Perhaps too, despite the fact that Duns Scotus was a Franciscan, the location of Deleuze's collection at a predominantly Dominican theological library now makes more sense too. Finally, it is suggestive to note that Duns Scotus was known for bringing together various antithetical theological arguments; like Deleuze he would make commensurate those things which evidently did not belong together without any pretense of logical resolution. This predilection led to much opposition in his own day, a resistance that led to the coinage of a term to designate his followers, which persists in our modern lexicon. I can certainly imagine it as Popkin's reaction to Deleuze's concept of difference that knows no distinction, his philosophy of extremes, margins, and peripheries. But in light of the sustained attack on "common sense" and "good sense" throughout his oeuvre, I can also imagine Deleuze's delight to hear it. Today the name of Duns Scotus reverberates in the corners of posterity as *dunce*.