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Releasing Affects or the Release from Affects. The Case of Freud and Spinoza

Abstract

In this paper, the author is questioning the very concept of “indifference of thinking”. The author also asks: in what sense thinking leads to “overall indifference”? What, indeed, is indifference? Carefully reading the philosophical texts on affects, mainly Spinoza, Freud, Bergson and Deleuze, the author argues, that indifference is not a kind of non-affection, beside-affection, post-affection, but rather, it is a trace of affect – just as cinders are remnants of fire. Indifference is not abnegation either, which is a kind of statement that we could not care less. On the contrary, it is in indifference where we find a profound commitment to bringing back the things of this world to their natural position.

Keywords: *active state, conatus, contrary affect, death drive, façade formations, general indifference, madness, resolution, sustainability.*

Introduction (General Indifference)

Gilles Deleuze, in his book entitled *What is philosophy?*, formulates the surprising thesis according to which “[t]hinking provokes general indifference” (Deleuze, Guattari, 1994, p. 50). Deleuze would not be himself if he did not add straightaway that “[i]t is a dangerous exercise nevertheless”.² The as-

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² Gilles Deleuze, Guattari, Félix, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. H. Tomlinson, G. Burchell, New York: Columbia University Press.1994. p.50.

sociation of thought process with indifference is surprising not only because Deleuze has himself evidenced beyond reasonable doubt that his own thinking is far from indifferent, but also because the Spinozian paradigm makes of an affect the very requirement of thinking, which is obviously, is at odds with the requirement of thinking in the apparent absence of affect.

Thereby, in this text, I will question the indifference of thinking. In what sense may thinking produce overall indifference? What, indeed, is indifference? Is indifference a kind of non-affection, beside-affection, post-affection, or rather, may it be conceived as a trace of past affect – just as cinders are remnants of fire? Certainly, indifference in thinking is far from neutrality in politics or impartiality in law. It is biased, and it is the core bias of thinking. Similarly, indifference does not strictly follow the logic of bi-negation – “neither this nor that” nor is it akin to apathy – a condition of being free from emotion. Similarly, neither is it abnegation, which in itself would have driven us to the preconception that we could not care less. On the contrary, it is in indifference where we find a profound commitment to bringing back the things of this world to their natural position.

In this text, I follow the ideas of Spinoza and Freud. With Spinoza, the status of intellect and thinking is central, yet it is unclear. Intellect works both “in opposition” and as a continuation of causality and affectiveness of the body. Spinoza writes, quite openly, that in nature there is an infinite potential of thinking. I ask, however, what is this potency and who does it belong to? Is “thinking of nature” and “thinking in nature” a function of the infinite intellect of God? It is only in the intellect of God where all things that may be objects of his intelligence are bound to exist. For Spinoza, however – was not an empiricist; the relation between the idea and the object of the idea is never that of a causal nature. What, then, is its character? It seems that the idea of intellect is indeed coupled with an object, and thus, that mode of thinking is coupled with another mode, which can also be that of the body’s extension. Spinoza does not hesitate to call this coupling a union. Whether it is a coupling or a unification, what is perfect is simply called the truth. I deduce from this a hypothesis to be further verified in reading Spinoza; namely, that for him, “thinking” means experiencing in each object of thought the very potency of thinking. Intellect shared by all and concepts common to everyone makes such experiencing possible at all. The latter is common not merely because they belong to all minds, but because they represent something common in the world for all bodies.

Freud takes a different approach. Although for Freud thinking is always close to affects, he aims – through analysis – to free himself from affects. It seems that the case of Leonardo da Vinci is paradigmatic of such a release.

“Italian Faust”, as Freud used to call Leonardo, is the only subject completely liberated from the captivity of drive. Leonardo demonstrates his passion into the research drive as he shuns anything sexual to pursue his purely speculative activity. It follows, that in Leonardo’s case, the only forces that “have a say” must pass the test on thinking.

One characteristic feature of Leonardo which particularly fascinates Freud is the sluggishness with which Leonardo worked, eventually turning into an inability to complete any work. In the case of Leonardo, the researcher (drive to knowledge) wins against the artist (drive to form) and does so to such an extent that Leonardo himself falls into atrophy, a kind of “great ignorance” – indifference. As a result, Leonardo becomes not so much a subject of pure speculation, but a synonym of both inhibition – the lack of erotic interest, and disinhibition – directing attention to the entire complexity of nature. Finally, Freud concludes that “the view may be hazarded that Leonardo’s development approaches Spinoza’s mode of thinking”.³ What does such finding of “Spinoza’s mode of thinking” in Leonardo’s intellectual life really mean? This means that the recommendation to love only that which has already been known transforms the “object of love” into a “substitute for impulses”. Therefore, when a man has come to know, that he is no longer able to love or hate. Instead of loving or hating, such a man will only be studying and learning. The subject of cognition – the subject of speculative thinking – is no longer capable of love; it is only capable of intellectual love – *amor Dei intellectualis*.

Infiltrations

In attempting to answer these questions, let us start off with Freudian psychoanalysis. Freud himself ponders intensely upon the mysterious relationship between affects and concepts. For Freud, analysis is, in fact, not so much a translation or transcription based on “speculative fiction of nerve cells”, but a type of parsing and chemical analysis seeking to break down the imaginary-affective complex. Freud dreams of a complete partition of the dream, and the partition of the pathogenic formation – which he perceives to be a sort of infiltration in the mental apparatus. Solution and resolution [*Auflösung und Lösung*] – laconically writes Freud – are one and the same. “If you were able to break such a pathological idea down to its component parts, to the state from which they came into the mental life of a patient, this would

³ Sigmund Freud. *Leonardo da Vinci. A Psychosexual Study of an Infantile Reminiscence*, trans. A. Brill, [in:] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XI*, ed. J. Strachey, London: Hogarth Press. 1910/1957. p. 75

mean that if they fell apart the patient would be liberated from them”.⁴ Freedom is, therefore, the release of the excess affective-imaginative formation which is obstructive to thinking, i.e. phantasms, which not only need to be dismantled, but also removed in the process of partition.

In Freud’s reasoning, it is important that the pathogenic material is treated as a foreign body in the organism that should be removed from the living tissue. But how to do it? Freud is well aware of the limitations of the metaphor of surgery. A foreign body in the organism is indeed foreign, i.e. it is not connected to the tissue yet it causes its inflammation. In the case of mental formation, such a foreign body cannot be removed from the mental apparatus without first destroying it. A foreign body becomes an inseparable part of the tissue, specific to the mental apparatus to such an extent that it becomes the mental apparatus. “The inner layers – writes Freud – increasingly alienate from the “I” (*ego, das Ich*), even though the limit of what is pathogenic, actually never begins to reveal. The pathogenic organization does not actually behave like a foreign body; instead, its behaviour resembles infiltration. As such, in this comparison, infiltration should be considered resistance. After all, therapy is not about eradicating anything – psychotherapy cannot make it today – but about melting down resistance and thus paving the way for circulation in the previously foreclosed area”.⁵ Here we come to the essential issue i.e., the issue of eliminating the symptom without eliminating the structures of “I” (*ego, das Ich*); bringing back circulation to where it was already close to arrest. The change in the metaphor whereby a “foreign body” is replaced with “infiltration” and “elimination” is exchanged for “melting down”, are the key here.

Over the years of his career, Freud was – not without much difficulty – struggling to liberate himself from thinking about the therapeutic process in terms of hypnosis. Finally, in the text entitled *On Psychotherapy* published in 1905, Freud makes the distinction between analytic method and hypnotic techniques of suggestion. In fact, he does it so vividly, that ever since their publication, these two techniques appear to him not only different but their own opposites. Freud, when formulating this crucial distinction refers to Leonardo da Vinci’s distinction between the two types of arts – *per via di porre*, or painting, which is realized through the filling of empty places, and *per via di levare*, that is sculpture, which is realized through the removal of ex-

⁴ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, [in:] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume IV*, ed. J. Strachey, London: Hogarth Press. 1900/1957. p.54.

⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Concerning ‘Wild’ Psycho-Analysis*. [in:] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XI* (1910): *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis, Leonardo da Vinci and Other Works*, 1910. p. 233.

cess material. "Painting – Leonardo says as quoted by Freud – works *per via di porre*, because the painter puts a speck of paint where there was none before on neutral canvas; sculptor, however, works with *per via di levare*, because the sculptor carves away the obstructions that hide the true from his statue".⁶

Equipped with his analytical method, Freud, like a sculptor, carves away the excess material. Josef Breuer, in turn, professes hypnotic method exerting something that he expects to be strong enough to invalidate the very manifestation of the pathogenic formation. In contrast, analytical therapy creates nothing, nor does it introduce anything new; its tenet – says Freud – "is to liquidate, extract, eliminate". The remaining question, however, is what to liquidate if the pathogenic material, as it was established, is not a foreign body but a dripstone on the texture of "I" proper? Let me ask again: do we incite fire or extinguish it, do we excise the foreign body (degeneration) or dissolve it?

What does all this mean in the subject of thinking aimed at complete indifference? For Freud, affects are by no means mindless movements of the soul. Affects act intelligently by creating façade formations, but they also form infiltrations resembling frescoes. The analyst, however, is not a minimalist painter aiming to wipe off these growths, but a sculptor carving away the unnecessary pathogenic formations. Perhaps a doctor-analyst is neither a neurosurgeon (knife), nor a pyrotechnician (fire), nor even a chemist (solvent), but indeed a sculptor chiseling through multiple distortions and into the proper form of the brain. After all, Freud himself says that a forceps delivery leaves a baby's skull cast in the shape of the mother's pelvis.⁷

A doctor exercises thinking and this is what allows him/her to "keep disengaged" rather than engaged foreplay with the subject comfortably reclining on the couch. This does not mean, however, that a doctor does not feel, on the contrary, a doctor senses to the extent that he/she serves as a sensitive canvas for the patient's unconsciousness. A doctor becomes a telephone receiver lacking a microphone, so to speak. Faded magic is also on the patient's side, who speaks in order to be heard, and therefore to be recognized as a worthy object of love. A patient wants his/her affect to be listened to – this way revealing the desire to be loved. This desire may indeed be heard or rather listened to, but it is never satisfied.

⁶ Sigmund Freud, *On Psychotherapy*, [in:] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume VII (1901-1905): *A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on Sexuality and Other Works*, 1904/1905. P. 245.

⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Observations on Transference-Love (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis III)*. [in:] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XII (1911-1913): *The Case of Schreber, Papers on Technique and Other Works*, 1915.

Façade Formations

Let us draw a provisional conclusion that affects think. Affect is not only a power, but it is also a meaning, and above all, it is an activity of intelligence creating façade formations. Façade formations go together with Freud's thoughts at every stage of his work. Dreams in *The Interpretation of Dreams* remind of the figure of Prince Hamlet – they are façades of nonsensicality concealing true thoughts and wishes.⁸ Libido from *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* is an “eternal wanderer” – founded on partial drives and only temporarily let out for the purpose of reproduction, i.e. the function of reproduction enlisted for the service. Here, reproduction becomes the façade of sexuality.⁹ Finally, the wit in *Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious*, this “double-tongued villain which serves two masters”, hides behind the façade of comedy.¹⁰ The essence of wit is to benefit from pleasure, i.e. the principle of saving. Even if, as Freud says, it resembles the savings that housewives make when going to a distant market to buy cheaper vegetables, they end up wasting time and money for the trip.¹¹ We, therefore, approach three façades; the facade of nonsense (dreams), the facade of reproduction (libido), and the facade of comedy (wit).

It is characteristic that for Freud it is only the technique of wit which allows relating thinking and affect in an uninhibited and unsuppressed manner. Laughter arises when the potential of psychic energy, previously invested to acquire suppressed objects, has become unnecessary or is superfluous. As a result, after unlocking, it can be freely moved to a different place. Wit liberates affects, but in itself, it is a shortcut in thinking, a path leading astray, and as such a kind of error in thinking or speaking. Since wit plays nonsense, it is a hilarity induced – according to Kant's formula – by “waiting for nothing”. Is it not why, following his study of wit, Freud can only write about humour, which in itself is a kind of stoical joy and elevated reconciliation with fate but most certainly not the retreat from affects nor the retreat from affection; it is intellect-affect. Humour is not a resentful or sarcastic irony; humour remains at the service of active forces.

8 Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, [in:] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume IV*, ed. J. Strachey, London: Hogarth Press. 1900/1957. p. 65.

9 Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*[in:] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume VII*. 1905/1953.

¹⁰ Sigmund Freud *Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious*, trans. A. A. Brill. New York: Moffat, Yard & Co. 1905/1990.

¹¹ Frojd, *Idem*, p. 25.

Amusingly, even modern cognitive science follows the same path in trying to reconcile affects and computation.¹² According to Daniel C. Dennett, wit motivates the mind to search for subtle omissions, errors, and scams in thinking, all threatening the violation of the coherence of our knowledge. A computer with a sense of humour is perhaps a Spinosian spiritual automaton, which, however, is capable of rejoicing. The one who laughs last probably thinks the slowest, and has little to none in free computations to spare. Automaton do not laugh, and cyborgs just chuckle.

When compared with Dennett, Freud goes much further in saying that wit – under the mantle of humour – reveals the inconsistencies of our knowledge and eliminates mental congestion, circumvents restrictions and opens sources of pleasure to which access was previously denied. Humour “ridicules” free invested reserves (non-invested libido). Laughter is at the services of saving, yet it mainly deals with squandering. Wit deals with revealing nonsense, but only to hide the semblance of sense. Like this drunkard, a teacher who, asked by his friend to stop drinking, replies: *I give lessons so that I can drink; so when I give up drinking I won't be giving lessons!*. Or like Thomas de Quincey who calls Christmas *the alcoholidays*.

Everything, therefore, resolves to understand the mental effort, and the nature of saving and draining saved energy. “It has seemed to us that the pleasure of wit originates from an *economy of expenditure in inhibition*, of the comic from an *economy of expenditure in thought*, and of humor from an *economy of expenditure in feeling*”.¹³ The psychic apparatus is a saving machine, a common savings bank that deals with the immediate waste of the currency saved. The sequence saving, profit, squandering – where the currency is “pleasure” – is the very syntax of wit; its syntagmatic axis. Only one joke Freud repeats twice: *A wife is like an umbrella, at worst one may also take a cab*.¹⁴ The benefit of pleasure seems to be the last justification, i.e. its determination in the last instance.

Man of Thought

I would like to confront this Freudian way of thinking about affects with the philosophy of Benedict Spinoza. Gilles Deleuze claims that the Spinozian idea of parallelism not only rejects any causality between mind and body but

¹² Hurley, Matthew M., Dennett, Daniel C., Adams, Reginald B., *Inside Jokes. Using Humor to Reverse-Engineer the Mind*, Cambridge: MIT Press. 2013.

¹³ Sigmund Freud *Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious*, trans. A. A. Brill. New York: Moffat, Yard & Co. 1905/1990. p. 201.

¹⁴ Freud, *Idem*, p. 56

that it also excludes any hierarchy between one and the other.¹⁵ However, this is not true. Even though the body exceeds just how we imagine our body and that thinking exceeds our awareness of thinking, it is still the body that serves as the model of every presentation. In humans it is the body, not the soul that commands both the order of our actions and our cognition. Spinoza explicitly writes that the more capable it is the body in comparison with other bodies in acting and in experiencing, the more capable of learning is the soul in comparison with others.¹⁶

In Spinoza's *Ethics*, "body" can be interpreted either kinetically or dynamically. In the first sense, a body, however small, is an aggregate composed of a finite number of parts. This aggregation, however, does not follow the dictate of some transcendent principle; a body is simply a set of relations between its own movement and the movement of other bodies. From this point of view, every living existence is not a form or even a dynamic ontogeny of forms (morphogenesis), but a set of dependencies and relations between different speeds, between the acceleration and deceleration of its parts and parts surrounding them.¹⁷

In dynamic terms, a body is something that has the ability (power) to affect other bodies and the sensitivity (feeling) to be influenced by other bodies. Therefore, it is a set of dispositions (affects) to influence and to be influenced. In this variant, a body is neither a form nor even a set of functions of various organs, nor is it a subject nor a substance, understood as something to which certain characteristics of an object can be ascribed. The decisive parameter when defining a body is the lower and the upper threshold, as well as the difference threshold (the minimum change in intensity that the organism is able to register). With such a definition of a body, the division into natural objects (products of evolution) and artificial objects (products of engineering) is unfounded and empty in its entirety, since from the point of view of the philosophy of immanence all objects are natural, and the factor that determines their naturalness is the plan of immanence and ordering the relation in this plan in accordance with the dynamic or kinetic principle. The philosophy of immanence is a kind of generalized ethology of such different bodies as a cell, thermostat, photoreceptor, engine, protein, eye, optical device, court, tree, novel, thermometer, or symphony.

A body can, therefore, be an animal, a collection of sounds, a mind, an idea, a linguistic corpus, and what is subject to study in a body is not its anat-

¹⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, San Francisco: City Lights Books. 1988. p.30.

¹⁶ Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, [in:] *Spinoza: Complete Works*, trans. Samuel Shirley and ed. Michael L. Morgan (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing. 1677/2002. p. 82.

¹⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin, New York: Zone Books. 1990.

omy or architecture, but something that Deleuze describes as *longitude (latitude)*.¹⁸ It is this zone that determines the field of influence of the body and its ability to register other powers. It does not constitute a boundary, but a fluid body environment. Every object or entity that simulates its integrity and durability (constancy in time and space) is a set of relations and abilities having specific amplitude, lower and upper thresholds and variations of possible transformations that characterize the trajectory of the existence of only this single object (body).

This philosophy, which avoids thinking about an intelligent project in terms of transcendence, however, commands us not only to break with the myth of the substantial unity of the body, but also commands us something much more radical – compositional and situational thinking of each individuality. Thinking, in accordance with the main ideas of the philosophy of immanence, should be focused on the composition of relations of power between different bodies. Spinoza's philosophy of immanence is to teach us the art of composing objects (intensity) into increasingly complex objects (intensities) – communities (systems, devices), and to the creation of a complete symphony of nature.

The primacy of the body in Spinoza's doctrine stems from the proposition XXXIX in the fifth part of *Ethics*, stating: "He whose body is capable of the greatest amount of activity has a mind whose greatest part is eternal".¹⁹ In the scholium, Spinoza develops this proposition albeit in another direction. There he writes: "he whose body is capable of very considerable activity has a mind which, considered solely in itself, is highly conscious of itself and of God and of things".²⁰ This manifold gift consists of letting the body be taken over by multiple and partial drives yet without resorting to any order. This is perhaps a praise of polymorphous perversity of the body, since the victory in alienating the world would entail the primacy of psychosis while the victory in suppressing multiple drives would entail the primacy of neurosis.

For Spinoza, the human mind, when considered solely in itself, is only an idea or otherwise, it is the knowledge of the human body. By no means, is it a kind of self-consciousness or higher consciousness, or yet the knowledge of knowledge, which warrants the knowledge itself. At its best, it is rather "a form of ideas" or a modus of thinking. "If one knows something, therefore, one thus knows that one knows it, and at the same time one knows that one knows, and so on to infinity".²¹ Finally, it is because of the body, and not be-

¹⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, San Francisco: City Lights Books. 1988. p.124.

¹⁹ Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, [in:] *Spinoza: Complete Works*, trans. Samuel Shirley and ed. Michael L. Morgan, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing. 1677/2002. p.370.

²⁰ *Idem*, p. 371.

²¹ *Idem*, p. 100.

cause of lack of knowledge, imagination or because of sheer ignorance, that we imagine the sun as being close, i.e. at a distance no more than two hundred feet. Knowledge does not correct anything because it is the body which contains the idea of the sun which stimulates the body. The constitution of the body constitutes and organizes the constitution and the organization of the imagination.

Spinoza anticipates Freud when he writes that drive is the essence of man, and that desire is nothing else but drive *and* its awareness.²² Spinoza adds that he sees no difference “[...] between the human impulse and desire, because whether or not a person is aware of his desire the desire remains the same”.²³ Affect alone is barely the excitation of the body which sustains, increases or decreases the potential for action. As sadness diminishes or inhibits the power for action, joy increases our ability to act. “Joy and sorrow, and hence the affects composed from these and derivative are passive states [...]”.²⁴ Let us note, however, that passivity does not entail indifference. On the contrary, this passivity means permanent infection by affects and restless fidgeting of multiple desires which are continuously excited by an out-of-tune instrument delivering yet new sounds including howling, snarling, giggles – all thanks to the random indifference of nature.

Contrary Affect

Let us, therefore, return to the question of affect and the question of idea (representation). According to Spinoza, what forms a certain state (*constitutio*) of the affected body are affection-images or otherwise complexes of affections-images and affects-feelings producing each time a state different from the previous one in that it is characterized by higher or lower perfection. Ideas-affections, therefore, in their duration are subject to modulation of intensity. “The series defining the duration or change are referred to as “affects” or affections (*affectus*)”.²⁵ As a general rule, the affection (*affectio*) refers to the body, whereas the affect (*affectus*) to the mind. The affection, therefore, concerns merely the existence of a given state of affection of the body, whereas the affect (*affectus*) refers to multiple passages (changes) between one state and another.²⁶ Affections are thus akin to edges (curbs), whereas affects are akin to bridges (folds).

²² Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, [in:] *Spinoza: Complete Works*, trans. Samuel Shirley and ed. Michael L. Morgan (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing). 1677/2002. Str.105.

²³ *Idem*, p. 54.

²⁴ *Idem*, p. 87.

²⁵ *Idem*, p. 54.

²⁶ *Idem*, p. 87.

Ideas represent certain things or states of things, whereas feelings involve the passages in between those states of things which come at a variable intensity corresponding to the variation of states. Under the natural conditions of perception, the ideas represent what happens to our body and the effects of other bodies on ours, and therefore, they represent a concoction of the two. Such ideas indeed are images. Images are corporeal affections themselves with traces of external bodies' influence. As such, ideas always comprise the idea of image and affection and reflect the presence of external bodies. The manner in which these ideas are connected is primarily in accordance with the order provided by memory or habit. It follows that the order of memory is the product of random encounters between bodies.

As long as our feelings are the effect of random affection, the content of these is the resultant of the nature of affection on the one hand and the hazy images blended in our state on the other. Spinoza refers to these affects as a "passive state", that is the instance of sheer reactivity, while Freud calls them façade or pathogenic formations (themes) which should be dissolved. Spinoza seems to believe that only the idea of the internally induced *affectio*, or, in other words, self-excitement – albeit indicating the internal consistency of our constitution with that of other bodies – may produce affects featuring instantaneous activity. It is the instance which Spinoza refers to as "active state".

Such a constitution affects is accompanied by a special intellectual (analytical) apparatus. Thinking based on nominal definitions is exercised only in abstraction which is parasitic on external descriptions and employs definitions such as that of a circle; the set of all points in a plane that are equidistant from a given point called the centre of the circle. In contrast, real definitions are of a genetic character: they indicate the cause for the thing or its genetic components e.g., a circle is the movement of a line of which one end is fixed. Real definitions are not semantic postulates, they are simultaneously the explication and the implication (perception) of things. They are thus able to capture not only the characteristics of a thing but also capture its movement. Such is the thinking which may foster active affects.

Adequate ideas constitute a regular set and cannot be disconnected from the contexture of ideas placed in the attribute of thinking. This contexture is also the order of understanding and perceiving things, a coincident expression of the order of ideas and the order of events, which altogether makes of the mind nothing but a spiritual automaton. According to Freud, Leonardo provides us with a fine example of such a spiritual automaton. A true (adequate) idea presents nothing – it is but an expression of its cause, thus delivering its genetic definition. A spiritual automaton involves silent indifference. Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* represents no actual thing, such as the wife

of the Florentine cloth and silk merchant Francesco del Giacondo. The sole cause and reason for Mona Lisa's smile is the smile of Leonardo's biological mother whom our "Italian Faust" lost at the time of her death.

I believe that it is in proposition VII of Part Four of *Ethics* that we should find of particular pertinence in our considerations. Therein, Spinoza claims that an emotion cannot be checked or destroyed otherwise than by contrary emotion which is stronger than the earlier emotion, thereby compelling us to conclude that thinking alone does not have the power to stop affects. Thinking, in fact, is yet another affect. It is hardly surprising that a statement granted that the proposition XXXI of the first part renders intellect in action not as an abstract thinking but a certain mode of thinking, different from other *modi*, such as desire or love.²⁷ A desire originating in reason may arise only from the affect of joy, which, however, is not a passive state. It is an affect induced alongside the process of thinking. The affect of joy is a thought understood as a vector of action of the affect.

Spinoza states clearly and categorically: all our desires inherently arise from our nature in such a manner that they can be either understood by itself – since they are its immediate (direct) cause – or by us as being part of nature. It is the very desires arising from our nature in such a way that they can be understood by itself that are the cause of adequate ideas. Other desires belong in the imaginary register, and, consequently, to inadequate ideas. Eventually, therefore, Spinoza equals the status of affect with that of idea where he stresses that "an affect which is a passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it"²⁸ and later goes on to suggest that "there is no other power of the mind than the power of thought and of forming adequate ideas"²⁹.

Spinoza, in the summary of the fifth part of *Ethics*, entitled, *Of the Power of the Intellect or on Human Freedom*, states that the power of the mind over the affections relies on a set of regulations and devices. First, it rests in the very knowledge of the emotions. Second, it rests in the ability to detach the emotions from the thought of their external cause which the subject always imagines confusedly. Thirdly, it rests in the matter of time in respect of which the affections related to things that we understand are considered superior to those affections that are confused. Fourth, it rests in „the number of causes whereby those affections are fostered which are related to the common prop-

²⁷ Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, [in:] *Spinoza: Complete Works*, trans. Samuel Shirley and ed. Michael L. Morgan (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing). 1677/2002. p.44.

²⁸ Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, [in:] *Spinoza: Complete Works*, trans. Samuel Shirley and ed. Michael L. Morgan (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing). 1677/2002. p.339.

²⁹ *Idem*, p. 342.

erties of things”³⁰ Fifth, and lastly, the power of intellect over affections rests in the architecture, the order of the mind, whereby the mind can arrange its emotions.

When taken literally, the above postulates may stir a lot of confusion. The power over affects can be conceived otherwise than through reference to knowledge, separation of affect and thought, time of affection, the number of stimuli nor the way they link. Spinoza’s theory of affects compels us to think (1) thought as emotion, (2) expression as causality, (3) transmission speed as the function of the throughput of the link, and (4) priming as the persistent advantage of thought over affect. The human brain even without organs is still not blank, nor is it a phantom of the brain or a spiritual automaton. Instead, it ought to be thought of as possessing unlimited computational power. Such a brain laughs first at a joke. I cannot imagine the sound of his laughter. Perhaps the closest to it would be hissing.

Conatus (Beyond Death Drive)

Deleuze rightly discerns at least three ways of reading Spinoza’s central concept of *conatus* (power, striving). First, *conatus* can be understood as a commitment to persevere in existing, sustaining life and circularity of being. This is a mechanical definition of *conatus*, which makes of it a tool of the death drive. From Hobbes to Freud, both philosophy of life and political philosophy were philosophies of self-preservation, i.e. sustaining life. Yet, paradoxically, these philosophies were becoming philosophies of death.

When today Rosi Braidotti speaks on behalf of the subject founded on plenitude rather than scarcity and defends the idea of sustainability,³¹ this may be construed as confusing *conatus* understood as perseverance (survival) with *conatus* understood as composing and adding. In a second determination, the *conatus* is a pseudo-dialectic force opposing any disturbances and threats, and as such it negates, defends, avoids, wanders, cheats, and deceits. Hegel in his dialectic of master and servant gives perhaps the first outlook of this strange logic of deception and deferring death through deception, whereby life gets dispersed in a multitude of petty deaths and their simulations. It is in this sense that we may see in the *conatus* a set of defence mechanisms and a power to create façade formations. Finally, in a third determination, the *conatus* is a dynamic force aimed at enhancing the power of understanding; as such it involves the freedom to react and create compositions (collectives).

³⁰ *Idem*, p. 355.

³¹ Braidotti Rosi, *The Posthuman*, Polity Press, 2013.

In this final determination *conatus* stands for reason, here understood as a power to select and organize.

Here, let me ponder on the question of freedom to respond and how it relates to feeling or sensing things. What, in fact, is a sensation? In *Bergsonism*, Deleuze defines it as “the operation of contracting trillions of vibrations onto a receptive surface”.³² In his further writings, notably in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, Deleuze repeats this thought, stating that: “[...] chaos would be a universal giddiness, the sum of all possible perceptions being infinitesimal or infinitely minute; but the screen would extract differentials that could be integrated in ordered perceptions”.³³ The closest image of sensing things that we may get is that of a carousel, with all dizziness, fainting, sleep inertia, a multitude of impressions understood as forces. In this image of feeling consists of a trillion of minute perceptions, vibrations, glows, flashes, irrelevant signals, and noises which can be assigned to no perceptible shape (*Gestalt*). Deleuze monotonously repeats that what captures the semblance of sensing things is neither form nor function, neither structure nor figure but brushwork and texture.

Personally, I do not share Deleuze’s belief in the possibility of deriving all three formulas of *conatus* from one affirmative concept of life. Sadly, it is far from being true. It is only in *conatus* understood as striving to amplify the power to act and experience joyful and non-passive affects where we find affirmative power.³⁴ The pseudo-dialectic concept of *conatus* seems to suggest that affects-affections (*affectus*) are nothing other than its pseudo-figurations that arise when *conatus* is determined to do something in response to external stimulation (*affectio*) which is accidental to the body, and the nature and strength of which the body does not understand. Finally, *conatus* understood as pure duration is simply a struggle for survival, it is a pure death drive³⁵, maniacally struggling to preserve its existence.

Reactive forces decompose and separate the active power from its potential, confounding and conflicting the power and consent. Active powers not only associate, but they also acquiesce to being influenced. Sensitivity understood as power involves subjecting to influence and being free from long-term memory.³⁶ If, however, the capacity to be affected is to be perceived as the proper (real) and not just imaginative power to act, then it can be ef-

³² Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, New York: Zone Books, 1988. p. 74.

³³ Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, London: Athlone Press, 1993.

³⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, New York: Zone Books, 1988. str. 120.

³⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson. Foreword by Michael Hardt, Columbia University Press. 2006.

³⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, trans. Constantine Boundas, Columbia University Press, New York. 1991.

fected only by active affection i.e. free short-term memory, which entails that the freedom from infiltrations i.e., the elimination and final dissolution of affects-images, liberation from unnecessary growths in the body through the application of the method *per via di levare*, is, in fact, equal to giving consent to the state of minute deaths. In destroying these infiltrations, we also destroy our egos. Perhaps the state following such a liberation (self-destruction) is not that of general indifference, but a friendly and sometimes gallows-like humour. After all, is thinking not designed to give an account of the chaos, in which the brain as the cognitive subject is immersed? Does the consent to such self-destruction not require gallows humour in the first place?

Conclusions (Cymbals)

It was in the early work on the philosophy of David Hume, where Deleuze argued that the subject of empiricism is never given but rather made of the data and constituted by the rules made of data and founded on a fantasy that goes beyond what is given.³⁷ The subject of empiricism is resonance, yet it is not the resonance produced by wind instruments as long as the players are blowing, but by stringed instruments, where after each stroke the strings produce vibrations and where the sound disappears in duration, that is, where the disappearance of vibrations spans in time. It is this kind of resonance where the “principles of emotions” need to synchronize (align) with the rules of association. The only instrument capable of such a “detuned harmonic” is a percussion section, and more specifically – cymbals.

The mind is a percussion section; it is a constellation (apparatus and organ]) devoid of organization. A percussion section is a musical instrument in the state of madness. The image of brain lobes is that of cymbals. “Madness – Deleuze writes – is human nature related to the mind, just as good sense is the mind related to human nature; each one is the reverse of the other. This is the reason why we must reach the depths of madness and solitude in order to find a passage to good sense”.³⁸ When fiction of representation becomes the principle, then thinking ceases to reflect and correct. Reason is a fantasy transmuted into nature. Thinking manifests itself as madness because originally it is the madness of a percussion section. An orderly system can be derived just as easily from the folds of the abdomen as from the texture of the brain

³⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, trans. Constantine Boundas, Columbia University Press, New York, 1991, p. 84.

³⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*. trans. Tom Conley, London: Athlone Press, 1993.

or vibrations produced by cymbals. Thinking, indeed, is a dangerous exercise. The brain understood as a defence against the chaos of the world is unable to innovatively respond to its own chaos. Brain-cymbals are immersed in great ignorance, i.e., general indifference. The brain does not distinguish between affections of the world and self-excitement.

Such was Freud's premonition from the very onset. Freud constantly revolves around psychosis, yet he never approaches it close enough. It is perhaps a mistake to think of the nervous system in terms of registers, representations, etc. i.e. to understand it as the organ designed to form representations. Perhaps the brain does not represent anything, but instead instantly sketches out the whole multitude and multiplicity of all possible actions. Considering "humour" of the brain we should challenge the question of representation formed by an anvil experiencing a growing number of hammer blows. Would the chaos of consecutive strokes be applied to the canvas of orderly representations thereby producing infiltrations? Or, would this spontaneous hammering bring a harmony from the melody or, yet, a melody from the harmony?³⁹ Anvil is not an indifferent instrument even though it is by no means a sensitivity screen nor is it a telephone receiver. Neither is it a telephone switchboard.

Perhaps this concerto for anvil allows us to hear a reversed-laughter or, rather, a bizarre-sounding crescendo of murderers. Myself, I am not sure whether or not this laughter belongs to a victim.⁴⁰ For Bergson, laughter is caused by a shift from what is living to what is dead, i.e. the degradation of what is living to the state of mechanical deadness and mechanical repetition. "A really living life should never repeat itself" – states Bergson.⁴¹ The living of brain-cymbals is repeated only in the mantle of folds of the consecutive cymbals-lobes as they are vibrating along the stimulation of a spiritual automaton.

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³⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*. trans. Tom Conley, London: Athlone Press, 1993

⁴⁰ The weleit Klaus. *Das Lachen der Täter: Brevik u.a.. Psychogramm der Tötungslust [The Laughter of Killers: Beivik et al. A Psychogram of Killing for Pleasure]*, Residenz Verlag. 2015.

⁴¹ Bergson, Henri. *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. Cloudsley Brereton and Fred Rothwell, Los Angeles: Green Integer. 1999/1911.

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