

Article

Spinoza and Bergson Through and Beyond Deleuze: Freedom as Undissociated Joy

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Abstract

Two related problems, problems of (in-)compatibility, are addressed to understand Deleuze's philosophical project and to deepen our understanding of his use of Spinoza and Bergson: that of the compatible and incompatible features of Spinozism and Bergsonism, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the status of metaphysical compatibilism with respect to freedom in all three of their philosophies. I trace the incompatibilities and insist on the value of reopening the problem partially covered up by Deleuze's creative engagement. Spinoza and Bergson remain incompatible despite Deleuze's mixture, and metaphysically, Bergson and Deleuze explicitly affirm the coexistence of incompatible ingredients as constitutive of our very existence and freedom. Some version of metaphysical incompatibilism is affirmed by all three. Life, consciousness, and freedom force us to think of an irreducible incompatibility as constitutive, the coexistence of necessity and freedom, on the one hand, and a movement beyond teleology and mechanism, on the other. Deleuze's radical pluralism rejects the value of reconciliation and instead deploys an expanding multiplicity of incompatibilities. I flag certain parallels and resonances between Spinoza and Bergson that are not common Deleuzian themes and suggest that Jean-Marie Guyau provides an alternative link to Bergsonism through his spiritualist Spinozism. Despite Bergson's criticisms of Spinoza, they shared a moral notion of freedom expressed in intellectual generosity, which I characterize as undissociated joy.

Keywords: Deleuze; Spinoza; Bergson; freedom; compatibilism; history of philosophy

1. Dissociating Time and Eternity

Can you mix a philosopher of the eternal with a philosopher of the temporary?

There are many divergences and resonances between two of Deleuze's greatest influences; most noteworthy of all is a resonance without resemblance between Bergson's view of freedom, as emerging from contingent moments of hesitation in consciousness, and Spinoza's freedom, as a free necessity of intelligence acting from its own nature. Intensity and affectivity are central to each of these philosophers, and their views of freedom depend on descriptions of an operative psychological cause by which humans improve their minds and their understanding of life—what Spinoza and Bergson call intuition. The former defines intuition by the formal reality of the idea and the free necessity of intellect's affirmation; the latter links intuition to the virtuality of pure memory and explains it through dissociation. Both understand freedom through what we today call *attunement*, the psycho-physiological patterning that orchestrates psychical life in various activities. Shaping and steering our way in life, it is rooted in, and yet also can be hindered by, the sensory-motor systems of the living body. Attunement encapsulates attention, mood, and



Academic Editor: Paul Patton

Received: 21 April 2026

Revised: 31 May 2026

Accepted: 5 June 2026

Published: 29 June 2026

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relevance filtering; it winnows and focuses experience, dissociating from what is deemed irrelevant or lacks valence, canalizing and foregrounding the appearance of affordances. In some sense—and without having sufficiently foregrounded such a pronouncement—it could be said that all metaphysical problems are problems of dissociation: abstraction and quantification dissociate from the intensity of life and death. Both Bergson and Spinoza reject this typical state of the mind, the attunement of the average human born of the practical need of life and custom: its epistemology and cognitive structuring, built on chance encounters and attuned to utility, is unphilosophical because it is distracted or dissociated from the totality of existence. And finally, both use their views of freedom to promote an ethics of generosity, mutual aid, and empowerment through a collective effort to understand and philosophize, i.e., to promote *undissociated joy*.

And yet, it appears that Spinoza's philosophy marches towards eternal rest and tranquility in the unchanging power of divine unity—the infinite intellect—an absolute positive necessitarianism. Bergson rather went for duration and becoming, rejected absolute determinism in favor of an indeterminacy and contingency found in the living duration of effort and creativity. Each appear to dissociate from one of philosophy's perennial extremes, the eternal and the temporary.

By reopening consideration of several incompatibilities between Bergson and Spinoza, my goal is neither to argue for nor against the viability of a Deleuzian synthesis nor to engage directly with Deleuze's interpretations of them, or their place in his own work. I suspect any direct comparison of them by Deleuze in text or lecture would exhibit a profound sense of certain incompatibilities and disagreements between his two teachers, even though the only such instance I can find displays no such caution (e.g., [1]). He was not accustomed to overgeneralizing similarities between historical thinkers, and yet his extensions of each of his inspirations beyond their particular horizons have no doubt proven to be philosophically rich. My aim is to evoke the value of further scholarly reflection on the topics themselves, which have both contemporary and historiological relevance, through and beyond Deleuze's framing.

There are many parallels between Spinoza's and Bergson's views of movement and intuition, their critiques of Descartes, and teleology that we will examine carefully. Above all, they both were committed to harmonizing science and metaphysics, knowledge and morality, and did so by diagnosing the sources and remedies to political and social dysfunction in relation to *affective life*. These undeniable resonances that Deleuze exploits center on their different but, in some ways, complementary views of intensity and affectivity, even though, according to Aktas [2]¹, Deleuze is not entirely faithful to Spinoza's view of affects.

Some will object to calling Spinoza a "compatibilist" rather than a strict determinist or necessitarian. Even though Spinoza reduces all causes to the modality of necessity, and openly rebuked and dismantled Descartes' indeterminate free will, and even though Bergson and countless others have misread him as a mechanistic determinist. The truth is that Spinoza did think freedom and free causality were real and even achievable by humans, and that we need to consider the modalities of possibility and contingency in order to get there ([3] E4d3, 4d4). In fact, all three of these philosophers can be considered metaphysical compatibilists, insofar as metaphysical compatibilism consists of preserving aspects of both libertarian freedom and naturalistic necessity; they fit together the modal incompatibilities by offering alternative forms of causality based on what could be called organismic compatibilism. Bergson rejected what he took as Spinoza's failed compatibilism for its strict parallelism and put forward a new model of compatibilism based on perpendicularity. As we will see, the perpendicularity affirms an irreducible incompatibility between not only epistemic vectors (science and metaphysics) but also ontological levels (actual and virtual, becoming and being). Above all, a compatibilism worth anything must be one

that faces and attempts to handle the incompatibilities endemic to the concepts of natural necessity and supernatural freedom, not merely ignoring or repressing one or the other.

There are many forms of compatibilism from the history of philosophy which are by no means, for that fact, compatible with each other—they often tend to be either more idealistic or more materialistic, organic or mechanical, empirical or phenomenological, or for affirming or rejecting representational models. There are also incompatibilities between the various ideas of a single compatibilist thinker taken on their own. If we manage to be careful readers of any particular philosopher, we will find incompatible vantage points and conclusions across their corpus ([4] p. 51).

There are many Spinozas: diverse and incongruent vantage points within his works, that of modes and substance or of duration and eternity (cf. [5]). Similar difficulties accompany squaring the different claims of *Theological Political Treatise* [6] with the *Ethics* [3] or even between the elements of proof and the scholia and appendices of the *Ethics* itself, especially the contrasting tone between the appendix of part one compared to the preface to part four. A Spinoza who rejects the finite and transient to one who devotes all his care and effort to developing the mind within the realm of ignorance so as to escape it. There is a Spinoza who radically rejects teleology, freedom, and religion, and a Spinoza who accepts these concepts by his own framing as the activity of conatus, free necessity, and intellectual generosity. Deleuze himself used the old condemnation “Spinoza the atheist,” while others say the religiosity of part five is either a ruse or a blunder, as Jonathan Bennet famously called it “dangerous rubbish” [7]. Others, like Della Rocca and Carlisle, have defended the coherence of his works. It is my contention that the many Spinozas cannot consist of an actual unity forming a static concept of the whole system, but is rather a movement that harbors potentialities in the dynamic and transformative event of thinking: there is a thought that emerges from traversing incompatible vantage points that, even if it does not resolve the tension, it brings about a new and much needed set of insights in contemporary philosophical thinking.

Whatever each of us might think of Spinoza’s philosophy—our various allegiances or refusal, our inspirations taken, or recoils away from him—we can hardly deny the fecundity of his writing to produce a reaction, or even to transform the minds of readers, both for and against him. Above all, philosophers like Hegel or Deleuze appear to gain a sense of license from Spinoza, as if reading him made them certain of their purpose, what they must achieve in philosophy. His philosophy has had perhaps one of the most varied dispersion of reactions and interpretations, philosophically, spiritually, esthetically, and politically (see [8]). As Bergson said of the *élan vital*, just so the force of Spinoza’s thought itself is a *vis à tergo* which explodes like a firework out in diverging directions through dissociation. The *élan* of life, according to Bergson, tends both towards its own increase and enrichment in animality and intuitive metaphysics, or its diminishment and insensitivity in plant life and static, logical modes of thought ([9] pp. 93–132, 259–261). A personality is not a simple identity or empty subject. Rather, its actuality is exceeded by virtualities that together form an intensive multiplicity, implicating divergent tendencies, the paths closed off in life as much as those taken. There is a “multiple unity of the person” ([10] p. 148; cf. [9] p. 226) which permits profound changes in horizon by which diverging personae would actualize our individuations in ways that close off certain tendencies of the embryonic whole of the personality. The invention of the self is accomplished by a dissociation and repression of parts of the self that distract it from its commitments. The various commitments of Spinoza resist a simple dissociation. His affirmation of the body, of the reality of organism, and life, or his leveraging of infinity and geometrical ideas, each of his themes can and has been lifted and put to work in unique directions, disengaged from their context; they have spawned materialisms, idealisms, intellectualisms, physicalisms, and spiritualisms².

Spinoza's philosophy has produced a multiplicity of incompatible schools and has been interpreted in vastly different ways at different times.

When Deleuze reads the “we don't know what a body can do” ([11] pp. 17–19, [12] pp. 256–257), he opens the avenue of becoming for new concepts in materialism (cf. [12] pp. 237–238)³. He also appears to leave behind certain spiritualist commitments that Bergson rehabilitated [13]. Claire Carlisle [14] reads Spinoza as a tender and gentle-minded philosopher who exhibited the virtues he praised: piety, generosity, and caution. These virtues express true religion, all that we desire and do to promote the empowerment of all people by fostering collaborative virtue building. Here, another spiritualist reading of Spinozism emerges, not unlike the French spiritualist, Jean-Marie Guyau, or certain themes found in the German romantics. Carlisle pushes back against several Deleuzian themes, especially his insistence on an absolute immanence in Spinoza (pp. 61–62). I follow Gábor Boros [15], both in his wider interpretive strategy and in seeing the materialist reading as a fashionable overstatement that winds up missing the point Spinoza was actually making in this scholium (E3p2s). The scholia are generally more polemic and thus tend to exaggerate things to make a methodological move. While Spinoza sounds Nietzschean in a rebuke reminiscent of the despisers of the body, unlike Nietzsche, Spinoza “certainly would not have written sentences such as, ‘But the awakened, the knowing one says: body am I through and through, and nothing besides; and soul is just a word for something on the body.’ [quoted from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*]” ([15] p. 13). There is more to Spinoza than materialism or atheism; he was no despiser of the soul, and perhaps, even after Bergson and Deleuze, today we still do not know what Spinoza can do in metaphysics and theology.

As will become clear, I do not think Spinoza himself or his arguments are contradictory or inconsistent, but that they demand careful study to hold in tension what appears incompatible. In the conclusion, I will not remain agnostic to the many Spinozas, but neither will I present my own final portrait that would determine the scope and contribution of each of these thinkers. Rather, the aim is to examine the multiple parallels and incompatibilities with Bergson, and with Deleuze, not to promote a mere free-for-all, or insinuate that there is no determinable, coherent core to Spinoza's, Bergson's, or Deleuze's ventures. I find that the take-what-you-want, free-for-all—in which antagonistic schools appropriate different parts, tools, concepts, lenses, but not the whole or the insights needed to envelop them all—loses something that is of great value. While these incompatible appropriations have proven useful in the development of new modes of thought, they miss out on the power of thinking all the incompatible elements together, e.g., as they are woven dynamically across Spinoza's various projects and texts, and as only intuitive intelligence can apprehend. The risk with Deleuze's teaching of Spinoza is losing the ethical attachments, maintaining the undissociated joy which integrates the incompatibilities without neutralizing them. I will thus end with some general reflections on the project of philosophy as such, as well as the way we (re)read and interpret historical texts.

2. Deleuze: Incompatibilist Pluralism

Far from denying the existence of duration, Spinoza defines the continual variations of existence by duration, and seems in fact to consider it as the last refuge of the bad. ([11] p. 39)

While Deleuze [11,16,17] has been instrumental in speeding up and fomenting a resurgence of interest and scholarship in both Spinoza and Bergson, both sympathetic and polemical scholars have also resisted aspects of his readings (e.g., [15,18,19]). A typical sympathetic interpretation explains away or ignores the incompatibilities of Bergson and Spinoza by means of Deleuzian concepts so that their relation is understood through his transgressive differential metaphysics: a becoming sweeps themes and strategies away

from their original embeddedness in traditional polemics and doctrines, sets them free in lines of flight. This implies extracting and transforming the operative methodologies, and at its best is disburdening them from the false problems and badly stated questions of history, while remaining at risk of contracting involuntary dissociations, ignoring, and repressing the counter tendencies. Ford [20] baldly formulates the basic form of Deleuze appropriation as follows: Deleuze seeks to “repeat the gesture by which these thinkers resist the move to transcendence. It is a question not of content, but of method” (p. 172). Deleuze marches forward with them to his left and right under the banner of the philosophy of imminence and difference. Deleuze’s original philosophy comes about by mobilizing their methodologies, adapting them to new problems, undistracted by the clash of crystallized doctrines. He dissociated from these concerns to pursue a creative project unencumbered by them. While there is a virtue here, a power worth wielding in moderation, we risk erasing and forgetting the present question: can Deleuze really be both Bergsonian and Spinozist?

Before pressing these questions of incompatibility, we must give voice to the many lines of resonance, what might well be called a *resonance without resemblance*. It was not by artificial fabrication that Deleuze could unite ideas from Spinoza and Bergson, not by misreading them, and yet, what I found in my research on this question surprised me, namely that many of the compelling compatibilities, parallels, and resonances are not overtly Deleuzian themes, and some are even divergent and incompatible with Deleuze’s own philosophical commitments. I would go so far as to call for a post-Deleuzian revival of the moral psychology and metaphysics of generosity found in both, yet largely abandoned by Deleuze’s extreme or exaggerated rejection of attachments. Following Aktas, his ethical minimalism commits to an infinitesimally small standard for the event: that it be new. Spinoza and Bergson propose much more restrictive commitments to articulating the goal and standard of philosophy and ethics: not merely maximizing novelty or intensity, but also composing and optimizing shared intensities, collaborative active affects that are not exhausting, but rather, regenerative and cautiously protect and preserve the multiplicity, plasticity, and potency.

Acknowledging the philosophical value of freely lifting ideas from the history of philosophy while also remaining committed to tracing incompatibilities and attending to the nuances of difference, we may still ask a further line of questions: could we say that Deleuze has a greater allegiance to one or the other of the two? Who did he take more from? Whose work did he have to abandon more of? Did he Bergsonify Spinoza more than the reverse? If absolute freedom is a persistent commitment for Deleuze (a theme perhaps borrowed from Sartre, yet transformed, cf. [21]), it will be hard not to see him slightly closer to Bergson and the indeterminacy of free expression. Deleuze is sort of a ‘compatibilist’ insofar as he accepts aspects of both necessity and freedom from the Stoics, Lucretius, Spinoza, and Bergson, and yet he also professed a metaphysical incompatibilism by refusing to dissolve the incompatibilities in freedom and necessity, even making it constitutive of reality and the will (e.g., the three syntheses of time in *Difference and Repetition* [22], or the coexistence of the integral past, the plane of movement, and a thousand integral planes of consciousness in *Bergsonism* [16]).

Thus, compatibility and incompatibility shape Deleuze’s various commitments to freedom and necessity, if these labels still have any use for us in the Deleuzian field of problems and concepts, or even in Bergson, for that matter. One might well say that Deleuze had already surpassed the frame of concepts in which “compatibilism” is a useful label, just as he abandoned the *common sense* that Bergson wielded in the name of freedom. Compatibilism might well have appeared to him as answering a false problem, born of the representational image of thought which sees necessity and freedom as an antinomy or logical contradiction ([22] ch. 3). The incongruence of compatibilism and incompatibilism

might rather be viewed as ontologically generative, creativity as such. Affectivity, motion, intensity, all that cannot be represented or made fully present to consciousness, envelop the incompatibilities without resolution, and generate a dramatic philosophy of difference. Deleuze's ideas reflect the very pluralistic affirmation of incongruent ingredients, not just diverse, even incompatible inspirations, but *a fortiori*, the affirmation that ingredients of reality itself are not just irreducibly different, but incompatible, and this is generative of sense and existence.

(Before continuing, let me say that I love Deleuze and that his work was not only massively formative for me, but that it is partly because of him that I came to read Spinoza and Bergson—not exclusively but decisively. Wherever my synoptic gathering leads in what follows, know that I do not wish to diminish, take down, or dismiss his inimitable contributions, but to augment, suspend, and syncopate what has become functionally muted in its reception.)

3. Reading Them with and Against Each Other

Bergson's philosophical intuition of duration (as creative invention) from which his view of freedom took shape, emerged in response to the Cartesian philosophies as much as the mechanists like Spencer, and of course, to the intellectualism of Kant. In the final analysis, when measuring his own contributions to philosophy, Bergson reports he rejected the systems of Spinoza, overcoming its weaknesses and exaggerations: necessity and determinism, hyper-rationalism that eliminates freedom, over-values geometry, and gets stuck in the empty notion of static eternity ([9] ch. 4, pp. 297–306). I think he believed this story that he told in his lectures and monographs, since his tune stays largely the same across his early and late works. Rejecting Spinoza's account of "psychological automata" structures the flow of the text of his doctoral thesis from start to finish [23], the very framing of the qualitative multiplicity of psychological states as intensive, heterogeneous multiplicities ([23] p. 18–19) comes from a gloss on Spinoza's description of the affects such as pity (Ep3p22) and its progression towards compassion (Ep3p27c3) and generosity (Ep4p37s1; [3] pp. 166, 168, 218). But Bergson also painted Spinoza's modes as mechanistic ([24] p. 178) rather than finding in the complex relational structure of modes, a dynamic and self-organizing causality that creates no break in the absolute necessity of reality, while allowing for a multiplicity of singular expressions of free necessity—each *conatus* is a living organism embedded in ecological webs of relations. Bergson apparently does not see this dynamic and organismic face of necessity that appears in the progressive intensification of active affects—a gradually emerging freedom that transforms the sensory motor system so that our action and participation in collective actions bring an increase in joy and virtue.

Bergson also gave some leeway in developing what could be called a 'deconstructive' strategy—reading Spinoza against himself. Bergson writes that "for Spinoza, there are thrusts of intuition that cause the system to crack" ([9] p. 298/346). This mirrors his statement in the *Freedom* course: "Spinoza was an intellectualist by an effort of the will, and there are passages in the *Ethics*, especially in the last book, where Spinoza's intellectualism seems ready to crack, as it were, due to the effects of an inner thrust or an inner pressure" ([24] p. 187/260)⁴. This inner pressure comes, of course, from the intensive affects, the joy and expressive power involved in intuitive knowledge.

Despite being more amenable to a durational-intensive view of affects than Bergson typically acknowledged, there remain some real, perhaps insurmountable, differences. By focusing on intensity as qualitative, continuous multiplicity in *Time and Free Will* [23], we see that Bergson thinks through and beyond Spinozan affects to find indetermination as indispensable to them. The progression of complex emotions described in chapter one (e.g., pity and esthetic sentiments) exhibits two anti-Spinozist affirmations: indetermina-

tion and a non-mechanical process of invention. But Bergson errs by over-mechanizing Spinoza ([9] p. 305), losing the dynamic sense of infinity made intelligible through intensity. The introduction of indetermination is authentically anti-Spinozan. But this begins to fall apart on further scrutiny; if Bergsonian indetermination adds some genuinely new form of causal efficacy, is it meaningfully different from the nuanced view of Spinoza, namely, the formal reality of an idea that determines us to act and think by the content of its affirmation (E2p49)?

The fundamental point of irreconciliation hinges on the meaning of geometry. Bergson takes it in its most superficial sense, as quantity and space, rather than in relation to essence, idea, and infinity, as Spinoza does. Bergson defines matter as duration being weighed down by geometry ([9] p. 316/368). Nevertheless, he concedes in the same passage that there is an essence of both life and consciousness, reopening the door to Spinoza's organismic view of the geometrical via essences. Spinoza's singular essences are the causal influence of a self-organizing force, the autopoietic causal influence in all living things. By treating the emotions as if they follow the same necessity as the composition of lines, surfaces, and figures in geometry does not entail anything mechanistic or quantitative, but as we will see below, encompasses the vital activity of the organism (following Viljanen [28] and Jonas [29]). Just as a triangle is more than mere lines and points, although that is all they are composed of. Perhaps there is something like a *law of composition* that says that *the composition of two essences introduces a new essence irreducible to its components* (cf. [11] p. 64)⁵. The parts as integrated in the whole are different than the parts existing as uncomposed. Compositional essences are unique essences, all essences are unique, singular, and eternal ([11] p. 65). Recall that power, virtue, *conatus*, perfection, and essence are nearly synonymous (E5p25) if not fully, and "desire is the very essence or nature of each person" (E3p56) even though each term is defined separately and should not be completely collapsed into the others. He explicitly states that the "first essence" of the mind is the *conatus* of the body (E3p10) and that our essence, therefore, can become something else, can change. Desire is the *conatus* as directed by an affect of pleasure or pain, love or hate. "We see therefore that the mind can undergo great changes. Sometimes it passes to greater perfection and sometimes to lesser perfection" (E3p11s1). Each effect composes a specific way of endeavoring, compounded out of the particularities of essences stemming from the emotional and situational particulars (E3p56). Joy has the essential feature of increasing one's power of acting, virtue, and perfection, expanding and enriching our essence: the path of joy leads to our highest endeavoring, our highest virtue which is also our highest singular essence (5p25), and "the third kind of cognition depends on the mind as on a formal cause insofar as the mind itself is eternal" (E5p13). Our essence becomes an intuitive, intellectual love of God, since what we are is our desire, and the more we understand singular things intuitively, the more we understand God (E5p24) and the more we act from piety and generosity. This perspective of essence as unique, eternal, and infinite is not at odds with the gradual transformation of our essence as we become virtuous and free. At its base is the geometrical notion that essences are infinitely expressive and compound to form new singular essences. "Freedom is always linked to essence. . .not to will and to what governs it." [11].

Somers-hall [30] goes so far as to say that "Freedom for Bergson has a somewhat Spinozistic edge, as the rejection of external determination in order to reach a state where we act from our own nature [.] We can press the issue to Bergson: does life not, in a sense, *necessitate* the effect of indetermination⁶? If indetermination does something, if it has an effect, then we would have to say it implies the determination of an effect. Nothing exists which does not produce an effect (E1p36), and the effect of life is ultimately the increasing and expanding power of positive indetermination. We find this efficacy of indetermination

in *Creative Evolution* ([9] ch. 2), where life is the ongoing participation between plants and animals, the first storing up and the latter expending energy, each exhibiting a psychological pattern of dissociation. Humanity is a continuation of this process, creatively evolving toward mobility and the enriching of experience. Indetermination cannot be impotent, but is rather a fecundity, which is to say that it determines things to exist or move in a certain way. Bergsonian freedom distributes its metaphysical incompatibility across time, placing necessity in the back half of duration, in the past as the necessity of irreversibility and irrevocability. The past will necessarily always be what it already is, but the future, in duration, has a genuine, originary, or non-derivative reality, the real existence of the non-being of the future, its contingency. With this comes everything that Parmenidean logic cannot admit exists; movement is virtual rather than actual. But the past is also virtual for Bergson and is actualized only in its shadow effect on contingent life events. “The whole of our past psychical life conditions our present state, without being its necessary determinant” ([31] p. 148). The virtuality thus envelops both necessity and indetermination, and it is in and through memory’s power to condition life and consciousness that they coexist while remaining incompatible. If they can coexist, they cannot be true contraries, so that contingent is not unnecessary, nor does necessity preclude contingent. There is something non-necessary about contingency (borrowing Spinoza’s term from E4p11), and while anything necessary must not be contingent, the non-contingent and non-necessary allows us to think each without strictly opposing them to one another, and this is essential to understanding the activity of thought⁷.

Bergson defined consciousness by a hesitation that takes advantage of indetermination in a variety of useful ways ([32] pp. 19, 93, 204). Both moral and philosophical intuitions exceed conscious awareness just as the whole past, all at once, so to speak, contextualizes every particular perception or memory, marking it as a unique singularity. The fringe of consciousness is where necessities refract into interpenetrating virtualities from which we imagine possibilities relevant to the contingencies of the given concrete situation. Affordances are singularities that contribute to our power, and while we typically only evaluate them based on induction—the future will resemble the past—we can also be open to their propensity to form new compositions that we cannot yet imagine, that are inexplicable in terms of our past experiences. At a given moment of recollection, the total system is not equally brought into relevance but rather by intricate gradations of valance shading into oblivion (cf. [33] negative prehension), the past shapes the living movement of our duration. The grading of relevance implies dissociations which, psychologically, operate as organic wholes, kaleidoscopically rather than as atomic information erased or represented cinematographically ([9] p. 265/306). The past does not actualize itself since it cannot recur, but while remaining ineffectual ([31] p. 141) and impassible ([16] p. 55), it nonetheless indirectly affects the present by passing into it via the sensory motor system ([31] p. 240).

We cannot think or recollect the whole past at once, but we also cannot think or remember anything without it standing out from the whole past and finding its meaning in the very stance it takes on the rest of the past. Indetermination in the hesitation before executing a plan wherein we either revise our tactics or find a way to play a different game altogether, in such cases, indeterminacy loosens the grip of some necessities, insinuates itself into its meshes and implicates novel movements and meanings ([31] p. 249), but only if it there by sequesters new necessities by which it determines things to be in a certain way. Hesitation is unhelpful if it cannot foment useful action, if it cannot accomplish a new formation.

Can we see the causal efficacy of indetermination, implicated in the complexity of the sensory motor system, as consonant with the free necessity of Spinozan expressionism? Or do we risk losing what is most particular to Spinoza, as Bergson put it, “the most perfect

and the most complete expression of the most absolute determinism.” Such is the thicket of problems that we would do well to keep wrestling without collapsing it. Turning to focus solely on the topics where Spinoza and Bergson overlap, we will be better prepared to return to the question of freedom.

4. Mapping Consonances

4.1. Movement

Both Bergson and Spinoza take issue with the views of motion and extension found in Descartes. I will not dwell on this question that Thayer [34] already credibly asserted in 1919, they shared commitment to the irreducible reality of movement, and that Spinoza’s famous *natura naturans* (literally nature naturing, nature as an active productivity) grants an interiority and non-spatial essence to movement, the indivisibility of extension (Ep1p15; [3] pp. 94–97) as an attribute denotes the power to move, motricity, and even the integration of complex sensory motor systems, all indivisible in their activity. In short, motion need not be the motion of *something*, but that movement can be very substantial of corporeality. This finds voice in Bergson’s perennial distinction between reality *in the making* (real duration, life) and the *ready-made* (structure of conceptual knowledge, solids of geometry). It is indeed extremely difficult to conceive of a movement in itself that is not reduced to the accident of a solid. This would point us back to a conception of movement in Spinoza that is still *moving* rather than a movement already having *moved*. The dynamisms of reality, forming complex chains of free necessity, conceived as living movement, bring a certain alignment of these two thinkers’ perspectives, that is, from the vantage of affect and intensity. Bergson distanced himself from what he saw as Spinoza’s “mechanical” interpretation of the body, but this interpretation can be thrown into question (see [35,36]). Yet, if we follow the thread of infinity, the way infinity functions for both thinkers, we again begin to dissolve many incompatibilities. If infinity is more important than mechanism, if it is employed organically and expressively, then we again find a shared vantage: a dynamic continuum of movements and *conati*, a plenum of centers and inter-dependent cycles linked up in ratios. A multiplicity of movements that are self-organized by imminently expressed ratios, clearly are greater than the sum of forces they integrate and divide. Every living whole is more than its parts, even if it is inconceivable without its parts, without the living multiplicity of forms across which it continuously transitions. And every whole is less than the totality of its parts because it depends on a flux of energy and perceptions into its homeostatic rhythms that fan out to include the whole of nature. Placing infinity above the finite, making finite modes the shadow of our imagination working for practicality, linking the effort to expand and develop life’s virtues and to share them with others, infinity becomes the motive and motif of a shared intuition, again, between Bergson and Spinoza. The general shape of philosophical progress is the same: we must undo many habitual ways of thinking because we naturally begin thinking purely in relation to symbols and space, and we must end in an intuition. We are using an inferior faculty when we see things as independent substances, fragmented by our practical needs, while in reality, everything is deeply interwoven in the fabric of movements that is the whole of nature (cf. [34]).

Look at Bergson’s views of matter in the first chapter of *Matter and Memory* [31]. He treats matter as a phenomenon that is embedded in our sensory motor schemas, as an ingredient in living consciousness, and you will find he makes of matter a plane of images and cites Leibniz, who he updates with Michael Faraday and Lord Kelvin (pp. 200–201): rather than atoms in space we should think of fields of force imminent to a plenum of reciprocal relations. In *Creative Evolution*, he describes them as a vortex ([9] p. 14/8), a behavior and concerted movement rather than a solid or pattern. He symbolized the relation of matter and consciousness in the third chapter of *Matter and Memory* with the

diagram of the plane and inverted cone. With this, he traced an incompatibilism between the plane of memory and the plane of matter—life and consciousness appear miraculous in an integration of spirit and matter. Between them, as the mixture of both, consciousness emerges in an infinity of unique degrees of tension ([31] p. 162). Nothing of this structure appears readily in Spinoza, and Bergson clearly had Plotinus in mind when he conceived of the diagram ([27] p. 229; [37] p. 123) and while rejecting the intellectualism and static necessitarianism of Plotinus, that he also pinned on Spinoza ([31] p. 303, [27] pp. 303–304), he nevertheless made use of Plotinus to form and defend his own understanding of the dynamics of mental life, even when engaging his contemporaries ([38] p. 93). As we will examine later, Spinoza's parallelism denies the *interplay* between matter and mind.

Above all, even at the level of matter as pure movement, the laws of nature are already organismic, not merely mechanical as Bergson would have us believe ([9] p. 305). Hans Jonas, in 1965, offered a compelling reading of Spinoza's "physical digression" as rather meant to describe the organism and its sensorimotor system, as complex autopoietic processes, irreducible to a physical mechanism.⁸ This is exactly what the six postulates Spinoza gave at the end provide: a description of the human organism and its complex sensorimotor system. There is a consonance without resemblance between the moving, kaleidoscopic images of Bergson's *Matter and Memory*, and an organic structure of the imagination and the emotions in Spinoza—the composition of essences involves organic structures, vital processes. Following Viljanen [28] the efficient cause is not mechanistic or a transitive cause but rather relates to a dynamic sense of activity linked to power and the free necessity of the essence. Nothing exists from whose nature some effect does not follow (E1p36), meaning there are no existences without causal efficacy; every existence produces an effect. The emergent properties of organically composed individuations introduce causal factors not found in the parts, the ratios and proportions of motion and rest involve a novel essence with powers unique to the composition (see [11] p. 65, pp. 98–99)⁹. For both Bergson and Spinoza, the dynamic unity of the living, moving body, our sensorimotor system, is essential to philosophy, we must *educate* the senses rather than leave them behind ([9] p. 48; E4p38 and 2p14), as an artist learns to see things outside their mere practical use and can perceive and act on things in many ways, *undissociated* by this or that particular interest. By approaching reality through the efficient cause, in relation to power, and through the positive reality of movement, both Spinoza and Bergson anticipate aspects of Whitehead's process philosophy and Deleuze's philosophy of difference.

4.2. Purpose

By pursuing a dynamic metaphysics that takes the reality of movement seriously, both Spinoza and Bergson were also profoundly critical of teleological arguments, especially with respect to any interpretation of final causes as determined by static, eternal, universal forms that stand outside nature and coerce conformity, or decrees that all nature exists for the sake of human enjoyment. But on the question of teleology, both authors appear to violate their own edicts and to reintroduce a crypto-finalism that escapes the problems of the classical theories by making use of a common-sense notion of purposive action. Teleology needs a radical overhaul since the imagination's concepts of "ends," born of practical life, are unable to explain themselves, but purposive action can be expressed instead as a dynamic emergence of imminently set and negotiated goals, such as we find in the strivings of life.

After bashing teleology in the appendix to part one of the *Ethics*, Spinoza goes on later, in the preface to part four, to grant the purposiveness of appetite (E4d7) a pedagogical or heuristic role in the cultivation of virtue—perfection as our intelligence's valuation of what is useful to preserving and expanding knowledge (E4p27). The lifelong process by which

one progresses to greater and greater active affects, escapes bondage to passions, learns to follow the dictates of reason, gradually achieves virtues and blessedness, etc., is a path of effort and devotion, not only full of a sense of purpose but generative of new and greater purpose, value, and meaning. Thus, part four traces “good and bad,” notions Spinoza denies have objective reality in ideas, as experienced judgements of usefulness, and as useful for ordering our affects insofar as we learn that what is useful is understanding (E4p27), which not only makes knowledge of God the highest virtue (E4p28), but even makes the effort to cultivate intelligence and share it with others the highest priority of the free person (E4p36 and 4p37). The incompatibility is not a fault of contradiction but maps the transformation that must occur in us, forget the false sense of freedom which is nothing but following our uncontrollable appetites, learn what real freedom consists of without thinking we already achieved it too hastily. This embodies Spinoza’s *caute*. “What is called a final cause is nothing but a human appetite insofar as it is considered as a principle, or primary cause of something.” (E4pref. [3] p. 198). Among our “singular appetites” (p. 199), are the free acts that follow from our singular essence, what are better named our virtues. Spinoza adopts the final cause by making it converge with the formal cause (essence) and efficient cause (self-moving) so that they are all enveloped by the living movements of the organism and of nature: finality-appetite, formal-*conatus*, efficient-organismic movement.

For Bergson, teleology is practical to daily life, and even essential to science, which deterministically enacts its essence: to analyze, measure, and control matter. The intellect marches toward empty space just as matter dissipates as entropy. But life expresses another tendency that reintroduces purposive action in the form of creative improvisation and the method of intuition. Metaphysics arises only when we act with a purpose, when we use the mind to understand the mind and draw more from ourselves than we contain. We require a disinterested state, almost dreamlike, a sort of hyper-dream-state in which we surpass all our mental faculties, not by suppressing our intelligence but using it in a way it is wholly unsuited to operate, outside of the conceptual schema of space and utility.

Now again, for Spinoza, the *conatus* is all that it is at every moment; it is a perfection, even though it perpetually changes and is aiming at improving itself: even as it pushes and surpasses its limits, it is still at its limit, and immanently defines itself as a measure of perfection. Affects are the increase or decrease in power, setting a limit for itself, or increasing itself. There is a positive reality to even the most extreme sadness: it still involves a perfection, our power of existing. From our consciousness of our power emerges an appetite, a vocation to preserve, grow, enrich, and expand this power and perfection. Something like an imperative, imminent to the operative intelligence, to exalt itself and other intelligences. Intellectual generosity is the natural result of the emendation of the intellect, but the path there takes effort, and there is a residue of teleology that scholars have insisted on tracing (following [25]).

The temporal shape of finality cannot be, like motion for Zeno, argued away with logic¹⁰, but can be reframed, reinscribed into an ontology of intensity and the necessity by which freedom is actualized by intelligence in duration. Raymond Ruyer [39] rightly traces a new constellation between the problem of meaning [sens] and the problem of teleology, claiming that the ontological questions of medieval and early modern metaphysics, which rested on theology, had, from Bergson to Merleau-Ponty, shifted the ontological and metaphysical problems of God to the problem of *sense*. Ruyer’s axiology asserts that no one could ever fully eject every form of teleology from their thought without giving up on the project of riding themselves of teleology. At some point, the needs of life take back over, and our tacit assent to teleology resumes: get up and use the restroom or go eat lunch. One cannot oppose teleology, or even affirm non-teleological explanations, without tacitly affirming a *telos*, intending to say something true or useful, and undertaking an anticipatory

action that is indispensable to attention and sense-making more generally. How can we reject teleology without acting with a goal, at the minimum, communicating some meaning to others? No doubt Spinoza meant to say something true.

This is a question of exaggerations by both Spinoza and Bergson, which makes their work so thought-provoking. Filippo del Lucchese [40] has made an admirable effort to press the issue of teleology, strengthening our appreciation for the ground conquered in ontology by Spinoza's anti-teleological movements. But the very project of ridding our interpretation of Spinoza, or even of interpreting Spinoza at all, retains a shadow teleology in the orientations and norms it enacts. Thus, for both thinkers, the anti-teleological movement is practical; even the concrete interruption of our goal-oriented ways of being (the attention to life) is needed for the progression of both ethics and metaphysics. The teleology of the imagination cognitively structures a game of praise and blame, that is, the engine of superstition and envy, affects that keep people at variance with one another.

For Bergson, rather than being "staunchly antiteleological" (see [41]), he sees teleology as equally natural to humans as mechanical thinking; both are based on concepts, representations, and symbolic generalizations such as the designs used in manufacturing, and these wholly practical garments of thought have no useful application to understanding the essence of life, even though they are essential to life. In the first chapter of *Creative Evolution*, Bergson shows that teleology and biological finalism can be retailored to better fit the contours of life. He rehabilitates, but reverses Leibnizian 'external' teleology while wholly discarding the internal finality of German idealism ([42] pp. 43–50; though perhaps less so Schelling, [43] pp. 111–113). In the third and fourth chapters of *Creative Evolution*, Bergson traces a teleological fatalism inherent to the intellect in its inclination towards geometrical abstraction. Space, pure exteriority, and uniformity are the furthest aspirations of intelligence left to itself. Bergson surpasses teleology by a higher purposiveness immanently engendered in concrete duration. But outside of the intuitive sciences, the mind is subject to inevitable determinations.

The key to thinking through and beyond anti-teleology depends on posing the questions of teleology in highly nuanced ways. Instead of relying on representational models that deploy prefabricated plans (i.e., mapping a structure that affords a function that solves a problem), purposiveness is an imminent normativity, an unrepresentable directionality and vectoral quality that permeates a multiplicity. Just as with imaginatively representing the complex movement one wishes to learn with their body, it is only slightly helpful to the learner, better to move and learn by trial, and is useless to the expert. The intention of a gesture integrates the movements making up the gesture with the situation in which it is supported, and augments the meaning it communicates and transfigures. Teleology is as mundane and inseparable from life as our knowledge is inseparable from the sensory motor system. Imminence here refers to the creation and evaluation of a norm as a self-assessment born of an intrinsic motivation. Within the convergence of the notions of necessity, on the one hand, and freedom on the other (efficient cause as dynamic rather than mechanical), as well as by understand activity and passivity with as little teleology as possible, we escape teleology as the mother of all prejudice, for a purposive directedness born of a supple variety of reason, or even the intuitive knowledge that surpasses reason.

For Bergson, the forces and organization of evolution are not teleological in terms of the determination of specific structures, but life retains a shadow of teleological structuring, reframed in terms of tendencies. There is no *telos* predetermining the emergence of the eyeball, but its actual development on divergent lines of evolution attests to the *vis à tergo*, a sort of reservoir of inchoate tendencies that informs becoming as a metaphysical, impersonal memory which strives for self-expression through mobility, sensitivity, flexibility, and ultimately in mystical vision. For Bergson, consciousness, personality, and thought depend

on a principle of *dissociation* ([31] p. 165) opposed to *associationism* not as simply reversing it—disconnecting one atomic sensation from another—but a global sense of psychical dissociation in which one represses a mass of perceptions and memories by distraction¹¹; be it daydreaming or catatonia, the mind splits off into a sub persona of the total living being. The active state of focused consciousness represses what is irrelevant to remaining focused—dissociation implies a natural teleology of an inevitability in life: the *attention to life* and its inevitable fall into the torpor of routine and intellectualism (as in [9]). Life modulates the relevance of its memories and habits, acting on the fringe of consciousness, on the periphery, but it guides its own creative evolution without having any design or predetermined plan, without representing itself in advance. Rather, through an ongoing improvisation unbroken from billions of years ago to now, still in our deep, impersonal memory, and mixing themes that are habituated by culture or remembered from among the singular events of life. The force of inertia behind forms of knowledge (epistemes), institutions, and traditions, all render resistance to the free exercise of philosophy—a dissociative repression of the complexity of life or of the collateral damage of technology. Teleology will always be pervasively accepted for its seemingly obvious existence. Who denies that there are bodily needs, material utilities, affordances, or that materially complex bodies are variably purposive, useful for different things in different contexts because of the affects they enable? Intellect hurls itself beyond the practical into the eternal static forms of geometrical figures. Addicted to this ease of representation, our intellects starve themselves of any intensive, dynamic immediacy, and have no way of expressing the reality of life. It is like the gradual withering that a fictional, mobile plant would suffer that hid every day from the sun and came out only at night to feed on the pale, impotent moonlight. Teleology and mechanism each explain some aspects of the behaviors of life in a mutilated form, starved and disintegrating. They conceive the formation of life on the basis of the processes by which things die.

Stripped of all pre-formist themes and external determinations of universal type-forms, the pre-personal essence of life, *conatus*, harbors and develops a radically revisionary telos that lives virtually in a multiplicity as a horizon of possibilities, an excess of actuality transposing itself across shifting horizons. The surging forth of vital energy does not drain its reservoir. Spirit is strengthened by habit and by integrating emotions and memories; life grows to encompass a larger and larger expansion of awareness and power. Can we now go so far as to say that the existence of the *conatus* ‘necessitates’ an injection of indeterminacy into the net of determinations in order to make living movements organize out of antagonistic inertia? The further we advance with active affects, the more we come to not only store up and maintain our powers of acting but to enrich them and share them. The intelligent body is one that most expands and enriches the horizon of its possibilities, by which it can act and compose itself with others¹². The inner tendency of living bodies, and above all the necessity for intelligence in human affairs, creates an imperative to intensify the essence of life and even to transform and transvalue it with the guide of reason and the love of God. There is something in the very nature of loving each other, as humans, as modes that depend on one another, whose organization always involves intelligence, and yet there is something in materiality, in the movements we enact together, and in the ideas and affects that are the real contours of our coexistence, and that makes forms of teleology inevitable in human life. As we love each other, ourselves, and God, we are led to a normative structure informing not only practical life, but philosophy and metaphysics, with the commitment of cultivating joy and the shared empowerment of understanding. Thus, morality for Spinoza and Bergson, in my own post-established harmony, as the normative pull that we feel to pursue philosophy, our preferences and needs for rigor and depth, is ontological and metaphysical primacy. Levinas announced ethics as first

philosophy; he was merely meeting up with Spinoza and Bergson, going where they had gone, and then set off in a new direction from within their projects. One cannot be in any way a Spinozist or Bergsonian without *pursuing* the project of intensive variation (see [44]), of modifying and improving one's very power of philosophizing. Spinoza and Bergson both *intended* their philosophies to benefit us and worked tirelessly towards the goal of leading us towards our own intuitive and inventive activities, productive of philosophical truth.

4.3. Intuition and Spirit

By now, one will not struggle to see parallels between each of their uses of intuition, withstanding the shift in focus from eternity to duration, since both seem to take intuition as a mix of the eternal and the transient. For Spinoza, intuition involves active affects, which presumably can be said to involve duration as an event of the increase in power. While for Bergson, duration always involves an element of pastness that is eternal and necessary. We can bring Bergson and Spinoza together on intuition but it is clear that they will never admit of complete superimposition, diverging on the role of intelligence and habit, while themes from each encroach on aspects of the other's vantage, like binocular vision which can merge to form one image only for so long, and while we ignore the moments where the two images fail to merge, as when an object appears in one eye and not the other, due to positioning and perspective. The truth is that the depth that all binocular images make visible is evidence that they never merge completely, and thus, the depth wouldn't exist without the difference. The question is to identify what is placed into relief, as well as what is visible in only one or the other of the eyes.

Intensity is the most prominent common ground between the three eyes looking at Bergson, Deleuze, and Spinoza, despite the fact that the latter never thematized the term intensity. The *conatus* must be considered as ontologically intensive, as well as power and perfection. Astesiano [25] exalts the intensive depth of joy, liberty, and mysticism, as apparitions arising from Spinoza that haunt Bergson long after he thinks he has discarded him. It is the confidence or spiritual *fortitude* by which one who has tasted the joy of virtue, liberty, and mysticism now demands of life the expansion and enrichment of these powers. As stated in the abstract, preface, and conclusion of *Joie et liberté chez Bergson et Spinoza*: "The term mysticism, in these two authors, designates neither the refusal of experience nor of positive science, but amounts to a rationalism enlarged to the love of the real" ([25] *all translations of this work are my own*). Such a reading relies on what we might call the vantage of love, without which there would be no movement to life. Spinoza's third kind of knowledge, intellectual intuition, is born of and the expression of the intellectual love of God. This appears to connect with Hebrew *jadah*, which is an intimate knowledge through love ([39] p. 66). And taking this in connection with his discussion of *ruagh*, breath, spirit (pp. 20–26), which he associates with moral intuitions akin to the ideas of geometrical essences (pp. 111, 263). Likewise, Bergson makes mystical love of God, *agape*, the quintessential expression of the *élan vital* ([32] p. 211; [24] pp. 143–146). Above and beyond these parallels, we have one more remarkable component holding them in fellowship: the mystical love of God involves not only a disciplined philosophical intuition, but even a companionship with science.

4.4. Cooperation of Metaphysics and Science

The question of precision, marked in the opening line of the first introduction to *Creative Mind* [10], titled *Growth of Truth (Croissance de la vérité)*, first written in 1922, traces the transforming research project of Bergson's major works. Metaphysics lacks precision, and each of his books contributes to making up for it. The standard for precision differs greatly in science and metaphysics; the former uses quantitative abstractions and symbols,

whereas the latter relies on sympathy, methodology, and integration. It would not be too far off to say that, since duration is precisely what we are, taking it as primary is a step toward absolute precision. Just as an instinct is often perfectly precise, so too intuition can have an intimate, sympathetic knowledge. But unlike instinct, philosophical intuition must maintain contact, tarry with the natural knowledge of science ([37] p. 25). This includes understanding its observations and theories as well as critiquing the pseudo-concepts it formulates—perfectly logical solutions to badly stated or false problems. Many of its theories are more like defense mechanisms, fabricated in order to keep oneself from having to confront all the repressed content related to subjectivity. A scientifically sharpened mind needs the psychotherapy of metaphysics to keep it from cutting itself off from life, dissociating from the whole of reality, the singularity of concrete life—abstraction has become distraction and dissociation. Metaphysics relies on returning to the singularity and fluidity of duration, reawakening to the whole, and yet does not end in the singular and concrete. Like science, it must produce something universal and abstract; it must formulate its findings in language and construct a body of knowledge that is sharable and cworkable¹³. Astesiano goes so far as to say that:

Bergson is a classical philosopher, and even a rationalist, who makes philosophy a form of knowledge grounded in experience and reasoning, accessible in principle to all, rejecting fideisms or scientific positions, as well as the dominant twentieth-century idea of a surpassing of metaphysics (whether by poetry, logic, the human sciences, or other means). [25]

Bergson is committed to correcting metaphysics and insists that this depends, in large part, on each of us coming to maintain a healthy relation to science (defending its power while not overselling it, leaving room for spirit), and at the same time fighting off the overblown metaphysics that distort our understanding of reality by rejecting the sciences of nature or our condition as embodied. Bergson tackles this question head-on in *Psychophysical Parallelism and Positive Metaphysics*, 1901 [45], with a remarkable synoptic vantage, weaving science and metaphysics into a moral framing of the task of philosophy and life¹⁴. This text vividly displays a living image of metaphysics as dynamically engaging with science without dissociating from morally enriching action, and integrating incongruent vantages. It is a question of *attachment* and *release*, each of which can be good or bad in different circumstances. Attachments can build intensity but also become stagnant. Release, detachment, can be freeing and can foster creativity, but taken to the extreme is schizophrenic and eventually catatonic. By balancing and modulating attachment and release, we do not synthesize or reduce one to the other but rather make use of the very play between them when held in tension. Science cannot operate without the purposively oriented lived duration of the scientist, even though scientists often dissociate from every evidence of their own subjectivity. Above all, the fluidity and singularity of concrete duration are erased and repressed in the scientific myopia.

For Bergson, science and metaphysics must maintain a certain incompatibility: “Science in fact gives us knowledge of an absolute that can be measured, and metaphysics an absolute that escapes all measure. The belief according to which science or metaphysics could, one or the other, encompass the whole of reality and explain everything remains illegitimate” [25]. They are two halves of the absolute ([10], pp. 27–30)¹⁵. We must rather keep them engaged with one another, maintaining them in a productive tension. In this way, we follow the grain of reality rather than merely what is easiest for our intelligence bent on clarifying things, but ends up nullifying them. Reality is constituted by the coexistence of incompatible ingredients: the movement of present becoming and the immovable being of the past, the intensive and the extensive, the unrepresentable and representation, a world of science and a life of metaphysics. We must, once again, strive to form a binocular image

rather than glance between two dissociated worlds or pretend to snuff out one or the other. With this commitment, Bergson is not only classical but even Aristotelian, as is Spinoza, and Deleuze's own project continues this commitment to making a metaphysics that is adequate to the contemporary state of the sciences, especially those of biology and psychology. Since each made the effort in their own time, there are inevitable incompatibilities in their final products.

4.5. *Envy and the War Instinct*

In relation to political philosophy, there is little difference in the general orientation between Spinoza and Bergson, particularly on the goal of abolishing war. Both identify a general agitation and strife between humans as constitutive of moral life. The human condition is such that, unless something is done to emend our spirits, humans will disagree and be burdensome to one another rather than work together. Like the growing habit of grapes, which, from thousands of years of cultivation, has come to rely on human intervention to be healthy and productive, and if left unmaintained, will choke itself out, becomes overgrown and disease-ridden. Like the abundance of these high-maintenance cultivars, human potential has unproductive, even self-destructive, tendencies if left to itself.

For Bergson, closed morality and society follow from a war instinct, while for Spinoza, there is a natural state of bondage to sad passions, rooted in superstition and envy, setting humans at variance and preventing our ascension to active affects. Without the intervention of cultivation, we fall prey to the law of the appetites. Bergson's discussion of the war-instinct is not only central to his moral philosophy ([46]¹⁶), but can be seen as a further development of Spinoza's themes. Both Spinoza and Bergson reject Hobbesian views that see the constant state of war itself as natural, but rather that a war instinct is natural, actual war is artificial, and a counter-tendency is also natural, a spontaneous, sympathetic, and reasonable activity that drives us to abolish war. Thus, the advent of war and its abolition are each natural, while the latter implies a greater expression of our power; the former stunts our moral development and gets us into a frenzied fugue state that is difficult to slow down. For Bergson, "the origin of war is ownership, individual or collective, and since humanity is predestined to ownership by its structure, war is natural. So strong, indeed, is the war instinct that it is the first to appear when we scratch below the surface of civilization in search of nature" ([32] p. 284). It has become natural in the way luxuries become necessities, and habits become second nature. An addiction is at once insatiable while demanding perpetual satisfaction; the withdrawal of quitting becomes its own risk. Violence, rage, audacity, cruelty, abuse, etc., are addictive, consumable, and have a form of withdrawal that requires rehab.

The war instinct manifests in both frenzy and discipline, and by appropriating tool-making intelligence and "all these instincts of discipline originally converged towards the war-instinct" (p. 288), which absorbs not only the entire structure of customs forming national identity, but also "the industrious character of our civilization." Modern wars are not merely practical or even necessary, but follow from greed, luxury, and the sport of fighting. So while the League of Nations aspired for the abolition of war, it was not prepared to suppress or remove the "deep-rooted war-instinct underlying civilization" (p. 287). The war-instinct is at work both in the manifest systems and institutions of society, but also in the unconscious and affective registers of the *psyche* and living body of the organism. Bergson describes the frenzy that he experienced at the start of the Great War (World War I):

Think now of the enthusiasm of a people at the outbreak of a war! This is doubtless, to a certain extent, a defensive reaction against fear, an automatic stimulation of courage. But there is also the feeling that we were made for

a life of risk and adventure, as though peace were but a pause between two wars. The enthusiasm quickly dies down, for the suffering is considerable. If we leave out the last war, however, where the horror was beyond anything we believed possible, it is strange to see how soon the sufferings of war are forgotten in time of peace. The war-instinct both coopts rationality and abandons it in frenzy. [32] (p. 285)

Both closed society and the war instinct turn profit from habit's automatism, which even tend to erase the memories of atrocity and close off the heart from aspiring for war's abolition. Further, the war instinct has set up and exploited certain xenophobic tendencies. He points out a prevalent defensiveness toward or even disgust for foreigners, emerging from the war instinct, and makes "every foreigner a virtual enemy" (p. 286). All of this is the exaggeration of natural tendencies, more or less a lack of indeterminacy and hesitation, a lack of freedom, openness, and sympathy.

Now, Bergson also insists that the origin of war is ownership, a claim passed along from Plato to Rousseau. But unlike these earlier accounts, Bergson does not offer a myth about the state of nature, but a historical genealogy. Spinoza rejects that property and ownership are natural, but rather sees them as mere civil arrangements of custom. No doubt the mother of all prejudices for Spinoza is envy, which arises from an egoist conception of free will. The cognitive structure of this mutilated idea holds the whole system of envious emotions working together that keeps humans in variance with each other. Envy is the sad pleasure of witnessing the suffering of someone you hate, or the pain of witnessing their enjoyment. Envy emerges from the mutilated ideas that produce hate and fear, that the other, whom we hate, harms or threatens something we love. The false judgments implied in these affects provide mutilated rationalizations for the hate that leads to war, and how we become trapped in violent cycles that diminish our power of acting. Envy is related to, and feeds, fear and superstition. Everyone is *naturally* prone to these sad passions, according to the preface of TTP [6]. Furthermore, they fuel the bitterest hatred and an instability of mind that races towards "ferocious wars" (p. 5). Both Spinoza and Bergson orient us towards the abolition of war and situate the road to its realization in a love that mixes mysticism and science. Both sought to rebrand religion as a vehicle for averting war, while no doubt false religion and closed religion have contributed to wars, and we can assume historical figures exemplified this, William III of Orange, for Spinoza, who exploited the Calvinist clergy and used state secrecy to sequester power (see [47]). We must divest all disciplined rigor from the war effort, and the irrational mystical expansion resist appropriation in war, disenthral the mind, while pursuing philosophical intuitions. Spinoza rebukes the isolationism and supremacism of the Hebrew state, where everyone is commanded to love his neighbor as himself but hate his enemy (p. 243). Hate cannot conquer hate, only love can, by transforming hate and weakness into love (Ep4p43; [3] p. 177). According to both philosophers, the only solution to our war-torn predicament is mutual empowerment through freedom, won through a "higher" education: the cultivation of knowledge, temperament, and virtues¹⁷. Violence and war require various dissociations that starve and disempower our spirit, and cruelty itself becomes an appetitive addiction that demands temporary satisfaction but is only overcome by therapy.

5. Relation of Mind and Body: Parallel or Perpendicular?

The question of parallelism needs careful examination since it is Spinoza's original doctrine, and while Bergson's critique is most directly applicable to his contemporary epiphenomenalists' use of parallelism, it might not entirely fit Spinoza. Possible breakages between the strict series of 1:1 correspondence of body and idea can be found across the

Ethics (cf. [15]) such as the fact that every idea has a body that it is the idea of, but there are also ideas of ideas that apparently need no additional bodily support as they multiply, and that far from being a marginal observation, in fact the ideas of ideas play a generative role in the reflective use of reason that crafts and improves the very methods of philosophy; what leads to the geometrical method, started in TIE ([3] pp. 4–6). The formal reality of the mind, its activity considered as an operative intelligence, a quasi-transcendental structure of the mental action that is independent of its content, even if it always has its content, and, *a fortiori*, it is the operative orientation of life that elicits the content proper to perceptual appearances and, for the most part, is organized around our pragmatic communication about matter¹⁸. Perhaps Spinoza maintains parallelism while allowing for ideas of ideas to subtly regulate and direct our thinking and movement. Perhaps a crack opens in the great diamond where indeterminacy and beauty enter and modify its lattice of necessity. Spinoza thinks we can always point to another source of necessity within an intelligible field from which the new forces and movements emerge. Cannot the mind, for Spinoza, by the necessity of its own nature, draw more out of itself than it contains? Can it thus form the surplus of psychical energy that overflows its parallelism? Is not this precisely what happens to our essence *sub specie aeternitatis*, from the vantage of eternity? But bodies also draw more from themselves than they contains, just as the mind improves itself with reason, the body organizes itself in ratios of motion and rest.

Bergson gave a thought-provoking reading of Spinoza's parallelism via the metaphor of translation ([24] p. 182, [9] p. 301). If the *Iliad* is translated word-for-word into French and German, one could take the two translations and imagine one or the other was the translation and original, when in fact they each are the translation of the Greek. The original text stands for the unity of the entity in substance, which is then expressed in two diverse attributes: a mode of thought and a mode of body, being two perfect translations of the original. Bergson overlooks the fact that the metaphor would destabilize the series since a Latin translation would have no definite articles and other languages would involve other discrepancies, changes in word order and syllable count, etc. Above all, it seems that, for Bergson, one of the two translations, that is, the mind or spirit, adds infinitely more to its translation and exaggerates every detail creating an infinitely more vivid and meaningful text than the original. Or rather, if the original is our duration itself, then it is no text at all, and any translation is already interpretive. The material translation would symbolize the goal of perfectly mapping the transitive causality between brute forces in space.

Bergson rebukes parallelism, declares it "a confusion between two incompatible symbolisms" ([9] p. 163) and asks us to rethink the psycho-physiological relation through the evidence of duration and habituation, and above all, through the theory of dissociation. He concludes that the conscious state exceeds the physical state, and while it is impossible, if the brain could come to the exact same state a second time, nothing says that the conscious state needs to be exactly the same. Instead, a variety of conscious states can be related to the same motor schema, which relies on certain determinate cerebral states and processes. In the same way, multiple memories can gather on the fringe of our consciousness when we hear a word or phrase and infer various connotations. In the final analysis, consciousness exceeds the brain state existing at an instant, and thought, memory, and even embodied intelligence, exceed the enduring flux of conscious awareness in the present. The integral of experience is always more than a mere totality of differentials.

If *parallelism* is the simplest form of compatibilism, then Bergson's view of freedom rests on an incompatible *perpendicular* relation of matter and memory. Descartes proposed an interaction between absolutely incompatible ingredients; between the unextended and indeterminate soul, and the inert extension of body. They are not parallel, but rather two opposite rays colliding in a point forming a third substance, the communion of mind and

body. Bergson sought to modify these images and describes a vertical intersection implying that each line operates on its own dimension and between them there is inequality and irreconcilable differences that become constitutive in the dynamics of life. He provided us with two key diagrams that are not often enough discussed, and that I have here modified (see [31] pp. 132, 143; Figures 1 and 2).

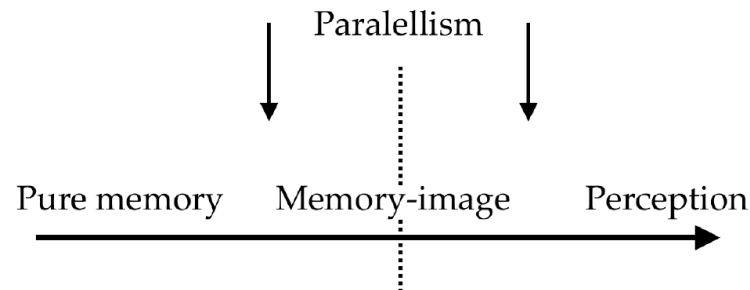


Figure 1. Bergson’s diagram explaining the origin and insufficiency of the doctrines of parallelism. The horizontal ray moving from pure memory to perception signifies the original duration in which the philosophers and scientists actually live, represented as a continuity. The dotted vertical line represents an intellectual cut in the continuity of lived duration, arresting a signal moment, the moment where perception and memory meet—the memory-image. Once sliced out by intellect becomes the representation. On either side of the representation they place a reality rendered incompatible with the other, mind and matter. I have added the vertical arrows and label “Paralellism” to represent Bergson’s own description of his diagram.

Perpendicularism

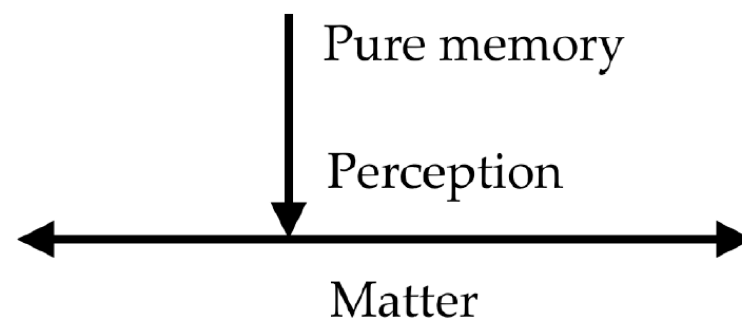


Figure 2. Bergson’s diagram of the mind-body or rather memory-matter relation. The vertical line is the same as the horizontal line of Figure 1, now intended to represent the “beyond” of pure memory as something that exceeds conscious awareness. The horizontal line represents matter as going beyond what we presently can sense or perceive, such as the world outside the walls of a room or the lands stretching beyond the horizon. The meeting point of the two lines indivisibly unites the material world at a given moment with the spiritual, in the activity of conscious perception.

At the start of chapter 3 of *Matter and Memory*, Bergson provides us with the first sketch of his anti-parallelism (p. 132, Figure 1). He starts by treating pure memory, memory-image, and perception as three continuous line segments, or rather than a line, as a single movement in which we cannot say where one segment starts, and the others end. What parallelism does is cut this continuity in half across the center, at the point which marks the representational memory-image. Each side of the cut is conceived as changing in parallel to the other. Now, this line, no longer artificially cut in half by the prejudice of analysis, is taken and rotated 90 degrees, placing pure memory at the top of a vertical line terminating the segment of perception at a horizontal line perpendicular to it that represents the horizons of our perspective on the material world around us. Taken one step further, the diagram becomes the famous inverted cone and plane representing the various degrees

of tension and concentration of consciousness from perception and motor habits, up to our general ideas, associations, and beyond to memories. This perpendicularity represents the incongruence of our being as spiritual and material. Ruyer attempted to bring Spinoza's parallelism into conformity with Bergson's perpendicular model, maintaining parallelism beyond mechanist determinism (cf. [39] pp. 134–139), and with the power to destabilize a 1:1 correspondence. Rather than this implying that bodies and ideas start affecting one another, which Spinoza rejects, it implies that there is more going on on one side or the other at some particular moment, as the sleepwalker acts without consciousness (E3p2s), and in part five, we follow the links in the chain of our consciousness without being able to find a direct correlate in the body. These perpendicular models are indeed reformulations of parallelism's commitment to a "both, and" rather than an "either, or," and, on a more generous reading of Spinoza that takes the organism, dynamic essences, and intuitive knowledge into account, his parallelism already cracks and flexes to the perpendicular forces of spiritual freedom.

6. Freedom Through and Beyond Dissociation

To act freely is to recover possession of oneself, and to get back into pure duration. [23], p. 231

...freedom is not in nature an *imperium in imperio*. [31] p. 248

When a tendency is analyzed as it develops, each of the particular tendencies born in this way *would like* to preserve and develop everything in the primitive tendency that is not *incompatible* with the work in which it has specialized. [9] p. 111, *my italics*

Freedom takes root in living consciousness by integrating intimate knowledge of what is compatible and conducive to concurrent, concerted activity. It is a global condition of our psychical state as animated by dynamic adjustments to attention—it is an attunement. It emerges when we voluntarily become "distracted" enough to focus. Freedom isn't one mode of attunement, rather it is the modulation of attunement: when something of interest catches us, by attuning to the relevant behaviors and gestures of any given situation, we implicitly dissociate from what is irrelevant or disrupts our attentive engagement. Bergson follows Pierre Janet [48,49] and other spiritualist psychologist in foregrounding the *tension* of consciousness ([31] p. 247), as a force of mental equilibrium that *suppresses* and *dissociates* in appropriate and useful ways to let our attention be open enough to avoid *fixation*, but focusable enough to build a steady train of thought, to keep to the plot, as we can follow what's going on in a conversation as topics interweave while implicitly keeping the thread of a larger set of questions. This dynamic and fixable tension is what Bergson sloganized as the *attention to life* ([31] pp. 14, 173): a specific dissociative fixation, distractable from the work of procuring practical advantages. This means simultaneously narrowing the fields of memory, imagination, and sensation, and yet keeping open the possibility of noticing what is held beneath awareness. Ultimately, it requires us to consider realities that cannot be present to consciousness but that are integral to all representing or presence-ing, and all knowing. This open, voluntary attention, without which there is no freedom, arises first and foremost from the body when its complex sensorimotor system is capable of being affected in many ways and of doing many things ([31] p. 247; [9] pp. 229–232).

Typically, we think of dissociation as strictly the dysfunctional state, attention deficit, loss of a sense of oneself or reality, automatisms, blacking out, fugue states, etc., a state in which psychical tension weakens ([37] p. 117–118, 161–162). When executive functions of integration completely collapse or split off, awareness dissociates, and the body acts purely through habits without conscious awareness. Some splitting can occur even without

impairing sensorimotor function, as Spinoza pointed out about sleep walkers (E3p2s), an observation that became a central case study in the psycho-physiology of French spiritualism. For Bergson, dissociation is what achieves our alert state of awareness and explains our ability to follow a multiplicity of details, just as much as pathological states, which are nothing but dysfunctional dissociations and modifications or disintegrations of attention.

“Life does not proceed by association and the addition of elements but rather by dissociation and splitting [dédoublement].” [9] p. 85

Against the associationism of mechanistic psychology, as much as the Kantian transcendental intellectualism, dissociation, for Bergson, explains how we come to form perceptions and thoughts ([37] p. 217, [31] pp. 158, 165, 181). Where association is meant to build up our mental states from atomic parts, dissociation starts with the totality, with pure multiplicity as a nebulous mass and achieves coherent experience by subtraction. Bergson describes this with the image of a telescope: looking at a nebula ‘canalizes’ it by blocking out the rest of the whole visible field and adjusting the focal distance ([37] p. 217, [31] p. 166; see [50,51])¹⁹. The “opposite” of dissociation is thus integration, not an actual association of parts, but “associated virtually” ([9] p. 228) becomes a *sui generis* formation that integrates an infinity of details and nuances. Psychological states “despite first being itself, nevertheless participates in others, and in this way contains, virtually, the entire personality to which it belongs.” ([9] p. 110)

Dissociations and automatisms, by their very nature, are not easily controlled and, in some sense, *all our psychological problems are in fact problems of attention, distraction, and dissociation*. Like the airplane sent to drop the bomb that cannot be stopped in *Dr. Strangelove*, our automatisms run the risk of running us off a cliff. A single plane of consciousness is stuck in flight, an *idée fixe*, ruminating on one way of interpreting that becomes an obsessive compulsion without the freedom to attune to different planes. Freedom comes from finding the Goldilocks zone of attachment and release, attuning our tension so as to promote hesitation without landing in indecision, an undissociated joy. Freedom involves the joy of integration, by which we lovingly and passionately pursue a project we find meaningful and, above all, one that meaningfully connects to all aspects of the person without starving the others. The person as a whole is brought to bear on the current situation and is nourished by its devotion. The whole person is a multiplicity beyond what we can be consciously aware of all at once, the virtual multiplicity of memories that is infinite in its details and which infinitely self-differentiates in planes of consciousness. Each conscious state is a dissociated plane that contracts and integrates the whole past and whole person in a singular way. The attention to life attaches and fixes dissociations to optimize our practical advantage-seeking. Intuition modulates dissociation and, in rare moments, bathes in the multiplicity of virtual, reciprocal implications by means of voluntary, undissociated, open attention. Intuition is basically the contestation of the hypothesis that *all* attention is dissociative. Freedom is basically a cybernetics of dissociation or *technē* or spiritual technique (*askesis*) in which we construct instruments to assist us in piloting, composing, and attuning the psyche. Freedom is indistinguishable from the work of philosophy itself. Since attention must regulate itself, this work is always a participation with itself; as agent and patient, student and teacher²⁰.

You cannot look at dissociation; it is not an object, a sensible impression, or even a pattern of movements. It is invisible, and only a being that is conscious of its duration and compares many moments of time, detached from the needs of the present moment, can become aware that its experience is the product of dissociations. Much like a transcendental structure, dissociation founds and operates in the coherence of experience transparently, the invisible fund of our investments. It is the “shake of the kaleidoscope” ([9] pp. 265–266) wherein the mind is completely distracted by the new image produced by the shake, and in which it never looks at the shake itself, how the mind attunes itself, how the image

gets put together. Freedom as undissociated joy does not mean one stops dissociating, stops focusing their attention. Rather, it means they learn to balance the fugue states and automatisms with the “releases” that cultivate a healthy blend of detachment, hesitation, and openness.

The *Ethics* is intended to interrupt and reorganize our patterns of dissociation, to coordinate a new set of attachments, and to train us to act in a way that will bring us undissociated joys. *Hilaritas*, cheerfulness, affects both the part and the whole of the body, does not pander to one part at the expense of the rest (E4p44s; see [52,53]). The more the body is capable of perceiving and doing many things—the more its sensory motor system can desire and do—the more capable it is of thinking and thus of affirming more ideas (E2p14, 3p11, 4p38). Our will is not infinite, but is exactly the size of our intellect, or in other words, (according to 2p49s) all the singular affirmations we come to understand [*intellegemus*] gradually accumulate into the virtue of mind, the power to act, the more we can affirm, the more we can act. We need a greater number of ideas, a diversity of ideas, not more general ideas, not greater abstractions, but more details and singular nuances. When we can disenthral the mind of illusions and mutilated ideas, and be more sensitive, we become freer to compose ourselves in ways that empower and sustain. When *hilaritas* and generosity combine, a collective and collaborative undissociated joy is cultivated in a participatory virtue-building, more precious than the knowledge production it makes possible. Again, as with Bergson, freedom and the work of philosophy are indistinguishable.

Bergson’s philosophy is fixed on the singular, transient becoming of duration, but his philosophical writings are far more speculative and descriptive, showing a commitment to de-personalizing and universalizing ([46] p. 285). As he wrote to William James, his friend and source of mutual inspiration:

I believe in the mutability of *reality* rather than that of *truth*. If we could tune our faculty of intuition to the moving nature of the real, would not this tuning-in itself be something stable? And truth—which can be nothing other than this tuning-in itself—would it not also have something of the nature of this stability? ([9] p. 325)

The undissociated psyche is like the embryonic living matter before it forms itself in morphogenesis. The *élan vital* is the embryonic state of the whole universe, undissociated, impersonal consciousness that splits (*dédoublement*) and dissociates into the immense diversity of life on our planet, each animal, to some extent, lost in the fugue state of its specialization ([9] pp. 106, 109–111, 122, 224). Freedom in the creative action does its best to preserve everything in the original *élan* that is not incompatible with the canalizations that have gotten it to where it has landed in evolution. The intellect and where it has ended by chasing pure space has dissociated from the mobility and creativity of the original *élan*, completely repressing the vitality and meaning of being alive, and sees only necessity and mechanism ([9] p. 282). Bergson goes so far as to make the idea of necessity into a kind of boogie man that haunted the mythopoetic minds of the ancient Greeks, and philosophy had the task of consoling the trauma of confronting the violent, cruel necessity that even the gods cannot escape from ([24] pp. 25–34). Thus, philosophies of absolute necessity from Epicurus and Lucretius to the Stoics and Spinoza are intended to calm the mind of anxiety (*ataraxia*) by accepting a deterministic helplessness that is little more than a dissociation from the living evidence of our freedom ([24] pp. 115–120, 175–184). Nijenhuis [54] has gone quite far in connecting Pierre Janet’s insights on dissociation to Spinoza and attempts to ground his psychotherapeutic account in a Spinozist framework. However, he makes no mention of Bergson, although I do not imagine he would object to the vantage I am here presenting.

Despite the conventionality of Bergson's reading of Spinoza as a pantheist who reduced God to Nature and Nature to mechanistic determinism, more people today affirm that Spinoza is closer to some sort of 'compatibilist' concerning necessity and freedom [55,56] as Deleuze's ([11] pp. 69–71) interpretation has it: "Freedom is always linked to essence and to what follows from it, not to will and to what governs it." ([11] p. 71). To place freedom in the self-determining expression of an intensive individuation that becomes undissociated. Imagination and reason each involve a degree of dissociation. Intuition is conditioned on disenthraling the mind of the sources of illusion and delusion, both at the level of emotions and thoughts. Spinoza defined freedom narrowly at the beginning of the *Ethics*, in Definition 7, as what exists only from necessity of its own nature, and determined to action by itself alone, and in letter 58 to Tschirnhaus on freedom and necessity, Spinoza refers to "free necessity" ([3] p. 226) and distinguishes it from compelled necessity. By the end of the *Ethics*, freedom proves to be the efficient, cautious, and perhaps even graceful execution of intelligent actions made in concert with others, i.e., piety, intellectual generosity, and philosophy [57].

When things do not completely work out as planned and yet we still manage to eke out an outcome that we can live with, we are not completely free, but rather evidently are exerting great effort to maintain what we have going. This is the condition of even the most virtuous, free, and blessed of all humans, certainly true of Spinoza himself, that his freedom was always being impinged on and that all he could do was do his best with what he had going, and with the aid of reason, he invented his way forward. But his freedom is also not merely his own; it was possible because he lived in the Dutch Republic with its intellectual liberties, and his exposure to Cartesian philosophy by Franciscus van den Enden. He also shares his freedom with us in the *Ethics* itself. Freedom is made to wait on the fulfillment of a host of anti-freedoms, hurdles, impediments, terms of resistance, and prohibitions, thrown our way by material decay, societal pressure, institutional inertia, and misfortune. Not just the power to choose what we know to be better, but the empowerment, affordances, and effort needed to expand our knowledge of what is good for us, and find out what our body can do. The more we work together, following reason, the more freedom we will be able to achieve in collaboration. Intellectual generosity takes this project as an imperative; we must liberate each other through our highest faculties (E4p37; [3] p. 218). Until then, as per Spinoza's diagnosis, most people will be trapped in bondage to sad passions, patterns of anti-social behavior, and inadequate cognition that prevent our power from increasing and being guided by the tranquility of mind. Philosophers and even virtuous folks will become harder to come by as sad passions, dissociative automatisms spread and evolve. Given the situation of our technology and industry, we require positive metaphysics and science to work in greater coordination to stabilize and enrich our liberty as a moral, undissociated joy: blessedness.

Bergson forces contingency back into the world in the slackening of action, which hesitates, feels, observes, and recollects. He also describes God slightly more teleologically, insofar as the *élan vital* involves a primordial yearning of love, not essentially different from *agape*, taken as integral to the necessity by which existence emerges, by which animal life progressed towards humans, and by which artists devote themselves and the mystics propel us forward morally. The mystic and the inventor make vivid to us the active manifestation of divine creativity. The free activity of Bergson is an expanded integration of multiplicities of memories, of states of consciousness, feelings, and sensations held in tension. Bergson calls it "a fact of psychological observation that the will is indeed something amazing, something that from certain angles, in certain aspects at least, partakes of the miraculous. The will is indeed a force capable of increasing indefinitely in itself" ([6] p. 145). Consciousness has the power of indefinitely increasing its multiplicities

of states, expanding into memories through associations, or into the inexhaustible detail of the sensible world. Just as an emotion becomes more intense by involving more of our senses (smelling and tasting a lemon is more intense than merely seeing) and becomes more profound when it connects to an ever-larger number of memories and feelings. So too, philosophically, we must become implicated in the larger context of our duration, beyond what consciousness is directly aware of at a given instant of dissociation. Bergson's view of the past and memory starts to look eerily similar to the infinite intellect as exceeding consciousness.

On 31 March 1905, when Bergson turns to Spinoza in his *Collège de France* lectures on freedom [24], one might be surprised to find his presentation begins by positioning Spinoza's view as Aristotelian. Spinoza, he says, follows Aristotle in the affirmation that philosophy is all about what we must love, and how:

...what nourishes our soul with a joy without sadness and without mixture, an infinite, that is, the love of an eternal and infinite thing, as Spinoza says.

This is exactly what Aristotle was telling us in book 10 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: philosophy's goal is just this, it's, "so far as we can, making ourselves immortal." The word *athanatizein* is untranslatable, it means: making immortality for oneself [*se fabriquer de l'immortalité*], we must make immortality for ourselves. This is exactly the objective of philosophy such as Spinoza understands it. [24] p. 176/245

Following the tendency of Greek thought from Aristotle to Plotinus, Spinoza makes philosophy a transition from perishing finitude and superficial knowledge of accidents to the infinite, profound knowledge by which "we manage to escape what passes away, what changes, to place ourselves back in eternity" (ibid.) Now, Bergson accepts that, in a sense, the whole problem of philosophy is about the aim of our love, what we attach ourselves to, and he will insist on an effort, or force, a Plotinian conversion that "turns" us, so that we love, not the ephemeral or superficial, but the enduring and expanding dynamics of the will as a moral force (see [15]; Boros, traces the presence of neo-platonic themes in Spinoza). "A natural force is something given, given not only in quality but even in magnitude; but a moral force, in a word, the force of willing, is something whose magnitude is not given, in the sense that with a little we can do a lot or, rather, there is neither a little nor a lot: we can will to will, will to give ourselves will-power" ([24]. p. 145). It is due to the *direction* of the will that it becomes capable of transgressing the finite laws of mechanical causality. Direction refers to a non-localizable element, a *sense* immanent to the sensible, while never appearing as one of the things present to the senses. In metaphysics, we must turn from the habits of the intellect towards those that align with the mystic and the inventor. Bergson continues a little further down:

So there's something like an indefinite reservoir of energy, and of an energy as it were transformable into intellect. What's remarkable is that this power of the will is due above all to the direction. The forces of nature are forces whose intensity isn't a function of their direction, doesn't depend on the direction we give them. *But the force of the will comes to it from its direction; we could even define moral force, insofar as it distinguishes itself from physical force, in this way: a force whose intensity comes to it from its direction.* If the will adopts a direction randomly, its force will be neutralized; there is one direction, and only one, the direction we call the right direction, where, on the contrary, its force will multiply indefinitely. We have here a psychological truth that the ancients didn't perceive or that they perceived only very vaguely, and that is what we call "psychological intuition". [6] pp. 145–146. *my emphasis*

This direction, for Spinoza, is without a doubt an orientation towards God; the intellectual love of God leads to intuitive knowledge, which is our greatest joy and blessedness. But, this orientation does not involve turning away from the world and transience, but of seeing God through the world, in particular, through singular things: “The more we understand singular things the more we understand God” (E5p24, [3] p. 257). Bergsonians need not condemn Spinoza for his intellectualism or eternalism, so long as it does not overtake these other commitments in his philosophy, including the alignment with Bergson’s openness, found also in Guyau. Bergson painted Spinoza as dissociative love that suppresses duration, rather than what it was, a love of generosity that kindles the productive tension of the metaphysically incongruent.

7. Guyau’s Spinozist Spiritualism

The scarcely remembered French spiritualist prodigy Jean-Marie Guyau, who Bergson described as a “brilliant disciple” of Fouillée ([25] p. 475) provides something like a middle position between Spinoza and Bergson, and while bridging the moral-political discussion from Spinoza to Bergson, it also provides a number of points of contrast. Bergson himself wrote a short, praise filled critical review of his 1890 *De genèse de l’idée de temp* ([58] pp. 145–152) and later nodded in assent to Guyau’s philosophical and moral insights when Jankélévitch assessed their intersections and divergences. This was in 1924, and Jankélévitch made out that Guyau was exclusively a moralist, while Bergson’s thought comprised neither a moral nor a religious philosophy. By the time of the *Les deux sources*, first published in 1932, Bergson affirms the moral bent of his intuitive philosophy as if it had been a constant, nearly unspoken assumption. Like Guyau, he sees the essential kernel of morality to be imminent to life as Astesiano formulates “moral fecundity brings fully to light the essence of life, which is first of all a force of expansion” [25]. And yet, following Weill [46], we know Bergson had in fact struggled more with writing this book out of all his others, and only the experience of the war instituted a conviction in Bergson that he knew what he needed write. It is based on the immanent joy of expanding and enriching power that morality blossoms, but it is in the face of abject violence and suffering that morality finds its sense. The essence of life is revealed not merely as the power to survive, but in generosity, which is a virtue we understand only by enacting it. Immorality is an impoverishment and stunting of life:

The violent man stifles the whole sympathetic and intellectual part of his being. . . By brutalizing others he more or less brutalizes himself. Violence, which thus seemed a victorious expansion of internal power, becomes in the end a restriction of this power. . . The despot becomes a child again. . . his objective omnipotence ends in bringing about a real subjective impotency. [59] p. 88

This maps to Spinoza’s idea of bondage to passive, sad passions, vicious circles that keep us trapped as intensively diminished and unenriched. It also maps onto the cancerous habits of a closed society that mutilate the heart, and above all, to the war-instinct. Opposite to such sad passions that set us all at variance with one another are the collective empowerments of generosity.

There is a certain generosity which is inseparable from existence, and without which we die—we shrivel up internally. We must put forth blossoms: morality, disinterestedness are the flowers of human life. . . charity is but one with overflowing fecundity. . . the heart of the truly humane creature needs to be gentle and helpful to all. . . the richest life is found to be that which most tends to spend itself lavishly, to sacrifice itself within certain limits, to share itself with others. [59], p. 87

Bergson also made use of the spiritualist conception of generosity that Ravaisson lifted from Descartes, making the true aim of education consist in the stimulation and enrichment of the spirit of generosity ([10] p. 213)²¹. Bergson did not engage directly with Guyau in *Two Sources*, but one could track thematic connections between it and the *Sketch of Morality Independent of Obligation and Sanction*, especially with respect to the renunciation of duty and the exaltation of a progressivist moral invention; morality as creative advance, needed above all to propel the hearts and minds to devotions, passionate pursuits undertaken boldly in philosophical or empirical research. Bergson appears to think through and beyond Guyau's moralist frame, perhaps in directions Guyau himself would have undertaken, had he lived longer²².

Taking the last two sections together, it appears that many key themes arranged around the ethics of generosity fall out from Deleuze's philosophy, do not figure prominently in his creative projects, perhaps marking incompatible commitments separating Deleuze from his predecessors (as suggested by [2,15]).

8. Conclusions

That's why, however much we may have engaged, through our personal reflections, in paths different from those Spinoza followed, we nonetheless become Spinozists once more, to a certain extent, each time we reread the *Ethics*, because we have the clear impression that such is exactly the attitude where philosophy must place itself, such is the atmosphere in which the philosopher truly breathes.

Bergson, letter to Brunschvig, 12 February 1927 [60] p. 587. *my trans*

A degree of exaggeration is to be found in both Spinoza and Bergson.

Spinoza exaggerated the power of reason and his rejection of teleology, which, as we saw, winds up only amounting to a limiting of the sense of finality to the concrete expression immanently patterning life and intellect. *Conatus*, generosity, blessedness, and even reason have their immanent sense and expend all their energy fulfilling the free action of their essence as the ever-renewed accomplishment temporalized by a minimally telic orientation. The gradual formation of Spinoza's geometrical philosophy is guided by its own immanent telos, first reared in the *Emendation of the Intellect*, which sets out with the goal of improving the formal reality of the mind, its operative, active intelligence. While Descartes set the stage by clearly stating the evidence of the formal reality of the mind, Spinoza radically renews the effort by overthrowing most of Descartes' expressed doctrines, e.g., the role of the cogito, the indeterminacy of freedom. Spinoza exaggerates his own rejection of free will and contingency, evident in the fact that he finds it necessary to discuss the influence of contingency and utility on our behavior in part four, and even makes use of "the free person" as an exemplar or model we are meant to strive to emulate (E4pref. [3] p. 199; cf. [11] p. 69). The freedom that the civil state must preserve and promote in the final chapter of the *Theological-Political Treatise* forms a counter-exaggeration.

Bergson exaggerated the difference between himself and Spinoza, as well as core themes of his philosophy, such as instinct and knowledge, as he himself admitted, and even defends as necessary to getting his point across ([9] pp. 156–161/174–179). Similar reflection softens his attacks on habit, intellect, and linguistic expression, to which he opposed philosophical intuition, and in general, the traces of an anti-intellectualism which hardly anyone would deny entirely as a theme of Bergsonism (though not nearly as problematically as his analytic opponents would have it, going back to Russell). His exaggerations have nevertheless won him a bad reputation, not unlike what Spinoza experienced after publishing the TTP.

Between Spinoza's hyper-rationalist theology and Bergson's sub-rational emotivism, there is a stance towards which various thoughts and ideas from each can gravitate and

coalesce, a position that is not anti- but perhaps ana-rationalist or better, an *open rationalism* that Deleuze himself used and gestured towards, but, it seems to me, failed to fully stick up for. Guyau and later figures like Whitehead, Merleau-Ponty, or Ruyer are clear beneficiaries of such a middle stance on the power of reason. It is true that the rationalist images of thought have tended to act as distractions developing into “complexes” and “defense mechanisms” forming a general dissociative tendency to “rationalize” whatever atrocities one likes from colonization to industrialization, in the name of intellectual progress. Deleuze inverts the hierarchy and shows that schizophrenia is the principle of thought, rather than reason. But he seems to have dissociated too far from the model of freedom cast from intellectual generosity, he represses the moral intuitions, distracted by escape to the Dionysian revel that I find incompatible with a more apollonian spirit in Spinoza and Bergson. The dissociated joy of novelty which takes no consideration for the organism as a whole or the ecosystem in which it is embedded, and is even hostile to its proportioned unity and effort to maintain itself.

We must not overlook the risks that come with a careless, amoral, or *adolescent Deleuzian freedom* that exaggerates the value of novelty: a freedom to shock expectations through experimentation that plumbs chaos for pure novelty, where novelty is the only criterion. Schizophrenia becomes the model of an explosive freedom apparently incapable of intentionally forming and holding attachments. There is a problem of power or efficacy with this model of freedom, as well as a moral problem of criteria. Affects involve material flows of energy in unique compositions. The composition itself is an immanent idea, an ideality that is distinct from the multiplicity as a whole or rather, assemblage [22]. Deleuze steps down into the thrashing sea of Spinozan affect and rather than follow Spinoza’s path to intellectual generosity and piety, suggests experimentation for its own sake, the only criteria are immanent to the event as the eternal return of difference, creativity without and beyond attachment [2]. The title of freedom is pinned to the embryonic openness of a complete cessation of dissociations, deterritorialization. We risk a fetishized defiance and performative disobedience, and fantasize that we ourselves or others have freed ourselves of all attachments. The effort to free ourselves from all attachments often leads to a dissociated fantasy that habits and customs are always bad, or that traditions are always bound to become a fascistic or cancerous tendency *via* nostalgia, xenophobia, misogyny, etc. Probably a lot of egotistic and self-sabotaging tendencies take root in the fantasies of pure novelty. I do not think this was the point Deleuze wanted to make, that there is only the wildly creative “freedom of indifference” ([11] p. 69), but also an “enlightened freedom.” I think it goes too far, breaching paranoia to assert that everything we think and do is already infected by micro fascisms, that all power is oppressive or there is no escape from capitalism in anything we desire or do.

Deleuze seems to prescribe affects that require us to dissociate from the value of repetition, generality, and attachment, because lurking behind them is good and evil. But for Spinoza, only a being without affects is beyond good and evil (E4p68). Insofar as we increase in our power *via* active affects, we understand reason, piety, and generosity to be good; we maintain an attachment and form commitments. The war machine is a violent transformer of attachments, just as war forces people to compromise commitments, sacrifice their attachments in various ways, and the proposed abolition of all attachments is rather cruel and injures or dissipates our power. We need to form certain attachments, commitments, maxims by which we conduct and devote our efforts. We need self-esteem, confidence, as well as fellowship, emulation, and shared aspirations, all of which need to be “kindled” as it were by others and by our own effort. Deleuze takes the embryonic undifferentiated *body without organs* as paradigmatic *exemplar* while somewhat demonizing the organism as a cliché, a reiteration of formalisms and repressive attachments²³.

Deleuze himself, in his life, research, and teaching, held more commitments than the standard of mere experimental novelty. This so-called adolescent Deleuzian freedom dissociates from the fact that we must actively strive, using intelligence, actively modulating dissociations in order to continue to harbor the embryonic potential for differentiation. This stance is completely anti-thetical to Deleuze project as I see it, and while he should have done more to prevent it from arising, we should also find and defend the moral and spiritual moments in Deleuze work, as Leonard Lawlor or Debashish Banerji read him. Just as we must protect our brain from injury, so too we must protect our psyche from the violence of the war instinct, and Deleuze could have better protected his philosophy from this danger. Novelty is, in fact, the very given of all existence for Bergson and Deleuze; it is only when novelty affords us affects that are esthetic, moral, and thus sustainable and renewable, only when the new composition increases our power can it become a standard worthy of commitment, a goal of becoming. We must maintain an organic, organized body (sensorimotor systems) that orchestrates our affects, if we are to preserve the embryonic power of freedom. I think Deleuze is aware of this, but the *body without organs* is more fragile than Deleuze lets on, and is more dependent on the organism and reason if it is to have any value and not be a dangerous corrosive force of disintegration beyond what we can survive. Like giving someone a firearm without teaching them how to use it or impressing them with a sense that if they turn it against another, they will regret it forever, or risk being consumed by the war instinct. This is very different from the affect of one for whom the weapon becomes a *line of flight* from a situation of organized violence. It is not hard to mistake oneself for being in the second situation when in fact, Deleuze's concepts are operating more in the first sense.

For Spinoza, the value of appetitive attachments (E4d7) manifests irrefutable evidence in certain ideas: one human relates to another as a god; two working together in fellowship are more powerful than three working alone; only love can conquer hate; the virtuous person desires all others to have virtue; and only what contributes to understanding is certain and known to be good. The whole idea is to pattern and organize our affects around these affirmations, attaching them to all our situations, opening them to an undissociated connection with all corners of the psyche and the cosmos. From this comes contentment of spirit ([14] pp. 112–133) as the intensity and tranquility of a *coda* or finally is all the more powerful because we have just listened to all the shifting directions of the whole symphony in series and feel it baring down on the movement and meaning of the present.

For Bergson, it is a moral intuition that transforms our understanding and our way of being, while nonetheless resisting translation to words through description, explanation, and conceptualization. Ultimately, it is in our concrete life that we experience situations that irreversibly change our perspective and orientation. Philosophers must make an effort to have undissociated joy which openly relates to all our experiences and commitments, that promotes and empowers our whole self and all the members of our body and community. We find a vivid example of the moral intuition in Bergson's own life, in his experience of the Great War, its horrors, and its effects on people's psyches, as well as his own. It impressed a moral sense on him, it instituted a commitment, and provided him with what he needed to research and write *The Two Sources* (see [46]). At first, the news of the war caused him to dissociate and fantasize, an involuntary reaction that "lessens the blow" protects one from absolute depression²⁴. Later, after the horrors of the war had been experienced, an undissociated intuition arose that enveloped his whole life. The intuition is irrevocable and institutes a criterion for free action; one will always pass judgment on their own performance in life and seek what promotes and avoid whatever hinders the prolongation, deepening, intensifying, and enriching of the intuition. It creates a vocation. The intuition is an adequate idea that, by harmonizing the formal and objective reality

of the mind, acts by expressing itself immediately from its essence as an efficient cause: through its own power, it increases its power endogenously. Only mystical intuition can expand our consciousness to the size of our technology, our automata, before they destroy us ([32]; see [46] pp. 283–284). Bergson, as Weill recounts, was haunted by the intuition that emerged from the war; it changed his account of human nature and shifted the focus of his optimism, perhaps because he stopped dissociating from numerous sources of pessimism he could have already found before the war.

Spirit accomplishes its own autogenesis without the extraction and consumption required in constructions using scarce resources; it is sublime and consoling. We can light one another's candles without starving our own flame. The fact that we can imagine a world in which what Lincoln called the tyrannical principle, and Bergson's war instinct, do not dominate²⁵, we are filled with an assurance that our efforts can bring about positive changes in the world—the practical postulate is rather the existence of affordances rather than the freedom. A spiritual energy of moral life bridges a congenial mixing of Bergsonian and Spinozan themes, even if they each exaggerate the nature of spirit in opposite directions, towards geometry or poetry.

Only through an investigation of attunement and dissociation can we formulate a viable alternative to the concepts that have framed history's compatibilisms.

Astesiano's [25] conclusion that Bergson is neither another Spinoza nor the other of Spinoza, but represents a possibility opened by his philosophy, centered on the affects of joy, devotion, and philosophical generosity. Here we find what we can call a philosophy of the open, while remaining aware of the different consequences of each effort to enact a philosophy of the open, a philosophy that opens. His work also stirs up more general questions for philosophers today: moving forward, how can we present a past philosopher *accurately* (in scholarship, in the classroom, or in popular content) while at the same time *generatively*? By generative, I mean the living and integral intelligence enveloping esthetic, moral, abstract, and concrete ingrediencies, which involves all these divergent tendencies in a state of reciprocal implication, a virtual and self-differentiating multiplicity: prior to dissociation. Treating a philosopher generatively means making their texts and ideas not only accessible but also being fruitful to contemporary philosophical thinking (involving some lifting, going through and beyond, transgression, etc.), as well as to re-enliven the very intuition that led our predecessors to philosophizing, the pressure that cracks the edifice, and eventually to say, construct, adapt, and perhaps even to exaggerate, in order to affectively communicate these insights in a way that is not merely communicating information but empowering. To philosophize is to take up the problems themselves for oneself in their time and community ([10] pp. 67–71, [22] p. 158). We must teach²⁶ with both the abstract simplification by which we would externalize all philosophical systems to each other and by pursuing them in reflection as if all can be looked at in a glance. We need imagination, reason, and intuition working in collaboration without reducing or sacrificing them to each other. Here we will likely attempt to imagine a future intellect that has inspected all the texts, systems, and ideas, and passed a final judgment on what to keep from them all, and what has crumbled under its own inadequacy. But we cannot hope to ever do anything like this, other than in an entirely inadequate and provisional way, and only in a concerted effort in the scholarly community can we hope to make any meaningful headway. In this endeavor, Deleuze has been among the most helpful and productive guides, and I am forever grateful for his immense contributions.

As philosophers, we must, from time to time, devote our attention to different directions with varying degrees of narrowness, now dissociating from Deleuze to think about Spinoza in his own terms, now on to Bergson, then to both together, etc., and even from one set of topics to another as we move from one text to another in a single philosopher's

corpus. We cannot hope to do this well without appropriately dissociating. We also must devote time to the integration of these diverse planes to form integrals of experience. But this also involves its own *dissociation* since it suppresses the singular fugue states in which we develop intensive variations in the stream of consciousness. By canalization or narrowing, consciousness enriches both itself and its “objects” in a reciprocal resonance. *Both an undissociated open awareness and a narrowing by dissociative canalization are necessary in philosophy, but we cannot do both at the same time and risk over-favoring one or the other*²⁷. We must not only experiment, but also form attachments to make the experiments useful. We seek to compose ourselves so that freedom is sustainable, so that we can harbor and expand our embryonic potential while propagating active affects. The two commitments must both be satisfied by their own standard while not letting either disrupt the other. Thus, freedom is an undissociated joy of composing affects that are sustainable, regenerative, and sharable.

Every philosophical method involves a “way of attending,” an attunement that renders its subject matter accessible and interesting. Thus, every philosophical standpoint involves managing certain dissociations and integrations: what to ignore and what to attend to, revealing what is in our blind spot, or what we have mistakenly become fixated on or fetishized. Either we are asked to ignore what are deemed unphilosophical distractions, ignore the traditional explanations that cover up what is questionable, or ignore the very data of the senses for an abstract theory. The phenomenological *epoché* is a dissociation from the natural attitude. At the very beginning of TIE ([3] pp. 3–6), Spinoza confronts the distractions that wealth, honor, and sensual pleasure pose to philosophical activities and the unique joy that they occasion. Probably no method in philosophy has yet to prevented all dissociation, canalization, distraction, blind spots, and siloing—it is possible that all claims to have done so are inherently dissociative.

We each must each develop what I call a *cybernetics of dissociation*—in the etymological sense—learn how to regulate, manage, and pilot our dissociations, what distracts or catches our attention, how to integrate both the closure of dissociation and canalization, with the undissociated openness that can reroute the whole river or find a new game to play. The formal reality, the attunement, cannot merely become an object of study, but implicitly demands a new formation of attunement. The fact is that we must do many different things in philosophy and should not become automated, fixated on one way of thinking or writing. Give due to both the concrete and the abstract, to be intuitive to the point of mysticism, and also be disciplined and rational. The *Ethics* is a mix of different forms of discourses, not exclusively elements in geometric order; it is the voice of the scholia, prefaces, and appendices, in which Spinoza’s own purpose is shown, his polemics and his generosity are enacted. Ultimately, Spinoza advocates for the health of the individual and community by teaching us to strive for what affects us with joy, and affects the whole body and mind equally, and preserves the proportionate relation among the parts—*hilaritas* (E4p44s). We must feed our appetites in a way that lets them hang together in harmony. There is a wholeness possible in community so that the more our affects augment rather than diminish each other, the more powerful we all become. As in the body, so in philosophy, we must not let our imagination or reason choke out intuition. There is an undissociated joy that arises when all our powers are able to work in concert. Bergson says as much with respect to the whole person ([23] p. 211), we are free to the extent that we gather ourselves up and make our whole past bear on the act of creating a novel formation. Both philosophy and freedom worthy of the name, involve all our faculties, not just intuition and reason, but also imagination. Freedom, like geometry, is initiated in fantasy, not the indifferent freedom of pure creative eruption, nor the endless daydream of ‘imagining’ but in the same way we persist in our failure while we learn to play an instrument, and becomes second

nature. Philosophy takes shape within the incompatibility of two necessary but divergent commitments: a faithfulness both to the past and to the future, both to accuracy and to the creative use that goes through and beyond singular formations. It is from the image of this productive tension, found in many diverse expressions, in our struggle to exist and perfect ourselves and each other, being at once eternal, temporary, and enduring, determining and determined, virtual and actual, focused and distracted, attaching and releasing, preserving and inventing. It is the very oscillating between such incompatibilities that engenders one's conviction in the reality of freedom.

Funding: This research was funded by California Institute of Integral Studies: Faculty Development Grant number: 10_40_00_01_201001.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Notes

- ¹ Rather than merely extending the range of affect beyond the emotion as a social function to the material flow as a subjective intensity, Deleuze removes the emotional and subjective pole altogether and represses attachment [1].
- ² Spinoza of course also influenced mathematicians, such as Cantor, and physicist like Einstein and Sagan. Despite having a continuous and profound influence in diverse niches across time, his work remains rather infrequently read by the general population, due to its monstrous complexity and radical reframing of philosophy, religion, and politics.
- ³ The sections *Memories of a Spinozist, I & II* rehash Spinoza within the lingo of ATP and weaves it into their rhizomic, schizoanalysis in order to 'understand' the body, perception, and understanding itself *via* the un-dissociating sense, or apprehension, of existence (motion/action/events) as "machinic functioning" ([12] p. 256). A materialistic tendency shows itself as well, along with description of consciousness as an immanence of absolute survey (*a la* Ruyer), connected to Uexküll's affective milieu, which resists the complete reduction to materialism.
- ⁴ In the first chapter, devoted to the frictions between Spinoza and Bergson, Astesiano [25] lays out the multiple different *tones* in which Bergson expresses Spinozan themes, especially the contrast between the courses at the *Collège de France* where he treats Spinoza positively and his published works where he is polemical and dismissive, above all, in the 4th chapter of *Creative Evolution*. Astesiano explains that the courses, by contrast, do not advance his research, but make known ready-made thoughts, display to us the inner workings of his struggle to understand himself in relation to his predecessors. This is retrospectively why Bergson may have judged his courses to be insufficiently interesting to be made available to the general public. Unlike Deleuze, Bergson wrote only two works dedicated to historical figures, one of which was fulfilling a requirement of the doctoral system in France at the time, the thesis on Aristotle written in Latin and not translated to French until after his death. He was, of course, well trained in the history of ancient and modern philosophy. He was obliged to teach an array of historical figures at the *Collège de France* when he assumed the chair of ancient Greek and Roman philosophy and later of early modern. It is fair to say that he took inspirations from nearly every philosopher he discussed, lifted insights and putting them to work in concert with all the others beyond the incompatibilities each imply when taken as systems. Unlike most of the earlier courses of the 1880's which were fairly elementary, exempting rare moments where Bergsonism appears in flashes. The 1898–1899 course on Plotinus at the ENS already is imbued with a Bergsonian spirit ([26] pp. 17–78), and the *Collège de France* courses are shaped far more radically by the lenses of Bergsonism than by facts and historical accuracy. His interpretation and presentation of the history of philosophy at the *Collège de France* is driven entirely by his own philosophical problems and question. Indeed, the series on the history of the idea of time, 1902–3 [27], begins with three lessons devoted entirely to themes of Bergson's own philosophy, resonant with what will be written more formally in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, published in 1903 (in [10]). And by the course on memory, the entire first half was reviewing and updating his views from *Matter and Memory* based on new studies in psychology. Astesiano vocalizes the privileged insight that the courses give us to glimpse Bergson's own efforts to understand his particular contributions to philosophy, be it at the price of precision. He comes to understand his philosophy through historical lifting and differentiating, going through and beyond the historical evolution of ideas.

- 5 “ESSENCE.—‘Necessarily constitutes the essence of a thing..., what the thing can neither be nor be conceived with-out, and vice versa, what can neither be nor be conceived without the thing’ [(E2p10s)]. Every essence is therefore the essence of something with which it has a relation of reciprocity.” [11] (p. 64).
- 6 “Let us start, then, from this indetermination as from the true principle, and try whether we cannot deduce from it the possibility, and even the necessity, of conscious perception.” [31], (p. 31). “From this indetermination, accepted as a fact, we have been able to infer the necessity of a perception, that is to say, a variable relation between the living being and the more-or-less distant influence of the objects which interest it.” (p. 33).
- 7 A Geometer need not necessarily be thinking about a triangle at any given moment, it is contingent that I happen to think it at some moment, and the idea of a triangle, taken on its own, has no internal determination of whether one think of equilateral, right, isosceles, etc., but when one manages to think of a triangle, they necessarily think one of its particular forms and necessarily as a three sided figure with inner angles equal to two right angles. Every particular thought that follows from an idea is non-contingent (since it necessarily follows from the essence of the idea) but also non-necessary in respect to the fact that we always happen to be not thinking of an infinite number of other triangles that are explained through the same idea.
- 8 Deleuze attempted to go beyond the organismic reading, by decentering into collective affective assemblages [12] (p. 257). This tendency of decentering is already sketched out and advanced by Spinoza and Bergson, Deleuze goes further by suppressing the organismic and the eidetic in favor of collective assemblage of material flows.
- 9 “The essences are. . . parts of power.” [11] (p. 65). Power is the composite unity of multiple essences, each of which is an appetite or desire.
- 10 Logic involves a purposive, finalistic orientation to truth, cf. [39].
- 11 There is a double sense of distraction; one can be distracted by something, and one can distract themselves away from some impinging contents, i.e., dis-tract is to pull apart, divert attention, or to abstract.
- 12 “For the more ways, the body is capable of being affected by external bodies. The more ways it is capable of affecting external bodies, then the more capable the mind is of thinking.” E4app27.
- 13 I have worked this out in detail in two articles published in *Process Studies*.
- 14 “I still see everywhere a dual direction in the development of [life’s] activity. At the same time as thought is inserted into life and concentrates itself on action (which appears to be the object of life), it realizes better its own nature and as a result also its independence from matter. Attachment and release, these are the two poles between which morality oscillates. You ask me to which it should fix itself? I do not see why it should become fixed. If effort is not attached to life, it lacks intensity. If effort does not release itself, at least slightly, and through thought, it lacks direction. You need to know where you are with respect to the first point to have the force to act, and with respect to the second in order to abstract yourself from the prejudices of the moment and to know what is to be done. But one should not go completely to either of these two extremities. I return to the idea that has been the leitmotif of my whole response. It is neither interesting nor instructive nor does it conform to the truth, to oppose concepts each of which partly corresponds to reality, because it was necessarily extracted from reality. Philosophy must rather propose their mixture and, if possible, create higher concepts in which previous oppositions can be absorbed.” [45] (p. 68).
- 15 Following Leonard Lawlor, in work he has presented in several public places titled “How to Reach the Absolute.” Such as Royal Holloway Centre for Continental Philosophy’s seminar series, presented on 25 March 2023.
- 16 As discussed further below in the conclusion, scholars speculate reasonably that the shock of the great war was a major source of the ideas that he subsequently wrote in *The Two Sources* [32].
- 17 This is all congruent with the Spinozan ethics of generosity, passed from Descartes and Ravaisson to Bergson’s analysis of the intensity of profound psychological states in *Time and Free Will* [23].
- 18 Spinoza and Bergson give voice to key features of Husserl’s phenomenology, such as the horizon structures, reciprocal implication of conscious states, and the analysis and critique of attitudes.
- 19 No doubt this image inspired Deleuze own notion of the plane of imminence.
- 20 This metaphysical psychology of dissociation is adjacent to the *epoché* of phenomenology in so far as the goal is to discover how to modulate our attention or attitude, and to conduct it in a way that enriches and intensifies its form and content. It is also adjacent to process philosophy, where intensity emerges from contrasts assembled in a final satisfaction, as Whitehead would say, through negative prehensions, and borrowing Bergson’s term, this intensification is won through canalization. Following Morris [44], this is *inductive intensive variation*.
- 21 I have elsewhere, in *Religions*, argued at length that generosity amounts to a collective intensification of psychical energy that draws more from the mind and body than they contain as finite quantities.
- 22 To fully appreciate the picture of this lineage, one would also need to reread Nietzsche throughout and beyond this context (who criticized Guyau, but not without voicing many admirations) in order to, again, track the consonances, repetitions, divergences, and incompatibilities of Deleuzian thought and our own. Where Nietzsche exaggerates the impoverishment of science, Guyau and Bergson come to its defense. Where Guyau sits closer to the synthesis of Epicurean and Stoic doctrines that he finds in Spinoza, Bergson’s pragmatism and mysticism implicates each in unique problems.

- 23 Far from attachments being deterministically fascist, it is rather more likely that promoting the fantasy of having no attachments promotes a nihilistic stance that acts as an affordances to political exploitations that do real harm, whether fascist, capitalist, technocratic, socialist, or democratic. It weakens one's ability to compose their affects effectively. Not having attachments is antithetical to freedom and political action.
- 24 "Instead of the fear or horror he should normally have felt, the way he describes this irruption of virtuality into reality seems quite peaceful. It is as if his mind had projected a sense of order and familiarity onto the situation, in order to prevent him from panicking. The irruption of war appears not at all as disruptive and shocking but instead as the most logical result of his whole life story. This discrepancy between the feelings Bergson should have felt (here, that of horror or panic) and the feelings he actually felt in this moment (that of familiarity and even of "admiration") is a typical feature of what psychologists would describe as a state of shock and dissociation." [46] (p. 288).
- 25 We must keep in mind that Bergson felt regret for his demonizing of Germany, painting France as pure spirit and Germany as a war machine. By the writing of the *Two Sources* people of all cultures are vulnerable to losing their self, humanity, and freedom to the war instinct [61]. While this had the effect of partially destroying his reputation for the next several decades, when we look at the atrocities of the second world war, and of the resource extraction and extermination often employed in colonization, we see the role of mechanization and discipline in the war instinct transformed into a tyrannical principle, personified in the modern nationalist ideologies and fascist dictators.
- 26 Just as a good music teacher does not overly force their own taste but guides the student to pursue their own singular perfection, their style, and must manage this alongside teaching the generalities and formal structures of all music, knowing well that this secondary rational knowledge through common notions is useful in practice, but does not contain the essence of any particular genre or piece of music.
- 27 Just as we must go back and forth between the narrow discursive movement of the proofs to the vast network of interconnected thoughts going beyond even the *Ethics*, we must also go back and forth between an inventive discourse within the network of bodies and canalized movements of life to an undissociated, open-intelligence that modulates its own attention and subjects multiplicities to intensive variations and integrations.

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