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1997 EBURON DELFT
Before justifying the title of this lecture and indicating the source of the terminology I have used, please allow me some preliminary considerations which will serve to explain what I feel to be the issue at stake.

In the past many philosophers (albeit not all of them) have explicitly addressed the problem of the essence of Man (to which Aristotle had proposed a double solution: Man by nature is a "speaking animal" and a "political animal"). Some have rephrased the biblical exclamation What is Man? (quid est homo, quod memor es ejus?, Ps. 8) as a speculative or transcendental question. Some have combined the two in order to develop a "philosophical anthropology" (a term which, of course, was introduced later). In this history Spinoza has a remarkable position, both because of the pivotal role which the question of "essence" plays in his main work and the eccentric answer he gives in response. Part III of the Ethics, as we know, virtually begins with a construction of the essence of Man (which in many respects parallels the construction of the essence of God in Part I) leading to the famous phrase in E3P9S: Hie conatus (...) cum ad Mentem et Corpus simul refertur, vocatur Appetitus, qui proinde nihil aliud est, quam ipsa hominis essentia, ex cujus natura ea, quae ipsius conservationi inserviunt, necessario sequuntur ... (When this conatus (...) is related to mind and body together, it is called Appetite, which is therefore nothing else but man's essence, from the nature of which there necessarily follow those things that tend to his preservation ...) This same Part ends with a variation of the formula, incorporating the precision which initially had been postponed:

1. In this revised version I have completed the argument and added more precise references. While I was preparing the lecture, I greatly benefited from the conditions offered by the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in Wassenaar.

Citations are according to the Gebhardt edition, Spinoza, Opera, Heidelberg: Winter 1925 (1972). The English translations have been taken from Samuel Shirley, Baruch Spinoza, The Ethics and selected letters, Indianapolis: Hackett 1982.
Cupiditas est ipsa hominis essentia, quatenus ex data quacunque ejus affectione determinata concipitur ad aliquum agendum (Desire is the very essence of man in so far as his essence is conceived as determined to any action from any given affection of itself) (E3Aff.D1). In between, there has been a full development of the anthropological theory. This is precisely what allows us to take these formulas not only as nominal definitions of Appetite and Desire, but also as real definitions of the essence of Man.²

The full circle which seems to be traced in Part III is also remarkable because it allows us to transform an abstract, merely generic, understanding of the essence of Man (which is the way E3P9 and its scholium must be read, if only because they appear as an application of the propositions which concern the conatus or actualis essentia of any thing), into an adequate knowledge of the individual's essence (E3P57D repeats the formula in this way: At Cupiditas est ipsa uniuscujusque natura seu essentia (... ) ergo uniuscujusque individui Cupiditas a Cupiditate alterius tantum discrepat, quantum natura seu essentia unius ab essentia alterius differt (Now desire is the very nature or essence of every single individual (...). Therefore the desire of each individual differs from the desire of another to the extent that the nature or essence of the one differs from the essence of the other). The metaphysical notion of essence has thus undergone a profound change (already illustrating the transition from the Second to the Third Kind of Knowledge): instead of referring to a class or a genus, it now refers (as a result of the theory of the affections, in which Desire is the prime mover) to the singularity of individuals. It is a principle, not of unification, but of determination or differentiation. That the essence of Man is equated with Cupiditas becomes all the more provocative from a religious point of view, since the singularity or ecceitas of each individual is precisely what a theological world-view would address while speaking of quod sit homo. But to such a world-view cupiditas would bear a direct relationship

2. The same reasoning indeed applies to other propositions of the Ethics where some notion is identified as ipsa hominis essentia: notably E4Df8 and E4P20D (Per virtutem et potentiam idem intelligo; hoc est (...) virtus, quatenus ad hominem refertur, est ipsa hominis essentia seu natura, quatenus ... (By virtue and power I mean the same thing; that is (...), virtue, in so far as it is related to man, is man's very essence, or nature, in so far as ...)). Ontologically, they must be considered as identical. This means that the "real definition" cannot be enclosed in a single verbal formula. It is the open series of such equivalent propositions. But, since Spinoza is no formalist, they cannot be used indifferently in a given context. Their successive introduction is the underlying thread to the structure of the Ethics.
At this point it seems to me worthwhile to look at the role played by the terms "consciousness" and "determination" in Spinoza's definitions. Even though he rarely uses the word conscientia, it is nevertheless most significant. It appears only three times in the Ethics, all of them in Part III: E3P9S (inter Appetitum et Cupiditatem nulla est differentia, nisi quod cupiditas ad homines plerumque referatur, quatenus sui appetitus sunt conscius et propterea sic definiri potest, nempe Cupiditas est appetitus cum ejusdem conscientia (there is no difference between appetite and Desire except that desire is usually related to men in so far as they are conscious of their appetite. Therefore it can be defined as follows: desire is 'appetite accompanied by the consciousness thereof'). E3P30D (Laetitia cum conscientia sui tanquam causa afficietur (Pleasure will be affected with pleasure along with the consciousness of himself as cause)), but also E3P18S2 (Conscientiae morsus (Disappointment)), which we cannot exclude as long as we are not certain that, for Spinoza, the "moral" and "psychological" meanings of conscientia are distinct (a distinction which, in the very same period, in English led to the emergence of the word "consciousness" in addition to the already existing "conscience").

Clearly, E3P9S is the most important occurrence. It is closely related to the way Spinoza uses conscius or sui conscius esse in other passages (where most

3. An implicit reference to the biblical question "what is man?" is already present in the Appendix to Part I of the Ethics, where Spinoza rejects the picture of the world having been created by God for Man's sake and benefit. Not by chance, this superstitious view of the "place of Man in Nature" was identified with Man's consciousness of his appetites cum ignorance of the causes which determine them. The same critical position would result from the Preface to Part IV, where Spinoza discusses the ethical question of a "model" (exemplar) of human nature.

4. More details on this point in E. Balibar, "A Note on «Consciousness/conscience» in the Ethics, Studia Spinozana, No 8 (1994), Spinoza's Psychology and Social Psychology. The first English writer to have used "consciousness" seems to be the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth, in his Treatise directed against Hobbes and the "materialists": The True Intellectual System of the Universe, published in 1678. But of course the meaning that became standard in modern philosophy was that proposed by Locke, in his Essay on Human Understanding (1690), especially after it had been translated into French by Pierre Coste (1700). See Catherine Glyn Davies: Conscience as consciousness: the idea of self-awareness in French philosophical writing from Descartes to Diderot, The Voltaire Foundation, Oxford 1990.
of the time the idea that Men are "conscious of their appetites" or "their wills" goes along with the idea that they "ignore the causes" which make them act one way or another, therefore perpetuating the illusion of free will). But it is not a definition of "consciousness". Indeed this definition is never provided by Spinoza. I suggest that we reverse the question, considering E3P9S and related formulas as an implicit definition of "conscientia" or "consciousness". Given that Spinoza provides us with a detailed description of the forms, causes and effects of Desire (cupiditas), we may consider that, in his theory, "consciousness" is nothing else but the (modal) difference between Appetite and Desire, which is typically human. That is, the difference between the "effort" or conatus to preserve itself for the human individual as a whole (cum ad Mentem et Corpus simul refertur) and the basic affection which, combined with Joy and Sadness, Hate and Love, Hope and Fear, give their emotional value or polarity to our relationship with any object.

With this in mind, what are we to make of the words ex data affectione determinari ad aliquid agendum (to be determined to act, or do something, by some affection)? I take it to be a very general formula in which all the processes of transition between passivity and activity are included, inasmuch as they are causal processes. Since the "effect" which is indicated is an action, there is a clear suggestion here that, although individuals (especially human individuals) are both passive and active, the natural tendency of an individual's existence is towards activity. This also means that emotions are always referred to this basic orientation. Precisely this dynamic difference or momentum is reflected in "consciousness", or it takes the form of an individual's desires.

This makes it fairly difficult to understand, it would seem to me, the kind of criticism which, again and again, has been hurled at Spinoza's anthropology, namely (1) that he was unable to give an account of subjectivity (in other words, he was an adamant behaviorist or reductionist), and (2) he was unable to give an account of the individual's autonomy (the only "proper" individual in his conception ultimately being "God", i.e. a total, impersonal and undifferentiated entity). This kind of criticism began soon after Spinoza's doctrine became known. However, in my opinion, they are not rooted only in ignorance or bad faith. They ultimately refer to the intrinsic difficulty which readers had (and still have) in understanding a doctrine which virtually escapes (or dismisses) the basic antinomies of metaphysics and ethics which arise from ontological dualism: individualism vs holism (or organicism), but also the opposite ways of understanding the human "community" itself, in which either
"intersubjectivity" or "civil society", "interiority" or "exteriority", is given primacy.\(^5\)

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That Spinoza is irreducible to these kinds of alternatives, well-established as they are, is of course no discovery of mine. Neither am I the first to request a new terminology which would express his originality. Let me simply recall A. Matheron's seminal book, *Individu et communauté dans l'oeuvre de Spinoza* (Paris, 1969), in which he writes for instance (when discussing the passion *ambitio*, which he pictures as "the very foundation of sociableness"): *elle se situe en deçà de l'alternative, en un lieu originel où «égoïsme» et «altruisme» coïncident* (p. 164). Later in his book, Matheron is eager to propose the complex expression *ego-altruisme* (p. 266). However, it seems to me that this solution is still unsatisfactory, not only because it retains a duality, but also because it acquires its meaning exclusively at the moral and political level, whereas the antinomy is already resolved at a much more primary level when Spinoza defines the *res singulares* or *individuals*, i.e. the finite *modi* of the substance. In previous essays, I suggested defining Spinoza's ontology as a *relational* ontology, i.e. a general theory of Communication, from which the different forms of imaginary and rational life, including the political life, could

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5. Such an opposition is indeed best known in modern Social Science as the *Gemeinschaft* vs *Gesellschaft* opposition, which was coined by Tönnies. But it has other formulations, developed over a long period. The word "intersubjectivity" was introduced by Husserl (*Cartesianische Meditationen*, 1929) with direct reference to Leibniz and his "monadology". It clearly expresses the primacy of *interiority* (our relationship to a "common", "really existing" world of objects is mediated by the originary relationship of recognition between the *ego* and the *alter ego*). Quite differently, a moral and juridical tradition which can be traced back to Locke and Kant has opposed the moral community, which remains an ideal, located within each person's conscience, to the real civil society, which relies upon *exterior* institutions and obligations set up by law.
be derived. But the concept of communication has contradictory uses, which have to be distinguished. What we need is to combine three key ideas:

1) In Spinoza's philosophy, not only is individuality a central notion, but it is the very form of actual existence. In the strong sense of the term (associated with necessity) only individuals really exist. As a consequence, "substance" and "individuality" are reciprocal concepts. Not in the aristotelian sense, however, in which the "primary substance" is identified with the individual, but in the sense that "substance" (or God, or Nature) is an infinite process of production of multiple individuals, whereas "individuals", being all different and all causally dependent, are the necessary existence of the substance. In short, "substance" is nothing other than the individuals; especially, it does not "transcend" or "underlie" their multiplicity, as a platonic paradeigma or a kantian Ding an sich, but it is the very name by which we designate the causal unity of this infinite multiplicity of "modes".

2) An individual is a unity, which means that it is always composed of some parts and it can never be thought of as an "atom", be it physical or spiritual (therefore the corpora simplicissima are no individuals, and they have no separate existence). But this is only the first step in our understanding of how individuals actually exist. Individuals are neither a given matter (a "subject" in the traditional sense) nor a perfect form or telos organizing an amorphous
matter. Just as *natura naturata* (which could be described as the set of all individuals) is second to *natura naturans*, every individual (including human individuals) is an effect of, or a moment in a more general, and more flexible, process of *individuation* and *individualization*\(^8\). *Individuation* as *individualization* is what actually takes place, giving rise to individuals.

3) Since they are not "given", individuals are constructed (or produced); and since they are not "perfect" in a final sense, they are active, or productive. But their construction as well as their activity always involves a previous, originally connexion with *other* individuals: not only an adaptive reciprocity of the individual and its environment, or the "interior" and the "exterior", but rather a reciprocity of interconnected or interdependent processes of individuation and individualization. Any individual *becomes* (and remains, during a certain time) separated and unique because other individuals become (and remain) separated and unique in their own way, in other words because the processes which lead to separated singularities are *not* themselves separated. This is but another name for "necessity", or the negation of contingency, as it is expressed in E1P29, which must be understood in a strong sense: if *in rerum natura nullum datur contingens; sed omnia ex necessitate divinae naturae determinata sunt ad certo modo existendum et operandum* (nothing in nature is contingent, but all things are from the necessity of the divine nature determined to exist and to act in a definite way), then nothing can be isolated, moreover nothing can be connected *a posteriori*, from "outside". Precisely because the result are individuals which tend to indefinitely increase their degree of autonomy, or to act adequately (cf. E3D2), the very idea of isolated processes of individuation is properly unthinkable.\(^9\)

8. By *individuation* I mean that individuals become *separated* from the environment – which indeed is made of other individuals; by *individualization* I mean that every individual is unique, or that no such thing as "indiscernible" individuals can exist (an idea which is shared by Spinoza, for whom it is a physical necessity, and Leibniz, for whom it is a logical one).

9. This leads us to another idea common to Spinoza and Leibniz, which can account for our difficulties in understanding them nowadays: in both cases a construction of the individual should also give an account of its being *necessarily related to other individuals*, with an evaluation of its degree of autonomy as a consequence. Spinoza and Leibniz, each in his own way, discovered that it is impossible strictly speaking to have a strong notion of singularity without *at the same time* having a notion of the interaction and interdependence of individuals. Right from the beginning, the leibnizian and spinozistic theories imply that singularities are interconnected, building up a "network" or a "system". We may conclude that in these doctrines the real
This will prove decisive when it is a question of understanding why the conatus of the individual essence (or the essential conatus of the individual), which by definition is a self-affirmation, should also immediately mean a resistance to its potential destruction by other things, therefore intrinsically requiring a combination or coalition with some other "similar" or "convenient" things against other things which are "adverse". And it will of course prove even more decisive in the political realm (where the conatus of the individual is called natural right) as an argument which both proves (against "individualism") that the autonomy or power of the individual is not reduced, but enlarged, by the constitution of a State or Civil Society, and (against "holism") that the sovereignty or power of the State is not reduced, but enlarged, by the growing autonomy of the citizens (especially their freedom of thought and expression).

Of course to picture Spinoza as a "dialectician" – at least in any pre-established meaning of the term – would only produce confusion. Nevertheless, the astonishing logic of coincidentia oppositorum (better said: the logic of simultaneous rejection of abstract opposites) which is at work in these arguments calls for a special terminology. The best term I can find is transindividuality. It was suggested to me some time ago by various discussions and readings, but more recently I was surprised to discover that specifically this term, with a full definition and theoretical implementation, has been used by a French philosopher, Gilbert Simondon, in his book L'individuation psychique et collective. My surprise was even greater when I realized the extent to which Simondon's arguments in fact are truly spinozistic, literally converging with some basic propositions of the Ethics, although Simondon himself (as many theoreticians in history) denies that he owes anything to Spinoza and even rejects his doctrine which, in a rather conventional way, he sees as "pantheistic", or a negation of individual reality.10

"object of thought" are not so much, in reality, the classical extrema (the Whole and the Element, or the Part), but rather the reciprocal viewpoints of unity and multiplicity, and the relative character of such notions as "whole" and "parts". See Yvon Belaval, "Sur le simple et le composé", in his Etudes leibniziennes, Paris: Gallimard, 1976. I will return to this comparison in my conclusion.

10. Gilbert Simondon, L'individuation psychique et collective à la lumière des notions de Forme, Information, Potentiel et Métastabilité, Paris: Editions Aubier 1989. The book was written in the late 50's, but – possibly because its ideas at that time would appear very strange – only the first part, dealing with the physical preliminaries, was published in 1964. The second part, which is more interesting, was issued only after the author's death. See also Gilbert Simondon. Une pensée de l'individuation et de la technique, edited by G.
Simondon's book is a very ambitious attempt at defining an ontological framework for the Human Sciences by criticizing the various concepts of individuality which derived either from Plato's archetypal forms (which gives priority to the invariants outside the individual) or from Aristotle's hylemorphic scheme (which gives priority to the inner perfection of the individual) and which survives until nowadays, e.g. in the \textit{Gestalt} psychology. According to Simondon the metaphysical doctrines of individuality, which lead to the classical dualisms of interior and exterior, \textit{a priori} and \textit{a posteriori} knowledge, "psychologism" and "sociologism", have always subordinated the understanding of individuation (ontogeny) to the definition of the individual as an (ideally) \textit{stable} form. Modern physics and biology (including such disciplines as the study of the growth of crystalline structures and the biology of learning processes, in which adaptation to a changing environment requires the emergence of new structures) provide decisive instruments for devising a \textit{new general} concept of ontogeny by showing that stable forms (which reduce the potential energy to a minimum) are less important in natural processes than \textit{metastable} equilibria (requiring an elevation of potential energy which has to be preserved, generally in the form of a polarity of the individual and the environment). Simondon's book is a very fascinating example of \textit{neither} reductionist \textit{nor} vitalist natural philosophy.\footnote{Written indeed before the development of Prigogine's theory of "dissipative structures", it opens a quite different conceptual outlook.}

What I would like to do now, however, is not to adapt Spinoza's doctrine to the formulations which can be found in this or that newly discovered guide. Rather my intent is to discuss the extent to which Spinoza \textit{himself} can be considered a consistent theoretician of "transindividuality", thus helping us to transform this notion from its initially negative definition (a doctrine which is \textit{neither} individualistic \textit{nor} holistic, just as it is \textit{neither} mechanistic \textit{nor} finalistic) into a positive, or constructive notion.\footnote{I have already made an attempt at describing Spinoza as a theoretician of transindividuality in my paper "What is 'Man' in 17th Century Philosophy? Subject, Individual, Citizen", in \textit{The Individual in political Theory and Practice}, edited by Janet Coleman, European Science Foundation/Oxford University Press 1996. There are other concepts of transindividuality in modern philosophy: not only Leibniz and Hegel (with some qualification), but also Freud and Marx. Kojève has used the word occasionally with reference to Hegel, and above all Lacan has borrowed it to express the idea that the...} This requires, first of all,

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that we show how certain basic propositions of the *Ethics* in fact express the idea of individuality as transindividuality, or a "transindividual process of individuation". Indeed my claim is not just that such propositions or groups of propositions can be found in the *Ethics*, but that they are central in each of the "Books" of the *Ethics*, from I to IV at least. As a result, the series of these propositions, highlighting successive aspects of a latent definition, could be considered as guide posts on the theoretical path which, in Spinoza's great work, leads (via anthropology) from ontology to ethics and politics.

Following this hypothesis, transindividuality will emerge: *first*, as a specific conception or scheme of *causality* (mainly in Parts I and II of the *Ethics*); *second*, as the key to the construction of successive *orders of individuality*, or orders of integration of more "simple" individuals into more "complex" ones (mainly in Part II, with consequences ranging through Parts III and IV); *thirdly*, as the latent concept which (in Parts III and IV) articulates "imagination" and "reason" (or, more accurately, the psychological laws of imagination or imaginary life, deriving from the basic ambivalence of human desire, and the rational rule of reciprocal utility, which creates the possibility of relatively stable communities).

1. *Transindividuality as a scheme of causality*

The crucial statement here is E1P28, together with its demonstration and scholium: *Quodcunque singulare, sive quaevis res, quae finita est, et determinatam habet existentiam, non potest existere, nec ad operandum determinari, nisi ad existendum et operandum determinetur ab alia causa, quae etiam finita est et determinatam habet existentiam: et rursus haec causa non potest etiam existere, neque ad operandum determinari, nisi ab alia, quae etiam finita est et determinatam habet existentiam, determinetur ad existendum et operandum, et sic in infinitum* (Every individual thing, i.e. anything whatever which is finite and has a determinate existence, cannot exist or be determined to act unless it be determined to exist and to act by another cause which is also finite and has a determinate existence, and this cause again cannot exist or be determined to act unless it be determined to exist and to act by another cause which is also finite and has a determinate existence, and so ad infinitum). But of course it is closely related to the

Freudian Unconscious is *neither* an individual "faculty" nor a "collective" system of archetypes. But each of them has a different way of understanding it: there is no question of a common doctrine.

13. I reserve Book (or Part) V, with its customary difficulties, for a final remark.
neighbouring propositions (E1P26 to E1P29), which in fact already identify Deus and Natura. Within this group, which expresses what has been considered Spinoza's "universal determinism", E1P28 specifically formulates what, using a Kantian terminology, I would call his general scheme of causality. This is indeed a logical scheme, but which can also be presented in spatial imagination, because, as every concept of causality, it immediately prescribes a topological relationship of causes and effects.

It has two typical characteristics. One, it is a non-linear scheme, as diametrically opposed to the Kantian scheme, where causality is identified with necessary succession. In Spinoza's scheme, "interaction" (Wechselwirkung) or "complexity" is not derived, it is originary, already involved in the elementary pattern of every causal action. Two, it is a scheme which establishes an "order of connexion" (ordo et connexio, or concatenatio, as Spinoza would have it) not between atomic terms (objects, events, phenomena) but between res singulares which, in fact, are individuals.

The scheme is non-linear because of the very way Spinoza defines a "modification" (more precisely a finite modification of God's Nature), repeatedly using the typical expression: ad existendum et [aliquid] operandum determinari. In fact from the point of view of universal causality, or Nature's infinite productivity, existence and operation are reciprocal notions, if not pure and simple synonyms (in the demonstration of E1P28, Spinoza identifies a "cause" and a "mode" — meaning here a finite mode: Deinde haec rursus causa, sive hic modus debuit etiam determinari ab alia ... (Then again this cause or this mode must also have been determined by another cause ...); and E1P36, the final proposition of Part I, will make it explicit that every natural thing is a "cause", and that no cause can exist which does not produce effects, thus completing the circle which had been initiated by Axioms 3 and 4). To

14. What is striking in Spinoza's use of the term cause is that he always takes it in an absolute, not a relative sense: things are causes (in themselves), not "cause of (for) x". They cannot not be causes. Which, by contrast, shows that a notion of cause as formal relation ($R : x \rightarrow y$, or $x R y$) always involves an idea of contingency (it is the case, or not, that given things find themselves in the relation of causality). But the consequence is indeed that things necessarily are in relations: they immediately cause some effect(s) and are effect(s) of some cause(s). The sole apparent exception is the Substance itself, which is causa sui. It is an apparent exception because, as soon as substance is conceived as the totality of causes, it must also appear as the totality of effects. With respect to the "classical" understanding of causality, Spinoza thus occupies a position which is exactly the opposite of Wittgenstein in the Tractatus logico-philosophicus, with whom he has otherwise so many similarities: in one case
exist means to operate, or to act upon other things. But this productive operation is itself necessarily determined by some other thing or cause. As a consequence, "to cause" is an operation by which something modifies or modulates the way something else operates (or produces its effects). Such an operation is of course itself modified or modulated, ad infinitum. But the infinite connexion does not take the form of independent linear series, or genealogies of causes and effects (A "causes" B which "causes" C which etc.): it typically takes the form of an infinite network of singular modi, or existences, a dynamic unity of modulating/modulated activities (the action of B upon any A is itself modulated by some Cs, which itself is modulated by some Ds, etc.).

But in turn these singularities must be individuals, because only individuals can be said properly to operate or to be active, and above all because only individuals can be said to be modified in order to modify something, or, in other words, to be affected in order to affect (i.e. to act). We must notice here that Spinoza is absolutely consistent throughout the Ethics in his use of the

everything is a cause, in the other case nothing is a cause.

15. It is especially remarkable that, in E5P6D, Spinoza refers to E1P28 and 29, summarizing them as follows: Mens res omnes necessarias esse intelligit, et infinito causarum nexu determinari ad existendum et operandum (The mind understands all things to be governed by necessity and to be determined to exist and to act by an infinite chain of causes).

16. Once again, this is fully consistent with the rejection of contingency, especially in the form which a classical definition of Chance has pictured as "an intersection of unrelated causal chains" (Cournot). No causal chains can be "unrelated". It also clarifies the reasons why Spinoza absolutely rejected the notion of substantial vacuum: as E1P15S explains, any admission of a vacuum is incompatible with necessary connexion in this sense. Several commentators have sought ancient or modern physical models for this conception (for instance Gueroult in the theory of oscillations created by Huygens, Bennett in the theory of fields: they all have in common that they switch from particle to wave intuitions). It seems to me that Simondon's technical analogy is the best (although it was not intended as an interpretation of Spinoza): Le terme de modulation (...) désigne l'opération s'accomplissant dans un relai amplificateur à nombre infini d'états, comme, par exemple, un tube à cathode chaude (...) ou un transistor. C'est l'opération par laquelle un signal de faible énergie, comme celui qu'on envoie sur la grille de commande d'une triode, actualise avec un certain nombre de degrés possibles l'énergie potentielle représentée par le circuit anodique et l'effecteur qui est la charge extérieure de ce circuit (cit. p. 36-37).
terms afficere, affectus and affectio: the meaning does not change when passing from the universal (common) notions (as in E1d5, E1P25C\textsuperscript{17}, and E1P28D) to the more specific theory of human individuals. This is the reason for his claiming to have dealt with human passions purely on the basis of common notions, without making them an "exception" in nature. At this point we cannot but notice the similarity between this definition of causality in general and the definition of Desire as the essence of Man: Cupiditas est ipsa hominis essentia, quatenus ex data quacunque ejus affectione determinata concipitur ad aliquum agendum (Desire is the very essence of man in so far as his essence is conceived as determined to any action from any given affection of itself) (E3AD1). Clearly, this means that the essence of causality is the unity of activity and passivity (we might suggest, in quasi-mathematical terms, that it is the "differential" of activity and passivity) within one and the same "subject" (or individual, as Spinoza prefers to say), a unity which defines the individual's singular conatus and relates it to an infinite multiplicity of other individuals.\textsuperscript{18}

Again here a comparison with Kant could be very significant. Just as Kant, Spinoza has one and the same general scheme to explain the physical or causal order and the ethical or practical order. In Kant this is the scheme of succession, in Spinoza the scheme of modulation (using Simondon's terminology). But contrary to Kant, Spinoza's scheme is not intended to oppose both orders, one being the inversion of the other (in Kant a causal order is a linear determination ex post; a final order is a linear determination ex ante, which operates by means of a representation of the goal or intention). It is intended to identify them, "practice" being a modulation in the same way as any individual causality (and therefore, ultimately, "freedom" being not the reversal of the natural order, but the necessary expression of its active side).

\textsuperscript{17} Res particulares nihil sunt, nisi Dei attributorum affectiones, sive modi, quibus Dei attributa certo et determinato modo exprimuntur (Particular things are nothing but affections of the attributes of God; that is, modes wherein the attributes of God find expression in a definite and determinate way).

2. Transindividuality as a concept of integration

What has been just described can only be partially true. It could be called a concept of "first order" complexity: an order which reintroduces complexity within the "elementary" scheme of causality or poses a logical equivalence (mathematicians might say a duality) between the idea of each individual's actual existence, and the idea of multiple relationships (connections, chains) between different individuals. This complexity of the first order finds its most typical expression in E2P7, as the "identical order of connexion" which governs things (or causes) and ideas. But in the propositions which follow immediately a second order of complexity is introduced, which can be considered a deeper level of understanding of Nature as a common notion. This is the concept of the individual as a determinate level of integration, incorporating other individuals ("lower" levels of integration) and itself incorporated in "higher" levels or forms of integration. It should become clear at this point that every use of the notion of individual by Spinoza is dependent on the consideration of individuation as a process. This is exactly where transindividuality becomes irreducible.

The idea of an individual being made of constituent parts (therefore being a "whole"), and being in turn a part of a more comprehensive whole, is of course nothing original. It is exactly this representation which gives rise to the classical antinomies of individualism and holism, "mechanical" and "organic" unity, depending on which term is seen as primary. Spinoza himself has resumed it in his Letter XXXII to Oldenburg, where he makes clear that there are objective orders of magnitude in Nature which are associated with interactions or reciprocal actions. The distinction of "whole" and "part" is relative: something which is a part at one level can be a whole at another level, and conversely. But it is certainly not apparent or arbitrary. Its reality is based on the fact that there are stable units characterized by a "constant proportion (ratio) of motion and rest" among their parts or elements, an idea taken from Descartes' Laws of Nature, which Spinoza has dissociated from its "creationist" background and applied to each particular level of integration.19

19. The proximity of Spinoza's formula eadem ad invicem motus et quietis ratio to the Cartesian Law of the conservation of movement (Dieu a créé la matière avec le mouvement et le repos, et conserve maintenant en l'univers, par son concours ordinaire, autant de mouvement et de repos qu'il en a mis en le créant), and the way he introduced it over his own exposition of Descartes' Principes, have been extensively discussed. What perhaps has been less observed is the implicit reference to the opening phrases of Book II in Aristotle's Physics, which concern the difference between "natural" and "artificial" beings: "and the common feature that characterizes them all [i.e. the
In Descartes it is a question of a constant sum of motion and rest, which holds for the whole extended substance; therefore physical individuals do not really exist as autonomous entities. In Spinoza there can exist a constant proportion of motion and rest at different levels, which means that autonomous bodies actually exist, and are relatively stable, at least for some time, i.e. as long as this proportion is maintained.

This theory is completely explained in the Ethics in Lemmas 4 to 7 after E2P13. As a result, Nature as a whole (tota Natura), considered here under the attribute of extension, is the only "absolute" Whole or Individual (which I think should be understood as a boundary concept, just as the corpora simplicissima is a boundary concept at the other end). But the more important fact is that, for any individual, its identity (or its remaining "itself") should be explained by some constant proportion at one level, whereas its variations should be explained by some constant proportion (or invariant) at another level.

However this presentation is not quite satisfying. Although including the "dynamic" concept of proportions of motion and rest, it remains dependent on a static (and also, ultimately, finalistic) representation of Nature as a given hierarchy of forms, or a general order of subsumption of individuals within one another, according to their degree of complexity (the multiplicity of their elements). It seems to me that the defect here comes from the fact that, in spinozistic terms, the explanation has been reduced to the point of view of Natura naturata, in which "individual" is a formal concept equally applying to any level of integration (the representation of "Nature" as a "single Individual" belongs to Natura naturata). But the "physical treatise" after E2P13 contains another causal idea, which is summarized in Postulates 3 to 6. It concerns the way an individual body is affected by other ("external") bodies. It is further explained in the demonstrations of E2P19 and E2P24, in which it becomes also clear that the underlying doctrine is not only a "physical" one (in the restricted sense of the laws of motion in the attribute of extension), but it is an

natural beings] seems to be that they have within themselves a principle of movement and rest ..." (192b). The definitions of movement and rest have changed, and the "principle" (arché) has become a ratio, but the allusion is clear. This is all the more important, because Aristotle goes on explaining this "principle" as a natural or intrinsic "tendency towards change" (hormè metabolès emphutos), which should be contrasted with Spinoza's definition of the conatus of the individual essence as self-preservation. Once again Spinoza's physics, as his ontology, appear to be neither aristotelian nor cartesian. This would deserve a separate discussion.
ontological one which concerns "things" or "individuals" as such. This is the doctrine which we must keep in mind in order to understand how (in E3P6 to 8) the "constant proportion of motion and rest" can be rephrased as the *conatus* by which anything strives to preserve its own existence, thus identifying each individual mode as a part, or a fraction of Nature's *potentia* (this time, Nature being understood as *Natura naturans*).

Let me suggest the following explanation. Any individual's conservation (or stability, therefore identity) must be compatible with a "continuous regeneration" of its constituent parts, i.e. what in modern terms we would call a regulated inward and outward flow, or material exchange with other individuals — the mental counterpart being the fact that any (self)consciousness of the body mixes or "confuses" its own states with the ideas of other things, just as the perception of external objects is mixed or confused with a representation of the body itself (E2P19 explains that this is not a subjective "illusion", but the very nature of the human *Mens*, which reflects the actual existence of the Body). Indeed, in causal terms, the conservation is nothing but this regulated process of "continuous regeneration". To say that an individual keeps existing is tantamount to saying that it is regenerated or reproduced. An isolated individual, having no "exchanges" with the environment, would not be regenerated, therefore it would not exist. Right from the beginning, what Spinoza implies is that any individual has a need of other individuals in order to preserve its form and its existence (see E2Post4 and above all its use in E4P39D).

Of course, to say that the exchange is "regulated" means that it results from a relationship of forces (*potentiae*), or a balanced equilibrium between destructive and constructive effects of the exchange. But there is more to be said. We cannot be content with the idea that "exchanges" take place between different individuals: we must indicate what is actually exchanged. Spinoza's idea is simple, but daring: what is exchanged are parts of the individuals under consideration, that is, "regeneration" means that a given individual (let's call it "I") continously abandons some part(s) of itself, while at the same time continously incorporating some part(s) of others (let's call them "they"), provided this substitution leaves a certain "proportion" (or essence) invariant.21

20. By this I do not mean that Spinoza has two different doctrines or theories, one "physical" and one "metaphysical", as Gueroult and also Jonathan Bennett (*A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, Cambridge 1984, chap. 4 and 5) seem to admit. On the contrary: Spinoza's "physics" adequately expresses his ontology, according to the definition of *attributes*.

21. A serious objection might be raised here: what I am describing is only one of the three processes which intervene in Spinoza's explanation of the individual's
Clearly, "I" preserve my essence provided the dynamic proportion which defines me as an individual is preserved, independent from the fact that it preserves the essential proportion of others: "my" preservation can mean "their" destruction. But the reverse is also true: since the whole process can be considered from the point of view of any natural individual involved, "their" preservation can also mean "my" destruction.

If I am correct in understanding Spinoza's explanation in this way, it certainly involves a number of difficulties. To begin with, there is the difficulty of understanding how such a process can admit of degrees. Spinoza has an obvious tendency, when describing the human existence, to present it as an all or nothing alternative, conservation vs destruction, which culminates in the introduction of a broad concept of "death" as discontinuity: see E4P39 and scholium. On the other hand, the very notion of increasing and decreasing "power to act", with its result of increasing or decreasing the autonomy of the individual, which is what the doctrine of the essential conatus aims at, seems to imply that there are degrees, or margins of variation between indefinite preservation and immediate destruction. It is also difficult to explain according to which rules, or under which circumstances, the preservation of a given individual is compatible or incompatible with that of others ("my" preservation and "their" preservation). But this question is in fact the programme of the subsequent parts of the Ethics (in the privileged case of human individuals).

Its possible general solution seems to rely upon the following implications of Spinoza's model. One of them emerges in the demonstration of E2P24: in order for "me" to exchange parts with "others", I must undergo what I would call a virtual decomposition of my own individuality, just as a virtual decomposition of other individuals is required. That is, "parts" of existing individuals can interact with external things only if they are subtracted, or simply isolated,

conservation of its forma, the other two being (1) the change of some partial movement (compensated by another one) under the impact of external causes, and (2) the change of size of constituent parts which leaves the motus et quietis ratio invariant. Leaving aside that Spinoza probably is thinking of different physiological phenomena, I raise the hypothesis (which should be discussed per se) that the three processes are one and the same, only expressed in different languages or by means of different images. The first one is atomistic or corpuscular (as the idea of "inward and outward flow" comes from the epicurean physics). But I think that Spinoza's basic idea is beyond (or beside) the opposition of the corpuscular and the oscillatory viewpoints (or it has the two aspects: "component parts" can be imagined as material bits, but also as partial moves, which are also material; moves can be "exchanged" or "shared" just as pieces). Of course the whole explanation could also be considered as metaphoric.
from the unit to which they "belong", in order to form a transitory unity with the parts of other individuals (in spinozistic terms, they are considered not for their contribution to the individual's essence or internal "proportion", but as separate individuals, which can enter other rationes or "proportions"). In other words, what Spinoza is saying is that there does not exist anything like a global face à face between indivisible individuals (or persons, in the human case). Individuals are related to (or "mixed" with) one another because they exchange "parts" (which can be represented as signals, including words as well as other material modes), i.e because they are continuously "analyzed" and "synthesized", de-composed in their constituent parts and re-composed as relatively autonomous units.\footnote{22. In my oral presentation I spoke of "decomposition" without adding "virtual". This has led Prof. Michiel Keyzer to ask the question: "what if individuals do not want to be decomposed?". The question is most welcome 1) because it makes it clear that the physical problem has an immediate ethical import (on which I totally agree); 2) because it raises a fundamental difficulty concerning "virtual" and "actual" existence in Spinoza. It seems to me that virtuality has to be admitted as a valid spinozistic notion, but is not synonymous with either fiction or possibility. It is a question of the viewpoint which is adopted, but this viewpoint is real, or objective (which Spinoza expresses by saying that its idea is in God). "Parts of the Human Body" must be considered both from the viewpoint of their belonging to its essence (\textit{quatenus motus suos certa quadam ratione invicem communicant}) and from a different viewpoint, inasmuch as they individually or separately relate to external objects (\textit{quatenus ut Individua, absque relatione ad humanum Corpus}). I suggest that the corresponding reality is an unstable equilibrium between these two modes of existence - once again corresponding to passivity and activity. The question therefore becomes how such an equilibrium practically evolves. Hence the ethical import: it is not in the power of natural individuals to become indestructible units, with an invariable composition, but it is in their power (i.e. essence) to look for the conditions in which the cohesion of the parts is secured or even reinforced. What individuals want is: not to be decomposed; what they actually perform in the best case is: preventing for some time a virtual decomposition from becoming actual.} Now one could ask, of course, what determines the difference between a virtual or transitional decomposition and an actual, irreversible one (destruction of the individual, which in the case of political individuals or States Spinoza would call "returning to the mass").\footnote{23. \textit{Tractatus politicus}, VII, 25; VIII, 3. I have discussed this formulation \textit{(ad multitudinem redire)} in my article "Spinoza, l'anti-Orwell" (mentioned above). There I also tried to show that Spinoza's institutional construction of the State}

22. Tractatus politicus, VII, 25; VIII, 3. I have discussed this formulation (\textit{ad multitudinem redire}) in my article "Spinoza, l'anti-Orwell" (mentioned above). There I also tried to show that Spinoza's institutional construction of the State

23.
looked for in the "social" doctrine exposed in Part IV, which explicitly concerns human individuality, but carefully maintains the mode of explanation founded upon "common notions". It all derives from the single Axiom of this Part: *Nulla res singularis in rerum Natura datur, qua potentior et fortior non detur alia.* *Sed quacunque data datur alia potentior, a qua illa data potest destrui* (There is in Nature no individual thing that is not surpassed in strength and power by some other thing. Whatasoever thing there is, there is another more powerful by which the said thing can be destroyed). The more complex an individual is, the more relationships it will have with the external world; i.e. the more intensively it will exchange its own "parts" with other (similar or dissimilar) individuals, the more it will need these exchanges to preserve its own existence; but also, accordingly, the more its own preservation will be threatened by the superior strength of the other things. I take Spinoza to mean that what ultimately is necessarily stronger (more powerful, and potentially more destructive) than any singular thing (e.g. than "me") is the *multiplicity* of other singular things (all the more if these multiple things are combined to form unities from which "I" am excluded). Conversely, what could be stronger than any given, finite multiplicity of external things, is a combined unity or a "convergence of forces", a *convenientia* of which "I" myself am a constituent part (ultimately, *natura* as such, see E5P38, 39 and scholium). Propositions E4P2 to 7 are devoted to discussing the play of partial causes, and consequently the effect of the affections, or the role of passivity in the conservation of human individuals. Passivity, or the superiority of external causes, the virtual decomposition of the human individual, is unavoidable. But any affection can be "repressed" (*coerceri*) by some contrary affection. The end of the argument can be found in E4P29 to 31 (which give a general description of the effect of *convenientiae* on the preservation of the individual) and E4P38 to 40 (which apply the same doctrine to the human case, after the reciprocal utility of Men has been defined as Society). I understand these propositions as expressing the idea that relationships between individuals which are based on their "common nature" build up a "collective" or superior individual without suppressing their autonomy. On the contrary, they increase their *potentia agendi* (including, of course, their capacity to think or know), and accordingly their capacity for existence (which means, in the vocabulary of the affections, that for each individual they increase Joy and suppress Sadness). Given the "naturally superior" strength of external forces (E4Ax),

(his own brand of "statistics") involved a permanent process of *decomposition* and *recomposition* of the dangerous *multitudo* (dangerous for the rulers, and above all dangerous for itself).
this means that a *unity* of mutually convenient individuals is an intrinsic condition for each of them to maintain its (or his) autonomy and singularity.\(^{24}\) Finally we can say that the complete concept of an individual is that of an equilibrium which is not fixed, but dynamic - a *metastable* equilibrium which must be destroyed if it is not continuously recreated. Moreover, such an equilibrium implies a virtual decomposition or deconstruction, provided there is always a process of recomposition or reconstruction already taking place. But this reconstruction, although it expresses the individual's singular essence, is itself determined by "collective" processes, i.e. the "constant proportion of motion and rest" or, in a different terminology, the *convenientia* which allows individuals to build up a greater individual, or an individual of higher order. For this reason I spoke of a "second order of complexity" in the understanding of natural causality, because the transindividual pattern which we are dealing with is not only understood as horizontal interaction or reciprocity at the same level, but also as a process of interaction which, for any type of individual (*Individuorum genus*, in the terminology of the Scholium of Lemma 7 after E2P13), regresses to the inferior level and simultaneously progresses to the superior level.\(^{25}\) Clearly, Spinoza thinks that this is a universal pattern (or that

\(^{24}\) The single Axiom of Part IV becomes rather unexpectedly qualified in E5P37S (*Partis Quartae Axioma res singulares respicit, quatenus cum relatione ad certum tempus et locum considerantur, de quo neminem dubitare credo* (The Axiom in Part IV is concerned with particular things in so far as they are considered in relation to a definite time and place, of which I think no one can be in doubt)). The argument I have just proposed explains why I think that a "transindividual" viewpoint *still* underlies the theory of *amor intellectualis Dei* and the Third Kind of Knowledge in Part V. I agree that there is no complete evidence for this, unless one accepts taking into account the "political" texts together with the *Ethics* (as Matheron, Negri, and others, do) and admits that Spinoza uses such terms as *aeternitas* in an univocal manner. See especially the idea that collective political bodies, where there is a diversity of opinions and an institutionalized system of representation, are virtually "eternal" (*Tractatus politicus*, VIII, 3: *concilia contra aeterna*).

\(^{25}\) This is where a comparison with Simondon proves very stimulating. His key idea is that any individuation remains dependent, in a metastable equilibrium, on the *pre-individual potential* from which the individual emerged through successive "structurings" or "distanciations from the environment". Therefore the existence of an individual is always "problematic" or tense. It is this tension which individuals try to resolve (or to understand) by seeking a greater degree of individualization in the building of collectivities. But a living collectivity is never a simple aggregate or, on the contrary, a fusion of pre-existing
it can be explained by "common notions"). But it is only when the individuals referred to are human individuals that the explanation can be completed, because in that case we can draw from our own experience the elements which are needed to describe its singularity: namely the affections as they influence our degree of activity and passivity by typically oscillating between decreasing and increasing our independence from partial causes – in other words our conflictual or harmonic unity with other things, and particularly other men.\(^{26}\)

3) Transindividuality as a mediation between "imagination" and "reason"

A reader of the \textit{Ethics} might raise several objections to this argument. For instance he could say the following. We know that Spinoza contrasts "inadequate cause" with "adequate cause", or more precisely "to be inadequately cause" (by which he means that we are mainly passive, determined by external causes) with "to be adequately cause" of something (by which he means that we are mainly active, or the effect we produce can be explained "by our own nature"). The usual way of understanding it is that Spinoza is contrasting individuals: it must be a culture (what Simondon also calls "spiritualité"), or a dynamic way of solving the individual's problem. It has to return to the pre-individual level (consisting, among others things, in emotional patterns) to integrate them in a new, superior, metastable entity which, for that reason, will appear as \textit{neither} "external" \textit{nor} "internal" to the individuals (but precisely transindividual). \textit{Il passe dans l'individu du pré-individuel, qui est à la fois milieu et individu: c'est à partir de cela, de ce non-résolu, de cette charge de réalité encore non-individuée, que l'homme cherche son semblable pour faire un groupe dans lequel il trouvera la présence par une seconde individuation ...} (cit., p. 192).

26. The discussion in this section has been almost entirely conducted in "physical" terms, more precisely by considering that individuals are primarily \textit{bodies}. This is also the order followed by Spinoza. One may of course wonder how the same idea could be expressed in the attribute of \textit{cogitatio}, i.e. inasmuch as individuals are \textit{minds}. My suggestion (again, not to be accepted without further examination) is that this mental counterpart is provided by the theory of \textit{idea ideae}: an expression which in the \textit{Ethics} occurs only in Part II, in direct combination with the general definition of the composed individual and the \textit{mens as idea corporis}. In Parts III, IV, and V, \textit{idea ideae} becomes implicit, while Spinoza adopts the point of view of the Mind as a complex of ideas of affections of the body, and he describes various modalities for their connexion (or transformation). Note that, in "mental" terms, the \textit{convenientiae} are synonymous with \textit{notiones communes}, if we consider not only their (universal) "objective" content, but also their "formal" being as modes of thought.
situations in which we are dependent on other people and situations in which we are independent, acting on our own. But the argument I have sketched is pointing towards a quite different understanding (less "individualistic"): to be active or to be an adequate cause is also to establish a relationship with others, albeit not one of dependency (not even "mutual" dependency) but of convenientia or synergy.

Although this understanding may not be obvious, I do think it can be defended. One could first suggest that when Spinoza speaks of Man or human nature (e.g. E4P4: Fieri non potest, ut homo non sit Naturae pars, et ut nullas possit pati mutationes, nisi, quae per solam suam naturam possint intelligi, quorumque adaequata sit causa (It is impossible for a man not to be part of Nature and not to undergo changes other than those which can be understood solely through his own nature and of which he is the adequate cause)) he is not necessarily referring to a single individual, but using a "generic" term. This is a fragile defense, however, not only because it is linguistically artificial, but also because Spinoza's demonstrations, in Part IV, always maintain a clear distinction between individual or personal affections and collective processes. To think of individuality as transindividuality certainly does not amount to suppressing or blurring this distinction. Hence there only remains a stronger, but also more difficult hypothesis. We may observe that Spinoza never actually says that anyone whose actions can be explained by his own or his sole nature (per solam suam naturam intelligi) is acting solely, or separately from the others. To draw such a conclusion is clearly to accept "individualistic" assumptions, which is precisely what I am questioning here. We may even go one step further by arguing that the "model of human nature" (exemplar humanae naturae), to which Spinoza refers in the preface to Part IV, in reality excludes any individual perfection which isolates Man (including the "free" and "wise" Man). On the contrary it is a perfection which equates growing autonomy of the individual (greater freedom and greater singularity, or uniqueness) with closer association (or "friendship") with other individuals. It seems to me that this is mainly the way Spinoza articulates the individual and the collective aspects of Imagination and Reason in Parts III and IV.

In the Preface to Part III, we read the famous critique of "humanist" doctrines (in the sense of an affirmation that Human Nature is something unique and miraculous, transcending the common laws of Nature): Imo hominem in Natura veluti imperium in imperio concipere videntur. The next phrases make it perfectly clear that Spinoza is not only arguing that the same rational method must apply to the science of Man and to that of other natural beings or that human nature follows the ordinary causal laws; but he is also arguing that human behaviour should be explained in terms of interaction with other natural beings, be they human or not. This is a logical consequence of the fact
that Man (or human nature) is not outside Nature (especially not as its "ruler" or "beneficiary") - hence the Definitions and Postulates immediately following. What makes this statement remarkable is that, as I have said, Spinoza's presentation in part III (and IV) is certainly not a dissolution or reduction of individual (particularly human) identity. It is rather a reconstruction of this identity, a grand synthesis of the constitutive aspects of such an identity (we may be tempted to call it a phenomenology, or to compare it with a phenomenological reconstruction).

To begin with, Spinoza introduces consciousness, which he pictures as an idea of oneself, as Body and Mind, affirming the existence of its "object" (ideatum). It is, therefore, always immediately associated with Desire. But this is only an abstract starting point. A full description of self-consciousness will arise only from the complete (natural) history of Desire, i.e. of the passions and actions which are combined with it (either as modalities, consequences, or causes of its metamorphoses). It will be a history of the singular units (ideas plus affects, or images of present or past "objects" mixed with perceptions of "oneself") through which the Self becomes something concrete – or individualization becomes individualization. If a transindividual character essentially belongs to this process, it must therefore intervene within the logic of Desire, possibly in the very association of ideas and affects. However, right from the beginning, Spinoza also divides his subject by taking into account the basic distinction between passions and actions, or "inadequate" and "adequate" ideas, imagination and reason. It would seem that the individual's Mind is (at least logically) split between these two sets of ideas, that its conscious unity is always a divided or uneven one. Therefore we must start with two different questions: one concerning the transindividual constitution of "imagination", the other one concerning the transindividual constitution of "reason". Before we try to synthesize them within a single process, we must treat them as if they were two different kinds of conscious life.

How about imagination, first? We must be careful, not to project upon Spinoza arguments taken from later doctrines, be they psycho-sociological or psycho-analytical, however analogous they may appear. Nonetheless, it can be suggested (1) that Spinoza's theory of imagination is not a theory of some human (individual or generic) faculty (as memory, perception, will, etc.), but a theory of the structure in which individual "selves" are primarily constituted (including self-awareness, self-recognition, self-assertion); and (2) that this

27. In this reconstruction, I draw many useful ideas from Michèle Bertrand,
*Spinoza et l'imaginaire*, Paris: P.U.F. 1983, who takes all the benefits from her Freudian training, but very carefully emphasizes the inconsistencies between both authors.
structure is originally relational or transindividual: not only does it confront us with a picture of consciousness in which every relationship that "I" can have with "Myself" is mediated by the Other (more precisely: an image of the Other), but it also shows that the life of imagination is a circular process of successive "identifications", where I recognize the Other from Myself, and Myself from the Other. In many respects, it could be said that this conception of imagination as a structure is a secularization and a generalization of the Biblical maxim (which we know Spinoza considered the core of the "true" Religion) "You shall love your neighbour as yourself", except that Spinoza emphasizes the intrinsic ambivalence of the passions which are raised by identification processes (Love, but also Hate). 28

Propositions E3P15 to 17 are crucial in the explanation of how the life of imagination develops into what I have called the "history of the self": they show how an internal conflict is generated, in which opposite affections (mainly Love and Hate) simultaneously affect the same subject with respect to the same objects (Haec Mentis constitutio, quae scilicet ex duobus contrariis affectibus oritur, animi vocatur fluctuatio, quae proinde affectum respicit, ut dubitatation imaginationem ... (This condition of the mind arising from two conflicting emotions is called 'vacillation', which is therefore related to emotion as doubt is related to imagination)), which will be overcome only by the introduction of temporal modalities of Joy and Sadness (Hope and Fear), thus adding a new dimension to the oscillatory moves of the passionate Desire. These propositions are also remarkable because of the explicit use they make of the idea of partial causes connecting individuals who are constituted of many parts and can be affected in many ways. The key concept is aliquid simile, the "element of likeness" (or partial likeness) which allows an individual to associate Joy or Sadness with the images of Other individuals, thus awakening feelings of Hate and/or Love towards them and awakening his own

28. This ambivalence is explained in a particularly striking manner in E3P32 and scholium: ex eadem naturae humanae proprietate, ex qua sequitur, homines esse misericordes, sequi etiam, eosdem esse invidos et ambitiosos (from the same property of human nature from which it follows that men are compassionate, it likewise follows that they are prone to envy and ambition). Whence it can be concluded that, as far as we live in imagination, we in a sense remain for ever children (pueri). Contrary to the moralists' tradition, Spinoza has become aware of the fact that it is possible to hate oneself (which is exactly what the Augustinian tradition demands in the name of God: e.g. Pascal). It can be understood only if the real and imaginary Other is always already involved in any "self-consciousness".

26
Desire to please or displease them. Imagination is pictured here as a "mimetic" process. Its effects are described in the next section, until another important concept is introduced, *affectuum imitatio*, in E3P27: *Ex eo, quod rem nobis similem, et quam nullo affectu prosecuti sumus, aliquo affectu affici imaginamur, eo ipso simili affectu afficimur* (From the fact that we imagine a thing like ourselves, towards which we have felt no emotion, to be affected by an emotion, we are thereby affected by a similar emotion). The relationship to the Other then emerges as a double process of identification: we identify ourselves with other individuals because we perceive a partial likeness (i.e. a likeness of the parts of the body or mind, which become positive or negative objects of desire) and we project our own affections upon them (or theirs upon ourselves). Hence the continuous communication or circulation of affects between individuals, which is also the process in which each individual's affections are reinforced. This is clearly a Janus-face process, one collective and one personal, in which collective as well as personal "identities" are created. After all, we do try to imitate others and to act according to an image we have built of them (see in particular the definition of *ambitio* and *humanitas*, in the scholium of E3P29, on which the explanation of imaginary sociableness is grounded, in other words, the explanation of sociableness inasmuch as it is always at least partially the result of Imagination). But it is also a direct transposition in the psychic or mental language of the above described process of de-composition/re-composition. This could make us suspect that, indeed, Spinoza already had these arguments concerning personal and collective identity in mind when he described the conservation of the individual as a process in which both an *infra-individual* and a *supra-individual* level are necessarily involved.

29. It seems that Spinoza was particularly concerned with the difficulty (but also the ethical necessity) of restricting this process of association, which has its roots in the *partial images* of the body or the mind, to *other humans*: the two common "excesses" or "confusions" being, on the one hand, the identification with animals (zoophilia and zoophobia), on the other hand the anthropomorphic idea of God as a benevolent or malevolent ("jealous") figure. This might very well be a crucial aspect of what, in Part V, he calls a causal understanding of one's own (or proper) Body and its actual *potentia*.

30. See E3P43 to 46, where notably the "class" and "national" identities are explained; E4P32 to 34 and E4P37D2, where the constitution of the civil society is mainly explained by the *fear of differences* which every individual imagines are incompatible with his own preservation. I have discussed these propositions in more detail in *Spinoza et la politique*, cit., p. 93 sv.
Imagination is already transindividual because it consists of partial mimetic processes in which both ideas and affects are involved. But what can be said about Reason? It was introduced in Part II (E2P40 and scholia) as a "Second Kind of Knowledge" in which thought is governed by the common notions in the double sense that they are universally applied to any object and common to all human minds (since they are ideas of properties which can be found equally in the whole and in the parts). Clearly, such "common notions" can be ethical as well as theoretical (or maybe every theoretical axiom has an ethical value, just as every universally valid rule of action must involve a true idea). But it is not until E4P18S that the question of Reason is tackled again. It seems that we have here the most explicit programme of a definition of "reason" or "reasonable action". It is presented, not as a faculty (even less as a divine inspiration or a transcendent essence), but as a structure or a system of mutual implications in which, for each individual, the conatus to preserve his existence is connected with the knowledge of his proper good (quod sui utile est) and the necessary establishment of a commercium with other men. Each of these elements is necessary.

Spinozistic "reason" is doubly utilitarian, but in a specific sense. It is utilitarian inasmuch as the very principle of virtue for each individual is to look for what is useful to himself and what he needs in order to preserve his own existence. But it should not be conceived mainly in terms of reciprocal dependency (except in very primitive conditions, to which Spinoza has alluded in the Theolocio-political Treatise). Therefore Spinoza is not particularly interested in such questions as the division of labour or exchange of goods. In traditional terms, he does not distinguish between the problem of "necessary life" and "good life" or perfection (zên and eu zên in Aristotle). Rather, knowledge is the condition and the result of this effort: E4P26 and 27 insist again that reason cannot be separated from knowledge, which is its intrinsic power. Therefore reason is useful, but not instrumental. It cannot be rational without also being reasonable.

31. Here we may recall what I suggested above about notiones communes being convenientiae.

32. By borrowing Levi-Strauss' famous tripartition, it could be said that (in the Ethics) Spinoza is not really concerned with the exchange of Goods (see however E4App 27 to 29), but rather with the exchange of Women (or better said, objects of sexual love) and the exchange of Words or, more generally, signs (but of course a developed analysis of linguistic communication can be found only in the Theologico-political Treatise).
It is also utilitarian in the sense that – ignoring any "kantian" conflict between ends and means – it prescribes not only reciprocal utility, but also reciprocal use of each other’s forces. Nothing is more useful for a man than another man (homini nihil homine utilius), not even himself. This explains to us why in the very same text where the maxims of Reason are explained, Spinoza also shows that the building of a community with, "as it were", one single Body and one single Mind, is a requisit of self-conservation (nihil, inquam, homines praestantius ad suum esse conservandum, optare possunt, quam quod omnes in omnibus ita conveniant, ut omnium Mentes et Corpora unam quasi Mentem, unumque Corpus componant, et omnes simul, quantum possunt, suum esse conservare contentur, omnesque simul omnium commune utile sibi quaerant (Men, I repeat, can wish for nothing more excellent for preserving their own being than that they should all be in such harmony in all respects that their minds and bodies should compose, as it were, one mind and one body, and that all together should endeavor as best they can to preserve their own being, and that all together they should aim at the common advantage of all) E4P18S). It seems to me that the notion should be understood in a strong sense: what for any of us makes the superior usefulness of other men is not what they have or what they make or produce, but what they are (but of course they are mainly active individuals or "causes": thus they make, produce, and have). For the same reason my own usefulness to them (and my readiness to be used by them) is immediately implied by my perception of their usefulness to me (this is the concept of friendship).

In E4P35 (with its corollaries and scholium) the reciprocal idea is fully developed: Reason not only prescribes seeking a common good or a common utility in social life (or "commerce" in the general sense), but it produces this result, which is nothing other than the preservation of existence. We may even suggest, by anticipating the intrinsic community of Minds exposed in Part V, that such a reciprocal use of individuals in society is a necessary (if not sufficient) condition for the production of common notions, i.e. adequate ideas which are conceived in the same way in different minds. For such ideas require that – to some extent – the minds of which they are "parts" be "one and the same mind". Adequate ideas are ideas which allow each of us to know his affections by their cause, therefore to be active. They are also ideas which many different people consider to be identical, thus creating a partial identity of different individuals. Finally, by comparing this kind of unity with imaginary unity (or likeness), we may assert that Reason is free from the specific abstraction which limits the power of Imagination and also explains its ambivalent effects (both constructive and destructive): namely the image of the Other as "similar" or alter ego (or Neighbour) and the subsequent necessity to please him (E4P66S). In Reason the Other is conceived as useful not in
spite of its (his) singularity or difference, but because this singularity is implied by the general laws of human nature. As a consequence, there is no question of reducing the qualities of each individual (his opinions, his way of life, or even his appearance) to those of the rest. This is what makes all the difference between convenientia and similitudo, "friendship" and "ambition" or even "humanity" (E4P37S1, E4P70). But with this consequence, we are in fact considering Reason, not as a "Second", but already as a "Third Kind of Knowledge", in which singularities as such are known as necessary.

Each kind of knowledge, then, can be considered as a specific way to establish a necessary connection between the individual's conservation and the institution of a community. It seems to me that such a way of reading Spinoza's arguments concerning Imagination and Reason may help us to clarify the notions of "passivity" and "activity". Imaginative communication requires that individuals be dominated by inadequate or confused ideas of similarity, which cannot but oscillate between opposite illusions (that individuals are identical or incompatible, twin brothers or natural enemies). Rational communication requires that individuals know each other as different individuals who have much in common. "Under the guidance of Reason", Men know that their fellow Men are irreducible to one another, each having what Spinoza calls a specific ingenium, while being mutually convenientes more than any other beings. There is transindividuality in both cases, as a condition for the existence of the individual, but in antagonistic forms. Nevertheless, as Spinoza insists in Part IV (E4P59 and scholium), many of the same effects can be achieved either passively or actively (which is the reason why Civil Societies, where some individuals are passive and others active or, more likely, each individual is to some degree passive and to some degree active, are both necessary and possible).

This again suggests that transindividuality as such should be considered a process rather than a fixed pattern. What interests Spinoza indeed, and becomes the object of the second half of the Ethics, is not to describe separated "lives". There actually is one single conatus, one single problem of the preservation of the individual in Nature. According to Spinoza, inadequate ideas can never be eliminated (which would mean an absurdity: that the human individual is no longer affected by a more powerful environment).

33. The only place which I know in the Ethics where Spinoza explicitly comments on this implication of his theory of Reason relies upon a very specific and very generic example indeed: it is E4P68S, where he interpretes the story of Adam and describes woman as the being "most convenient with the nature of man" (homo), contrasting this rational community with the imaginary likeness of men and animals.
Therefore Imagination will always remain a part of his Mind. But adequate ideas, little developed as they may be, are also a part of the Human Mind for every individual. If there were no adequate ideas, and no actions which Man causes "by his own nature", his affections would simply lead to his destruction or death. A concrete concept of transindividuality therefore implies that relationships between individuals, or parts of the individuals' Minds and Bodies, are considered in the transition from Imagination to Reason, i.e. from a lesser to a greater power to act. This is precisely what Spinoza suggests when he explains that the constitution of civil society is a condition of free thinking and the activity of knowledge. But of course a new terminology – such as the one I am proposing – will only add something to the widely accepted view that Spinoza considered politics (and especially democratic politics) as an intermediary step on the road to wisdom if it can be proved that this condition is not external: in other words, if we can prove that a new kind of knowledge is also, by its very nature, a new kind of community. I find this likely, but I am not sure that it can be completely demonstrated from the text of the Ethics. Another possibility, especially if we consider Part V of the Ethics as an incomplete, if not aporetic, text, is to read it as an investigation of the difficulties of such an idea. Part V would introduce a new coincidentia oppositorum, especially inasmuch as it tries to include in the amor intellectualis Dei both a greater strength of images and affects of Love and Joy, and a greater number of "eternal" ideas which cross individual minds or become "impersonal". From this point of view, it is very interesting that, for example, E5P20 directly associates the intellectual love of God and the adequate knowledge of our affections with the imagination of the greatest possible number of Men eodem Amoris vinculo cum Deo junctos.

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The question, therefore, remains at least partially open. The importance of further discussion can be manifested by comparing Spinoza with other classical philosophers who asked the question What is Man? Especially with Leibniz who, in this respect, seems to be very close to his point of view, but who in the end opposed him very strongly. 34 Spinoza and Leibniz were equally dissatisfied with Descartes' dualism and Hobbes' materialistic atomism. They tried to derive from Nature itself the conditions which allow any individual to become more or less "powerful" or

34. Here I have summarized some of the ideas developed in my paper "What is 'Man' in 17th Century Philosophy: Subject, Individual, Citizen", mentioned before.
"self-sufficient". This is also why we have difficulties today in understanding them perfectly. XIXth and XXth century discussions have prepared us to imagine that a strong concept of individuality should first emerge in the framework of "individualistic" doctrines. But historically it was just the opposite: such a concept was elaborated on theoretical bases which, to our standards, would appear "holistic" or profoundly anti-individualistic. Their concept is also not restricted to human individuality; it covers individuality in general. What is at stake could be presented as a paradoxical way of understanding the singularity of the Human being by conceiving of "individual difference" as a universal ontological problem, something which could manifest itself and become expressed in infinitely many modes, with infinitely many degrees, in the realm of Nature of which Man himself is a part. However such a programme can be carried on in more than one manner: therefore the most interesting thing is precisely the fact that two different "naturalisms", which paradoxically enough reveal themselves as more individualistic than "individualism" itself, eventually prove antithetic.

Spinoza and Leibniz admittedly share what we may call a basically immanent point of view: any individual can be singularized only under the effect of its (or his) own inner activity, which can be conceived as some "force" (conatus), some "energy" (vis), some "tendency" (appetitus), or some "desire" (cupiditas) to realize all its possibilities (quantum in se est, Spinoza writes simply) in space and time. It is a dynamic power, which Spinoza attributes to the "essences" themselves, whereas Leibniz attributes it to the "monads" or "metaphysical points". We have seen also that this leads to a radical form of nominalism (every individual is unique: "there are just as many species as individuals", as Deleuze puts it) and to a definition of individuality which stresses its complex character and, accordingly, puts the opposition of whole and parts in perspective.

We also know that this deep insight into the logic of individuality is often considered responsible for unacceptable paradoxes when it becomes a question of accounting for the freedom of the individual. Evidently the difficulty is that, if relations between individuals immediately build up new superior individualities, it would seem that the autonomy of the parts is

35. Matheron has rightly insisted on this point (see "L'anthropologie spinoziste", in Anthropologie et politique au XVIIe siècle: études sur Spinoza, Vrin 1986).

36. This idea was brilliantly exposed by Deleuze in his two books: Spinoza et le problème de l'expression, Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1968; Le Pli: Leibniz et le baroque, ibid., 1988.
absorbed into the interest and the requests of the whole aiming at its own self-preservation, especially if these "parts" are Human persons.

In spite of their common "naturalistic" or "immanent" point of view, this is exactly what Leibniz would object to in spinozism. Quite different from Spinoza, Leibniz does not repudiate the theological concept of Man's original freedom: on the contrary, he follows the Christian "liberal" tradition which aims at proving that this freedom is fully compatible with Divine Providence and Blessing in spite of Original Sin.³⁷ Spinoza's conception of relation as immanence is best described by the term "transindividuality"; conversely, "inter-subjectivity" is the notion that fits in better with Leibniz, since it is mainly a question not of actions and passions, but of a correspondence between representative contents of all the monads, which results in each of them having an image of all the others clearly or confusingly involved in its own "perception of the world". It could be said that, to Leibniz, all individual perceptions are but different "perspectives" inscribed in the same universal horizon, or even that "the world" is actually nothing other than the sum total of all the individuals' mutual perceptions. As we know, the notion of "pre-established harmony" allows him to combine subjectivity and intersubjectivity with the acceptance of Providence and Predetermination. If this view does not abolish liberty, however, it is because a "perfect" world – at least one which, as our own, is "as perfect as possible" – must include freedom in itself, which is a "perfection" par excellence. To put it more clearly, it must include all the conceivable degrees of freedom, in a continuous progression from zero to absolute freedom: in other words there would exist no such thing as "free" humans if in the "chain of beings" an infinite number of comparatively "less free" and "freer" beings was not given. But this does not imply that all men are equally free (or enjoy an "equal liberty") since, although the analogy of form between human individuals normally suggests an analogy of freedom among them, the Principle of Indiscernibles strictly prescribes that two equally free men cannot exist, and the Principle of the Best suggests that this relative inequality is necessary to the constitution of the "best possible world". Leibniz's conception of immanence is, therefore, basically hierarchic or "vertical".

But is there not another way of reading the reciprocity of the Part and the Whole? For instance reading it as an expression of the mutual implication of "individual" elementary liberty and "collective" liberty (or liberty inasmuch as its conditions are collective). It would seem that Spinoza has put the case in a particularly clear manner. His allegedly "deterministic" (in fact causal)

³⁷. To this demonstration Leibniz dedicated his last major published work, the Essais de Théodicée (1710) – in many respects an implicit critique of Spinoza.
propositions express the universal connection of individualities. Should we consider it as fully incompatible with freedom, hence a profoundly "anti-humanistic" thesis? Spinoza himself would reply that it is incompatible only with an imaginary representation of freedom, not with the conditions of a real liberation. When Spinoza declared cupiditas to be "the very essence of Man" (and equated it with virtus), he had no intention of supporting pessimistic anthropological views on individual selfishness, nor to contrast them with purely moral altruistic views. What he intended to do was to show that the typical affective "oscillations" of the human psyche (fluctuatio animi) are originally constituted within a trans-individual intercourse, which is always both real and imaginary. Thus the aim of Spinoza's naturalism is to define the way of a "becoming necessary" of freedom itself\(^{38}\): the very "law" of this process being that the liberation of the individual actually multiplies collective power, just as collective freedom multiplies the individual power.

This takes us back to the divergence of the two systems. It was slight but irreducible in their initial ways of understanding individual difference as an immanent one, but it lead eventually to a huge gap, both from the metaphysical and from the political angle. Spinoza's philosophy, and this is certainly not by chance, aims at a construction of democracy in which the freedom of expression would be constitutive, more generally, the diversity of individual opinions and the free communication between individuals would appear as a necessary condition of existence for the State itself.\(^{39}\) To be sure, there can be no pre-established harmony between the increasing power of the individuals and that of the community. Their agreement must remain a fragile achievement of fortune (i.e. of causes which are seldom acting together, and easily counteracted). Nevertheless they can in no way be considered contraries. Therefore Matheron and others are correct in explaining that although Spinoza comes closer than any of the classical metaphysicians to picturing society as a "market", he does not take the path of what would become "liberalism"; provided they establish certain rules, individual potentiae are virtually complementary. But this complementarity always relies upon their own activity; it has to be constructed.

A digression into Leibniz's rival conception of individuality allows us to better understand some crucial problems of the spinozistic doctrine. In the

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38. *Libertas (…) agendi necessitatem non tollit, sed ponit* (Tractatus politicus, II, 11).

39. This thesis is more clearly expressed in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, but it is not suppressed in the *Tractatus Politicus*. See my *Spinoza et la politique*, cit.
Monadologie as well as the Essais de théodicée (which are permeated with neo-platonist inspiration), the aim is clearly to provide a philosophical foundation for a Christian conception of personal identity, which not only would be compatible with the dogmas of the Immortality of the Soul and the Last Judgment, but would also allow us to rationally understand them. Every single individual must have a unique relationship with God, while becoming integrated in the End within the Spiritual unity (or corpus mysticum) of Christ. To this mystical idea, Spinoza has opposed a doctrine of beatitudo and aeternitas whose difficulties are obvious, but which clearly aims at proving the individual's singularity and his capacity to reach personal autonomy, while simultaneously criticizing the Jewish and Christian belief wherein this virtual autonomy is pictured as a salvation which can be obtained only by transcending the limits of This miserable World.

The doctrine which is explained (or perhaps we should say simply sketched) in Part V of the Ethics is remarkable (and strange) because (1) it proposes the idea of "eternity" as something which can be partial (E5P39: Qui Corpus ad plurima aptum habet, is Mentem habet, cujus maxima pars est aeterna (He whose body is capable of the greatest amount of activity has a mind whose greatest part is eternal)); (2) it refers the Third Kind of Knowledge (and the corresponding Amor intellectualis Dei) to a specific "consciousness" or rather causal knowledge of one’s personal Body and its affections qua powers; (3) it describes the "form" of this Knowledge as an "intellectual order" of ideas which is in the individual understanding exactly as it is in God. Therefore it is identically conceived in every human understanding (or is indiscernible in different understandings). This is indeed, from a metaphysical point of view, an astonishing coincidentia oppositorum.

On the basis of the arguments sketched above, I would suggest the following interpretation. Admittedly, there is no explicit reference to transindividuality here. Rather, we are presented with a reciprocal move, in which Spinoza explains what a greater or superior degree of individuality can consist of, given that individuality was constructed as a transindividual reality.

To say that there is partial eternity must be understood as a rejection of the corpus mysticum – an imaginary transposition to the "Whole" or the "World" of the inadequate idea we have of our own body. It is also the counterpart of the idea expressed in the De intellectus emendatione: habemus enim ideam veram. We already have some true (and, indeed, adequate) idea, just as we can already experience beatitudinem (E5P23S: sentimus experimurque, nos aeternos esse (We feel and experience that we are eternal)). Therefore "eternity" has nothing to do with a Future or a Promised Land. It is a quality of that part of our actual existence which is active or in which we are the adequate cause of our preservation.
Inasmuch as we are "eternal" in this sense, our power to act and exist and our power to think and understand are one and the same thing. It should be no surprise that this activity goes along with our being able to conceive of our own body as multiplicity, as an effect of its own multiple natural (i.e., from our point of view, pre-individual) causes and also with our consciously forming ideas which transcend a "restricted" or "limitative" concept of individuality: for they cannot be "privately" owned, since they have exactly the same content in every mind, i.e. in every part of the infinite (natural) power of thinking. Since these two aspects of the doctrine proposed in Part V clearly refer to each of the "attributes" of the substance (extensio and cogitatio), it seems that the coherence of Spinoza's argument entirely relies upon the possibility to think of them as identical. They would of course be antithetic to "common sense". This might be because common sense is unable to imagine independence and community not to be contraries, inversely growing and realized. We may also suggest that what Spinoza is trying to express by means of this paradoxical unity is a non-commonsensical (and non-metaphysical) idea of the relationship between individuation and individualization, wherein the latter becomes a pre-condition of the former, not the reverse. Accordingly, transindividuality (both in its passive and active aspects, its imaginary and reasonable expressions) would certainly remain a pre-condition of this superior form of individuality (which we already enjoy) but it would also be endorsed with a new superior (i.e. more powerful) quality.