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The Voice and the Name: Spinoza in the Badioudian Critique of Deleuze

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In two recent publications Alain Badiou has launched a veritable battle against Deleuze's ontology.[1] In *La clameur de l'Être* - a book entirely devoted to Deleuze - Badiou gives a critical and in many ways very original exposition of the Deleuze's entire work as being a philosophy departing from an ontological pre-comprehension of Being as One.[2] Once again, in *Court traité d'ontologie transitoire*, a book giving a comprehensive outline of the philosophical background of Badiou's own mathematical ontology, an entire chapter is devoted to Deleuze's philosophy. Although Badiou in both books shows a tremendous respect for Deleuze's thinking they nevertheless constitute fundamental critiques.

In *La clameur de l'Être* the attack is directed towards the category of 'univocity' in Deleuze's thinking. According to Badiou, Deleuze's insistence on the univocity of Being reinstalls transcendence. The oscillations in Deleuze's ontology between, on the one hand, Being as the multiplicity of actual events and, on the other, Being as unitary virtual structure - this oscillation at some point falls out to the advantage of virtual continuity, which then takes on a position "symmetrical to the classical beyond" as Badiou says (Badiou 1997, p. 70). The accusations against Deleuze appears somewhat odd and are also rather severe: Badiou accuses a philosophy, Deleuze's, which has tried to ground itself upon the practical imperative of affirmation of not being able to affirm Being the way Being is, thereby reinstalling transcendence. And he accuses a

[1] References: Badiou 1997: *La clameur de l'Être* (Paris: Hachette, 1997); Badiou 1998: *Court traité d'ontologie transitoire* (Paris: Seuil, 1998); Deleuze 1967: 'La Méthode de la dramatisation', *Bulletin de la societé Française de la Philosophie* 62 (1967); Deleuze 1990: *The Logic of Sense* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1990), orig. *Logique du sens* (Paris: Minuit, 1969); Deleuze/Guattari 1991: *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (Paris: Minuit, 1991); Deleuze 1992: *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (New York: Zone, 1992), orig. *Spinoza et le probleme de l'expression* (Paris: Minuit, 1968); Spinoza, Baruch de: *Éthique*, original text and translation by Bernard Pautrat (Paris: Seuil, 1988).

[2] Badiou 1997, p. 20 (my transl.): "Deleuze's fundamental problem is certainly not to liberate the multiple, but to fold the thinking of it into a new concept of the One [...]. One would have to carefully distinguish, in Deleuze's work, a metaphysics of the One."

philosophy, that grounds itself upon a thorough critique of the concept of the identical, of not being able to affirm the multiple as such. According to Badiou Deleuze's dream of a virtual monism of Being is an abstract refuge and a vain fiction of a synthesis of Being repressing the cold fact of the disparity of the actual.[3] Badiou having at this point completely reversed the practical dimension of Deleuze's philosophy from being an aggressive struggle on behalf of the chance event of the future and a joyful practice of the multiple into being a mnemonic ascesis of the virtual One.

In *Court traité d'ontologie transitoire* the critique takes a somewhat different form, although the ontological foundations in Deleuze remains the pivot of Badious reservations regarding Deleuze. Badiou departs from the vitalistic traits in Deleuze, labelling the Deleuzian philosophy an ontology giving "Being the name of life". This is not surprising: There is for Deleuze an immanent dynamics, an immanent vivacity of Being, founded in its very nature as difference. Without this internal self-variation, this differing with itself, Being would not be. But according to Badiou the category of life in a certain sense denegates the actual by making the heterogeneous positive events of Being into mere simulacra of a continuous, univocal movement taking place on the level of a life which is essentially virtual. In this sense, virtual life is no longer the virtual of the actual, but rather becomes the transcendent condition of the actual incarnations of Being. Deleuze can maintain life as principle of Being insofar as he maintains every actual event as being drawn from one and the same virtual *fond*, all events, if being on the actual level completely heterogeneous, then on the virtual level being part of one and the same virtual event - the *eventum tantum* of *Logique du sens* (Deleuze 1992, p. 177-80). But, according to Badiou, in and by giving this name to Being, life, Deleuze falls back into equivocity, because Being no longer says itself in the same way in the virtual and in the actual, the actual living in a sense being given 'less' Being than the virtual life, the movement of the virtual in some way being more 'real' than the somewhat 'dead' constellations of the actual. Instead Badiou wants to maintain the irreducibility of the actual by invoking an irreducible heterogeneity between events, being as *multiple pur*, Being as the disordered and discontinuous ensemble of actual events. As he says: "It

[3] Ibid. p. 41 (my transl.): "One sees the price that must be paid for the inflexible insistence upon the theme of univocity. That he multiple (beings, significations) in the end only is of the order of simulacra, because the numerical difference disposed of in the universe is, when it comes to the form of being it refers to (thought, extension, time, etc.), purely formal, and when it comes to its individuation, purely modal."

would be necessary for this to sacrifice the Whole, sacrifice life, sacrifice the great cosmic animal with which Deleuze enchants the surface" (Badiou 1998, p. 72, my transl.).

One final figure to determine Badiou's critique, this time on the basis of an explicit agreement. The dicethrow. As Badiou says about Deleuze: "Yes, it is that, he has said it once and for all: to think, it is to throw the dice"(Badiou 1998, p. 72, my transl.). They both regard the dicethrow into chance as the fundamental power of Being, Being being a power to throw dice, to choose its own necessity on the basis of chance. The throwing of the dice being the moment of chance, the return of the dice being the moment of necessity; the throwing the moment of disorder, the returning the moment of order. Both the *eventum tantum* in Deleuze and what Badiou terms a *décision axiomatique* constitute events of Being in which Being chooses its own nature and form. As Badiou would say it, the distance between the throw and the return of the dice constitutes the passage from the *il y a* of the pure multiple to the localisable 'being-there', from *Être* with the big Heideggerian 'E' to the appearance of a determined and specific *être-là*. The same goes for Deleuze's Nietzschean dicethrow: The immanent movement of the virtual, its 'throwing dice', is its openness to the encounter with chance and a descendence into chaos, whereas the return from chaos is enacted in a series of determined, local and structured actualizations. However, these two conceptions of the dicethrow are nevertheless fundamentally different, again returning to the question of virtual continuity. Because for Deleuze all the events, every descendence into chaos, constitutes in a certain sense a continuous movement, it in some sense being the same univocal event which imposes itself upon thought every time it is forced to think as well as every distinct actualization of the virtual in some sense refers to the same virtual and its internal self-variation. For Badiou, on the contrary, every event of the dicethrow constitutes a number, a numerically distinct event having no synthetic ground: Events arrive as distinct elements in an empty *ensemble* [set], the absolute of the multiple, being the multiple of the multiple, at the bottom becoming the multiple of nothing. According to Badiou the vivid continuity of Deleuze's overfilled virtual surface of Being must make room for the cold, discrete multiplicity of events in an *ensemble vide* [empty set]. Badiou reveals himself as at the same time both more of a Heideggerian and more of a revolutionary than Deleuze, at the same time affirming the conversion of being into nothingness as the foundation of being rather than the overcrowded Deleuzian chaosmos, and affirming the absolute discrete and numerical singularity of the actual event, breaking with every

possibility for a historically homogenous synthesis of Being. Every dicethrow is a unique number, events being countable as so many irreducible ruptures of history.

So much for the basic outline of the controversy. It is not here my objective to give a complete exposition of these two ontologies. It would rather be to determine under what conditions and with what right Badiou reproaches Deleuze for reinstalling a transcendent category "symmetrical to the classical beyond" in maintaining the univocity of Being. A virtual defence of Deleuze one might say.

Spinoza in Badiou and Deleuze

In the present forum, one might then ask, what all this has to do with Spinoza. The answer is quite simple. Because strangely enough both parties claim Spinoza as their own. And the way in which they claim to be heirs of Spinoza might indicate the implications of their differences. I'll give a brief sketch of the fundamental features of these two 'Spinozisms':

For Deleuze, Spinoza finds no equal on two points, the one speculative, the other practical. On the speculative side Deleuze praises Spinoza for being the first to conceive of an immanence of Being. Spinoza's monistic concept of substance implies a metaphysics without transcendence, a metaphysics establishing the nature of Being as immanent expression, or univocal expression as Deleuze terms it. *Logique du sens* provides us with a very precise definition of univocity:

> The univocity of Being does not mean that there is one and the same Being, on the contrary; beings are multiple and different [...]. The univocity of Being signifies that Being is Voice that it is said, and that it is said in one and the same 'sense' of everything about which it is said. That of which it is said is not at all the same, but Being is the same for everything about which it is said. (Deleuze 1990, p. 179)

Univocal expression means that the voice of Being is singular, although that which this voice says is not singular at all, the expressing itself of substance being singular, the modal expressions through which this self-expression effects itself being multiple. But we will return to a more precise explication of this.

Concerning the practical dimension of Deleuze's Spinozism, it first of all refers to Deleuze's reading of the third book of the *Ethics* - the

deductions of the passions. Deleuze considers Spinoza as the "prince of philosophers", who was the first to see that the plane of immanence is "filled by intensive ordinates" as he says it in *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?*[4] A discovery referring exactly to the third book. The third book is not a psychology precursing Freud, but rather the general outline of the intensive encounters constitutive of the dynamics of Being. It outlines an immanent and productive field of power struggles determining bodies, may they be biological, personal, social, linguistic, whatever, to pass in and out of existence according to the immanent rule of maximization of joyful encounters and perseverance in existence. The third book becomes the description of a dynamic ontological surface, the violent mimicry of a *totius facies universi* constantly changing its physiognomy according to encounters between affectively defined bodies constituting the features and modal forms of this face. No doubt this immanent ontological powerfield into which Deleuze transforms Spinoza's passional *ars combinatoria* constitutes the heart of Deleuze's claimed Spinozism.

For Badiou however, Spinoza appears somewhat differently. As Badiou himself remarks in *La clameur de l'Être* Deleuze's Spinoza has always appeared to him as something of an enigma.[5] No doubt because Spinoza for Badiou is, not surprisingly, not the passionate Spinoza, but rather the cold calculator of the *more geometrico*. For Badiou Spinoza the mathematician takes the lead: "Spinoza, who excludes any event by forbidding the excess, chance and the subject, goes straight for the axiomatic figure. From this point of view the *more geometrico* is crucial. It is not a form of thought, but is the written trace of an original decision of thinking"(Badiou 1998, p. 74, my transl.). The *Ethics* is a book somewhat enveloped or contained in the *more geometrico*, immanent in an axiomatic choice, a choice in a sense preceding the *Ethics* itself like the axioms precedes every mathematical demonstration, the *Ethics* being the written trace or the effect of this axiom.

What is the function of this axiomatic choice? Speaking in the vocabulary of Deleuze, Badiou says that the axiomatic is constituted in the position of the fold, the fold being the *intellectus* in Spinoza.[6] The function of this axiomatic is to condition the possibility of thinking being, thinking the *il y a* of substance. The axiomatic being the prism or the

[4] Deleuze/Guattari 1991, p. 49.
[5] Badiou 1997, p. 8: "We met in Spinoza, but "his" Spinoza was (and still is) an unrecognizable creature." (my transl.)
[6] Badiou 1998, pp. 77-78.

crystal through which thought thinks being, the principle of the thinking of being, in a certain sense the being of thinking, the *il y a* of thinking itself. It is this 'being of thinking' in the position of the *intellectus*, which Badiou considers to be the transcendental site of the choice of the *more geometrico*, the being of thought then taking the form of the *mathème*: "From that I can conclude: The *more geometrico* is the true thought itself as the thinking of being, of the 'there is'. One cannot think being but *more geometrico* [...]. This result is, in my opinion, certain. God understands [*entendre*] himself as mathematicity itself. The name of the 'there is' is: *mathème*"(Badiou 1998, pp. 91-92, my transl.). One has to pay attention to a small linguistic detail here. Badiou uses the word *entendre* to designate that 'God understands himself'. This might as well mean 'God hears himself'. One may say that God understands himself, thinks himself, in hearing himself as *mathème* or as *more geometrico* - somewhat like an echo. Thus, for Badiou the power of the Spinozian *Deus sive Natura* is the power to understand itself in naming itself in the position of the *intellectus*, a position which axiomatically gives itself the name of *mathème* in the somewhat transcendental choice of the *more geometrico*. Transcendental it is exactly because this axiomatic which conditions and governs the logical distribution of the properties of Being in the *Ethics*, that is the principle of the *Ethics*, is not present in the *Ethics* as anything but the trace of a writing constituting it. Transcendental also because if we know the name, then the act of naming, the choice itself is outside thinking of Being itself, conditioning it - the *intellectus* exactly being the position or the site on the 'border of nothingness', from which the being of thinking inserts itself into the being of Being.

Thus, the difference between Badiou and Deleuze concerning Spinoza refers back to the question of ontological choice, of Being choosing its own nature, its own distribution and differentiation. In short: the nature of the dicethrow. For Badiou, this choice is present in Spinoza exactly in the choice of method, in the *more geometrico*, a choice somewhat 'outside' the *Ethics* itself. For Deleuze, however, this choice of Being is constituted within the *Ethics* itself, is immanent in the text. It is present exactly in the ethology of passions outlined in the third book. And in the same way any ontological choice is immanent in the field in which it is taken. The axiomatic choice of the *more geometrico* for Badiou is a site for an event popping out of emptiness, an 'absolute beginning'[7] on the border of

[7] Badiou 1997, pp. 136-37 (my transl.): "This is why I have a concept of absolute beginnings (that which necessitates a theory of the empty) and of singularities of thought which are incomparable in their constitutive gestes (that which necessitates a

emptiness. For Deleuze on the contrary, the ontological choice does not refer to an event popping out in the *ensemble vide*, but to an intensive variation in a full and continuous *spatium*. There is no emptiness in which the event happens, the event rather being an internal movement in a compact soup of intensive differences, this soup being exactly Spinoza's univocal substance.

To summarize one can from the point of view of the history of philosophy certainly agree with Badiou, when he points out that Deleuze does not take into account, or rather does not take seriously, the axiomatic and mathematical implications of Spinoza's choice of the *more geometrico* as method.[8] But on the other hand one could equally claim that Badiou in his own reading cannot account for the systematic internal function of a major part of the *Ethics*, namely the deduction of the passions. If Deleuze forgets the *more geometrico* to make Spinoza serve his own purposes, Badiou does the same in what appears to me to be an equally reductive forgetfulness of the entire third book. How should one point to the true Spinozist here?

Anthropomorphisms and the Voice of God

We can depart from a simple Spinozian figure of thought, that of the war against the so called 'anthropomorphisms' contained in the 'divine names' - names given to God in the scripture. A war that Spinoza leads in scholia of the *Ethics* and the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, here following the interpretation that Deleuze gives of this in *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*. According to Spinoza an anthropomorphism

Cantorian theory of the plurality of types of infinitude). Deleuze has always maintained that by doing that, I fell back into transcendence and into the equivocity of analogy. But if it is in fact necessary to sacrifice immanence and the univocity of Being (which I do not believe, but it is not important here), for a political revolution, for an amorous meeting, for an invention of the sciences, or for a creation of art to be thought as distinct infinities, under the condition of dividing and incomparable events, I will do it. [...] If, against the ascesis of the fold it is necessary to maintain that the fidelity to an event is the militant recollection, the transition of which remains obscure, and to reduce it to its actuality as a generic multiplicity having no virtuality beneath it, I will do it. I do it."

[8] Badiou 1998, p. 72 (my transl.): "One will only ask: How come that a player of thought, a thrower of dices like Deleuze, can so insistly reclaim Spinoza, to point of making him "the Christ of philosophy"? Where then find a place for chance and for the play in the immanent nescessity of substance? This is no doubt because Deleuze, like so many other interpreters, neglects the function of mathematics in Spinoza's ontology."

refers to those who "imagine God to be like a man, having body and spirit and being subject to passions" (E I P15 scholium, my transl.).[9] An anthropomorphism is an 'anthropologization' of the transcendent field constituted by the arbitrary assignation of secular properties to God. Making the transcendent an analogy of the empirical in short.[10] As Spinoza himself illustrates the problematic: If a triangle could talk, it would say that God was eminently triangular.[11] Thus, an anthropomorphism is a trancendentalization of *doxa*, which functions through analogy and equivocation. In this way an anthropomorphism is the doubling of the empirical into the transcendental, a doubling of ontology. We fall into a 'Platonic' ontology by assigning properties to God: There is the empirical world having certain values, which are however only realised imperfectly; and then there is the transcendental domain of God having the same values, but eminently.

Spinoza's critique of the divine names is then, that the properties elevated into eminence, that is the properties of God, do not express the nature of God. They are only nominal definitions, not real definitions. Only the definition of God as power is a real definition, the only definition expressing the cause of God. This is the essential: That expressive substance in itself has no properties, has no nominal definitions.[12] Spinozian power cannot be considered a perfection, is not a property, is not assigned to Being, in short - power is not a name, it has no significative value. Here one finds a subtle equivalence between the denunciation of the anthropomorphisms in Spinoza and Nietzsche's insistence that one cannot assign a value to life. An equivalence which passes through a pre-comprehension of Being as being without properties. That is how univocity of substance should be understood: That there is nothing but voice, power, life - and no names. We recall *Logique du sens*:

[9] Original text: "Sunt, qui Deum instar hominis corpore, & mente constantem, atque passionibus obnoxium fingunt ..."

[10] Deleuze 1992, p. 46: "Whenever we proceed by analogy we borrow from creatures certain characteristics in order to attribute them to God either equivocally or eminently. Thus God has will, understanding, Goodness, wisdom and so on, but has them equivocally or eminently. Analogy cannot do without equivocation or eminence, and hence contains a subtle anthropomorphism, just as dangerous as the naive variety."

[11] Spinoza, Letter 56 to Boxel, cf. Deleuze 1992, p. 356, n. 8.

[12] All this being somewhat similar to the Kantian objection towards the ontological proof of God. As Kant points out that existence is not a property and therefore cannot be thought as a perfection, the same can be said about the power of substance constituting the essence of God in Spinoza.

"The univocity of Being signifies that Being is Voice that it is said".[13] A voice without a name would be the real definition of the Spinozian *Deus sive Natura*. It designates a completely depersonalized being. It's quite simple: If the voice is primary, one cannot assign a subject to the enunciation of the voice, one cannot do it but retrospectively. The name of the subject, the name of God, is nothing but an effect of univocal expression. God does not have a name, but only a voice. He does not have the power to speak, rather he is a power to speak, his voice not being his property but his very being.

What function does a divine name have then? One has to consider where this whole discussion of divine names appears in Spinoza. Apart from the scholia of the *Ethics* it is part of his discussion of the exegesis of the Bible in the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, of how to interpret the names given to God in the Bible, and whether these names express the nature of God. Spinoza's position on this matter is that they do nothing of the kind. The divine properties have nothing to do with his attributes, because they do not express the nature of God. Rather the nominal definitions or properties assigned to God in the scripture are designed to make a specific moral order pass. The names correspond to a categorization of the world according to a specific contingent moral order - being that of Christianity. Spinoza calls for an historically immanent interpretation of the function of the divine names.[14] Rather than to be taken as indications of God's nature, these names should rather be thought as the ground of a morally founded symbolic order, a series of imperative signs designed so as to make us conform to a specific structuration of the world.[15] This is important: A name assigned to God is what Deleuze would term a *mot d'ordre*, an order-word or a password: A word which at the same time commands and makes an order pass. In very generalised terms the names assigned to God are then principles by which

[13] Deleuze 1990, p. 179.

[14] Deleuze 1992, p. 56: "It is one of Spinoza's principal theses that the nature of God has never been defined, because it has always been confused with his *propria* [...]. A reason must be found to explain why Spinoza's predecessors, in spite of all their ingenuity, confined themselves to properties and were unable to discover the nature of God. Spinoza's answer is quite simple: they lacked a historical, critical and internal method capable of interpreting Scripture. They didn't ask about the plan of the sacred texts. They took them as the word of God, God's way of expressing himself."

[15] Deleuze 1992, p. 56: "... no attribute of God is ever revealed. Only varying 'signs', extrinsic determinations that guarantee some divine commandment. At best, *propria* such as divine existence, unity, omniscience and omnipresence, which guarantee a moral teaching. For the end of scripture is to subject us to models of life, to make us obey, and ground our obedience."

a particular contingent categorization or distribution of Being is imposed as necessary. The properties of God, these empirical values elevated into being transcendental values, falls back onto the empirical field as order-words: One must be Good, merciful, and so on, in accordance with God - and these values can no longer be questioned. By redoubling the empirical into the transcendental the values of *doxa* are affirmed, no questions asked. One understands why Spinoza called the illusions of the anthropomorphisms an *asylum ignorantiae* - an asylum of stupidity (E I, Appendix).

Thus, the divine name is a principle for the distribution of being, a word which makes an order pass, somewhat in the same way as the *Nom du Père* in Lacan - a symbolic overlay on Being, which at the same time denies us the access to Being itself, the *asylum ignorantia* of the divine names being a prohibition of thinking the nature of Being itself. A name given to the voice of Being, which at the same time conditions thinking and denies us the access to think the conditions of this thinking. The name denies us the access to the voice. In this sense every order of thought is founded upon a symbolic order prescribed by a name, the name being the condition or the principle by which Being gives itself expression as a specific and local modality of Being.

Here one sees how the theme of the ontological dicethrow inserts itself into the discussion of the definitions of God. Because if the real definition of God doesn't imply any assignation of properties to God, then the power of expressive being is no longer determined, but rather the power drawn from a transcendental field having no properties. This descent into a field without properties we know very well: The real definition of God is the throw of the dice. But on the other hand, what the voice says or expresses is exactly a property of Being - that is, a name. The return of the dices. The voice is saying its own name as though it threw the dice so as to draw a name for itself on their return. What the voice says is a denomination. The throwing of the dice being the voice, the return of the dice assigning names to the voice. The real definition of God as power returning as a series of nominal definitions, names of God, which are nothing but simulacra of the real definition, they always 'come after the fact'.[16] If the real definition of Being as voice refers to a virtuality

[16] As Spinoza says about the idea of final causes: "Hoc tamen adhuc addam, nempe, hanc de fine doctrinam naturam omninò evertere. Nam id, quod reverâ causa est, ut effectum considerat, & contrà. Deinde id, quod naturâ prius est, facit posterius." My transl.: "I do, though, add this, once more, that this doctrine in the end reverses nature completely. Because what truly is cause, is considered as effect, and inversely. Thereby, that which by nature is first, it makes come after." (E I, appendix)

expressing itself, then the nominal definitions of Being refers to the determined modal actualizations of this expressive activity. The name is the donation of sense, the necessity, or rather a necessity, drawn from the dicethrow of the voice into chance. In a certain sense the anthropomorphisms are well grounded faults in the sense that it is in the expressive nature of Being to produce them. It is in the nature of Being to cover itself up with nominal definitions, because its very actualisation is a series of self-maskings. In a certain sense then the nominations of God and the installations of different 'asylums of stupidity', different symbolic regimes of different names, are unavoidable, part of the integral movement of univocal expression. Modal forms must be produced and with these modal forms also the principles governing these modal distributions - that is, the names. But what was needed according to Spinoza to leave these asylums of stupidity was an integral, that is immanent, analysis of the conditions of these regimes and the concrete powers and wills having an interest in assigning this or that name to God. We are confronted with the famous 'who wills' of the method of dramatisation outlined by Deleuze in 'La méthode de la dramatisation'.[17] Spinoza's demand for a historical hermeneutics of the scripture and the divine names is equal to Deleuze's demand for a dramatising method investigating the immanent powerfield producing a particular sign regime - a demand for a genealogy of divine names. Instead of asking what is God's name, an invalid question insofar as the question of essence does not pertain to the name or the sign, one should ask who wants this or that name of God, which constellation of the will to power produces this or that particular name of God - or in Deleuze's Spinozistic terms: which passional geometry. Because no doubt the analytic required for such a dramatisation of the divine nominations is for Deleuze exactly the 'ethological' analysis outlined in the deductions of the passions in the third book of the *Ethics*. It becomes the method for an onto-political analysis of the *conatus* of a sign regime effecting itself in the divine names. A field of clashes between names or 'who's?', of joyful or sad encounters, which for a moment reveals a little bit of the chaosmotic murmur of God's voice, univocity passing as thin thread in the middle, between regimes of different order-words or names, revealing itself in the intensive difference between these names. God as the Christian God, God as man, God as the father, God as inter-subjectivity - in between all these actual names, these 'theologies', passes the pure voice of Spinoza's nameless and virtual atheist God at the same time escaping and

[17] Deleuze 1967, p. 1.

engendering the names.

Speaking Being, Naming Being: Deleuze and Badiou

On the basis of this interpretation of divine names, we can return to the Badioudian critique of Deleuze and their respective claims to Spinoza.

As we have seen the assignation of a name to God in the Spinozian conception had to be given an immanent historical interpretation in terms of different moral regimes or orders of Being. The names form the principle or the basis for an evaluation of Being itself - a judgement of Being, a judgement immanently construed within the passage of history. But does this insistence on the immanence of the act of naming not correspond very badly to Badiou's claim that the *more geometrico* should be a name of Being in Spinoza and that this name should be the incarnation of a transcendental, axiomatic choice made outside of the *Ethics* - that the *Ethics* should be contained in the *more geometrico* as being immanent in something preceding it? Is this not to ascribe a performative inconsistency to Spinoza, actually insisting that Spinoza in a sense makes exactly the same fault as he criticised his predecessors for: That he takes a nominal definition for a real definition, thinking that the name he ascribes to God should have a transcendental value? If one accepts the interpretation of the critique of divine names, would any true Spinozism not have to renounce on any naming of Being? Something which Badiou certainly does not do, assigning even two names to Spinozian being: The being of Being named absolute infinite mode or substance, and the being of thinking named *mathème* or the *more geometrico*. How could Badiou on this basis continue to consider himself a heir to Spinoza?

And then the final step of this argument. Having detected this problem in the Badioudian conception of Spinozism, one might ask oneself, whether it is not exactly the same, which occurs in Badiou's reading of Deleuze: Badiou reproaching Deleuze for reinstalling transcendence and equivocity in his system by giving Being the name of life.

Let us return to Badiou's critique once more. Having determined the Deleuzian name of Being as life, Badiou reaches the following conclusion: The name of life constitutes a principle for an evaluation in which life judges us rather than we judge life.[18] Naming Being life

[18] As Badiou writes: "[...] life constitutes us and judges us "according to a hierarchy which considers things and beings from the point of view of power [puissance]." (Badiou 1998, p. 67, my transl.)

completely reverses the resentful regimes of the judgement of life. The evaluation of life by the living makes room for an evaluation of the living by life itself, or what amounts to the same in Badiou's reading of Deleuze: The evaluation of a form of being is performed from the perspective of the integral power of unitary Being, that is from the perspective of the living One. A form of life only affirms being insofar as it affirms its own non-necessity, that it only acquires the necessity of its own distribution of the multiple from the integral power of chance drawn from the One. Every specific modal distribution of the multiple must affirm its own origin in the unity of life - that is in the integral unity of chance itself - *eventum tantum* once more. All this sounding as if it conformed perfectly to Deleuze's own presentation of his philosophy.

However, something appears to be wrong. It is true that Being in the Deleuzian conception has two definitions. Substantial being defined as One and modal being defined as multiple, the one referring to the immanent life of a unitary being expressing itself, the other referring to the expressions or modes in which this immanent expression effectuates itself. Two definitions of being: As substantial being by itself, and as modal being by something else. Or in Deleuzian vocabulary: Being as the virtual One or being as the actual multiple. It is because of the eminence of the definition by unity that Badiou reproaches Deleuze for falling into equivocity. But does univocity of Being at all refer to a unity named life? If one maintains that Deleuze's use of the word "name" and the word 'voice' in relation to the dynamics of Being takes on a systematic sense, and a sense in accordance with the Spinozistic distinction between nominal and real definitions of God or of substance, this is obviously not the case. Taking the Spinozistic point of view, the distinction between the virtual and its actualizations, between the producing of sense on the side of *natura naturans*, and the produced sense from the side of *natura naturata*, does in no way imply an equivocal naming of Being. Being has two definitions: the one singular and real - the voice, the other multiple and nominal - the names. One has to insist that *natura naturans* does not have a name. The name, that is the subject of order, has to be produced by an original activity preceding it. This original activity is exactly the voice in all its impersonality, univocity itself. God not being the subject of a name, but the power of a voice. God does not play with dices as a subject of the dicethrow, he is the dicethrow itself. That is the same as to say, that life should be affirmed, but certainly not as a principle of judgement. To say that life is the name of Being is the same as to say that life is the principle of Being, a principle for evaluation. If this principle indeed is the target of Badiou's critique of Deleuze, then this critique does not

seem pertinent or at least does not refer to Deleuze himself - and this in exactly the same way as Spinoza did not truly fit Badiou's interpretation of him. To make an immanent critique of the divine names turn around the an affirmation of life does not mean to name the unnamable as the new principle of judgement or of evaluation. One must go even further in the understanding of the triple critique of Spinoza, Nietzsche and Deleuze, that life cannot be judged. Univocity of life has nothing to do with a thinking of the One in the sense that life is a singular principle for the substantial production of modal being. Quite the opposite. Univocity of life means that one must affirm the multiplicity of modal distributions, because life itself cannot be considered a principle. It does not mean that life or Being has no principles, thereby making a nominal definition of life. It means that life is not a principle, but only a power to produce principles. What must be affirmed is the passage of substance through the modes, the double activity of engendering and escaping modal forms. It means to affirm the reproduction of the production of names and of sense, not to affirm the thinking of non-sense, because that would not be thinking at all. But what one must affirm would be the thinking of 'other sense' – 'thinking otherwise' as Foucault would have it, which is not as much an affirmation of the improper or nameless, but rather the affirmation of it by the multiplicity of proper names. That is exactly what one must affirm so as to escape the *asylum ignorantiae* of the divine names. Life is certainly not the real name of Being in Deleuze as Badiou would claim it to be. Life only has nominal names - although it has a real voice.