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Religion, Reason, and Culture in the Age of Goethe

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10: "The Magic Formula We All Seek": Spinoza + Fichte = x

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Sed omnia praeclara tam difficilia, quam rara sunt.

[For all excellent things are as difficult as they are rare.]

—Spinoza, *Ethics*

The Revolutionary Rhizome

ALL EYES, IT WOULD SEEM, are on Spinoza at the moment. Much of the credit for this remarkable renaissance is due to Gilles Deleuze, who wrote two books on Spinoza, and then went even further in his best-selling manifesto *What Is Philosophy?*, anointing Spinoza both the "prince" and the "Christ" of philosophy.¹ And Deleuze is hardly alone in his attentions. Spinoza now looms large in our understanding of the entire Age of Goethe.² The controversy over Spinoza still figures as a minor flap in Lewis White Beck's classic history, *Early German Philosophy*,³ but it has become the defining intellectual controversy of the whole age since the publication of Frederick Beiser's influential study *The Fate of Reason* in 1987.⁴ Further, over the past decade, the intellectual historian Jonathan Israel has published three massive tomes asserting that, basically, every significant thinker of the Enlightenment was a closet Spinozist.⁵ Skepticism may be in order: on Wall Street, this latest development would be read as a "contrary indicator," signaling a market top. But the centrality of the *Spinozastreit* (Spinoza controversy) clearly means that we have to understand both the extent and the import of Spinoza's influence on the Age of Goethe. And the centrality of Spinoza to contemporary discourse is beyond doubt; somehow, he figures in everyone's equations.

Not so with Fichte. Some outstanding scholarship has been published in recent decades,⁶ but compared to the boom in Spinoza, Fichte studies remains a cottage industry. Indeed, Fichte has long been the least appreciated and the least understood of the great philosophers. Hegel wanted to be buried next to Fichte, and he was, but Fichte rates only a few sentences in Bertrand Russell's 836-page *History of Western Philosophy*, which mentions only the *Reden an die deutsche Nation*

(Addresses to the German Nation) and dismisses him as perhaps insane.⁷ Fichte is one of the few major thinkers to whom Deleuze did *not* devote a study, and he seldom mentions him by name. But I shall argue that, especially in Deleuze's late philosophy, Fichte contributes the terms that allow Deleuze's philosophy to add up. Indeed I want to go even further, and suggest that all three of these seminal thinkers—Spinoza, Fichte, and Deleuze—are deeply connected by a Deleuzian rhizome stretching across four centuries.⁸ Deleuze and Guattari famously put forward the concept of the "rhizome" in chapter one of *A Thousand Plateaus*, as a model for a complex nexus of influences and connections that transcends local and proximal causality.⁹ Viewed in this light, both the *Spinozastreit* specifically and a range of larger issues within German Idealism can be situated within a much larger context, and those issues reveal a surprisingly direct relevance to the latest philosophical developments culminating in the work of Gilles Deleuze.

Ironically, it is Charles Taylor's book on *Hegel*, of all people, that provides the clue. In his magnificent first chapter, "The Aims of a New Epoch," Taylor connects the failed Revolution of 1789 forward to the failed "French" revolution of 1968, and back to Spinoza.¹⁰ If not to the degree Jonathan Israel asserts, Spinoza was indeed omnipresent in the intellectual life of the German-speaking world at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. In response to the failure of their Revolution, the generation of the 1790s strove to attain a specific kind of philosophical breakthrough that was formulated variously as a union of Spinoza or the "Spinozist" Goethe + Kant or Fichte; Hegel termed it a "union of union and nonunion" that would reconcile *Substanz* (substance) and *Subjekt* (subject). Schelling began as a Fichtean, and then went on to complement Fichte with Spinoza. As early as 1795, Hölderlin, Schelling, and Hegel were exchanging letters in which they seem to equate Fichte's Absolute "I" with Spinoza's "God."¹¹ In a famous letter to Jacobi of 9 June 1785, Goethe declared Spinoza's philosophical project to be his life's work.

Spinoza + Fichte

Spinoza and Fichte might seem initially to have no common denominator. After all, they are the prime expressions of the very opposition that the generation of the 1790s labored so mightily to synthesize. Moreover, Fichte had gone out of his way to criticize Spinoza as a "dogmatist" in the earliest version of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, or *Science of Knowledge*,¹² and we know that Jacobi's accusation of "Spinozism" (tantamount to atheism) was the charge that offended Fichte more than any other. But I shall argue that it is easier than one might imagine to reconcile Fichte and Spinoza, because Fichte's philosophy is suffused with Spinozist elements

right from the beginning, and he moves even further in the direction of Spinoza in his later philosophy.¹³

The strongest evidence of his Spinozist turn is contained in three remarkable diaries from the last year of Fichte's life, which were suppressed by Fichte's son and have been published only very recently.¹⁴ These will be discussed more fully below.¹⁵ Even in versions of his *Wissenschaftslehre* that date from the turn of the century, Fichte has begun to veer sharply toward Spinoza, abandoning his earlier, dialectical presentation and seeking to explain the nature of intellectual intuition through a systematic analogy to mathematical construction. Indeed, in the *Neue Bearbeitung* of 1800 to 1801, Fichte begins each of eight sections with a *Lehrsatz* or proposition, followed by specific postulates and corollaries—that is, he argues *more geometrico*, à la Spinoza, and he asserts that his arguments exhibit the same rigor as mathematics itself. And in another text from the same period, Fichte describes the method of the *Wissenschaftslehre* as “the *mathesis* of reason itself.”¹⁶ Moreover, the unfinished and unpublished manuscript of the same late version of the *Wissenschaftslehre* ends with a series of disjointed speculations and notes, many of which are startlingly Spinozist. Fichte even goes so far as to speculate about the possibility of a “pure intuition of God” that might serve as the “band for connecting the entire intelligible world” (Breazeale 21).

Expression

Charles Taylor contends that what drew Herder, Goethe, and others of the next generation to Spinoza was “a vision of the way in which the finite subject fitted into a universal current of life” (Taylor 16). In late versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte had begun articulating the same Spinozist vision of God as pure, self-unfolding, and self-expressing life. In an extraordinary passage from the version of 1810, for example, Fichte follows Spinoza in defining God as the single substance: “Nur Eines ist schlechthin durch sich selbst: Gott, und Gott ist nicht der todte Begriff, den wir soeben aussprachen, sondern er ist in sich selbst lauter Leben” (Only one thing exists absolutely through itself: God, and God is not the dead concept which we enunciated just now, but he is in himself pure life).¹⁷ Fichte then proceeds to an assertion that echoes perfectly Deleuze's interpretation of Spinoza: “Soll nun das Wissen dennoch sein . . . so kann es, da nichts ist denn Gott, doch nur Gott selbst sein, aber ausser ihm selber . . . seine Äusserung” (However, if there should be knowledge . . . then it can only be God himself, because there is nothing but God, but outside of God himself . . . his expression). Taylor's insight is confirmed: what united the whole generation of the 1790s, drew them to Herder, and drew Herder to Spinoza, was a shared anthropology of *expression*. But what drew Deleuze and the late Fichte to Spinoza was

a metaphysics and an ontology of expression that opened the door to a potent, nonreductive philosophical monism. Just as Spinoza fought to overcome Cartesian dualism, Deleuze strove to redeem the original sin of metaphysics, its perpetual construction of a transcendental Other to which concepts can only refer, through the expressive immanence of living concepts.¹⁸

Expression is so central to Deleuze's interpretation of his arch-predecessor Spinoza that his translators rightly featured the concept in their title of his major study of Spinoza, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, demoting Spinoza's name to the subtitle.¹⁹ And the first sentence of Deleuze's Introduction quotes the sixth definition of Spinoza's *Ethics*, emphasizing the word “expresses” with added italics: “By God I understand a being absolutely infinite, that is, a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which each one *expresses* an eternal and infinite essence” (13). The single substance that is God expresses itself initially in the two attributes that are God's essence, and then again at the level of the modes, which can be viewed as “an expression, as it were, of expression itself” (14). Hence, “God expresses himself in himself ‘before’ expressing himself in his effects: he expresses himself in himself constituting *natura naturans*, before expressing himself through producing within himself *natura naturata*” (14).²⁰ Important epistemological correlates follow directly from this ontology of *expression*, chiefly the privileging of intuition as the organ whereby expression is apprehended immediately. And it is just this aspect of Spinoza's epistemology that allows him to transcend the Cartesian conception of clarity and distinctness as embodied in discursive thought (15). Indeed, it is what makes Spinoza the perfect cure for the ills incurred by Cartesian dualism (17). What made Spinoza so exciting to Herder, Goethe, and the post-Kantians, and led Deleuze to recuperate his philosophy yet again at the end of the twentieth century, is his epistemology of intellectual intuition framed for an ontology of unifying expression.

Taylor reminds us that the students' rallying cry in May 1968, “*décloisonnement*” (opening up), was likewise a call for unity. In the case of Deleuze, it was the failure of the “French” revolution of May 1968, in which students took to the streets, rallying under the motto “*L'imagination au pouvoir!*” (all power to the imagination!), that led to a desire for unity. Like their German ancestors, the generation of 1968 strove for a unifying philosophy as well, which Deleuze and Guattari famously termed “the magic formula we all seek: PLURALISM = MONISM” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 20). (To underscore the point, they print that final equation all in caps.) My own contention here is that, especially in his late writings, Deleuze hits upon the same magic formula by synthesizing Spinoza and Fichte via a *Wechselwirkung* (reciprocity) whereby all three of these intensely radical philosophers are mutually transformed, illuminated, and renewed.

Fichte + Deleuze

Spinoza's influence on Deleuze is patent, but I shall argue that Fichte participates as an omnipresent silent partner as well. On its face, this argument might seem implausible. In many places Deleuze seems hostile to German Idealism as such. He framed his entire project as anti-Hegelian, and he characterized Kant as an "enemy."²¹ But there is no trace of the late Hegel's conservative apologetics anywhere in Fichte; indeed, Matthew C. Altman has written persuasively about Fichte's "anti-Hegelian legacy."²² And in the same sentence in which he describes Kant as an enemy, Deleuze avers that he likes his own book on Kant very much, and, on close inspection, his reading of Kant reveals itself to be surprisingly sympathetic.

How is this possible? Because Deleuze neutralizes Kant by reading him in the spirit of Fichte. I suspect that Deleuze was not entirely conscious of the degree to which he was doing this, but if so, then my case is all the stronger: the deep connections he discovered without seeking them are real, not adventitious. For both Fichte and Deleuze, it was not Kant, but rather dualism, that was the great enemy—as it had been for Spinoza, who strove to overcome the letter of Cartesian dualism in the spirit of Descartes.

To be sure, Deleuze never mentions Fichte by name in his book on Kant, but his reading of Kant is thoroughly Fichtean. Where Kant had insisted on the hegemony of the understanding in the production of knowledge, Deleuze follows Fichte in asserting the priority of the imagination. He reminds us that, for Kant, all knowledge is representation; that "representation means the synthesis of that which is presented"; and that "this synthesis, as both apprehension *and* reproduction, is always defined by Kant as an act of the imagination" (*Kant* 14–15). What guarantees the objectivity of representation in both senses—both its universality and its relationship to the objects of experience—is for Deleuze *not*, as in Kant, the applicability of the underlying categories of the understanding. Deleuze's account of the transcendental deduction could be pages straight out of Fichte. Deleuze assigns the categories a distinctly minor role—indeed, they are barely mentioned, and they are not listed as a topic in the index of the book. What guarantees objectivity is rather the fact that "[the categories] are linked in the unity of a consciousness, in such a way that the 'I think' accompanies them" (*Kant* 15). "Indeed, all use of the understanding is developed from the 'I think'; moreover the unity of the 'I think' 'is the understanding itself.'" This last phrase is a quote from the *Critique of Pure Reason*—but it is a point that Kant mentions only in passing, in a footnote. It was Fichte who promoted Kant's footnotes on imagination (here and elsewhere) to the center of the argument, and Deleuze follows him. *L'imagination au pouvoir!*

In the elegant and witty preface to the English edition, which grew out of his seminars on Kant of 1978, Deleuze epitomizes the *Critique of Pure Reason* entirely in terms of the Fichtean self, the tension between the active, self-determining *je* and the "phenomenal, receptive and changing" *moi*. The latter is constructed within time, but the former synthesizes time itself. "Thus time moves into the subject, in order to distinguish the Ego from the I in it . . . [time as the] 'form of interiority' means not only that time is internal to us, but that our interiority constantly divides us from ourselves, splits us in two: a splitting in two which never runs its course, since time has no end. A giddiness, an oscillation which constitutes time" (*Kant* ix). Note Deleuze's invocation of Fichtean *Schweben* (hovering oscillation) to summarize the whole of Kant's First Critique in a single term. Even this early interpretation of Kant turns out to be thoroughly Fichtean in spirit.

The movements of the concept that Deleuze describes evoke both Fichtean *Schweben* and Spinoza's unity of thought and extension in *scientia intuitiva* (intuitive knowledge): "The plane of immanence has two facets as Thought and as Nature, as *Nous* and as *Physis*. This is why there are always many infinite movements caught within each other, each folded in the others, so that the return of one instantaneously re-launches another in such a way that the plane of immanence is ceaselessly being woven, like a gigantic shuttle" (*WIP* 38). Deleuze's descriptions in his later texts of the living concept moving inside its plane as a shuttle flying—elsewhere, "the incessant to-ing and fro-ing of the plane" (*WIP* 59)—are another clear evocation of Fichtean *Schweben*.²³

As Günther Zöller has argued, "Fichte takes up Spinoza's insight that all determination is by way of negation (*omnis determinatio est negatio*),"²⁴ arguing that thinking as active determination always necessarily calls forth its *Anstoß* or "check," an irreducible, determinable *other*. But this central concept links Fichte forward within the transhistorical rhizome as well. It is but a short step from this aspect of Fichte to some of the profoundest passages in Deleuze's masterpiece, *Difference and Repetition*, such as the following on the thinking that is pure difference:

For it is not figures already mediated and related to representation that are capable of carrying the faculties to their respective limits but, on the contrary, free or untamed states of difference in itself; not qualitative opposition within the sensible, but an element which is in itself difference, and creates at once both the quality in the sensible and the transcendent exercise within sensibility . . . every time it is a free form of difference which awakens the faculty, and awakens it as the different within that difference.²⁵

"Difference" is Deleuze's name for the mobile, creative energy of thinking that resists—checks—reason's constant striving for totalizing,

tautologous identity. For Deleuze, as for Fichte, this limitation of referentiality is what frees thinking to intuit genesis of the living concept through introspection.

It is in Deleuze's own, later philosophy, however, that the deepest connections between Deleuze and Fichte reveal themselves. There he likewise recuperates central aspects of Spinoza's ontology, which Fichte had recuperated independently through the "ontological turn" in his own late philosophy. For example, here Deleuze writes: "It is in this sense that thinking and being are said to be one and the same. Or rather, movement is not the image of thought without being also the substance of being" (*WIP* 38). The import of Fichte's late turn from an epistemology centered on the imaginative faculties of the individual self to an exploration of thinking as an immediate manifestation of the life of nature, perhaps even of God himself, will be discussed further in the section on "Immanence" below.

Transcendental Empiricism

Although their terminology is different, Deleuze, Fichte, and Spinoza all share a number of key concepts. The most important of these is a privileging of intuition over both empirical sensation and discursive thinking. I follow Deleuze in calling this shared stance "transcendental empiricism," as for example in his short essay "Immanence: A Life": "It may seem curious that the transcendental be defined by such immediate givens: we will speak of a transcendental empiricism in contrast to everything that makes up the world of the subject and the object."²⁶

What Deleuze is describing is "of course not the element of sensation (simple empiricism), for sensation is only a break within the flow of absolute consciousness" (*Immanence* 25). This "transcendental empiricism" cannot involve reference to external signs: understanding is a pure activity; ideas are not, as Spinoza puts it so derisively, "mute pictures on a panel."²⁷ "Simple empiricism" breaks the "flow" of a consciousness that, for Deleuze as for Spinoza and Fichte, is "absolute"—a "pure stream of a-subjective [because pre-reflexive and hence pre-subjective] consciousness" (*Immanence* 25). The heart of Spinoza's *Ethics* is of course his assertion that there is only one "absolutely infinite" substance with only two attributes:

Nothing consequently is clearer than that Being absolutely infinite is defined, as we have shown (Def. 6), as Being which consists of infinite attributes, each one of which expresses a certain essence, eternal and infinite. But if anyone now asks by what sign, therefore, we may distinguish between substances, let him read the following propositions, which show that in Nature only one substance exists, and that it is absolutely infinite. For this reason that sign would be sought for in vain.²⁸

Fichte resolves *Tatsachen* (facts) into *Tathandlungen* (Fichte's neologism, implying a mental activity that is simultaneously a fact of consciousness); Spinoza raises *naturata* up into the pure activity of *naturans*, apart from which there is no sign; and for Deleuze, "things" ultimately dissolve into processes, unfolding "events"; in one interview, he asserts flatly: "I don't believe in things."²⁹

Deleuze makes it clear how little his "transcendental empiricism" has to do with empiricism as understood more conventionally: "When immanence is no longer immanent to something other than itself it is possible to speak of a plane of immanence. Such a plane is, perhaps, a radical empiricism: it does not present a flux of the lived that is immanent to a subject and individualized in that which belongs to a self" (*WIP* 47). By "self" he means of course what Kant terms the "phenomenal" self, not the Kantian/Fichtean "noumenal" self. After this entirely Fichtean description of the realm beyond subject and object accessed via intellectual intuition, Deleuze proceeds to credit not Fichte, but Spinoza, who "knew full well that immanence was only immanent to itself" and is therefore "the prince of philosophers" and even "the Christ of philosophers" (*WIP* 48, 60).³⁰ And again, surprisingly for the orthodox view of Spinoza but not at all in the new context we are creating here, Spinoza is invoked in terms much more appropriate for Fichte, as a philosopher of *freedom*: "He [Spinoza] discovered that freedom exists only within immanence" (*WIP* 48). For all three thinkers mapped by our rhizome, freedom flows only from a direct *participation* in meaning; we are free only to the extent that we actively and transparently co-create the processes determining our knowledge.³¹

Nor should "transcendental empiricism" be confused with logic. Deleuze quickly dismisses logic's "infantile idea of philosophy" (*WIP* 22), and his hostility is implacable: "Logic is reductionist not accidentally but essentially and necessarily: following the route marked out by Frege and Russell, it wants to turn the concept into a function" (*WIP* 135). In a rivalry with philosophy inspired by "real hatred," logic "kills the concept twice over" (*WIP* 140). In the same vein, Fichte responded harshly to Reinhold and others who wanted to reduce philosophy to logic: such a philosophy can achieve only a purely analytic kind of necessity and universality, and it can claim this only because it sacrifices all real content. Such a "*FormularPhilosophie*" (philosophical formalism), as Fichte disparaged it, is therefore nothing but a "desiccated conceptual game" (Breazeale 16).

Intuition

But for Deleuze, as for Spinoza and Fichte, the concept is reborn from its own ashes by revealing itself to a faculty that corresponds exactly to Fichte's "intellectual intuition" and Spinoza's *scientia intuitiva*. Only intuition can apprehend this supersensible yet entirely real content:

Instead of a string of linked propositions, it would be better to isolate the flow of interior monologue, or the strange forkings of the most ordinary conversation . . . thought as such produces something *interesting* when it accedes to the infinite movement that frees it from truth as supposed paradigm and reconquers an immanent power of creation . . . *It would be necessary to go back up the path that science descends*, and at the very end of which logic sets up its camp. (WIP 139–40)

Deleuze does not use Fichte's terminology here, but rather Wittgenstein's: "The concept shows itself and does nothing but show itself" (WIP 140). Nevertheless, the methodological parallel to Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794 is striking: "going back up the path that science descends" could stand as a one-sentence commentary on Fichte's text.³² Again we see that, intentionally or unintentionally, Deleuze's relationship to Fichte has been strangely veiled. For his part, Deleuze has captured the distinction between discursive thought and intuition in a brilliant metaphor, comparing propositional thought-structures to the devices of Baroque emblems, which represent only an abstract schema of the living *event* that is "shown" in the rich and dynamic iconography of the accompanying image.³³ Like Fichte, who argued that only intellectual intuition is able to fill thinking with a content that is *real*, Deleuze describes the experience of intuition as an encounter with substance: "Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of fundamental *encounter*. . . its primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed" (*Difference and Repetition* 139).

Kicking away the ladder of propositional logic, we step into a realm that Deleuze calls "virtual" and Fichte calls "intellectual." The *virtual* is a realm of pure "consistency," the nonformal, nondiscursive that Fichte finds by stepping behind logic's first principle, the axiom of identity ($A=A$).³⁴ Logic destroys the concept's "inseparability of intensional components (zone of indiscernibility)," limits the infinite "plane of consistency" by reducing it to finite, referential movements (WIP 138). Logic is the enemy, because logic destroys immanence. Deleuze echoes Fichte's discovery of a higher, pure subjectivity ($I=I$) behind the formal axiom of identity: for Deleuze, the genuine philosophical concept "requires a 'belonging' to a subject" (WIP 141).

For Spinoza, *scientia intuitiva* is the third and highest mode of knowledge; understanding things in light of intuition was for him "the highest effort of the mind and its highest virtue."³⁵ Its ultimate goal and promise is to reveal "the knowledge of the union existing between the mind and the whole of Nature."³⁶ Spinoza concedes that human thinking is still too weak to achieve this highest intuition. But then in a remarkable passage immediately following, Spinoza asserts that, because we can

imagine such a degree of knowledge, we should strive to attain it: "meanwhile man conceives a human character much more stable than his own, and sees that there is no reason why he should not himself acquire such a character. Thus he is led to seek for means which will bring him to this pitch of perfection, and calls everything which will serve as such means a true good" (*Improvement* 6). It is a remarkable anticipation both of Fichte's notion of endless striving toward an unattainable limit, which Fichte views as the motive power driving all of the activities of mind, and of the centrality of imagination as the ultimate impetus to striving.

Spinoza's surprising example of *scientia intuitiva* is the "fourth proportional," $a : b :: c : x$, which exemplifies intuitive knowledge when it is apprehended immediately, rather than deduced discursively via an algebraic algorithm (*Improvement* 9). In words that Deleuze and Fichte could have written, Spinoza asserts that the truth needs no external sign; we are moved to a conviction of certainty because we find ourselves at every moment *inside* the pure activity of the truth's construction. Surprisingly, the arch-rationalist Spinoza has no interest in the discursive algorithm that allows one to deduce the fourth proportional logically: instead, he pushes mathematical demonstration in the direction of a Fichtean intuition—"a pure activity into which an eye has been inserted."³⁷ "For an idea is in itself nothing else than a certain sensation" (*Improvement* 27).

Spinoza rejects any attempt to deduce the direct *expression* of substance that is God. Rather, he subsumes deduction within its "*direct manifestation*" to the faculty of intuition:

It is now the object that expresses itself, the thing itself that explicates itself. All its properties then jointly "fall within an infinite understanding." So that there is no question of deducing Expression: rather it is expression that embeds deduction in the Absolute . . . One cannot understand attributes without proof, which is the manifestation of the invisible, and the view within which falls what thus manifests itself. Thus demonstrations, says Spinoza, are the eyes through which the mind sees. (Deleuze, *Expressionism* 22)

Deleuze's explication of Spinoza here recalls vividly Fichte's method in the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794, where logic is the ladder one climbs to an intuition that can no longer be "said" in propositional form, but only "shown." For Spinoza, the highest kind of knowledge is a knowing that is a seeing. Viewed in this light, Spinoza stands very close indeed to Deleuze's own position when the latter asserts that "reason is only a concept, and a very impoverished concept for defining the plane and the movements that pass through it" (WIP 43).

Deleuze affirms "the grandiose Leibnizian or Bergsonian perspective that every philosophy depends upon an intuition" (WIP 40). Intuition is "pre-philosophical," which is to say the ground of all possible knowledge,

in that it is the chaotic, infinitely mobile matrix out of which specific concepts are born: "The concept is the beginning of philosophy, but the plane [of immanence] is its instituting" (WIP 41). Intuition is the third kind of knowledge that sees immediately "a plane of immanence that constitutes the absolute ground of philosophy, its earth or deterritorialization, the foundation on which it creates its concepts" (WIP 41).

Spinoza, Fichte, and Deleuze all found their philosophies upon intuition, and their founding intuition leads them all to the same fundamental insight: the ground of all knowledge is a synthetic, monistic activity that is immanent only to itself. Deleuze's descriptions of this immanence are filled with Fichtean and Spinozist resonances, as for example when he describes it as

a state of survey without distance, at ground level, a self-survey that no chasm, fold, or hiatus escapes . . . a *form in itself* that does not refer to any external point of view, any more than the retina or striated area of the cortex refers to another retina or cortical area; it is an absolute consistent form that surveys *itself* independently of any supplementary dimension. (WIP 210)

Here we are reminded immediately of a striking locution in Fichte's latest version of his *Wissenschaftslehre*, that of the recently published diaries from March 1813 to January 1814, where intellectual intuition is described as "Sehen des Sehens" (seeing of seeing).³⁸ As in Spinoza, this intuited immanence is "an absolute consistent form," a pure substance that is also pure subject, the "I = I" that is the first precipitate of the self-positing Fichtean self.

In a passage that clearly parallels Spinoza, and may be directly indebted to him (again without using his terminology), Deleuze describes the concept (as opposed to the logical proposition, the scientific function, and the referential prospect) as infinite, active, and creative. As in both Spinoza and Fichte, the philosopher's task is to free thought from mere "repetition," from referentiality, "from truth as supposed paradigm" by "acceding to [thought's] infinite movement" in a way that "reconquers an immanent power of creation" (WIP 140). Deleuze is far from reviving speculative metaphysics: concepts are not read out of some transcendent order. Rather, they must be created, because "there is no heaven for concepts" (WIP 5), and the first, grounding act of philosophical knowledge is bearing witness to the genesis of the concept: "But the concept is not given, it is created; it is to be created. It is not formed but posits itself in itself—it is a self-positing. . . . The concept posits itself to the same extent that it is created. What depends on a free creative activity is also that which, independently and necessarily, posits itself in itself: the most subjective will be the most objective." The language is pure Fichte,³⁹ but then, strangely,

Deleuze adds immediately: "The post-Kantians, and notably Schelling and Hegel, are the philosophers who paid the most attention to the concept as philosophical reality in this sense" (WIP 11). Later in the same chapter of *What Is Philosophy*, Deleuze again invokes Fichte without naming him: "What remains absolute, however, is the way in which the created concept is posited in itself and with others. The relativity and absoluteness of the concept are like its pedagogy and its ontology, its creation and its self-positing, its ideality and its reality—the concept is real without being actual, ideal without being abstract" (WIP 22).

Conceptual Realism

All three thinkers are conceptual Realists. Deleuze's *event*, "real without being actual," offers an uncanny parallel to the Scholastic notion of *universalia ante rem* (universals prior to things), and both concepts help greatly in understanding Spinoza's cryptic notion of *natura naturans*. As we have argued above, both thinkers are adamant that Spinoza's *expression* of divine substance, Deleuze's *events*, can be grasped by intellectual intuition, but never by discursive thought. The *event* is what resists embodiment in any particular "state of affairs"; it is "the part that eludes its own actualization in everything that happens" (WIP 156). Hence it cannot be grasped or expressed by *universalia in re* (universals in things). What characterizes the *event* is precisely what made it seem unreal to the Nominalists: it has "a shadowy and secret part that is continually subtracted from or added to its actualization . . . it neither begins nor ends but has gained or kept the infinite movement to which it gives consistency. . . . The event is immaterial, incorporeal, unlivable: pure *reserve*" (WIP 156).

Spinoza's distinction between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* maps neatly onto the Scholastic distinction between *universalia ante rem* and *universalia in re*, respectively. He warns against "abstractions" from experience, that is, against dealing in *universalia post rem* (universals after things): "we shall be extremely careful not to confound that which is only in the understanding with that which is in the thing itself" (*Improvement* 31). Hence Spinoza's initially surprising insistence that a circle cannot be adequately understood as the set of points equidistant from any given point: that would be to define it from the outside, *post rem*, as static *naturata* (*Improvement* 32). The only way in which to understand the circle adequately is to witness its genesis, by intuiting a line with one endpoint fixed, and the other moving freely. In Fichtean terms, Spinoza is describing an intuition of the circle's positing, the intellectual movement out of which the structure of the circle precipitates. Spinoza, Fichte, and Deleuze all strive to find rigorous ways of describing the ineffable. Indeed, Spinoza proceeds from his dynamic definition of the circle to prescribe general "rules for defining uncreated things" (*Improvement* 33).

Another example would be Spinoza's remarkable assertion that the idea of a well-constructed building in the mind of an architect is fully real and true, even if the building is never built (*Improvement* 23). A more complicated instance is the extended discussion of Peter and Paul that recurs throughout both the treatise *On the Improvement of the Understanding* and the *Ethics*: "the true idea of Peter," which is "the reality of Peter represented subjectively" and "in itself something real, and quite distinct from the actual Peter" (*Improvement* 12), clearly must be a *universalium ante rem* as opposed to a *universalium in re*. Extending the same argument further in the *Ethics*, Spinoza distinguishes between "the idea, for example, of Peter, which constitutes the essence of the mind itself of Peter [*ante rem*], and the idea of Peter himself which is in another man; for example, in Paul [*post rem*]" (*Ethics* 97).

For Spinoza, God has infinite attributes, which means that all possible states of affairs exist simultaneously in *potentia*, unrealized yet fully real. Deleuze's description of the temporality of the *event* helps us to understand how this can be so. For Deleuze, this temporality stands apart from clock time; it is an infinite movement that takes place at infinite speed, hence has no duration; a *naturans* in which war is willed "against past and future wars, the pangs of death against all deaths, and the wound against all scars" (*WIP* 160). Like Fichte, Deleuze asserts that these *universalia ante rem* can be known only through "the strange indifference of an intellectual intuition."⁴⁰ In his *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1814, Fichte describes the ultimate limit of Idealism as a self-grounding Realism.⁴¹ As in Spinoza, this highest plane of philosophical knowledge can be accessed only by a science unique to philosophy, apart from propositional logic and scientific functions: it can be accessed only by a *scientia intuitiva*.

Living Thinking

Explicitly in both late Deleuze and late Fichte, and implicitly in Spinoza, this pure, *ante rem* immanence that exists apart from particular states of affairs, and cannot be represented with reference to them, is described as *life itself*. "Philosophical concepts will be functions of the lived, as scientific concepts are functions of states of affairs; but the order or the derivation now changes direction since these functions of the lived become primary" (*WIP* 142). In the earliest versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte had opposed "speculation" to mere life as lived, which he viewed as the naïve "other" of philosophy (Zöller, *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy* 30), but in the late deliberations recorded above all in the recently published philosophical diaries, Fichte's stance toward "life" shifts radically. By the time of the final *Diarium*, written in the last months of his life, Fichte clearly has subordinated the *Ich* to "ein Leben, das *ich* nicht bilde, sondern das mich *bildet*" (Z 322; a life that *I* do not imagine, but rather

that *imagines* me): "So sage ich ists . . . nicht das Ich *schaut* sich, sondern das Leben schaut hin Ich: / daß es [das Ich] hinterher spricht: es habe sich hingeschaut, ist der Reflex der Hinschauung [des Lebens]" (Z 322; I tell you it is thus . . . it is not the I that *sees* itself, but rather life looks upon I: / that it [the I] speaks afterward: it has seen itself, is the reflex of the perception [of life]). Throughout his diaries, for example, on page 214 of *Diarium II*, intuition is clearly identified as a "Reflex des Lebens" (reflex of life) and the *Ich* is now viewed as the focal point of a *divine* "seeing": "Es ist dieses Ich ein gesezmässiger Punkt, innerhalb deßen das göttliche, als ein Leben aus sich von sich, erscheinen kann" (*Diarium II* 217; this I is a lawful point within which the divine, as a life in itself and through itself, can appear). The *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1814 describes the Absolute as "durch und durch lauter Leben von sich aus in sich" (Z 327; pure life through and through in itself and through itself), and the understanding as form determined by life itself: "Er [der Verstand] versteht sich als *Form eines Lebens*, u. da seyend durch die Selbstbestimmung des Lebens zum Daseyn dieser Form" (Z 325; [The understanding] comes to know itself as the *form of a life*, and as something existing by virtue of life's self-determination of the existence of this form). For Fichte, the highest intuition would be that of "die Genesis des ersten Sehens" (*Diarium II* 235; the genesis of the first act of seeing), of the lawfulness of life revealing itself as "Sichtbarkeit der Sichtbarkeit" (*Diarium II* 233; visibility of visibility).

Spinoza asserts repeatedly that God's understanding *is* His will; when God thinks, *life* happens, because "substance thinking and substance extended are one and the same substance, which is now comprehended under this attribute and now under that" (*Ethics* 84). This is indeed "a truth which some of the Hebrews appear to have seen as if through a cloud, since they say that God, the intellect of God, and the things which are the object of that intellect are one and the same thing" (*Ethics* 84). In his late philosophy, Fichte moves closer to Spinoza than he ever had dared before in identifying his philosophical Absolute not just with *life*, but with "göttliches Leben" (Z 316–17; divine life). Zöller may be right in his claim that Fichte's untimely death probably saved him from having to endure another round of the *Spinozastreit* (Z 330).

If thought and extension are infinite attributes of a single divine substance, it follows that the highest thought, the pure activity that is God's self-understanding, must simultaneously express itself in extension as the genesis of actual states of affairs. *Natura naturans* is the "Gott-Natur" (God-nature)⁴² from which the discrete, finished forms of *natura naturata* flow. Deleuze's "plane of immanence" must be what Rudolf Steiner termed in his own late work a realm of "living working," as opposed to the realm of "finished work."⁴³

In his late writings, Deleuze follows and conjoins Fichte and Spinoza explicitly in calling for philosophy to create "vital ideas":

To reach the concept it is not even enough for phenomena to be subject to principles analogous to those that associate ideas or things, or to principles that order reasons . . . what suffices for “current ideas” does not suffice for “vital ideas”—those that must be created. Ideas can only be associated as images and can only be ordered as abstractions; to arrive at the concept we must go beyond both of these and arrive *as quickly as possible* at mental objects determinable as real beings. This is what Fichte or Spinoza have already shown: we must make use of fictions and abstractions, but only so far as is necessary to get to a plane where we go from real being to real being and advance through the construction of concepts. (*WIP* 207)

Tellingly, Deleuze footnotes this passage with a reference to Martial Guérout’s two-volume study of Fichte.⁴⁴ Even if it is not clear that Deleuze was studying Fichte directly, there is evidence that Deleuze was at least reading *about* Fichte late in his career. The parallels are striking in any case.

The concept is neither denotation of states of affairs nor signification of the lived; it is the event as pure sense that immediately runs through the components. It has no number, either whole or fractional, for counting things that display its properties, but a combination that condenses and accumulates the components it traverses and surveys. The concept is a form or a force; in no possible sense is it ever a function. In short, there are only philosophical concepts on the plane of immanence, and scientific functions or logical propositions are not concepts. (*WIP* 143–44)

In his last deliberations, Fichte arrives at the same epiphany: “*es selbst, das unbegreifliche, ist, weset . . . ? das ist als verbum activum, nicht als verbum neutrum genommen. Das eben ist die Haupt Absicht des Idealismus[,] das verbum neutrum ganz aufzuheben, u. überall nichts als activa übrig zu lassen*” (*Z* 319; [*Life*] *itself, that incomprehensible thing, is, comes into being . . . ? it is as an active verb, not as a verbum neutrum*. That is indeed the main purpose of Idealism: to cancel out the *verbum neutrum* completely, so that everywhere only active verbs remain). Life is to the concept as *natura naturans* is to *natura naturata*. For all three thinkers, the concept reveals itself as a formative *force*, a life force or living form.⁴⁵

The import of Deleuze’s passages, quoted above, in which he describes the plane of immanence “rocking back and forth” as it is woven by a flying shuttle, is now revealed. His intuition recalls perfectly the epiphany of the Earth Spirit to Faust in the opening scene of Goethe’s drama:

In Lebensfluten, im Tatensturm
Wall’ ich auf und ab,
Webe hin und her!

Geburt und Grab,
Ein ewiges Meer,
Ein wechselnd Weben,
Ein glühend Leben,
So schaff’ ich am sausenden Webstuhl der Zeit
Und wirke der Gottheit lebendiges Kleid.

[In tides of living, in doing’s storm,
Up, down, I wave
Waft to and fro,
Birth and Grave,
An endless flow,
A changeful plaiting,
Fiery begetting,
Thus at Time’s scurrying loom I weave and warp
And broider at the Godhead’s living garb.]⁴⁶

It is a revelation of the Goddess Natura, an immediate intuition of life itself.⁴⁷ In such epiphanies, the infinitely remote goal of Spinoza’s striving, union of the mind with the whole of nature, “the magic formula that we all seek,” seems within reach after all.

Immanence

All these threads come together in Deleuze’s last published essay, “Immanence: A Life.” In this intensely personal testimonial to his deepest beliefs, Deleuze begins with a purely Fichtean description of the positing of the finite self within a *Tathandlung* that transcends subject and object: “Consciousness becomes a fact only when a subject is produced at the same time as its object, both being outside the field and appearing as ‘transcendents’” (26). Further, he argues that “[consciousness] is expressed, in fact, only when it is reflected upon a subject that refers it to objects” (26). He then proceeds via Spinoza’s concept of absolute immanence to a remarkable passage that includes a rare explicit reference to Fichte. The key concept shared by all three thinkers is the “transcendental field”:

What is the transcendental field? It can be distinguished from experience in that it doesn’t refer to an object or belong to an object (empirical representation). It appears therefore as a pure stream of a-subjective consciousness, a pre-reflexive impersonal consciousness, a qualitative duration of consciousness without a self . . . we will speak of a transcendental empiricism in contrast to everything that makes up the world of the subject and the object. (25)

In his earlier philosophy, Fichte had sought to ground cognition on a pure activity, a *Tathandlung*, which cannot be any *thing* or pre-existent

fact (*Tatsache*), even within consciousness. But the early Fichte's subject as positing agent stops short of genuine immanence.⁴⁸ The Fichtean subject and object reveal themselves in Deleuze's late philosophy as "transcendent" rather than "transcendental": both Deleuze and Fichte himself overcome the dangers of Fichte's early philosophy by situating the transcendental not within a *self* (not even an "absolute" self), or even within Being (as though immanence could be immanent to something other than immanence itself, as in Spinoza), but rather within *life itself* (*Immanence* 26–27). Deleuze ends his final essay evoking Fichte by name at last:

We will say of pure immanence that it is A LIFE, and nothing else. It is not immanence to life, but the immanent that is in nothing is itself a life. A life is the immanence of immanence, absolute immanence: it is complete power, complete bliss. It is to the degree that he goes beyond the aporias of the subject and the object that Johann Fichte, in his last philosophy, presents the transcendental field as a *life*, no longer dependent on a Being or submitted to an Act—it is an absolute immediate consciousness whose very activity no longer refers to a being but is ceaselessly posed in a life. (27)

And then he immediately evokes Spinoza: "The transcendental field then becomes a genuine plane of immanence that reintroduces Spinozism into the heart of the philosophical process" (*Immanence* 27–28). In this exquisite final essay, Deleuze maps the rhizome with a single masterstroke. The magic formula is: Spinoza + Fichte = x. We solve for x, and x = Deleuze. Only Deleuze is equal to the radicality of his illustrious predecessors. His synthesis calls forth a new plane of consistency, with uncanny "nondiscursive resonances"—an *event* that surveys *us* as it actualizes revolutionary potentials.

Notes

¹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 48 and 60 (hereafter cited as *WIP*).

² See, for example, the remarkable volume of essays titled *Spinoza and German Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), edited by Eckart Förster and Yitzhak Y. Melamed.

³ Lewis White Beck, *Early German Philosophy: Kant and His Predecessors* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969).

⁴ Frederick Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987). By 1991, Manfred Walther had published an important volume of essays devoted to Spinoza and German Idealism. See Manfred Walther, ed., *Spinoza und der deutsche Idealismus* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1991).

⁵ Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1650–1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); and Jonathan Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights, 1750–1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁶ Including two recent intellectual biographies: Wilhelm G. Jacobs, *Johann Gottlieb Fichte: Eine Biographie* (Berlin: Insel, 2012); and Manfred Kühn, *Johann Gottlieb Fichte: Ein deutscher Philosoph, 1762–1814: Biographie* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2012).

⁷ Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967), 718.

⁸ In a stellar paper on Fichte presented at the annual meeting of the German Studies Association in October 2012, "The Inside/Outside of Imagination in Fichte," Dennis Sepper speculates on the existence of a "common ground" or "topological space" that would account for the Deleuzian rhizome I have been arguing. On this account, continuities across such a range of diverse thinkers and epochs would arise not through historical transmission, but rather because each thinker "explored, named, described, and extended in his way" the same ground, out of which he intuited active thinking emerging. One might call such a ground a field or, like Deleuze, a plane upon which imaginative experience unfolds and moves. In an earlier book, *Descartes's Imagination: Proportion, Images, and the Activity of Thinking* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), Sepper has explored in detail the workings of Descartes' mathematical imagination, and the aforementioned paper argues that Fichte sought to extend Descartes' project from an exploration of the "intuitable structure" of mathematical space to the deepest levels of concept-formation within the imaginative act of schematization. This is remarkably close to Deleuze's descriptions of emergent concepts.

⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). Hereafter *A Thousand Plateaus* and page number. The concept is particularly apposite here because it provides a way of "agglomerating very diverse acts"; it "ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences and social struggles" (7). Unlike traditional, "arborescent" models, it is mobile and even "nomadic"; "it evolves by subterranean stems and flows" (7). In that sense, the rhizome seeks to create new forms of consistency within maximal multiplicity. As a method, the creation of a rhizome requires first a liberation or "deterritorialization" of energies from their original contexts, then a "circulation of intensities" (10), then a "conjugation" of those "deterritorialized flows" (11), which allows the new mapping to emerge as a "reterritorialization" of those energies. See also the related note on Dennis Sepper immediately preceding.

¹⁰ Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975). Hereafter Taylor and page number.

¹¹ Richard Fincham, "Schelling's Subversion of Fichtean Monism, 1794–1796," in *Fichte, German Idealism, and Early Romanticism*, ed. Daniel Breazcale and Tom Rockmore (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), 155.

- ¹² J. G. Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
- ¹³ Not all scholars would agree that Fichte developed significantly different philosophical positions in his later philosophy. See especially Isabelle Thomas-Fogiel, *Fichte: Réflexion et argumentation* (Paris: Vrin, 2004). On Fichte's debts to Spinoza, see also Stefan Büttner, "Spinozas präsentationstheoretische Konzeption als Vorläuferin der Fichteschen Bildtheorie," in *Fichte in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Helmut Gierndt (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 49–57.
- ¹⁴ These philosophical diaries have been designated as *Diarium I*, *Diarium II*, and *Diarium III*. *Diarium I* and *Diarium II* appeared in vols. 15 and 16 of Fichte's *Nachgelassene Schriften*, ed. Erich Fuchs et al. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 2009 and 2011). *Diarium III* was published in *Ultima Inquirenda: J. G. Fichtes letzte Bearbeitung der Wissenschaftslehre Ende 1813 / Anfang 1814: Textband*, ed. Reinhard Lauth (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 2001), 131–425.
- ¹⁵ For an excellent discussion of these late diaries see Günter Zöller, "Leben und Wissen: Der Stand der Wissenschaftslehre beim letzten Fichte," in *Der transzendental-philosophische Zugang zur Wirklichkeit: Beiträge aus der aktuellen Fichte-Forschung*, ed. Erich Fuchs, Marco Ivaldo, and Giovanni Moretto (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 2001), 307–30. Hereafter abbreviated as *Z*.
- ¹⁶ Daniel Breazeale, "Toward a *Wissenschaftslehre* more *geometrico* (1800–1801)," in *After Jena: New Essays on Fichte's Later Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Breazeale and Tom Rockmore (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008), 10. Hereafter Breazeale and page number.
- ¹⁷ Quoted in Errol E. Harris, "Fichte and Spinozism," in *Der transzendentale Gedanke: Die gegenwärtige Darstellung der Philosophie Fichtes*, ed. Klaus Hamacher (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1981), 416–17.
- ¹⁸ Deleuze's philosophy was profoundly influenced in this regard by Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, and the mathematical mysticism of Cusanus. See Joshua Ramey, *The Hermetic Deleuze: Philosophy and Hermetic Ordeal* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).
- ¹⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (New York: Zone Books, 1990). The French original gives them equal billing: *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by page number.
- ²⁰ Spinoza's key terms *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* are difficult to translate (and hence usually referred to in the Latin original, as I shall henceforth). *Naturans* would be the present participle of an imagined verbal form of "nature," and *naturata* would be the past participle of same, so a literal translation would be something like "nature naturing" and "nature having natured," respectively.
- ²¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy: The Doctrine of the Faculties* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), xv. Hereafter cited as *Kant*.
- ²² Matthew C. Altman, "Fichte's Anti-Hegelian Legacy," in Breazeale and Rockmore, *Fichte, German Idealism, and Early Romanticism*, 275–86.
- ²³ Another important register of metaphors that Deleuze favors is structurally homologous to Fichtean "Schweben": topological transformations such as the

- Möbius band, on which the seeming dichotomy between inner and outer is overcome by a simple folding of an object that has *only one edge and one side*. For Deleuze (as for Spinoza and Fichte), the turning of truth toward thought and the turning of thought toward truth are a single, instantaneous motion that is executed with an infinite speed that bridges all gaps: "this is not a fusion but a reversibility, an immediate, perpetual, instantaneous exchange—a lightning flash. Infinite movement is double, and there is only a fold from one to the other" (*WIP* 38). For his part, Fichte invokes the concept of "immanence" repeatedly in his late philosophical diaries, for example on 278–79 of *Diarium II*.
- ²⁴ Günter Zöller, *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy: The Original Duplicity of Intelligence and Will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 77.
- ²⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 144–45.
- ²⁶ Gilles Deleuze, "Immanence: A Life," in *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 25. Hereafter cited as *Immanence*.
- ²⁷ Benedict de Spinoza, *A Spinoza Reader: The "Ethics" and Other Works*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 148. Hereafter cited as *Spinoza Reader*. See also: "For no one who has a true idea is unaware that a true idea involves the highest certainty. For to have a true idea means nothing other than knowing a thing perfectly, or in the best way. And of course no one can doubt this unless he thinks that an idea is something mute, like a picture on a tablet, and not a mode of thinking, namely, the very [act of] understanding" (142).
- ²⁸ Baruch de Spinoza, *Ethics and On the Improvement of the Understanding* (New York: Hafner, 1949), 47–48. Hereafter cited as *Ethics*.
- ²⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972–1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 160.
- ³⁰ Deleuze's provocative claim is that, like Christ, the true and immaculate philosophy incarnated only once, in the person of Spinoza.
- ³¹ See also the discussion of *scientia intuitiva* and the "fourth proportional" below.
- ³² In a nutshell, Fichte is trying to find his way to that inaccessible thing-in-itself that Kant had called "the transcendental unity of apperception." Fichte's approach is thoroughly consonant with Kant's "transcendental method": he attempts to step behind the structures of thinking and see what constitutive activities must necessarily be in place in order to account for the structures. Changing the metaphor, one can say that Fichte is climbing toward the top rung of a ladder, the most universal and fundamental and abstract and indubitable things we can think, which are the fundamental axioms of logic. Fichte says boldly, now let's step *behind* even those axioms.
- ³³ *Negotiations* 160, 201; this thought was first presented in Deleuze's late masterpiece *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
- ³⁴ Deleuze is much clearer than Fichte on the relationship between logic and the living concept that shows itself via "transcendental empiricism." While honoring the

depth of Fichte's insight, one might wonder whether his having used logic as his Wittgensteinian ladder and then having retained many of its terms (notably "identity") did not contribute substantially to the misunderstanding of his philosophy.

³⁵ *Spinoza Reader* 257. For a fuller discussion of Spinoza's two main accounts of *scientia intuitiva*, see my article "Goethe's Intuitions," *The Goethe Yearbook* 18 (2011): 35–50.

³⁶ Benedict de Spinoza, "On the Improvement of the Understanding," in *Ethics and On the Improvement of the Understanding* (New York: Hafner, 1949), 6. Hereafter cited as *Improvement*.

³⁷ See my discussion in "The Metamorphosis of the Scientist," *The Goethe Yearbook* 5 (1990): 187–212.

³⁸ Of the many passages containing this insight that might be quoted, the most memorable is Fichte's report at the very beginning of *Diarium II* of a dream to rival Descartes': "In einem Traume schien mir eine Aufgabe sehr leuchtend hervor. Das Sehen sey ein sich sehendes Auge" (209; In a dream, a task appeared to me, shining very brightly. [It was to show that] seeing was an eye that sees itself). Elsewhere, Fichte refers to "the eye [*Auge*] of intuition" (Breazeale 21). See also *Diarium II*, 220 and 235.

³⁹ See, for example, the extraordinary passages at *Diarium II*, 221, "So ist es ja durch das ganze Bewußtseyn hindurch, bis die WL. eintritt, u. die verborgene *Genesis aufdekt*: / daß das *Leben selbst seinen Begriff* bei sich führe" (It is thus throughout all of consciousness until the science of knowledge emerges and *uncovers* the hidden *genesis*: / that *life bears its own concept* within itself); and again at *Diarium II*, 223: "Begriffen heißt bald das Wesen ausdenken, als *im Sehen*: bald die *Genesis*: Dies ist nun ganz einerlei: Sehen ist *Reflex des Lebens*, ist ja *Genesis*" (*Comprehension* means now thinking through the essence, as in *seeing*, and now its *genesis*. These are one and the same. Seeing is *a reflex of life*; it is *genesis* itself).

⁴⁰ *WIP* 158. Deleuze is surely deploying the terms "strange" and "indifference" in unconventional, technical senses; otherwise the passage makes little sense. "Strange" evokes the "strange attractors" that feature so prominently in Gleick's book on chaos that Deleuze has just cited in his own text, James Gleick, *Chaos* (New York: Viking, 1987; rev. ed. 2008), and surely we are meant to hear Schelling's central concept of generative identity, *Indifferenz*, in the word "indifference."

⁴¹ "Hier an dieser Stelle schlägt, u. vernichtet sich die Reflexion durch sich selbst: u. der Idealismus erhält seine Grenze indem er in einem Realismus sich selbst begründet" (*Z* 325; Here, at this point, reflection posits and destroys itself through itself: and Idealism reaches its limit by founding itself within a Realism).

⁴² Goethe's neologism "Gott-Natur," clearly meant to recall Spinoza's famous dictum *deus sive natura* (God, which is to say, nature), is invoked in the final lines of Goethe's late poem "Schillers Reliquien" (Schiller's Remains):

Was kann der Mensch im Leben mehr gewinnen,
Als daß sich Gott-Natur ihm offenbare?
Wie sie das Feste läßt zu Geist verrinnen,
Wie sie das Geisterzeugte fest bewahre.

[What higher goal can any man attain
Than God-in-nature unto him revealed?
How forms once fixed to Spirit she lets flow,
How Spirit's firmly held in forms below?] [trans. F.A.]

⁴³ See Steiner's *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts*, 3rd ed. (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1999), which he composed on his deathbed in 1925.

⁴⁴ Martial Guérout, *L'Évolution et la structure de la Doctrine de la science chez Fichte* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1982).

⁴⁵ Cf. Zöllner, *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy*, 111, on Fichte's "treatment of thinking as form, more specifically as formative activity." Perhaps this is also what Deleuze meant in his many enigmatic descriptions of the living concept as a plane cutting through and organizing chaos.

⁴⁶ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*, trans. Walter Arndt (New York: Norton, 2001), lines 501–9.

⁴⁷ See my article "The Unconscious of Nature: Analyzing Disenchantment in *Faust I*," *The Goethe Yearbook* 17 (2010): 117–32, where I argue that the Earth Spirit in Goethe's *Faust* should be understood as an epiphany of the Goddess *Natura*.

⁴⁸ Deleuze, *Immanence* 27: "Immanence is not related to Some Thing as a unity superior to all things or to a Subject as an act that brings about a synthesis of things: it is only when immanence is no longer immanence to anything other than itself that we can speak of a plane of immanence." Or, as he puts it even more gnominically in the same essay, "The One is not the transcendent that might contain immanence but the immanent contained within a transcendental field" (30).