§ IV.

VERTIGO, BEATITUDO: SPINOZA AND PHILOSOPHY

One could say that every philosopher has two philosophies: his [sic] own and that of Spinoza.27

~Henri Bergson

Spinozism or no philosophy at all.28

~G.W.F. Hegel

1.

“We have not yet begun to understand Spinoza,” Gilles Deleuze once claimed, “and I myself no more

27 Henri Bergson, quoted in Michael Hardt, Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 130n3.
than others,” noting elsewhere that “the greatest philosophers are hardly more than apostles who distance themselves from or draw near to this mystery.”

Here one question eclipses all others, or serves to focus them: What would it be to have an adequate idea of Spinoza?

2. Philosophy is the very vertigo of immanence. That formula complements one of Deleuze’s: “Immanence is the very vertigo of philosophy.” Immanence is not philosophy, nor philosophy immanence. But there is in the passage from one to the other a modification of sense that is not without significance. It is perhaps for that reason that the two formulas are best read together. At the point of vertigo.

But why vertigo? What about philosophy, much less immanence, may be said to be vertiginous? Daniel Heller-Roazen has isolated the two components all

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enigmas share: “opacity and the hidden principle of their interpretation. That summary may appear willfully paradoxical,” Heller-Roazen comments, “yet enigmas verify its truth”: Were an enigma “immediately intelligible, it would be none at all,” yet were an enigma “solely solvable by means of knowledge extrinsic to its construction, it, too, could hardly be called an ‘enigma’.”

Immanence is the very vertigo of philosophy because immanence is the very paradigm of the enigma.

Deleuze’s formula is found in a work Deleuze titled *Spinoza and the Problem of Expression*: “By taking the ‘problem of expression’ as his central concern, Deleuze announces the ingenuity of his approach. Nowhere in the myriad definitions that the *Ethics* comprises is ‘expression’ defined. Yet the verb form of the concept appears on the very first page in the definition of ‘God’: ‘By God I mean an absolutely infinite being; that is, a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence’.”

More remarkable yet, “as soon as it is introduced into Deleuze’s argument, the concept ‘expression’ is

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32 Heller-Roazen, *Dark Tongues*, 77.
immediately bifurcated into two senses. The virtue of this concept for Deleuze is that it provides a single name for two heterogeneous processes, *explication* and *implication*. Deleuze argues that in Spinozism the modes, as affections of substance, effectively explicate substance. But it is equally true that each modal modification implicates substance in turn. The usual connotations of these two words are fully in force in Deleuze’s reading; substance is effectively elaborated through, that is, explicated by, the modes. But the modes implicate substance, in that they impinge on its putative autonomy, never leaving it unchanged. [...] Deleuze’s point is that in Spinoza substance is in an incessant state of unfolding (*explication*) via the modes, and folding back in on itself (*implication*) as a result of these modal affections.³⁴

To explicate is to implicate, for every implication follows from an explication, and every explication turns on how what it explicates is implicated in it.

Philosophy stands to immanence as explication stands to implication.

Philosophy: the vertigo of immanence *in its expression*.

³⁴ Peden, *Spinoza Contra Phenomenology*, 211; emphasis author’s.
3.

“Philosophy is something that moves, that passes, and that takes place,” Pierre Macherey has written, “in a place where the connection between thoughts gestates, which, in the works themselves, escapes the specific historical conditions of their authors’ undertakings, and the understanding of this process diminishes the interest we might extend to their systematic intentions, because this process grasps them dynamically in the anonymous movement of a sort of collective project.”

“Spinoza” is the name given that anonymity by those who undergo its movement sub specie aeternitatis.


Postscript: The Unreadable

Whether or not clarity is enough, it is certainly not enough to throw around the term ‘clarity,’ since that term obviously means very different things to different people, and stands in urgent need of clarification.36

~Hans-Johann Glock

What is there more mysterious than clarity?37

~Paul Valéry

“If reading is not to be simply synonymous with deciphering, commentary or even interpretation,” Geoffrey Bennington has written, “then it must inevitably encounter the question of the unreadable”38: “If I can simply read what I read, then what I am doing is not in fact reading but something else (processing, decoding, unscrambling): reading as such occurs only as and in the experience of the unreadable.”39 Not “processing, decoding, unscrambling,” neither is it “deciphering, commentary or even interpretation”—reading is an activity irreducible to any

other that may, at first glance, be thought to be synonymous with it. Whatever else it is, reading is not something one “simply” does. Nor, it appears, is it something one can do “simply.” If “reading as such occurs only as and in the experience of the unreadable,” and if the unreadable can be identified with the illegible, reading for all that remains no less difficult to place. “The very act of recognizing moments of illegibility,” Craig Dworkin has written, “cancels their status as such; reading the illegible nullifies its own account in the precise moment of its construction and obliterates the very object it would claim to have identified, creating a new space of erasure which cannot itself be read. In that moment of singularity the unreadable disappears within its own legibility, and that legibility simultaneously effaces the text it would seem to read.”40 No longer “simply synonymous with deciphering, commentary or even interpretation,” yet incapable of articulation without their resources, situated “only as and in the experience of the unreadable,” yet given over to that experience only insofar as the unreadable itself will have escaped one, where—in what sense—may reading “as such” be said to “occur”?

Writing of novelty in metaphysics, A.W. Moore claims it is not simply that a “radically” new way of making sense of things will, of necessity, have been unforeseeable. “The introduction of a radically new way of making sense of things is unforeseeable in the more profound sense that, until that way of making sense of things has been introduced, there is

no way even of making sense of its introduction.”41 As Jean-François Lyotard has observed, “We read” —only; necessarily; radically; at all—“because we do not know how to read.”42

42 Jean-François Lyotard, quoted in Bennington, “Editorial,” v.
§ “By ‘problematic,’” Deleuze clarifies, “we mean the ensemble of the problem and its conditions.”43 “For Kant,” as for Deleuze,44 “problems are

(1) transcendent to experience (they are not themselves derived from empirical or a posteriori experience) while having only an immanent employment, such that they are (2) organizational principles, which (3) do not disappear with their solutions, rendering them (4) fictions in that they make no claim to knowledge (in their correct or immanent usage) yet are nonetheless employed to arrive at knowledge, which thus (5) have a true (immanent) and false (transcendent) usage, and (6) such that they do not resemble their solutions.45

“After I established these things, I thought I was entering port; but when I started to meditate […] I felt as if I were thrown again into the open sea.”46

43 Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, 177.
44 Levi Bryant, Difference and Givenness: Deleuze’s Transcendental Empiricism and the Ontology of Immanence (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008), 165: “It is clear that all six of these properties are precisely what Deleuze seeks in the concept of a problem.”
45 Bryant, Difference and Givenness, 165.