Paul Livingston

December 19, 2021

Anomalous Monism and the Univocity of Being:

Davidson, Deleuze, Spinoza

Multiple indications today point to the relevance of *formally flat* knowing of causes as such, one without teleology, representation, elevation or height.[1] The possibility of this rational knowing probably marks the importance of Spinoza's thought, not only for contemporary ethics but also, equally, for global geopolitics. This knowledge, as I shall argue here, might take the form more of a recognition than a schematization or an archaeology: it would see in the flatness of the order of causes a fully adequate way to recognize ourselves, without ideology or mystification, as integral parts (but only that) of the global structure it demonstratively or formally indicates. In making of this flatness a unitary space, it would be the contemporary condition for our not making ourselves (as Spinoza says in the preface to Part III of the *Ethics*), within nature, a "kingdom within a kingdom," for our not finding in the form of our actions a mandate for domination; or for not thinking, that we can sufficiently determine the meaning of our action or the ends of our practice wholly from ourselves alone. The flatness of causes is thus the radical form of a knowledge without ideology, mystification, or purpose, of the real determinants of our collective being and that of all those who surround us, the others in general with which and whom we share the earth.[2]

From its beginning, however, the prospect of such a demonstration of determining causes exists in a difficult and ambiguous relationship with the project of reflection on the ontology and logic of sense. If the project is to be one of recognizing ourselves, it must operate as a recognition of the sense of what happens or becomes in general that does not exclude constituted human languages and lives as a proper and dependent part. But at the same time, in its critical direction against ideology and illusion, it must locate the sources of sense, not ultimately in any figure of subjective action or psychology, but rather nowhere else than in this pure becoming itself. No transcendental exterior, no eschatological or teleological outcome will witness or determine this becoming, or impel its direction. Thus, the dual requirement that it imposes on the logic or ontology of sense is that there not be any kind of exterior One that operates with respect to sense as its source; but also that the "interior" One of self, soul or mind cannot serve as the principle of any origin or causal ultimacy for sense as such. Tracing a difficult

---

[1] Some of these signs might be taken to be: i) the continuing dominance within "analytic" philosophy of varieties of programmatic 'naturalism'; ii) the rise of what are called (in certain circles) 'new' materialisms and realisms; iii) vastly more exigently, the global crises of anthropic violence and domination to which these movements (in part) respond.

[2] By a "flat" knowledge of causes I mean an understanding of the events making up the causal order, as such and in general, that does not accord any *particular* causes the significance of origin, end, or hierarchical elevation of rank or power. The provenance of the idea of "flatness" here traces to Manuel DeLanda's (2002, p. 47) invocation of the possibility of a "flat ontology"; DeLanda cites a passage from *A Thousand Plateaus* as well as Deleuze's discussion of an ontology of multiplicity without genus/species, or other forms of hierarchy, in Deleuze (1968) (*Difference and Repetition*), pp. 182-183.

path between the twin lures of theology and humanism and avoiding both, a universal knowing of the flat order of causes would then ultimately have to reveal a constitutive dynamics of sense that, beyond any figure or assumption of human or divine creation, has no other locus than this order itself.

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze identifies the project of a heterodox tradition, which he finds marked in the philosophies of Duns Scotus, Spinoza, and Nietzsche, of the "univocity of being," situating it in opposition to the more dominant tradition, tracing to Aristotle, of attributing to being a basically hierarchical organization, and to human language at best a capacity to name it by way of analogy or equivocation. In a celebrated passage in the first chapter, Deleuze introduces the claim of univocity by articulating a logic of the distinctions which articulate the sense and reference of propositions:

> In the proposition understood as a complex entity we distinguish: the sense, or what is expressed in the proposition; the designated (what expresses itself in the proposition); the expressors or designators, which are numerical modes – that is to say, differential factors characterizing the elements endowed with sense and designation. We can conceive that names or propositions do not have the same sense even while they designate exactly the same thing (as in the case of the celebrated examples: morning star – evening star, Israel-Jacob, *p*lan-*b*lanc). The distinction between these senses is indeed a real distinction [*distinctio realis*], but there is nothing numerical – much less ontological – about it: it is a formal, qualitative, or semiological distinction. … What is important is that we can conceive of several formally distinct senses which none the less refer to being as if to a single designated entity, ontologically one. It is true that such a point of view is not sufficient to prevent us from considering these senses as analogues and this unity of being as an analogy. We must add that being, this common designated, in so far as it expresses itself, is said in turn *in a single and same sense* of all the numerically distinct designators and expressors. In the ontological proposition, not only is that which is designated ontologically the same for qualitatively distinct senses, but also the sense is ontologically the same for individuating modes, for numerically distinct designators or expressors: the ontological proposition involves a circulation of this kind (expression as a whole).[3]

In the passage, Deleuze deploys to (what he takes to be) ontologically decisive effect a conception of sense that will be familiar, in essential details, to those who have read Frege's "On Sense and Reference," or any of the vast range of projects that follow on it in subsequent philosophy. In the article, the possibility of judgments of identity that are genuinely informative leads Frege to introduce, beyond linguistic signs and their referents, the third, intermediate level of meaning that he characterizes as sense or as "mode of presentation" [*Art des Gegebenseins*]: it is then possible (Deleuze cites Frege's most famous example of this from the article: the presentation of the planet Venus, alternatively, as "morning star" or "evening star," alongside parallel examples from Spinoza and structuralist linguistics) for one and the same object to be designated through two or more qualitatively distinct nominal senses. Just as decisively, in the article, Frege theorizes the entirety of a proposition or thought (as distinct from the term or any of its referential objects) as a *primary* locus of sense, so that it is from the analysis of its

[3] Deleuze (1968), p. 35.

holistic structure and constitutive differential factors that we must seek any possible systematic illumination of the individual senses and referents of its terms.[4]

Within the proposition in general, Deleuze suggests that we may distinguish among three aspects, each articulated, in different ways, by this specific structure. First, there is (he suggests) the *sense* of the proposition *as a whol*e, what in it, for Frege, determines it as having as a truth-value and (Frege suggests) the truth-value as something like the referent of the sentence as a whole. With greater economy but also broader suggestion, Deleuze says that the sense is, in relation to the proposition as a whole, its 'expressed.' Second, there is the entity or entities that are referred to, or denoted, by the proposition – the one or several entities that (as we may put it) the proposition is "about." Deleuze suggests that this or these – what is designated in the proposition – may be said to "express itself" in it. Third and finally, there are the differential and distinct symbolic items or signs that serve to articulate the distinctions (both of sense and of reference) that, as possible within the structure of a language as a whole are (as a matter of the syntactic or material structure of the proposition itself) marked within it by these differential signifiers themselves.

Given this structure, and these distinctions, the articulation or demonstration of the claim of univocity takes the form of a kind of circular reflection on the sense and reference of a certain specific kind of proposition, what Deleuze here calls the "ontological" one. Although Deleuze does not specify, we may perhaps take it that he means propositions of the sort that, in the history of Western philosophy to which he here makes summary and generalizing reference, purport to articulate the "sense" or "senses" of being by having (implicit or explicit) reference to 'it' – propositions such as Aristotle's "being is said in many ways" or Parmenides' "Just one story of a route is left: that it is."

Now we can grasp from Frege's argument that it is possible for terms in such a proposition, or in different such propositions, to be associated with distinct senses, nevertheless referring to the same individual. In the case of the "ontological proposition", this means that language permits the singular object of designation – "being" – to be *designated* in a plurality of different ways. The distinction of these ways, as with the more homespun cases of pluralities of senses, is made possible by the plurality that the language admits, and differentiates between, while still maintaining the uniqueness of their reference, to a single individual or as if to one. But what is distinctive, and essential to the 'ontological proposition," according to Deleuze, is in effect that the plurality of designations that operate to produce distinctions in sense are *themselves* capable of having this singular referential object – i.e. being -- affirmed *of* them, and this, indeed, in a *unitary* sense. Here, the formal flatness of the syntactical distinctions made possible by the language itself, as a matter of its structure, guarantees that any principle or rule of differentiation will not elevate above any of the *differentia* above the others: all of them are ontologically equal, and none of the syntactic distinctions has the position of master.

On the level of what is (as Deleuze says) 'ontologically' relevant, there is thus, in the "ontological proposition" a kind of recoil of the unity of the object of designation – being -- in the ontological proposition of the referent back to what is said *of* the numerically differential factors or linguistic signs. The recoil makes it clear that the various senses by which being is designated do not have only the unity of analogy, or of a variety of extrinsic determinations that just happen – *per accidens*, as it were – to

[4] This is marked in his earlier announcement (in the *Grundlagen der Arithmetik*) of the "context principle," which asserts that a name has meaning only in the context of a proposition.

present the same subject matter. Rather, the fact that these different senses have a ground for their own differentiation in the linguistically distinct signs and these signs themselves are in a single (structural) sense that it flat and equal means that what is referred to, differentially, is designated only on a ground that it is and must be unitary, and indeed must coincide with what is referred to itself.

In the opening sections of *The Logic of Sense,* the same structural theory of the proposition allows Deleuze the suggest a paradoxical ontology of presuppositional sense on the level of language, in close connection with Deleuze's theorization of an ideal category of "events-effects", what he later terms "sense-events." At the same time, 'sense', if we posit it, will operate as a kind of paradoxical but real and inherent condition for the possibility of the proposition, for its unity and its possibility of truth or falsehood. As the "expressed" of the proposition which "inheres or subsists" within it (p. 19), it will bear a direct connection to the proposition's inherent possibility of expressing an event: something that happens or occurs in (and as) it occurs.[5] Deleuze suggests that this occurring, if grasped on the level of its integral relationship with the proposition, is to some extent independent of and even primary to the attribution to objects of properties, or to the individuated "state of affairs" for which the proposition denotatively is thought to stand. This independence is what qualifies the sense-event, as the formal "expressed" of the proposition, nevertheless to be attributed not to the proposition itself but to its real object, or to that state of affairs, as a determination of its real becoming: not "The leaf is green" but rather "The leaf greens" or the "greening" of the leaf.[6] In this way, sense as the real formal condition of the proposition already includes its possible expressivity with respect to the temporal dimension of becoming or happening, and with this to the real becoming of things. And for this reason, the analysis of propositional sense is thus plausibly capable of illuminating, as expressed, the order or structure of evental causation, in which events necessarily follow on others over time in their contingent becoming, in a way that has no other or further determinant or constraint on the level of superior necessities, but simply emerges from the order and logic of this becoming itself.

In *Difference and Repetition,* Deleuze relates this analysis of sense in the proposition explicitly to Spinoza's tripartite distinction among substance, attribute, and mode. This distinction is, in particular, Deleuze suggests, the characteristic form which the claim or demonstration of the univocity of being must take, under the condition that it become "identical with unique, universal and infinite substance … proposed as *Deus sive Natura*.":

> Against the Cartesian theory of substances thoroughly imbued with analogy, and against the Cartesian conception of distinctions which runs together the ontological, the formal and the numerical (substance, quality and quantity), Spinoza organizes a remarkable division into substance, attributes and modes. From the opening pages of the *Ethics*, he shows that real distinctions are never numerical but only formal – that is, qualitative or essential (essential attributes of the unique substance); and conversely, that numerical distinctions are never real, but only modal (intrinsic modes of the unique substance and its attributes). The attributes behave like real qualitatively different senses which relate to substance as if to a single and same designated; and substance in turn behaves like an ontologically unique sense in relation to the modes which express it, and inhabit it like individuating factors or intrinsic and intense degrees … Attributes are thus absolutely common to substance and the modes, even though

[5] Deleuze (1969), p. 12.
[6] Deleuze (1969), p. 21.

> modes and substance do not have the same essence. Being itself is said in a single unique sense of substance and the modes, even though the modes and substance do not have the same sense or do not have that being in the same manner [*in se* and *in alio*]. Any hierarchy or pre-eminence is denied in so far as substance is equally designated by all the attributes in accordance with their essence, and equally expressed by all the modes in accordance with their degree of power.

In parallel with the distinctions within the "ontological" proposition drawn above, Deleuze here suggests that the classifications within such a proposition – namely between being (as ontologically one), the formally distinguishable senses, and the unity of what is designated – may here be understood as aligning with Spinoza's own organization into (the one) substance, attributes, and modes. Modes are (by Spinoza's definition of them in *Ethics* I, D5) affections of the one substance, but substance (by ID4; see also IIP6) only manifests itself as modes under the formal condition of its differentiation into the attributes under which they appear. Deleuze thus suggests that Spinoza's different attributes of the one substance – thought and extension are two (not, emphatically, to say the *only* two) examples – function, with respect to the one, as something like differentiated senses: they are, effectively, the various and formally equal ways in which substance (the substance) can solely be understood as designated.[7] At the same time, in the other "direction" of its expressive activity, the single substance itself functions as a unitary sense through which all modes – or particular things – express it. On the level of what is 'ontologically' relevant, the being of the modes thus refers structurally back to the being of the substance. Indeed, they are, formally speaking (if not numerically speaking), the same.

In his 1968 study of Spinoza, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, which is closely linked to *Difference and Repetition* both in method and result, Deleuze further suggests that, for Spinoza, this ontological circulation of substance and its modes through the attributes must indeed have a distinctively *causal* meaning. Quoting the scholium to P25 of book 1, which says that God is the efficient cause of both the existence and the essence of things, Deleuze emphasizes that it follows from this, for Spinoza, that God is the cause of all things in the same sense (*eo sensu*) that he is the cause of himself.[8] With this identity of a unitarily causal sense, Deleuze suggests, "the idea of immanent cause" comes, in Spinoza, to explicate the claim of univocity, "freeing it from the indifference and neutrality" that still characterized the claim in Scotus's formulation. On Deleuze's interpretation, it is this idea of causation that requires, and verifies, not only that there can be no ontological hierarchy between modes for Spinoza, but even that modes are not subordinate, ontologically speaking, to substance itself. All of the modes (of whatever attribute) can communicate in the flat formal equality of being, since whatever attributes they fall under are formally equal with respect to substance itself, as are the essences themselves. The essences are "really" or "formally" distinct, Deleuze explains, but this distinction, crucially, does not imply any division of being itself: they do not partition substance (as genus) into species or (as whole) into parts, but rather each refer back to the being of substance as ontologically one.[9]

With, then, the marked difference between the formal distinction of the attributes and the numerical distinction of modes, the unitary sense of being, corresponding to the leveling of all possible hierarchy, is allowed to circulate through the whole system of "expressive" causes. At the same time, the formal flatness of the distinction of attributes – the plurality of attributes which, like senses, refer back to the

---

[7] Spinoza says (1 D4) that an attribute is "what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence."
[8] Expressionism, p. 67.
[9] Expressionism, p. 65.

singularity of substance, while at the same time allowing each of the plurality of modes to present itself under any of them – ensures that there can be no priority of any one of these presentations of what is singularly and identically one over any other.

This equality has, of course, decisive implications – to which Spinoza turns in chapter 2 – for the 'problem' of mind and body, or of thought to extension as two of the (infinitely many) attributes with which we are particularly concerned. In particular, it assures that, while there can be no *subordination* of one to the other, each can operate as an order of causes that is complete in itself, while nevertheless there can be (and needs to be) no effective causation *between* them. Thus, Spinoza says in *Ethics* IIIP2 that "The body cannot determine the mind to thinking, and the mind cannot determine the body to motion, to rest, or to anything else:" by the consequences of their definitions, modes of thinking can be effectively caused only by other modes of thinking, and similarly for modes of extension. But nevertheless – and here is to be found the radical and enigmatic significance of Spinoza's monism with respect to cause – the ontological circulation of the one substance with the modes *through* the diverse attributes allows for it to be the case that the relationship between modes of different attributes indeed can be one of *identity*. Thus we have the famous and puzzling claim of 2P7, that the "order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things." Here is the basis for the common practice of interpreters in speaking of Spinoza's claim of mind/body "parallelism," but as Deleuze and other commentators have pointed out, what is most centrally asserted is (not a claim of parallelism between two distinct orders) but rather a claim of *identity*.

On this claim, the order and connection of modes of thinking – the causal order of ideas – should rather be construed as identical with the order and connection of things – modes of extension – just because, and just insofar as, these individual modes are themselves, across the duality of attributes, nevertheless numerically identical. It is only the purely formal character distinction of the sense-like attributes that gives rise to the appearance (but that is all that it can be) of their distinction. But that the distinction of attributes, like the distinction of senses with respect to an ontologically unique referent, allows only for the appearance of distinction, does not mean that the ground for distinction is itself merely apparent, constructed, or imaginary. As Deleuze emphasizes throughout, the distinction of attributes is, for Spinoza not only formal but (using the term he draws from Descartes, while using it to a completely different end) also *real*: as the precondition for the possibility of the circulation, and articulation, of immanent causality in the substance and transitive causality in the modes, it is in no way a product, imposition or creation of language or of the imagination but has the ontological significance of ensuring between substance and modes the applicability of a univocal sense of causality itself. In this way, Spinoza's 'monism' is not just his insistence on the One of substance, but, effectively and equally, his affirmation of the formal identity, through the attributes, of this with the unity of each mode in its self-identity (immanent causality) *across* the infinitely different attributes.

As we have seen, this is possible only insofar as (and because) of the differentiation of distinctions between real/formal and numerical/modal ones: that is, only insofar as one can see a plurality of senses intervening "between" the one substance and the modes as possible modes of the presentation of each. As Deleuze suggests, a model for this plurality, and this unity, can be seen in the proposition, in which the different senses of its distinct constitutive signs are marked by their (numerical) distinction from one another. And yet, even granting the model, it is still possible to wonder about the structure and privilege of this unity that is effectively shared by the One substance and each individual mode through what appears in Spinoza as the real and essential diversity of the attributes. For in Spinoza, of course,

whatever the extent of the formal flatness of being that the circulation of being, or unity within the modes and back to substance allows, there is still the One as *ultimate* cause. Formal flatness in the modes, yes, and even between the attributes: but still the One substance as absolute cause of all things, by way of a deduction of *its* uniqueness from numerical or arithmetic principles whose logical provenance appears, on independent and more contemporary principles, at least problematic.[10]

It is true that Spinoza does not represent the final step in what Deleuze portrays as the historical development of the univocity doctrine: this is taken by Nietzsche, who has rather abandoned substance to create a univocity which no longer revolves around identity but rather difference, seeing in this reversal an irreducibly plural universal activity of the will to power. And with Deleuze's own model of the proposition, as opposed to that of the ("subject/predicate") judgment, we witness how a shift in logical-semantic form itself provides an important corrective against substantialist presupposition; for the proposition as Deleuze presents it using the Fregean logical distinctions, there need be neither a singular underlying subject of predication nor any overarching and pervasive determining substance as cause. But one can still wonder about the unitary form of unity that officially operates for Deleuze, mediating – in what must be, given univocity, a *single* sense -- the unity of the proposition, that of its unitary "object" (as state of affairs or event) and the individual objects of reference of its numerically distinguishable terms. We can wonder, in particular, whether this unity does not have its own hidden determination, or prior condition, in a form of ultimacy that would echo Spinoza's substance while rewriting it on the level of holistic structural determination: the unity (as we may put it) of language as a whole or of its logical structure, what "makes possible" for the individual terms and sentences their semantic values, meanings, or senses. At the same time, we can equally wonder about *how* this structure permits the identity of referents, across the distinction of sense: whether the distinction of senses with a common referent has a real basis, deeper than just that of contingent differences in usage, in relation to flat totality of numerically distinguishable events and causes and the differential possibilities of presentation they inherently permit. To ask this question is evidently to ask about how unity remains implicated in the recognition or production of identity as it is practiced or permitted on a structurally deep level of ordinary language, or to ask how it is active in the causation or production of linguistic sense as such.

II

Developing the analytic tradition's characteristic project of logical-linguistic analysis of the structure of language in its ordinary use, Donald Davidson's analytic project combines a reflective model of linguistic interpretation (on the model drawn from Quine's 'radical translation') and systematic formalization of the role of truth in a language as it can be reconstructed from the utterances of its speakers. This amounts – especially through the constraints necessarily placed upon the interpretation of this language by the demands of rationality in this structure – to a comprehensive reflection on the kind of unity that is involved or inherent in our essentially intersubjective practice of a language as it constrains, and

[10] This is not only because, in a contemporary post-Cantorian context, an all-inclusive absolute of the kind envisioned by Spinoza would evidently have to be considered inconsistent, but also because (as Spinoza himself seems to suggest, e.g. in the letter 50 to Jellis) his demonstrations of the uniqueness of substance from the premise of its absoluteness are really demonstrations of the inapplicability of number to it. See Gueroult (1969) for discussion.

determines, the pattern of everyday understanding which characterizes such a language in its everyday use. And with respect to the question of the integration of the human in the order of causes, these assumptions entail a radical picture of the integration of human thinking and action in the order of causes which is general, and ontologically or semantically flat.

From his first writings on the topic, Davidson defends -- against the then-recent orthodoxy of those like Ryle and Anscombe who, purporting to draw on the analysis of ordinary language to anti-Cartesian effect, would rather separate rigorously the orders of causes and reasons -- the commonsense position that the rationalization of an action is a matter of genuinely *causal* explanation.[11] For example, the provision, whether by oneself or another, of a reason for one's bodily movement can, if correct, genuinely be the provision of a cause for that movement, on par with, and fully integrated into the order of, other possible causes for such a "physical" event. On this view, the fact that such rationalizing explanations as we give to our "intentional" actions serve to explain them by justifying them does not exclude that these same explanations may also point to real causes which are, as events, ontologically no different from non-"intentional" ones. And if, as Davidson argues elsewhere, any language intelligible as such is effectively committed to an ontology that includes events as datable particulars, this implies a thoroughgoing situation of both human action and perception within an overall unitary network of overall causal explanation.

It is on this basis that Davidson, in the 1970 article "Mental Events," announces and defends the doctrine that he calls "anomalous" monism.[12] This doctrine combines the assertion of mental-physical (and physical-mental) causality in individual cases with the assertion that, while genuine causal relations require (strict and exceptionless) laws, there are no such laws connecting the physical or the mental (or indeed, Davidson suggests, governing the "mental" itself). Given the underlying identity of events in causal sequence, however, the appearance of difference between the mental and the physical, and indeed the logical irreducibility of the one to the other, is rather to be understood – not as a difference in the events themselves – but in terms of a difference on the level of *description*. Officially, for Davidson in "Mental Events," then: "Causality and identity are relations between individual events no matter how described. But laws are linguistic; and so events can instantiate laws, and hence be explained or predicted in light of laws, only as those events are described in one or another way …" (p. 215). When two events are related as cause and effect, they have some unitary description that instantiates a (strict and exceptionless law). However, the existence of a singular cause-effect statement, or the truth of a singular statement of causality, need not in general instantiate such a law, and indeed does not (Davidson thinks) when mental-physical or physical-mental causality is asserted.

This is, of course, reminiscent of Spinoza's position, and Davidson notes the parallel in his 1993 paper "Spinoza's Causal Theory of the Affects."[13] Here, Davidson outlines several features of Spinoza's metaphysics in the *Ethics* that are shared by his own anomalous monism. These features include: i) an overarching commitment to the completeness, and hence causal closure of the physical world; ii) what Davidson calls a "dualism" of "vocabularies or concepts" between the mental and the physical; iii) and an understanding of causal relations as holding exclusively between individual, temporally dated events, however described. Given these assumptions, we are evidently close to Spinoza's overall ontology. The

[11] Davidson (1963).
[12] Davidson (1970).
[13] Davidson (1993)

distinct "vocabularies" or sets of concepts at least resemble Spinoza's attributes, and the suggested identity of causally implicated events which retain their identity across the vocabularies resembles the identity that Spinoza suggests, for modes, across their attributes. However, there are at least two important differences, also both noted by Davidson in the article. First, anomalous monism itself only asserts the "token" identity of events in the two attributional orders and the possibility, on the physical side, of bringing them under a unified order of causal laws. This stops significantly short, however, of Spinoza's assertion of *complete* parallelism, or even identity, in the orders which relate the entities in each attribute (the claim, in particular, of *Ethics* 2P7, that the "order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things.") Here there is identity of *items*, but it is unclear what could justify the further and more demanding claim of an identity of the overall *orderings* of the items in each vocabulary. Second, Davidson does not see the order of mental events, at least as it figures in the description or explanation of human action or behavior, as even potentially *complete*. This is because, as he confesses, he sees no way to understand the systematic pattern of explanation of a person's action in terms of (as it may be) her "intentional" processes without attributing, in many cases, the causes of these processes to external, physical events. So for this reason, whatever the token identity across the mental and the physical in particular cases, there will be for Davidson, officially, some physical events that are not mental events, and even if the order of physical description is thus conceived as complete, the order of mental description cannot be.[14]

In fact, the reasons for both the incompleteness or the anomalousness of the mental itself become less clear if we take it, as Spinoza doubtless does, that the relevant order of explanation on the level of the "mind" is not an individual's *psychology* or psychological life but rather "the order and connection of ideas" themselves as modes of thinking, where things as modes of extension are correlated (or rather identified, across attributes) with the ideas of those very things. Davidson in fact imagines, on this score, that given a sequence of propositions arranged in deductive order corresponding to the temporal order of (law-governed) causal relations in the order of extended things, the given deductive order could be seen to correspond to the temporal one; but such a sequence of propositions could evidently only exist in God's intellect rather than a finite one. To think of the asserted identity of orders in this way would effectively allow that there are, in accordance with the Principle of Sufficient Reason which Spinoza certainly accepted, at any rate *rational* laws that might be seen – from a position of knowing both orders in their ideal completeness, a position that (presumably) only God can attain – to run through them both, and provide identical explanations for each, even if the basic difference in vocabularies indeed makes it impossible for there to be deductive relations between them. But let us leave that to the side for a moment and (not presupposing the ideal of God's knowledge) ask a bit further about the grounds for Davidson's (what he calls) "conceptual dualism" or dualism of "vocabularies" itself.

What is the underlying reason for holding the "mental" or "intentional" to be irreducible to the "physical"? Here, Davidson officially follows – much of the time, at least – Quine and other analytic

---

[14] It might be thought that there is a third, and even more basic difference: that Davidson thinks that there can be causation between the mental and the physical (or vice versa) and Spinoza does not. However, if the claim of identity of (token) events is thoroughgoingly maintained, this problem is easily handled: in the singular case of an instance of (what is described) as mental-to-physical or physical-to-mental causation, the "mental" term can always be replaced by a "physical" one which yields a description of the same two events, this time one (Davidson thinks) suitable for subsumption under a rigorous law.

philosophers who take it that first (as Brentano suggested) "intentionality is the mark of the mental" and second, that the presence of intentionality in an event or activity as described is marked the description's essential use of a particular kind, what are called "intentional" verbs. It is further common in the tradition to distinguish this logical behavior by means of the logical criterion that is thought to mark "intensional" (with an 's' rather than a 't') sentential contexts, concepts, or predicates as opposed to "extensional" ones. This criterion is the possible substitution, *salva veritate*, of co-referring terms. Where such terms can be substituted, in a sentence, without ever altering truth value, the context is 'transparent' or extensional; otherwise it is intensional (or at any rate non-extensional).

Beyond this, however, Davidson gives another, and different, explanation for the distinction between the two "vocabularies" or sets of concepts, and the necessity for their figuring in our ordinary conceptual apparatus, or indeed (given Davidson's assumptions) any conceptual apparatus we could reasonable understand or translate into our own. This is that, in interpreting the verbal behavior of an agent, we have necessary recourse to an essentially *holistic* understanding of the meaning of this behavior in the total economy of (what we take to be) their desires and attitudes. In this context, in order to comprehend their language and behavior at all, we must attribute to them systematically a pattern of overall rationality. But since this holistic attribution, Davidson says, has "no echo" in physical theory, and so there is no serious hope (Davidson thinks) for finding laws which would systematically connect the mental with the physical.[15]

Davidson thus sometimes suggests that interpretation, as opposed to physical theory, has the holistic structure that it does because it is governed by a "constitutive ideal of rationality" which must, as a matter of the possibility of interpretation itself, govern each moment in our developing rationalizing theory of another's actions, thoughts, and desires.[16] Along similar lines and for similar reasons, he suggests in "Mental Events," (referencing the "lawlike" character of inductive generalizations in the physical domain, and what he sees as the impossibility of such generalizations in the mental) that the mental and physical predicates are not "made for one another." From a Spinozist perspective, committed in a thoroughgoing way to the immanence of causes, we might wonder about either metaphor. With respect to the "constitutive ideal," what could (outside the imaginary or a spontaneous production of ideology) institute or constitute it and confirm it in its global but delimited force over *human* acts and affairs, to the exclusion of all other events? And equally, we could wonder at the metaphor of irreducibility of concepts or vocabularies not "made for another:" who or what could have done the "making," outside the imaginary figure of a divine creator or a human instigator, fully and austerely master of itself? These are just metaphors, of course, and their real point in Davidson's rhetoric is to suggest underlying structural reasons for the irreducibility of the mental "vocabulary" or "concepts" to the physical ones despite what is (on Davidson and Spinoza's shared commitments) the real underlying identity of the individual events described in each case. Nevertheless, from a position informed by the claim of the univocity of being or (what Deleuze takes to be) its Spinozist formulation, it is hard to credit the suggestion of a "constitutive" role of human thought, activity or intentionality that

[15] Davidson (1980), p. 231.
[16] Davidson (1970), p. 223.

would be capable of drawing the distinction between the two vocabularies or concepts in a way that would suffice to make of this a *real* distinction rather than a basically imaginary or ideological one.[17]

More generally, while much of the development in the analytic tradition of the theory of "intensionality" and "extensionality," together with the allied idea of analyzing the opacity or transparency of contexts, suggests the direct applicability of this apparatus to the discovery of logical-semantic grounds for the distinction between what is there independent of human concepts and what is produced, imposed or imagined under them, there are grounds for doubting this applicability, both from Spinoza's position and in its own right.

Let us return, in particular, to Spinoza's distinction between attributes. As we have seen, Spinoza appears committed to the claim that a mode of extension can be, on a particular occasion, numerically identical to a mode of thinking, and vice versa. As Michael Della Rocca (1993) argues, this commits Spinoza to the claim that certain causal statements must involve contexts that are referentially opaque. In particular this is evidently the case for statements that attribute causality (regardless of whether it is "immanent" or "transitive") under mixed attributes: for example, it must be possible for "mode of extension 1 is caused by extended substance" to be true while "mode of thought 1 is caused by extended substance" is false, even when mode of extension 1=mode of thought 1. But then, by a simple and direct argument, it can be shown that *any* context that mentions a mode under its attribute will be referentially opaque. Della Rocca concludes from this (p. 193) that the "properties" of being thinking and being extended – as well as all properties that depend on these (such as, for example, the property of being five feet long, which evidently depends on extension) – are, for Spinoza, irreducibly intensional. Whether a mode bears them, or not, depends not on how the mode is "in itself" but rather on (in Della Rocca's words, with reference to the question of whether a mode is caused by extended substance or not) "how that mode is conceived of or described" (pp. 190-91).

This, when combined with the claim (which Spinoza at least appears to accept) that *all* modes always appear under attributes, where they appear at all, would seem to require that *all* intelligible or attributable properties of modes, of whatever attribute, are 'intensional' in this sense, and hence (if Della Rocca's description of the implication of their intensionality is correct) a matter of how they are conceived of or described. In fact, Della Rocca thinks that this cannot be so, for Spinoza: for he does hold, after all, that a mode of extension can be literally and numerically identical to a mode of thinking. Della Rocca (arguing that Spinoza must accept a version of Leibniz's law which holds that two entities are identical if, and only if, they have all their *extensional* properties in common) suggests that this requires that modes must have, in addition to the intensional properties that depend on conception or

[17] Recent projects in analytic philosophy display the tenacity of the distinctions which this way of putting things suggests we might rather seek to overcome. Thus, for instance, John McDowell's argument of perception and its justification in *Mind and World* makes central (and essentially uncritical) use of Sellars' dualistic metaphor of the non-overlapping "spaces" of reasons and of causes, where to place an item in the first is to provide a (rational) justification for it and to place it in the second is to place it in the mere order of temporal occurrence. Later on in the analysis this produces McDowell's need to invoke a "naturalism of second nature" and a "naturalized Platonism" according to which our possession of certain rational capacities allows us to "come into" their space by actualizing our specifically human nature. Though I cannot pursue the argument in detail here, it appears that a thorough application of Spinoza's principles, rejecting at the outset the language of a dualism of spaces, could rather yield a broader picture of the (indifferently causal or rational) determinants of our actions and capacities on which these would be more evidently integrated within what would then be essentially a unitary nature (not differentiated into "first" and "second").

description in this way, certain 'neutral' properties which also potentially account for their placement in an overall causal order that is neutral between modes. Della Rocca mentions, for example, temporal properties (such as when the relevant mode begins and ends) and certain causal ones, for example being the unique cause of five other modes.

But it would be surprising if Spinoza held that beneath, behind, or before their determination under specific attributes a set of necessarily more obscure properties that are 'neutral' in this sense, and responsible for their actual numerical identity or difference; and in fact it is not evident that Spinoza *must* think this. Della Rocca's reason for thinking there must be "neutral" properties in this sense depends upon the recognition that Spinoza does hold that modes of distinct attributes can be numerically identical, and upon the supposition that where such identity is attributed, they must be identifiable by (using Leibniz's law in a specific formulation) shared *extensional* properties.[18] But this leaves aside the possibility that a mode of thinking and a mode of extension might be identifiable with one another, on an occasion, by means that in no way require an identification of shared properties at all. For example we might recognize a mode, under different attributes, as identical, not by means of a discovery of its extensional properties, but by making *singular* reference to it through a suitable device (for example a temporal demonstrative). In this way, having so recognized it, we can also attribute causality – even apparently cross-attribute causality – to *it.* If that is possible, then it is indeed possible for modes to be identified, across attributes, despite its being the case that causation does not *genuinely* operate across attributes: I am attributing (for example) the causation of my lifting my arm to my relevant "intentional" event (for example, of choosing to doing so, when I do) believing that it is *that* event (whatever its physical description: it is not necessary for me to know what it is) caused the lifting. And finally, it is then possible to universalize: we can now affirm that *all* modes, as they appear or are described, do so only under attributes, and even that each attribute includes *all* events.

Now, as we saw above, Spinoza's own way of asserting this possibility of the identification of singular modes, in general, across attributes appears to be to say that, whatever their attribute, they are caused in a unitary way by (the one) substance. But outside the assumption or evidence of a singular and unitary substance, we can also ask how it functions within a general ontology of events as dated particulars, of the kind Davidson suggests. Here, I believe, the relevant point to make is just that it is possible – it is even of the essence of our language or relation to the world – for us to make singular reference to events as unique particulars, and also to provide causal explanations of them in these terms (Davidson sometimes makes a similar point).[19] In so doing, however we may subsequently

---

[18] Thus (p. 203): "If there were no extensional properties at all, that is, if all properties were intensional, then there would be no way to determine that one mode is not identical with another."

[19] "It is often said that events can be explained and predicted only insofar as they have repeatable characteristics, but not in so far as they are particulars. No doubt there is a clear and trivial sense in which this is true, but we ought not to lose sight of the less obvious point that there is an important difference between explaining the fact that there was *an* explosion in the broom closet and explaining the occurrence of *the* explosion in the broom closet. Explanation of the second sort touches the particular event as closely as language can ever touch any particular. Of course this claim is persuasive only if there are such things as events to which singular terms may refer. But the assumption, ontological and metaphysical, that there are events, is one without which we cannot make sense of

allocate them with respect to (what Spinoza would call) their attributes, our location or recognition of them is not, in the first instance, a matter of our imposition of concepts, vocabularies, or descriptions. Thus, we must apparently recognize – as an essential and inherent feature of our location within the world – our possibility of recognizing events as individual particulars, and this possibility *includes* their possibility of appearing in different modes. But then, it is plausible that the relevant possibility is not a matter of *our* language or concepts at all. It is rather, and essentially, a possibility that is grounded in the events themselves, and as such, and might (as such) be generalized or universalized to *all* of them.

So if this is correct, in adapting a variety of anomalous monism to the structure suggested by univocity and indeed by Spinoza's expression of it, we ought not to hold either that all properties of events, as appearing under attributes, are intensional, or that events, despite the apparent ubiquity and exhaustiveness of their appearance under attributes, nevertheless still must have some "extensional" and neutral properties that characterize them as they are in themselves. Rather, we would do well to abandon (or at least make no essential use of) the framework of the "intensional" and the "extensional" itself, along with the project of sorting "properties" of individuals into these two categories.[20]

With this, it would apparently become possible to, restoring the symmetry of the attributes of thought and extension (or of the "mental" and the "physical"), envision a different or successor form of anomalous monism, still warranting the name but no longer committed to the asymmetry of Davidson's own approach or (what emerge as) the ideological or imaginary imposition of purpose which allows for its sense of the "intentional" or conceptual as a specialized imposition upon the order of physical causes

---

much of our most common talk; or so, at any rate, I have been arguing. I do not know any better, or further, way of showing what there is." (Davidson 1967b, p. 162)

[20] At any rate, there are good reasons to doubt the identification of the "intensional" with the "intentional". As is well known, modal contexts as well as "psychological" ones are marked by opacity. And as Davidson in fact himself points out ("Mental Events," pp. 211-212), even if we sort verbs into the "intentional" and "nonintentional" there is in fact no way, logically speaking, to provide by this means any actually logical criterion for the distinction of events which would be capable of sorting them in the intended way. For an apparently canonically *physical* event – for example, a stellar collision – with a 'physical' predicate P true of it, uniquely, at a time t (though perhaps true of other events at other times), may *also* be uniquely described as the event, x, uniquely such that Px *and* x occurs at the time of Jones's noticing a pencil rolling across his desk. This makes the relevant specification (partly) "intentional" and so determines the event as itself intentional; and of course a similar device would threaten to make all events so.
Interestingly, in the context of defending the general claim that all mental events are identical with physical ones, Davidson suggests taking this in stride: "It would be instructive to try to mend this trouble, but it is not necessary for present purposes. We can afford Spinozistic [note the modifier – PL] extravagance with the mental since accidental inclusions can only strengthen the hypothesis that all mental events are identical with physical events. What would matter would be a failure to include bona fide mental events, but of this there seems to be no danger." (Davidson 1970, p. 212)
We may – from the present perspective – certainly agree with Davidson that the impossibility of a criterion to logically differentiate the mental events from events generally should be taken to provide support for the claim of identity. But evidently, an exactly parallel argument to the one that shows that "physical" events can be made to come out as "mental" can also show that any purportedly "mental" event can be sorted as "physical": so it would seem that there is no priority to be witnessed here and indeed that, by this kind of argument, Davidson must – since he is committed to the completeness of the physical – also then be committed to the completeness of the mental (despite what he says later in the article).

itself. At the same time, it would apparently be possible to vindicate Spinoza's claims of the completeness of each attribute in itself and the potential appearance of each mode in every attribute, even without the agency of the unifying one. The monism of this approach would remain anomalous: though it would be committed to the potential completeness of the physical order *and* to the availability, at least in principle, of strict and exceptionless laws in the "mental" order, it would remain that there could not be any (strict) laws which connect the one domain to the other.[21]

If this is correct, we should accordingly refuse to see the appearance of modes under attributes – or that of events as "mental" or as "physical" – as any kind of reflection of *our* linguistic or conceptual activity, superadded to those modes or events themselves. Rather, recognizing that it is of the essence of our language to be able to identify events, and recognize their causal order, by means of our own indexical or located involvement with them, or by their manifest occurring at a time, we can come to recognize that what is manifest in this occurring is plausibly not a feature of *our* conceptual apparatus or descriptions or whatever but of the events themselves. As such, the appearance under attributes of modes, or the multiple "vocabularies" of our language for objects, can be universalized to apply to *all* objects, as such, and the *unitary* order of causes – in which we also take our place – can be recognized as such. With this, the linguistic metaphor of "expression" that Deleuze draws from Spinoza, and the suggestion of its ubiquity across the space of events is apparently vindicated; but it would be as accurate (or inaccurate) to say that this amounts to imposing linguistic structure on the world as a whole, as to say that, with it, the idea of structure itself as, irreducibly, such an imposition is allowed to lapse in favor of a recognition of the immanent sense of appearances as such, or of the unitary and flat space of events itself.

Still, we might wonder, outside the Spinozistic figure of the One substance but in a Davidsonian context or one committed *only* to the irreducible plurality of events, what ensures the unity, across its appearances under differing modes, of the "order" that is thereby apparently recognized. Is this unity in some sense (and in what sense) "logical", and if so how it is imposed or produced, or how should we understand its claim of universality as maintained or enforced? If it is to be, indeed, a matter of "expression," then who or what is expressing itself in it, or what licenses the reflexivity that is apparent in the metaphor or structure of "self-"expression itself? Here, as we have seen in section 1 above, it is relevant to wonder whether (and, if so, in what way) what is called the "unity of the proposition" can be seen as imposing the relevant (and universal) unity – that is, the one requisite to recognizing the universal *flatness* of the causal order as such -- and also, at the same time, how and in what way that unity is instituted, created, produced or maintained.

In fact, a logical consideration relevant to this question is introduced by Davidson in discussing and criticizing, in a 1967 article, a suggestion due to Reichenbach for analyzing the logical form of sentences

---

[21] It would admittedly still seem obscure what it is that vindicates the claim of IIP7 that the orders would be – not only orders of the same particulars – but themselves the same. But the idea would be, essentially, that both would be indifferently describable as causal *or* as rational, once we see the *completeness* of the laws in each case and their ability, each in its own fashion, to cover *all* events (which it is beyond us as human beings to see in detail, but might indeed be seen by God). What would emerge from this would apparently be (as on Davidson's own suggestion above) the possibility of differentiating the two orders of thought and extension not by any distinction of the items or even their order, but just according to whether they are seen under the aspect of the (timeless) order of rational deduction or the (temporal) order of actual unfolding in present time.

attributing action.[22] On Reichenbach's suggestion, an action sentence such as "Amundsen flew to the North pole" may be seen as, despite its surface form, containing an implicit predicate which allows it to appear as quantifying over events: in essence, something of the form "There exists an event which consists in the fact that Amundsen flew to the North Pole". In this way, sentences which appear to require, for their truth, the happening or occurrence of an event may be shown, as a matter of logical form, to quantify over such an event, using the locution "consists in the fact that …" as an implicit prefix to the original sentence. However, as Davidson argues, on plausible premises this will make all events identical. For, assuming only that we can substitute *logically equivalent* sentences for one another within the frame of the "consists in the fact that …" prefix, we can license the inference from "x consists in the fact that R" to "x consists in the fact that S" (and vice-versa) for *any* two R or S involving events that occur. So in this way, we can use Reichenbach's device to argue that all events that occur (that is, all events) are identical; and this, Davidson takes it, shows a serious problem with the analysis, at least if it is to be construed as bringing out the real logical form of sentences requiring the taking-place of events for their truth.

The argument is in fact essentially the same as the one that has come to be called the "slingshot" and which shows, on plausible premises of intersubstitutability, that any attempt to segment or name "facts" by construing the sentences stating them as their names must fail, or at least end by showing that all true sentences must designate the same thing, if sentences have designation at all. The argument was influentially explicated, before Davidson, by Gödel and Church, and it is at least possible that the reference of all true sentences must be to a single object, the truth-value True. Elsewhere, Davidson uses the same argument to reject any "correspondence" theory of truth, or indeed any theory according to which sentences are generally "made true" by facts or states of affairs. Given the "slingshot," Davidson argues, any such position will end by showing that the requisite truthmaker for any true sentence is the same as that for any other, or (as he puts it in "True to the Facts") indeed that all sentences that are true are made true (if at all) by a single "Great Fact."[23] But seen in this light, Davidson argues, the statement that a particular sentence is made true by a fact or state of affairs adds nothing to the bare statement that it is true. Accordingly, we would be better to just give an analysis of the sentence in terms of (as Tarski showed us how to do) a theory of meaning for the language which operates by giving the systematic structure of the truth-predicate in the language, and which evinces the conditions for its truth in terms that do not involve reference to "facts", "states of affairs", and the like.

Returning, then, to events: Davidson of course has his own analysis of sentences which apparently require the happening of events for their truth and involve construing those sentences as implicitly quantifying over just those events. But the salient point of difference with Reichenbach's theory or any that construes these sentences as asserting something like the existence of a "taking place of…" or an "occurrence that…" is that on Davidson's analysis the analyzed sentence does not recur *as a whole* within the quantified sentence that emerges on analysis, and so the analysis does not anywhere require the original sentence itself to function as anything like a *singular* term. So with this, the "slingshot" can no longer apply, and there is no obstacle to giving an analysis of these sentences, along with all the others, by means of a theory of meaning for the language as a whole taking the form of a Tarski-style truth definition. This leaves the problem of "extensional" and "non-extensional" contexts, Davidson

[22] Davidson (1967), pp. 115-120.
[23] Davidson (1969), p. 42; see also Davidson (2005), pp. 127-133.

emphasizes, just where it was: but if it not thought to pose a problem for the identity of objects or referents, it shows that it need not pose any *special* problem about the identity of events either.

In this way, Davidson argues for an analysis of sentences asserting or requiring (what we will be tempted to put as) the occurring of events that traces their form, and their unity, to the systematic unity of the Tarskian truth-definition for the language as a whole. The senses of sentences, and the "states of affairs" they are thought to denote, never enter the picture: or if they do, they tend (as the Slingshot effectively shows) toward invoking or logically requiring that their reference be to the True or the Great Fact that includes, in a formally undifferentiated way, all that is the case. And with respect to events, similarly, the supposition of a *referential* meaning for the propositions in which they figure will produce a singular Great Event including, in a similarly undifferentiated way, all that ever has happened, is happening, or will ever happen. Thus we may conclude that any analysis, such as the Deleuzean one we considered above, which begins by according a basic logical significance to the unitary sense of the proposition – or indeed to what Deleuze calls the "sense-event" – must end by producing a complete fusional unity of this sort. We may take this, with Davidson, as amounting to a *reductio* of the assumption which provides a separable meaning to each sentence; or in fact we might take it, with equal logical justification and by the same argumentation, as indicating (as Deleuze indeed sometimes seems to) something like a Grand total event comprehending all possible ones, a *singular tantum* of all that has or will "take place," a grand or singular event for all events, comprehending all of them within its universal or absolute intensive scope.[24] Taken the first way, the argument would reduce to emptiness the seeing formal requirement, in order to produce or ensure the unity of the order of events as a whole, of anything like Spinoza's One substance, while still nevertheless offering to preserve the formal analysis of events and causes in its flatness and universality. Taken the second way, it would rather vindicate, by directly evidencing, such a One as a kind of absolute form of the event and its sense, beyond substantialism, a singular one-all, containing the sense of all that has ever taken place, is now taking place, or ever will take place. The one approach would suggest nominalism, and deflation of the reification of propositional meanings; while the other would suggest, metaphorically at least, a kind of grand harmonization of all in which individual events fulgurate and take shape. But since the argument is the same in either case, logic cannot apparently decide between the two.

III

We have seen that (and, to an extent, how) a logical analysis of the form of sentences asserting the taking place of events, or requiring events for their truth, can illuminate the formally flat order and structure of their causal relationships as such and as a whole, thereby vindicating (a suitable form of) anomalous monism and facilitating our recognition of ourselves as, fully and irreducibly, *dependent* elements of this total order. In this way the analysis appears to, using logical tools that were not

---

[24] E.g.: "It occurs, therefore, as a unique event for everything that happens to the most diverse things, *Eventum tantum* for all events, the ultimate form for all the forms which remain disjointed in it, but which bring about the resonance and the ramification of their disjunction. The univocity of being merges with the positive use of the disjunctive synthesis which is the highest affirmation. It is the eternal return itself or – as we have seen in the case of the ideal game – the affirmation of all chance in a single moment, the unique cast for all throws, one Being and only one for all forms and all times, a single insistence for all that exists, a single phantom for all the living, a single voice for every hum of voices and every drop of water in the sea." (Deleuze 1969, pp. 179-80).

available (and could not have been) to Spinoza himself, refute the requirement of a unitarily causal and absolute substance which he effectively places on the form of any universal analysis of the causes of events as things, while, as just noted (if we take the consequences of propositional structure in a certain way) tending rather perhaps to reinstate, by way of indication, a kind of original or comprehensive, though non-substantial unity as the form of events and their sense itself. This latter is the unity which Deleuze wishes to mark with the "uni-" of the univocity of being. And as we have seen, the argument which elicits the dependence, within the "ontological propositions" characteristic of the history of philosophy in its attempts to designate being as a referentially singular One, of this signification on the structural differentiation of signifiers or modes which "are" in a unitary sense, also suffices, on Davidson's argument, to justify his summary claim of Being's speaking, throughout this tradition, in a "single voice."

But to put things in this way is evidently – taking Scotus's terminology in a somewhat different than its originally intended sense – to suppose that being *speaks*, or at any rate that it is *said* "in a single and same sense". So in closing, I would just like to pose a single critical question (which I also cannot hope to resolve here) about the position of this figure or function of unity in Deleuze's, in relation to this claim. The question is, here, as directed to the saying or affirmation of the (purportedly unitary, or anyway flat) sense of being, essentially the signature Nietzschean one: who speaks? That is: do (or how do) the *operative* causes of even what we can recognize as a logically flat total order, for which there is no hierarchy or privilege of origin or end, succeed in organizing themselves into a single *total* expression? Or, we may apparently ask in the same way, who or what is the *agent* of the totality of expression, or the ground of expression as such? In the context of Spinoza's substantialism, this question is answered, by the capacity of the One as a matter of "expression" and as a universal form of causality, by the agency of the One substance. But outside the assumptions of what is evidently still Spinoza's attempt to save the One as cause, it is not obvious, even if we can still recover on logical grounds the implication of the individual causation of the multiplicity of events, what beyond ideology could license the re-imposition or reintroduction of such a singular and agentive One.

And this difficulty is, if anything, heightened by what is essentially Deleuze's requirement – if the specificity of the univocity claim is given its due -- that the requisite One indeed be, rather than neutral, instead "affirmative:" that the univocity of being, if rightly understood, consist in not only a theory or a description of its unity, but indeed an affirmation of the one of that formal unity itself together with all it comprehends. In the context of Spinoza's idea of the one substance, this implies its agency, through immanent causality, with respect to the causation of everything else. But even without this assumption, it appears that an affirmative univocity may still require an essentially active and agentive one, even if it be at the level (but what level of that, where all levels are equal?) of being's 'own' voice.

To pose the question in this way is, evidently, to pose a question about the ancient alliance between being and power, an alliance which enters (for all of Spinoza's egalitarianism) in the *Ethics* quite abruptly, in the demonstration of 1P11, by way of the claim or consideration that "to be able to exist is to have power" (as, Spinoza further says, "is known through itself.") We may grant that individual events have powers, or have them as known; but do we really understand a power that is universal, a power behind all other powers, or a singular power that is hiding, as if as a noumenal cause behind all that happens, even if it also synthesizes all in general? This is to ask the question, among other things, of the "metaphysical" justification of the attribution of power as such or (what appears equivalent) the

actual coherence of the positing of an absolute figure of (as we may put it) "absolute" power, of what is essentially the form of effectiveness in general, or efficacy as such.

I do not wish to settle this question here, but only to note that if Spinoza has given us this figure of a universally affirmative and active power of being in its univocal self-expression, he has also perhaps given us the terms in which to unmask it as ideology and imaginary postulation. For as he has made clear in his theory of affects and the determination of human affairs (see especially IIIP2 and P3), the distinction between what is active and what is passive in them depends not on the determining causes in themselves, but rather on whether they are seen to originate within or outside ourselves. But (as Davidson himself also suggests) its determination as active or passive is not intrinsically part of what it is to be a power, and whether a power is internal or external to a presumed bearer may be relative to its description, or again to our lack of knowledge of its true cause.[25]

[25] "The concept of a causal power is indifferent to the intuitive distinction between the active and the passive. We may think of solubility as a passive characteristic, and of being solvent as active. Yet they are logically on a par, the former being a property of things changes in which cause them to dissolve, and the latter being a property of things changes in which cause other things to dissolve. Both are equally causal powers." (Davidson 1973, p. 64).

Works Cited

Davidson, Donald. 1963. "Actions, Reasons, and Causes." In Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events*, second edition. Oxford: Clarendon, 2001.

Davidson, Donald. 1967. "The Logical Form of Action Sentences." In Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events*, second edition. Oxford: Clarendon, 2001.

Davidson, Donald. 1967b. "Causal Relations." ." In Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events*, second edition. Oxford: Clarendon, 2001.

Davidson, Donald. 1970. "Mental Events." In Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events*, second edition. Oxford: Clarendon, 2001.

Davidson, Donald. 1973. "Freedom to Act." In Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events*, second edition. Oxford: Clarendon, 2001.

Davidson, Donald. 1974. "Psychology as Philosophy." In Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events*, second edition. Oxford: Clarendon, 2001.

Davidson, Donald. 1993. "Spinoza's Causal Theory of the Affects." In Davidson, *Truth, Language, and History*. Oxford: Clarendon, 2005.

Davidson, Donald. 2005. *Truth and Predication*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press.

DeLanda, M. 2002. *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*. London: Continuum.

Deleuze, G. 1968a. *Difference and Repetition*. Transl. by Paul Patton. New York: Columbia U. Press, 1994.

Deleuze, G. 1968b. *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*. Transl. by Martin Joughin. New York: Zone Books, 1992.

Deleuze, G. 1969. *The Logic of Sense*. Transl. by Mark Lester with Charles Stivale. Edited by Constantin V. Boundas. New York: Columbia U. Press, 1990.

Gueroult, Martial. 1969. "Appendice No. 17" in Gueroult, *Spinoza I: Dieu (Ethique, 1)*. Paris: Editions Montaigne, pp. 578-84.

Spinoza, Benedict de. *The Ethics.* Translated by Edwin Curley. In Curley, ed., *A Spinoza Reader.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton U. Press, 1994.