## T₂—*Nothing* & Spinoza…

| }{ | HOUSE | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| {} | **EDITION**<br>(*reading-order*) | **PRINT**<br>(*making-order*) | **SITE**<br>(*playing-order*) |
| **SUBSTANCE** | **Section 1:**<br>—ENTER | **Page 1:**<br>ENTER | **Mode 1:**<br>—ENTER |
| | **Section 2:**<br>—BACKGROUND | **Page 2:**<br>PURPOSE | **Mode 2:**<br>—EXIT |
| | **Section 3:**<br>—PURPOSE | **Page 3:**<br>EXIT | **Mode 3:**<br>—BACKGROUND |
| | **Section 4:**<br>—EXIT | **Page 4:**<br>BACKGROUND | **Mode 4:**<br>—PURPOSE |
| **intension**<br>(sum of attributes) | **thought**<br>(*large gate*) | **extension**<br>(*small gate*) | **intuition**<br>(*middle gate*) |
| **TRAINING** | STUDY | | |

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*Prolegomenon*—The essay Nothing & Spinoza is a *triptych*. Each version of the essay, in a collection of 3, comes forth as a permuted version of the others. They are called a triptych because they are conceptually *juxtaposed* (rather than sequentially conceived) or non-linear. The three versions are called: edition, print and site. They are inspired by Arne Næss' thinking, building and dwelling (Heidegger corrected); taken one step further to feature 3 facets of *performance.*

The three derive from a form of letter-correspondence from pre-WWI. And springs from a structure of pagination: a folded letter-sheet with 4 faces—1) front, 2) back, 3 & 4) the left and right faces of the spread inside the folded sheet. The first facet of the triptych—called edition—the order of sequence is the reading order. The second facet—called print—simply follows track of the the material in linear sequence. The two first facets correspond to thought and extension.

The last facet features the architecture—in this sense the geometry—of the letter form: the entrance is from the outside, the exit from within. As such, it is a formative technology of social relationships cultivated through correspondence: it gives some background (external) and holds a purpose (internal). Thus, the letter-form holds the architecture of a situation. The letter-form is a mereological compound where the parts-to-whole come about through permutation.

The technical aspect of the letter-form therefore features a particular but simple interaction design. While the four-square structure is paralleled at the level of contents: 1) a response; 2) a broad outline; 3) an errand and 4) redemption [mending the relationship for any kind of possible breach provoked by the errand]. The aesthetico-epistemic operators—1) ENTER, 2) BACK-GROUND, 3) PURPOSE, 4) EXIT—is a *Klein's group*: a term, its opposite and their inversions.

Here, the function of the opposition (ENTER/EXIT) holds the inversions (BACKGROUND/PURPOSE) and acts like a *container* to the inversions (which hold the *contents*). Here the container is not external and the content internal: since *both* the container and the contents feature external/internal inflections, inviting *two* mediations: of the *body* and the *site*. As such, the letter-form has a structure that attracts *coincidence*, in the sense explored in this triptych.

The two *compound* mediations that interest us here are: *denial* and *performance*. These are respectively passive and active. They are discussed in terms of Spinoza's usage of the word *nothing* throughout his magnum opus Ethica. And in the progressive understanding of coincidence in a series of stories—called stories of nothing—gathered from my oral repertoire, written down and compounded during the lockdown/C19 pandemic: an attempted *Decameron*.

Mode 1—ENTER

With attention to what hit the *paper*, rather than what Spinoza processed in his mind, I want to approach *Ethica* (1677) from the vantage point of *photogravure*. That is, I am—once more—*less* interested in interpreting Spinoza's philosophy, than *hacking* into it through the intermedium of *markmaking*: what happens at the rim of thought, in Spinoza's writing, focussing on a single word, which repeats 153 times: *nothing.* Nothing *else*, nothing *but*, or just plain *nothing*.

(The score of 153 high by the standard of words conveying key concepts in Ethica such as *attribute* [163], *mode* [95]/*modification* [116]).

Of course, there is a leap from the lexical to the logical determination of *nothing*. This leap runs between the *extension* of the word *nothing* in Spinoza's *magnum opus*, indicated above, and the *intension* of George Boole's concept of *nothing*, 180 years after Spinoza. So, the concept did not exist at that time—just as the numeral *zero* was a latecomer in the history of counting—but the difference between *thought* and *extension* did. They are the *attributes* within the human precinct.

Why is this (*nothing*) important? Evidently, the kind of word-count, featuring above, is a child of the *digital* age. These counts are for instance an automatic feature of the search-engine in Kindle (which offers Ethica as a *public domain* document, and so *free* of cost). In Spinoza's terms, *nothing* is a common notion by its extension in Ethica. But it is not a common notion in intensional terms, since what was termed *nothing* came later, and became what we know as the *empty set*.

Yet, for us, it is difficult to overlook, since it is impossible to de-invent something once it has been conceived/invented. For instance, the distinction between *finite* [243] and *infinite* [180] runs between *counting* and *enumerating*. The former being concerned with *quantities*, the latter with *sets*. Evidently, in a text like the present one, there is a question of *how far* we can go with mathematical logic. However, some of these notions deserve to become *common notions*.

In our digital era everyone should for instance be familiar with the difference between *sets* and *sums*. Because so much of what we are exposed to, daily deals with them to the point of con-flation: though, when we think about it, logic and arithmetics are *clearly* different things. Since logic is the account of the protocol we use to arrive at a conclusion/decision, while arithmetic has to do with the calculation of quantifiable magnitudes (that can be measured).

In the *design*-field we are often impressed and amused by the *tricks* that conflation can play between the two in our *minds*. And since it has an entertainment-value we let them mushroom. Yet, a more honourable profession might be to be *specific* about the difference between them, in order to become *precise* in how they combine, as we make design-propositions that engage with audiences, users, workers in the *expanded field* of **design** (which is humanity at large).

This *3rd party readability* in **design** can be used as a definition of *usership*: the *population* produc-ing metadata harvested by major players in the development of artificial intelligence (AI), where hive-minds is little but a mirror of the collective output from *their* reading and usership[1]. Dreaming of recreating humans as machines—that could live forever with a proper maintenance—is a *boy's room* dream: but, more importantly, will reveal a logical glitch with an updated version of Spinoza.

That is moving *from* robotics *to* the potentially more exciting realm of *occasional cause* (Laruelle, 2013[2]): that is, moving from *algorithmic acrobatics* w/meta-data statistics, to the *indexes of change* that only surface now-and-then, but have an immediate impact on time *and* the human life-world. That is, an area flatly dismissed by Spinoza in the mode of *thought*, but that literally crowds his work following the mode of *extension*. Let me give and example of the difference.

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[1] Cf, [Toward a lexicon of usership Stephen Wright](#)

[2] Laruelle, François. (2013). *Principles of non-philosophy*. Bloomsbury academic.

If you look at mainstream AI applications—ranging from spellcheck algorithms to HR-algorithms in the present hire and fire—the *language* suggestions made by spellcheck algorithms are time-local and biased by contemporary business language; while HR applications run by amazon.com came up with white, mature adult and male profiles. The meta-data we harvest/access and feed into the algorithm will determine the hive. And, as shown, in ruthless/brutal ideological ways.[3]

In this setting, drawing attention to how credible and life-like the robotic avatars can be smoke-screens the ideological push of such applications. We ask: are these likely to disappear any time soon? Clearly AI comes with an ideology which is not part of the technology, but linked to who develop/own the technology and how they use it (Lanier). The strategy of making really big commercial invisible is time-old. Unfortunately, engineers are also often believers.

The twists and turns of their *passions*—a weird combination of atheism and idolatry[4]—is the core subject of Spinoza in Ethica: moving from the ontological passion/desire of attributing life and consciousness to machines, to the ethics of digital usership given that we are alive and conscious in the sense developed by Spinoza: turning humans from the smoke-screened *passivity* of human passions, to the living horizon of the agent intellect (which is within and beyond us).

Which is why our present foray into the 'empire of nothing' is far from wanton: since it can both result in smoke-screening—as indicated above—and in *critical practice* (that is, an amalgam of performance and critical theory [Cvejic]). We take off from this passage in Ethica: "PROP. XXIX. *Nothing* in the universe is *contingent*, but all things are conditioned to exist and operate in a particular manner by the necessity of the divine nature." (our it.). Nothing and contingency.


Mode 2—EXIT

The *stories of nothing* feature the way of the *termites*. They will turn to the angels and cats for council, but are fundamentally in the *middle* of things: mid-stream (rather than *upstream* as angels and *downstream* as cats). They are *in performance*. Which means that—in Spinoza's terms—they keep *substance* wired to its *modifications*. That is, the self sustenance of substance is *extended* to its modification, pending on *performance* unfolding under the perennial threat of *denial*.

That is, fiction can at any point slip unto the illusion: and comfort bought at the price of violence. The middle-gate and the *other*, its connection to learning. The difference that makes a difference is whether *metalepsis* rests on a) *synecdoche* }{, or turns to b) *metonym* {} (i.e., short-circuiting, or simply abandoning, the unstable but connective equilibrium between substance and its modes). The stories I gathered during the pandemic *materialise* what is at stake here.

The 10 stories—stories of *nothing*, to be sure—hatched the real events/occurrences related in them. They are all significantly, though differently, concerned with *coincidence*. Starting with striking but superficial stories: what catches the eye is how coincidence somehow *mirrors* ongoing activities and interferes with them, with a force of pattern conjuring a sense of its being directed by someone *behind* the scenes. A "hidden stage-director" who of course is not there.

Hence a feeling of uncanny with a strong emotional load, verging unto comedy and paranoia (in the candid camera genre). The initiative to gather and edit the stories in a sequential order, was done in the context of the Covid19 pandemic: when a similar sense of uncanny accompanied the actual *mise-en-scène* of everyday life (with the security measures, the ritual distance between people, the home offices and the video-conferencing on a variety of staged/digital backgrounds).

The edited sequence of the stories of nothing is an allegory of a similar transition that happened through and out of the pandemic. The lockdown became tangled with the historical developments on the world stage: the environment, the impact on the electrosphere with the increase of energy

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[3] Example of *techno-racism*—I wanted to congratulate an Ethiopian artist on an installation he created, the spell check did not have his name in its glossary (it suggested /Kebab/ instead of /Kebreab/).

[4] Cf, Ray Kurzweil's manifesto The age of spiritual machines—when computers exceed human intelligence.

prices, the Russian war on Ukraine, and the diatribes on forms of address (linked to the changes on the *cultural maps* of gender and indigenous identities). History, once more, is making its way.

On the backdrop of historical consequence, the sequence of #01-10 *stories of nothing*, evolved from mundane and *light-headed* stories, to the *deeper* semantics of coincidence proposed by the surrealist—in a preface to a survey on this topic, in the wake of WWI ([Minotaure])—where the phenomenon of *coincidence* was understood as reverberating historical necessity foraging through the *unconscious*, and the vehicle of *desire*, and the entanglement of *two* causal orders.

The entanglement of two causal orders—of which the C19 pandemic and the stories #01-10 are a case in point—is not new: from a literary vantage point it features the staging of the picaresque novel. The mediaeval plot in Boccaccio's [Decameron], for instance, is almost identical. As is [1001 nights]. And also, from the Enlightenment century, Diderot's *Jacques le Fataliste*. The *pendular* movements of life as a journey, and the *periscopic* procession of smaller stories alongside it[5].

It is possible to conjure the historicity of life through this procession of stories. In [William Kentridge]'s work[6] as an artist it is obvious and recurring. Hence, the following proposition: when the semantics of the principal story—the container story—is deepened as the number of *added* stories increases and come through as recurrences, desire will verge unto interest, interest to material difference, and material difference to social injustice. In sum: we become worried.

This lateral drift from sensation to worry—from entertainment to critical practice—features a life-cycle of its own. What is presently important to us here, is what happens on the *theatre of human emotion*. In Spinoza's scope, emotions can transide from the human do the Divine *comedy*: or, perhaps, we should say *geometry*. As desire is transformed into consciousness, emotions cease to be passive—and vehicles of bondage—are *docked* to the 3rd kind of knowledge: *intuition*.

Each of the stories #01-10 are documents of such transitions: they come in story because they are *specific*, and the evolve to deeper semantics (or, intension) through precisation (i.e., the clarification of the terms of which a problem is set). They are *psychoanalytic* in mode, without being moored to pathology, trauma and therapy. Stories of character development in sense not amenable to individual isolates, but rather to the trans-individual histories in cultural dynamics.

So, when we talk of 'consciousness', here, it is not in an astral sense: but rather in a physical sense (including the physics chapters of living matter, where we likely are only scratching the surface). We therefore may want to ask: what is the physics of fiction vs. the physics of illusion? We can know them by their effects on human governance: human organisations can be tethered to illusion—worlds that contain their own reality—or evolving through the work of fiction.

Contrary to illusion, fiction—like consciousness—can and will be marked by the real. Reality leaves its mark on humans through events that pass under the "radar" of factual knowledge. Such events are either part of our unconscious, or surface now and then as pre-conscious turns with a strong emotional load. Such as the coincidences related in stories #01-10 and their dynamics that are psychological and physical at the same time. Two orders of causation coming together[7].

As semantics deepen, duality melts away (Laruelle, 2013): the alternation between thought and extension is *non-dual*—in Spinoza's Ethica—because it converges on the makeshift development of intuition: the 3rd kind of knowledge emerges with *upheavals* and *reversals*. The stories of nothing indicate that there are no tidy sectors attributes (that are infinite) and their modes/modifications (that are finite). They can be help, coupled and mediated through the human body.

[5] Eco, Umberto.(2007). *Foucault's pendulum*. Mariner books.

[6] Kentridge, William.(2016). *No it is*. Walter König.

[7] Barad, Karen. (2007). *Meeting the universe half way—Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Duke university press.

Which means that there is the infinity of substance, the finite world of its modifications, and the *other* which is neither infinite nor finite, but contingent. From one vantage point, contingency is expressed through the *denial* of it in Ethica. From another vantage point, it is expressed by performance of it: in the sense that all the *twist and turns* in the history of nothing—or, the empty set Ø—are produced in a *multiple* linguistic usage that comes out in the experiment (PURPOSE).

That is, the concept nothing as absence and the complement of the concept of universe (marked as 0 and 1 by George Boole). The group-denomination of elements that are not there (noted as *O* by Cantor): such that need to be told before they form a group. That nothing is non-identical to itself and will be makeshift in its definition (denoted by {} by Frege). And its falsity (marked as Λ by Peano). Finally, the notation of nothing as the empty set Ø reduces it to pure extension.

In other words, *intension*—or, the sum of attributes—is considered lost, as by convenience or conversion. Moving within and beyond these twists & turns, it has been suggested here that we define an alternation which is not the same as the alternation between 0 and 1 (Boole), but the alternation within 0 (or, Ø if admissible) between }{ and {}. That is between the whole as assumed and the whole as revealed, in our understanding of sets (cf, Felix Klein and Rosalind Krauss[8]).

Which means that the *other*, understood as contingency, does not exist *per se*. It features the *realm* of nothing. At the same time we cannot understand the possibility of upholding change—by connecting the in/finite through the embodied mediations of performance— without it. But this needs *not* be any more mysterious than the number *zero* (and its impact on the possibilities of arithmetics). That beneath—alongside and touching—he universe there is the alternation }{/{}[9].

A difference that makes a difference: alternation between *synecdoche*}{ and *metonym*{} features what Laruelle's 'unilateral duality' (2013)[10]—since the signature of illusion is that it can do without fiction (in totalitarian regimes by putting a ban on it), while fiction feeds on experience and the mileage of alternating with illusion. In other words, illusion cannot live with fiction; but fiction can live with illusion. Fiction is defined by its *alternating* with illusion, and being *marked* by reality.

In this definition, fiction *evolves* with the work of time: it can explore illusion and also hatch factual understandings. Fiction feeds off contingency and prompts the development of intuition. Of course, much of this speaks to us as individuals. But the outcome of the present query can readily apply to the *reach* of leadership in organising organisations: beyond which it is the coordination of contingencies at a level below *strategic* planning that takes over (that is, the *tactical* level).

The more a strategy is specific the more the managerial reach, its limits and counter-point will be revealed: since the work of coordinating activities is what brings precisation to strategy. If it is not specific, this counter-point will simply not appear. And its potential to build reserves for the organisation—in a variety of capital—simply will be missed. It will be overlooked. As I am writing these lines and the reader is reading them we join in the realisation of how things are at present.

The dynamics in the realm of contingency can therefore result in something else than the empire of nothing. It can, for instance, be the empirical realm in which material culture and cultural materials cross paths: that is, the baggage that comes with being human has a time-span that is much longer than our biological lives, and yet younger than mountains (i.e., the time-span of geology). We can even think that it can shrink or expand: or, that it is activating/vital or passifying/dead.

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[8] Klein, Felix. (1891). *Considérations comparatives sur les recherches géométriques modernes* [eng. Comparative considerations on modern geometrical research]. Le programme d'Erlangen. Gauthiers-Villars.

Krauss, Rosalind. (1979). Sculpture in the expanded field. *October*, Vol. 8. The MIT-press.

[9] The operators }{ and {} correspond to limen and hymen in Derrida's philosophy. Cf, Derrida, Jacques. (1981). *Dissemination*. The Athlone press.

[10] This unilateral duality can be expressed Ø = {} + }{**i** based on that {} will do without }{, while }{ cannot [in the sense that fiction will take illusion into account, while it also will be marked by reality].

If so, if features the enterprise of value development/creation as something going on in an expanded physical realm (i.e., expanded to include biological physics); where the alternation between deepening semantics and technological procedure, is determined by sufficient rather than necessary conditions. It can move on sufficient reason alone, or it can move on necessary and sufficient conditions together (inviting a repurposing of Spinoza's *magnum opus Ethica*).

The *medial zone* (proximal space) exceeds human life within the scope of history. It is likely to terminate some time before a planetary catastrophe. This we cannot know. The triumph of history is yet to come. If the planetary issues trump social justice, there will be no triumph of history. The *intension* of thought and extension—reason and sense perception—in *intuition* (a vectorial sum), will move humanity from a biological technical life-form, to performances of the agent intellect.

**Synopsis**:

| #01 | A story spun from the encounter of a courier—carrying a frozen goose in his bag—with a living and angry white goose in the streets of Oslo. |
|------|------|
| #02 | This time the courier is carrying a tape destined for a Pokorny in Prague—where this is a very common name—a bystander in Hotel Forum asks if it might be Dr. Pokorny. Which it was. |
| #03 | The courier meets his double, hears Miles Davis randomly plaid (twice), and discovers that a tombstone he admired was indeed someone who had designed vinyl covers for Miles Davis. |
| #04 | Now the courier reads *The Name of the Rose* on a journey to Vézelay, south of Paris, fantasises the portal of the Madeleine cathedral, to discover that it was used as a model by Eco. |
| #05 | On another of his journeys, the courier discovers that he has got the wrong address in Oslo to an event for the second time, two years in a row, on his way he meets a parrot in a tree. |
| #06 | On how the courier—on a journey to Portbou with his daughter—walked across the border on the trail of Walter Benjamin's escape, landing in a seminar where they did this every year. |
| #07 | The courier is on a journey in Sarajevo, where he hears of a two-way radio connection that allowed citizens to carry out transactions beyond the war-zone (1992-1995). |
| #08 | Once more on a journey from Dublin to Enniskillen/Ulster with his daughter, the courier listens to an electric keynote on the Border, and attend a bogland performance of Beckett's Godot. |
| #09 | How the Norwegian diplomat K, received a Patek Philippe with his name misspelled by one of Saddam Hussain's doubles. The courier asked: in which sense did a meeting take place? |
| #10 | In the end the courier ponders on whether William Kentridge's *No, it is* (exhibit) might be taken as a note on coincidence, mirrors, social injustice and the Apartheid in South Africa. |

Seen as a whole, these stories of *nothing* conveyed by the courier progress by waves to deeper level of semantics where the initial bafflement on encounter with the coincidences is relieved by a sense of homing in on the world as it is: in which the marks of the real articulate with the courier's journey inwards. Each mark is an occasion at which the courier eventually realises that nothing will solve the puzzles, but that his task is to tell it back in story: the sum is a *political encounter*.

That is, with the work of time tasks and occasions of story-telling performed a culturally organised process of political encounter: a way to politics emerging from the open-cast of culture. The stories of nothing therefore belong to a medial zone mediate by trans-individual dynamics, in which the courier found himself implicated. The stories therefore are told, not authored. Their sites and circumstances therefore become of more importance, than what his readers can understand.

What he banks on is that the readers have a fund of experience of their own, that will reverberate with the stories he has to tell. And in these aspects, he is neither a journalist nor a novelist. But is closer to Walter Benjamin's conception of craftsman: a tradition of knowledge and a way of

learning that Benjamin reflections on the works of Nikolai Leskov, in the essay *The storyteller* from 1936[11]. The storyteller's errand with substance is *specific* and subject to precisations on request.

Here, the story—at least in the courier's practice—is not a literary project: but one where responsibility is transposed by the ability to respond: in performance. The entanglement of two orders of causation (physical and psychological) defined somewhat superficially as coincidence, could instead be seen as conceptual problems[12] that are held and developed performatively: in the courier's *travail* with the successive entanglement, they are intercepted and conveyed in *waves*.

They are *nothing* in the sense that they are *no thing*. Their charge is material and libidinal at the same time. The emotional load of each pulse is material. Their material load is fictional. Together they are like the rings of a tree. Consciousness may here be seen to derive as much from the physics of emotions as from the psychological plot of matter. As they become more articulate they converge: and as they articulate they become tangibly counterposed, as a vectorial sum.

Here the growth of consciousness is seen as part of the human character development and biological physics, where analysis becomes a partner in creation. They are part of an implicate order (Bohm, 2002[13]) in high the unfolding of illusion has its counterpart in the enfolding of fiction. In sum, the *empty set Ø* is the condition for the successive waves homing in on substance[14]. Without it, there would simply be no journey, the courier concludes his *pandemic* stories of nothing.

My reading of Spinoza's Ethica therefore results less a heretic reading of a heretic, than from a specific course of *training* that followed in the wake of the twists-and-turns in the courier's life. My present coming-and-going between *photogravure* and *body work* defines an errand with performance as critical practice. It closes the book on the 10 stories, and opens a *new* one, where stories of this kind are included by **design**, rather *than* by accident (forthcoming in DAC-essay).

The *stories of nothing* have been emerging over a period of 27 years. In the context of working on Spinoza's *Ethica*, they appear as *fieldwork* notes of a kind. A land survey in the spirit of Kafka's geometer K. As such they might also constitute a feminist critique of Ethica, rather leaning on his craftsman in lens-grinding, than on the excellence of a philosophical system per se. Hence the hopes for a dancer reading the prepared excerpts from Ethica as a choreographic performance.

Mode 3—BACKGROUND

Evidently, this reading which is prompted by the extension of *nothing* in Ethica—featuring 153 hits —but also by the existence of *nothing* as a common notion in mathematical logic, in the beginning, is linked to *contingency* by a far stretch. However, if we consider that there might be a realm where things appear occasionally as finite and/or infinite, then contingency defines a realm of indeterminacy: they shift between appearing as countable and enumerate. Examples?

The motion of a *single* pendulum can be calculated, and has been. The motions of a *double* pendulum cannot be calculated. But it does feature an extension of enumerable patterns. The only thing is that we do not know *when* they will appear: which is why they are determined as *occasional*. Here, we may turn to statistics, and to screening patterns/intercepting occasional shifts: where we shift from motion to movement, from the quantifiable (single) to something enumerable (double), resembling a *thinking thing* [12].

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[11] Benjamin, Walter. (1969/1936). The Storyteller. *Illuminations—Essays and reflection*. Schocken books.

[12] Cvejic, Bojana. (2015). *Choreographing problems—Expressive concepts in contemporary dance and performance*. Springer.

[13] Bohm, David. (2002/1980). *Wholeness and the implicate order*. Routledge.

[14] Scholem, Gershom. (1996). *On the kabbalah and its symbolism*. Random house.

**Double Pendulum at t=9.2 seconds**
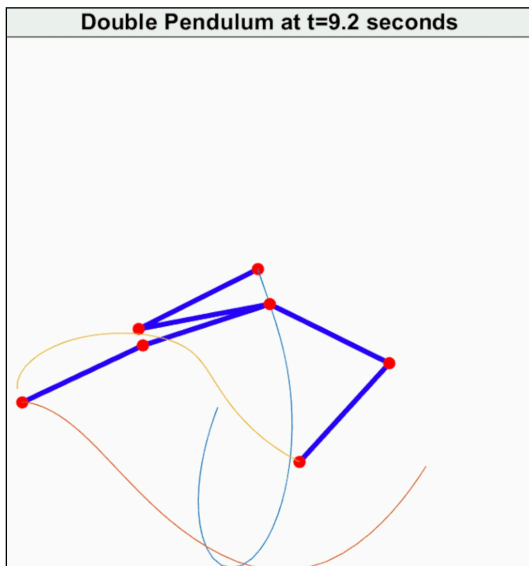
And—here is the AI-glitch—something resembling *us*. We are surreptitiously turning *from* what we might resemble, *to* something resembling us. This trope (*trope* means 'turning point') is *metalepsis*. The visual equivalent of a pun, implying a shift of context—whether it is said or shown—where the *message*, the *messenger* and the *media* become confused. If they become conflated, metalepsis brings *illusion*, clearly. If they are activated to become *discrete* they will be articulate in a different way from illusion. They will articulate *intuition*, featuring the 3rd kind of knowledge, or simply *fiction*.

Let us therefore *define* illusion and fiction. *Illusion is a world unto itself and contains its own reality*. And: fiction is defined *in relation to* the real, such that it can be *marked* by it: fiction can and always will be marked by the real. A *corollary*: because it has annexed and appropriated the real, as an inherent/passive property, illusion violates the real (inherently/passively). While the relation between fiction and the real, is one of *warm neutrality*. Fiction is active and *modern*.

As a broad cultural phenomenon beyond philosophy—and the minds of a few—*fiction* is modern: growing *with* human life-forms through architecture and **design**: opening for unbridled express-ions ranging from artistic to exotic. It was this before it became industrial ([Bauhaus]). Industrialism, in the beginning, was a vehicle cultivating modernism in society and building modernity, as an unparalleled collective action of cultural entrepreneurship. Whether liberal and/or dictatorial[15].

But why turn to *modernism* now (and specifically in relation to the question raised here)? Well, consider modernism as a response to a Q&A. Question: what *allows* picking up on thinking things —say, in architecture, art, archaeology and anthropology [Tim Ingold's 4As in [Making]—that (1) *we may resemble*, and instead claim that (2) *they resemble us*? Answer: *nothing*. Here modernism provides a response by simply dividing between what *belongs* (1) and what is *included* (2).

From this vantage point, modernism came with a normalising proposition, for *the* **designs** *that make us belong to the modern world* (1) and *the extravaganza included in it* (2). So, the whole deal is the normalisation in the *compound* of 'warm neutrality' *and* 'extravaganza'. However, with the industry taking off from reconstruction to consumerism after WorldWarII the balance tilted to the *latter*. Which is what we may be facing now: 'extravaganza' *unmooring* from 'warm neutrality'.

*Proposition*: modernism—in the sense outlined—would *neither* had hatched, developed *nor* taken off unless the developments in mathematical logic on the topic of *nothing* had taken place. That is, *from* the development of Georg Boole's concept of *nothing*, *to* the hatching the the *empty set* that was denoted by André Weil as Ø in 1939. Such changes that are *not* regular, but *occasional*, changing world we live in (and its time). From in an entry on the [history of mathematics]:

"George Boole introduced the concept of empty set, or 'nothing' as he called it, as the complement to the 'universe' in his Mathematical Analysis of Logic (1847). His notations for them were somewhat boring, 0 and 1 respectively. Cantor wrote in 1880 'for the absence of points we choose the letter *O*.' Frege, the founder of mathematical logic, interpreted 'null class' as extension of the concept of 'not identical with itself' rather than a collection of objects, and used {} for it. Peano used Λ for both null class and 'false' in his axiomatization of arithmetic in 1889, but Zermelo axiomatising set theory in 1908 went back to Boole's 0, and so did Hausdorff in his influential book *Grundzüge der Mengenlehre* (1914). Hausdorff was the first to use 'empty set' in

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[15] Examples of dictatorial modernisms: Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's  modernisation of Turkey, the cultural revolution in China, industrialism in the Soviet Union, Hugo Boss' design of SS uniforms etc.

its modern purely extensional meaning, before him there was always an air of intensional 'null class' to it, and even Zermelo stipulates extensionality as a separate assumption."[16]

From this (short) passage we may be baffled by the extent of ambivalence and instability in the concept conveyed by such discrepant usage: how do we know that they are talking about the *same* thing? Are the dialects, in the realm of *nothing*, such that *both* the signature-symbols and the the definition *will* differ? Within which framework can determine that they, in fact, overlap? And if modernism provided a *modus vivendi*—a coexistence based on compromise—how, really?

The symbols are: [0, 1]—*O*—{}—Λ—Ø. That is, enumerable to 5. But not countable to the same, since we *cannot* know whether we are counting apples and pears (hence, *as a sum*, it is meaning-*less*). My own notation overlaps with Frege's: here, {} a relation between parts-and-whole, while a *different* relation between part and whole is noted }{. In the former, the part-whole relation is assumed and imposed {}, while in the latter it is indexical and intercepted }{. Mereology.

Which means that we can propose that in the realm of *nothing*, there are 'differences that *make* a difference'. Otherwise, the debates and developments in mathematics related by stackexchange (above) would not have existed. In my *precisation* of Frege's notation, a clarification of the terms on which the problem is set, this variability of terms and domains of application are included. For instance, in articulating the difference {}/}{ I am including Peano's notion of the *false* null-class.

Which means that {} is *false*: the notion that the part-whole relation can be *assumed/imposed* is false (for instance, assuming that a thinking thing is substantially like us, on the basis of *piece-meal* observation of resemblance). And it means that }{ is *true*: the assertion that the part-whole relation can be intercepted through causal *indexes*. The latter entailing the human beings *can* be performant in this area. They can intercept part-whole relationships by being actively *receptive*.

That is, the kind of *mindfulness* in the act that we associate with *performance* (and that we also hook up with in *making*, in Tim Ingold's sense, or *hiking*). Critical theory will be of avail in this domain if it accepts to move *from* speculation *to* performance. And it is this venture we are going to explore and enact further in the present written piece. This, we will do by assuming a connection between performance and operations: here, the permutation in the numbering (1-4).

In Spinoza's time, the *cabalists*—the he arguably *builds* on and *distances* himself from[17] at the same time—would engage in the enumeration of words, as we have done here. But not as a quantitative count of *something*. They were rather interested in how the letters (which in Hebrew script correspond to numerals) could be resolved in number and through permutation will surface in *other* words. Hence developing pattern defining *clusters* of words with diverse meanings.

Much of this activity could be dismissed as absurd, if we did not take knowledge of what is at stake here. The point being that, in the Rabbinic literature, *there is* a realm of nothing[18]. It is a rift in creation subsumed in the cabalistic lore as 'the breaking of the vessels'. The world is not ruled by necessity alone, but includes the realm of nothing; where occasional cause and contingency prevails. We can *mend* the world (*tikun olam*), or we can *expand* the empire of nothing[19].

We are leaving the realm of the simple *pendulum* for the *double* pendulum. That is, the class of things that are in/finite in that they are only occasionally "…produced by external causes, whether they consist of many parts or few, owe whatsoever perfection or reality they possess solely to the

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[16] Cf, the application of Boolean logic in Ragin, Charles.(1989). *The comparative method: moving beyond qualitative and quantitative strategies*. University of California press.

[17] Cf, Cohen de Herrera, Abraham. (2010). Le portail des cieux. [Eng. *The gate of heaven*]. Philosophie imaginaire. Éditions de l'éclat.
Beltran, Miquel. (2016). *The influence of Abraham Con de Herrera's kabbalah on Spinoza's metaphysics*. Brill.

[18] Loew, Yehudah. (1982). *Les puits de l'exil*.[transl. Edouard Gourévitch]. Berg.

[19] Babel/Bavel (Hebr. בבל) the empire of nothing. Engl. Babylon.

efficacy of their external cause; and therefore their existence arises solely from the perfection of their external cause, not from their own" (1677:11)and at other times are left to their own means.

Here, the *empty set Ø* is a difference that makes a difference: that is, specifically between false and true. At every instance where Spinoza uses the term *nothing* we are faced with the choice of reading it *as the absence of something*, or take into account the *operations* of the empty set Ø in each instance of *nothing* throughout Spinoza's *Ethica—Ordine geometrical demonstrata*. This does *not* mean that nothing is *indeed* something, but that *nothing* waves an *operation*.

That is, nothing defines a realm *without* being—or, precisely by *not* being—something. So, it waves a *realm*, rather than a thing, and makes us return to the intensional aspects of the empty set Ø, which mathematicians allegedly left behind (cf, the above passage). The idea that Spinoza's philosophy is mined by his own writing, is of course an approach inspired by [Derrida]. Though not necessarily in his heritage (cf, Spinoza's excommunication and exit from Judaism [below]).

Mode 4—PURPOSE

Reading *Ethica* against the grain—through Spinoza's *écriture*—we can make the realm of *nothing* appear, as shadow or a *moon-landscape* of sorts. By moving from a *passive* usage of nothing to an *operation* we are turning to performance. My dream is that a dancer is reading the passages to repurpose Ethica through the intermedium of choreography as a *critical* practice. The permuted reading of *nothing* (below) is *not* the performance: it is a proposed *score* for a performance.

Which means that based on what is coming below—at the beat of a simple pendulum—we have absolutely no idea of what will be produced by an actual performance (double pendulum). The first turn of unpredictability is that we cannot know whether she would want to perform it. Since the abyss opened by the proposition below, is already gloomy enough or, even worse, will catch the performer in a repetition trapping her in a downward spiral of pointless errands (into void).

Still, here are the excerpts (numbered, Ø, ital. and brackets *added*) from 136 found instances:

**1**—V. Things which have *nothing* (Ø) in *common* cannot be understood, the one by means of the other; the conception of one does not involve the conception of the other.
**2**—PROP. III. Things which have *nothing* (Ø) in *common* cannot be one the cause of the other. Proof.—If they have *nothing* (Ø) in *common*, it follows that one cannot be apprehended by means of the other (Ax. v.), and, therefore, one cannot be the cause of the other (Ax. iv.). Q.E.D.
**3**—*Nothing* (Ø) is, therefore, *given* besides the understanding, by which several things may be distinguished one from the other, except the substances, or, in other words (see Ax. iv.), their attributes and modifications. Q.E.D.
**4**—For in the universe *nothing* (Ø) is *granted*, save substances and their modifications (as appears from Ax. i. and Deff. iii. and v.).
**5**—No definition implies or expresses a certain number of individuals, inasmuch as it expresses *nothing* (Ø), beyond the nature of the thing defined. For instance, the definition of a triangle expresses *nothing* (Ø), beyond the actual nature of a triangle: it does not imply any fixed number of triangles.
**6**—It is, then, far from an absurdity to ascribe several attributes to one substance: for *nothing* (Ø in nature) *is more clear* than that each and every entity must be conceived under some attribute, and that its reality or being is in proportion to the number of its attributes expressing necessity or eternity and infinity. Consequently it is abundantly clear, that an absolutely infinite being must necessarily be defined as consisting in infinite attributes, each of which expresses a certain eternal and infinite essence.
**7**—But substance of another nature could have *nothing* (Ø) in *common* with God (by Prop. ii.), and therefore would be unable either to cause or to destroy his existence.
**8**—If, then, that which necessarily exists is *nothing* (Ø), but finite beings such finite beings are more powerful than a being absolutely infinite, which is obviously absurd; therefore, either *nothing* (Ø) exists, or else a being absolutely infinite necessarily exists *also*.

**9**—Moreover, the parts (by Prop. ii.) would have *nothing* (Ø) in *common* with their whole, and the whole (by Def. iv. and Prop. x.) could both exist and be conceived without its parts, which everyone will admit to be absurd.

**10**—The nature of substance can only be conceived as infinite, and by a part of substance, *nothing* (else) can be understood (than) *finite substance*, which (by Prop. viii) involves a manifest contradiction.

**11**—Proof.—Besides God, no substance is granted or can be conceived (by Prop. xiv.), that is (by Def. iii.) *nothing* (Ø) which is in itself and is conceived through itself.

**12**—But substances and modes form the sum total of existence (by Ax. i.), therefore, without God *nothing* (Ø) can be, or be conceived. Q.E.D.

**13**—I know that there are many who think that they can show, that supreme intellect and free will do appertain to God's nature; for they say they know of *nothing* (more perfect), which they can attribute to God, than that which is the highest perfection in ourselves.

**14**—If, they contend, God had created everything which is in his intellect, he would not be able to create anything more, and this, they think, would clash with God's omnipotence; therefore, they prefer to asset that God is indifferent to all things, and that he creates *nothing* (Ø) except that which he has decided, by some absolute exercise of will, to create.

**15**—For intellect and will, which should constitute the essence of God, would perforce be as far apart as the poles from the human intellect and will, in fact, would have *nothing* (Ø) in *common* with them (but the name); there would be about as much *correspondence* between the two as there is between the Dog, the heavenly constellation, and a dog, an animal that barks.

**16**—Further, besides God there can be no substance (by Prop. xiv.), that is *nothing* (Ø in itself external to God). This is our second point.

**17**—Corollary.—Individual things are *nothing* (Ø) but }{ modifications of the attributes of God, or modes by which the attributes of God are expressed in a fixed and definite manner.

**18**—PROP. XXIX. *Nothing* (Ø) in the universe is *contingent*, but all things are conditioned to exist and operate in a particular manner by the necessity of the divine nature.

19—Wherefore all things are conditioned by the necessity of the divine nature, not only to exist, but also to exist and operate in a particular manner, and there is *nothing* (Ø) that is *contingent*. Q.E.D.

**20**—PROP. XXX. Intellect, in function (actu) finite, or in function infinite, must comprehend the attributes of God and the modifications of God, and *nothing* (else) }{.

**21**—Therefore the intellect, in function finite, or in function infinite, must comprehend the attributes of God and the modifications of God, and *nothing* (else) }{. Q.E.D.

**22**—Note.—I do not here, by speaking of intellect in function, admit that there is such a thing as intellect in potentiality: but, wishing to avoid all confusion, I desire to speak only of what is most clearly perceived by us, namely, of the very act of understanding, than which *nothing* (Ø) is more clearly perceived.

**23**—Note I.—As I have thus shown, more clearly than the sun at noonday, that there is *nothing* (Ø) to *justify* us in calling things *contingent*, I wish to explain briefly what meaning we shall attach to the word contingent; but I will first explain the words necessary and impossible.

**24**—Thus the prejudice developed into superstition, and took deep root in the human mind; and for this reason everyone strove most zealously to understand and explain the final causes of things; but in their endeavour to show that nature does *nothing* (Ø in vain), i.e. *nothing* which is (useless) to man, they only seem to have demonstrated that nature, the gods, and men are all mad together. Consider, I pray you, the result: among the many helps of nature they were bound to find some hindrances, such as storms, earthquakes, diseases, &c.: so they declared that such things happen, because the gods are angry at some wrong done to them by men, or at some fault committed in their worship.

**25**—The other abstract notions are *nothing* (Ø) *but* }{ modes of imagining, in which the imagination is differently affected: though they are considered by the ignorant as the chief attributes of things, inasmuch as they believe that everything was created for the sake of themselves; and, according as they are affected by it, style it good or bad, healthy or rotten and corrupt.

**26**—For it is said that God has the power to destroy all things, and to reduce them to *nothing*.

**27**—Proof.—Infinite intellect comprehends *nothing* (Ø save the attributes of God) and his modifications (Part i., Prop. xxx.).

**28**—Note.—Everyone must surely admit, that *nothing* can be or be conceived *without* God.

**29**—That is, if the object of the idea constituting the human mind be a body, *nothing* (Ø) can *take place* in that body without being perceived by the mind.
**30**—PROP. XIII. The object of the idea constituting the human mind is the body, in other words a certain mode of extension which actually exists, and *nothing* (else) }{.
**31**—Further, if there were any other object of the idea constituting the mind besides body, then, as *nothing* can *exist* from which some effect does not follow (I. xxxvi.)
**32**—Wherefore the object of our mind is the body as it exists, and *nothing* (else) }{. Q.E.D.
**33**—Strictly speaking, the idea of the mind, that is, the idea of an idea, is *nothing* (Ø) but }{ the distinctive quality (forma) of the idea in so far as it is conceived as a mode of thought without reference to the object; if a man knows anything, he, by that very fact, knows that he knows it, and at the same time knows that he knows that he knows it, and so on to infinity. But I will treat of this hereafter.
**34**—(I. xxxiii., Note i.) For (I. xxix.), except in this sense, *nothing* (Ø) is *contingent*.
**35**—PROP. XXXIII. There is *nothing* (Ø positive in ideas), which causes them to be called *false* {}.
**36**—Therefore there is *nothing* (Ø positive in ideas) which causes them to be called false {}. Q.E.D.
**37**—Proof.—There is *nothing* (positive in ideas), which causes them to be called *false* {} (II. xxxiii.); but *falsity cannot consist in simple privation* (for minds, not bodies, are said to err and to be mistaken), neither can it consist in absolute ignorance, for ignorance and error are not identical; wherefore it consists in the privation of knowledge, which inadequate, fragmentary, or confused ideas involve. Q.E.D.
**38**—Wherefore, and vice versâ, this idea of a triangle can neither be nor be conceived without this affirmation, therefore, this affirmation belongs to the essence of the idea of a triangle, and is *nothing* (Ø) besides }{.
**39**—What we have said of this volition (inasmuch as we have selected it at random) may be said of any other volition, namely, that it is *nothing* (Ø) but an idea }{. Q.E.D.
**40**—Proof.—Will and understanding are *nothing* (Ø) beyond the individual volitions and ideas (II. xlviii. and note).
**41**—*Nothing* (Ø) therefore seems to be taught *more clearly* by experience, than that the will or faculty of assent is free and different from the faculty of understanding.
**42**—If the mind could perceive *nothing* (Ø) else }{ but the winged horse, it would regard the same as present to itself.
**43**—These two affirmations, if we regard the mind, are in the same relation to one another as being and not—being; for there is *nothing* (Ø positive in ideas), which constitutes the actual *reality* of *falsehood* {} (II. xxxv. note, and xlvii. note).
**44**—As for the fourth objection, I am quite ready to admit, that a man placed in the equilibrium described namely, as perceiving *nothing* (Ø) but }{ hunger and thirst, a certain food and a certain drink, each equally distant from him) *would die* of hunger and thirst.
**45**—However, in my opinion, he accomplishes *nothing* (Ø) beyond a display of the acuteness of his own great intellect), as I will show in the proper place.
**46**—*Nothing* (Ø) comes to pass in nature, which can be set down to a *flaw* therein; for nature is always the same, and everywhere one and the same in her efficacy and power of action; that is, nature's laws and ordinances, whereby all things come to pass and change from one form to another, are everywhere and always the same; so that there should be one and the same method of understanding the nature of all things whatsoever, namely, through nature's universal laws and rules.
**47**—However, unless such persons had proved by experience that we do many things which we afterwards repent of, and again that we often, when assailed by contrary emotions, see the better and follow the worse, there would be *nothing* (Ø) to prevent their believing that we are free in all things.
**48**—If our folly does not carry us so far as this, we must necessarily admit, that the decision of the mind, which is believed to be free, is not distinguishable from the imagination or memory, and is *nothing* (more than the affirmation), which an idea, by virtue of being an idea, necessarily involves.
**49**—Proof.—The first element, which constitutes the essence of the mind, is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but }{ the idea of the actually existent body (II. xi. and xiii.), which (II. xv.) is compounded of many other ideas, whereof some are adequate and some inadequate (II. xxix. Coroll., II. xxxviii. Coroll.).
**50**—PROP. IV. *Nothing* (Ø) can be *destroyed*, except by a cause external to itself.

**51**—PROP. VII. The endeavour, wherewith everything endeavours to persist in its own being, is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ the actual essence of the thing in question.

**52**—Note.—This endeavour, when referred solely to the mind, is called will, when referred to the mind and body in conjunction it is called appetite; it is, in fact, *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ man's essence, from the nature of which necessarily follow all those results which tend to its preservation; and which man has thus been determined to perform.

**53**—Note.—From what has been said we may clearly understand the nature of Love and Hate. Love is *nothing* (else) but pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause:

**54**—…Hate is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ pain accompanied by the idea of an external cause.

**55**—Hope is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ an inconstant pleasure, arising from the image of something future or past, whereof we do not yet know the issue.

**56**—Note I.—This imitation of emotions, when it is referred to pain, is called compassion (cf. III. xxii. note); when it is referred to desire, it is called emulation, which is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ the desire of anything, engendered in us by the fact that we conceive that others have the like desire.

**57**—Note II.—This will or appetite for doing good, which arises from pity of the thing whereon we would confer a benefit, is called benevolence, and is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ desire arising from compassion. Concerning love or hate towards him who has done good or harm to something, which we conceive to be like ourselves, see III. xxii. note.

**58**—Note.—This hatred towards an object of love joined with envy is called Jealousy, which accordingly is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ a wavering of the disposition arising from combined love and hatred, accompanied by the idea of some rival who is envied.

**59-62**—Thus a miser thinks that abundance of money is the best, and want of money the worst; an ambitious man desires *nothing* (Ø so much as glory), and fears *nothing* (Ø)so much as shame). To an envious man *nothing* is (Ø more delightful than another's misfortune), and *nothing* (Ø more painful than another's success).

**63**—For we thereupon assume that we are regarding therein *nothing* (Ø) which we have not before seen in conjunction with other objects.

**64**—But when we suppose that we conceive an object something special, which we have never seen before, we must needs say that the mind, while regarding that object, has in itself *nothing* (Ø) which it can fall to regarding instead thereof; therefore it is determined to the contemplation of that object only.

**65**—Thus, although each individual lives content and rejoices in that nature belonging to him wherein he has his being, yet the life, wherein each is content and rejoices, is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ the idea, or soul, of the said individual, and hence the joy of one only differs in nature from the joy of another, to the extent that the essence of one differs from the essence of another.

**66**—For absence is *nothing* (Ø), whereas the emotion of pain is an activity; wherefore this activity can only be the activity of transition from a greater to a less perfection—in other words, it is an activity whereby a man's power of action is lessened or constrained (cf. III. xi. note).

**67**—This is perhaps the place to call attention to the fact, that it is *nothing* (wonderful) that all those actions, which are commonly called wrong {}, are followed by pain, and all those, which are called right, are followed by pleasure }{.

**68**—However, if we consider such matters as only depend on opinion, we shall find it conceivable that a man may think too meanly of himself; for it may happen, that a man, sorrowfully regarding his own weakness, should imagine that he is despised by all men, while the rest of the world are thinking of *nothing* (Ø less than of despising him).

**69**—As, for instance, if he should say that he is unable to form any clear conceptions, or that he can desire and do *nothing* (Ø) but}{ what is wicked and base{}, &c. We may also say, that a man thinks too meanly of himself {}, when we see him from excessive fear of shame refusing to do things {} which others, his equals, venture.

**70**—We are wont to call proud the man who boasts too much (III. xxx. note), who talks of *nothing* (Ø) but}{ his own virtues and other people's faults, who wishes to be first; and lastly who goes through life with a style and pomp suitable to those far above him in station {}.

**71**—Explanation—Cowardice is, therefore, *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ the fear of some evil, which most men are wont not to fear; hence I do not reckon it among the emotions springing from desire. Nevertheless, I have chosen to explain it here, because, in so far as we look to the desire, it is truly opposed to the emotion of daring.

**72-74**—An ambitious man will restrain himself in *nothing* (Ø) so long as he thinks his indulgences are secret; and if he lives among drunkards and debauchees, he will, from the mere fact of being

ambitious, be more prone to those vices. Lastly, a timid man does that which he would not. For though an avaricious man should, for the sake of avoiding death, cast his riches into the sea, he will none the less remain avaricious; so, also, if a lustful man is downcast, because he cannot follow his bent, he does not, on the ground of abstention, cease to be lustful. In fact, these emotions are not so much concerned with the actual feasting, drinking, &c., as with the appetite and love of such. *Nothing* (Ø), therefore, *can* be opposed to these emotions, (but high—mindedness and valour, whereof I will speak presently). The definitions of jealousy and other waverings of the mind I pass over in silence, first, because they arise from the compounding of the emotions already described; secondly, because many of them have no distinctive names, which shows that it is sufficient for practical purposes to have merely a general knowledge of them. However, it is established from the definitions of the emotions, which we have set forth, that they all spring from desire, pleasure, or pain, or, rather, that there is *nothing* (Ø) besides these three; wherefore each is wont to be called by a variety of names in accordance with its various relations and extrinsic tokens.

**75**—This seems to be the only reason for calling natural phenomena, which, indeed, are not made with human hands, perfect or imperfect: for men are wont to form general ideas of things natural, no less than of things artificial, and such ideas they hold as types, believing that Nature (who they think does *nothing* (Ø) without an object) has them in view, and has set them as types before herself. Therefore, when they behold something in Nature, which does not wholly conform to the preconceived type which they have formed of the thing in question, they say that Nature has fallen short or has blundered, and has left her work incomplete.

**76-78**—Wherefore, a cause which is called final is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ human desire, in so far as it is considered as the origin or cause of anything. For example, when we say that to be inhabited is the final cause of this or that house, we mean *nothing* (Ø more than that a man), conceiving the conveniences of household life, had a desire to build a house. Wherefore, the being inhabited, in so far as it is regarded as a final cause, is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ this particular desire, which is really the efficient cause; it is regarded as the primary cause, because men are generally ignorant of the causes of their desires.

**79**—For *nothing* (Ø) lies within the scope of a thing's nature (save that which follows from the necessity of the nature of its efficient cause), and whatsoever follows from the necessity of the nature of its efficient cause necessarily comes to pass.

**80**—III. Particular things I call contingent in so far as, while regarding their essence only, we find *nothing* (Ø) therein, which necessarily asserts their existence or excludes it.

**81**—PROP. VIII. The knowledge of good and evil is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ the emotions of pleasure or pain, in so far as we are conscious thereof.

**82**—Thus, in so far as we perceive that a thing affects us with pleasure or pain, we call it good or evil; wherefore the knowledge of good and evil is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ the idea of the pleasure or pain, which necessarily follows from that pleasurable or painful emotion (II. xxii.).

**83**—Therefore the knowledge of good and evil is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ the emotion, in so far as we are conscious thereof. Q.E.D.

**84**—But a conception (by II. xvii.) is stronger, so long as we conceive *nothing* (Ø) which excludes the present existence of the external object; wherefore an emotion is also stronger or more intense, when we conceive the cause to be with us at the present time, than when we do not conceive the cause to be with us. Q.E.D.

**85-86**—Again, as virtue is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ action in accordance with the laws of one's own nature (IV. Def. viii.), and as no one endeavours to preserve his own being, except in accordance with the laws of his own nature, it follows, first, that the foundation of virtue is the endeavour to preserve one's own being, and that happiness consists in man's power of preserving his own being; secondly, that virtue is to be desired for its own sake, and that there is *nothing* (Ø more excellent or more useful to us), for the sake of which we should desire it; thirdly and lastly, that suicides are weak—minded, and are overcome by external causes repugnant to their nature.

**87-89**—Again, if we consider our mind, we see that our intellect would be more imperfect, if mind were alone, and could understand *nothing* (Ø besides itself). There are, then, many things outside ourselves, which are useful to us, and are, therefore, to be desired. Of such none can be discerned more excellent, than those which are in entire agreement with our nature. For if, for example, two individuals of entirely the same nature are united, they form a combination twice as powerful as either of them singly. Therefore, to man there is *nothing* (Ø more useful than man)—nothing, I repeat, more excellent for preserving their being can be wished for by men, than that all should so in all points agree, that the minds and bodies of all should form, as it were, one single

mind and one single body, and that all should, with one consent, as far as they are able, endeavour to preserve their being, and all with one consent seek what is useful to them all. Hence, men who are governed by reason—that is, who seek what is useful to them in accordance with reason, desire for themselves *nothing* (Ø which they do not also desire for the rest of mankind, and, consequently, are just, faithful, and honourable in their conduct).

**90**—Now this appetite is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ man's nature or essence (Cf. the Definition of Appetite, III. ix. note, and Def. of the Emotions, i.).

**91**—But that a man, from the necessity of his own nature, should endeavour to become non—existent, is as impossible as that *something* should be made out of *nothing* (Ø), as everyone will see for himself, after a little reflection.

**92**—For prior to this principle *nothing* (Ø) can be conceived, and without it no virtue can be conceived.

**93-94**—Proof.—To act absolutely in obedience to virtue is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ to act according to the laws of one's own nature. But we only act, in so far as we understand (III. iii.): therefore to act in obedience to virtue is in us *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ to act, to live, or to preserve one's being in obedience to reason, and that on the basis of seeking what is useful for us (IV. xxii. Coroll.). Q.E.D.

**95**—PROP. XXVI. Whatsoever we endeavour in obedience to reason is *nothing* (Ø) further than to understand; neither does the mind, in so far as it makes use of reason, judge anything to be useful to it, save such things as are conducive to understanding.

**96-98**—Proof.—The effort for self—preservation is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ the essence of the thing in question (III. vii.), which, in so far as it exists such as it is, is conceived to have force for continuing in existence (III. vi.) and doing such things as necessarily follow from its given nature (see the Def. of Appetite, III. ix. note). But the essence of reason is nought else but our mind, in so far as it clearly and distinctly understands (see the definition in II. xl. note. ii.); therefore (II. xl.) whatsoever we endeavour in obedience to reason is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ to understand. Again, since this effort of the mind wherewith the mind endeavours, in so far as it reasons, to preserve its own being is *nothing* (else) but understanding; this effort at understanding is (IV. xxii. Coroll.)

**99-101**—PROP. XXVII. We know *nothing* (Ø) to be *certainly* good or evil, save such things as really conduce to understanding, or such as are able to hinder us from understanding. Proof.—The mind, in so far as it reasons, desires *nothing* (Ø beyond understanding), and judges *nothing* (Ø) to be useful to itself save such things as conduce to understanding (by the foregoing Prop.). But the mind (II. xli., xliii. and note) cannot possess certainty concerning anything, except in so far as it has adequate ideas, or (what by II. xl. note, is the same thing) in so far as it reasons. Therefore we know *nothing* (Ø) to be good or evil (save such things as really conduce, &c). Q.E.D.

**102**—Proof.—The mind is not capable of understanding anything higher than God, that is (I. Def. vi.), than a Being absolutely infinite, and without which (I. xv.) *nothing* (Ø) can either be or be conceived; therefore (IV. xxvi. and xxvii.), the mind's highest utility or (IV. Def. i.) good is the knowledge of God.

**103**—PROP. XXIX. No individual thing, which is entirely different from our own nature, can help or check our power of activity, and (absolutely) *nothing* (Ø) can do us good or harm, unless it has something in common with our nature.

**104**–Wherefore *nothing* (Ø) can be bad for us through that quality which it has in common with us, but, on the other hand, in so far as it is bad for us, that is (as we have just shown), in so far as it can diminish or check our power of action, it is contrary to our nature. Q.E.D.

**105**—If it be assumed that it be neither good nor bad, *nothing* (Ø) will follow from its nature (IV. Def. i.), which tends to the preservation of our nature, that is (by the hypothesis), which tends to the preservation of the thing itself; but this (III. vi.) is absurd; therefore, in so far as a thing is in harmony with our nature, it is necessarily good. Q.E.D.

**106**—*Nothing* (Ø), therefore, can be *good*, except in so far as it is in harmony with our nature; and hence a thing is useful, in proportion as it is in harmony with our nature, and vice versâ. Q.E.D.

**107**—For that thing is to man most useful, which is most in harmony with his nature (IV. xxxi. Coroll.); that is, obviously, man. But man acts absolutely according to the laws of his nature, when he lives in obedience to reason (III. Def. ii.), and to this extent only is always necessarily in harmony with the nature of another man (by the last Prop.); wherefore among individual things *nothing* is more useful to man, (than a man who lives in obedience to reason). Q.E.D.

**108-109**—I have also shown in addition what are the foundations of a state; and the difference between true virtue and infirmity may be readily gathered from what I have said; namely, that true

virtue is *nothing* (else) but living in accordance with reason; while infirmity is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ man's allowing himself to be led by things which are external to himself, and to be by them determined to act in a manner demanded by the general disposition of things rather than by his own nature considered solely in itself.

**110**—We may readily understand that there is in the state of nature *nothing* (Ø), which by universal consent is pronounced good or bad; for in the state of nature everyone thinks solely of his own advantage, and according to his disposition, with reference only to his individual advantage, decides what is good or bad, being bound by no law to anyone besides himself.

**111**—In the state of nature, therefore, sin is inconceivable; it can only exist in a state, where good and evil are pronounced on by common consent, and where everyone is bound to obey the State authority. Sin, then, is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ disobedience, which is therefore punished by the right of the State only.

**112**—Hence, in the state of nature, we can conceive no wish to render to every man his own, or to deprive a man of that which belongs to him; in other words, there is *nothing* (Ø) in the state of nature answering to justice and injustice. Such ideas are only possible in a social state, when it is decreed by common consent what belongs to one man and what to another.

**113-115**—We sometimes see men so absorbed in one object, that, although it be not present, they think they have it before them; when this is the case with a man who is not asleep, we say he is delirious or mad; nor are those persons who are inflamed with love, and who dream all night and all day about *nothing* (Ø) but their mistress, or some woman, considered as less mad, for they are made objects of ridicule. But when a miser thinks of *nothing* (but gain or money), or when an ambitious man thinks of *nothing* (but glory), they are not reckoned to be mad, because they are generally harmful, and are thought worthy of being hated. But, in reality, Avarice, Ambition, Lust, &c., are species of madness, though they may not be reckoned among diseases.

**116**—Assuredly *nothing* forbids man to enjoy himself, save grim and gloomy superstition.

**117-118**—For, if all men who are a prey to emotion were all equally proud, they would *shrink* from *nothing*, and *would* fear *nothing*; how then could they be joined and linked together in bonds of union?

**119**–This sort of honour, then, is (really empty) being *nothing*.

**120**—Proof.—To act rationally, is *nothing* (else) (III. iii. and Def. ii.) but to perform those actions, which follow from the necessity, of our nature considered in itself alone.

**121**—But all emotions are attributable to pleasure, to pain, or to desire (Def. of the Emotions, iv. explanation); and desire (Def. of the Emotions, i.) is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ the attempt to act; therefore, to all actions, &c. Q.E.D.

**122**—Therefore it is *nothing* (wonderful), if the desire arising from such knowledge of good and evil, in so far as it looks on into the future, be more readily checked than the desire of things which are agreeable at the present time. (Cf. IV. xvi.)

**123**—Note.—Superstitions persons, who know better how to rail at vice than how to teach virtue, and who strive not to guide men by reason, but so to restrain them that they would rather escape evil than love virtue, have no other aim but to make others as wretched as themselves; wherefore it is *nothing* (wonderful), if they be generally troublesome and odious to their fellow—men.

**124**—Proof.—A free man is one who lives under the guidance of reason, who is not led by fear (IV. lxiii.), but who directly desires that which is good (IV. lxiii. Coroll.), in other words (IV. xxiv.), who strives to act, to live, and to preserve his being on the basis of seeking his own true advantage; wherefore such an one thinks of *nothing* (Ø less than of death), but his wisdom is a meditation of life. Q.E.D.

**125**—Further, it is written that when man had found a wife, who was in entire harmony with his nature, he knew that there could be *nothing* (Ø in nature), which could be more useful to him; but that after he believed the beasts to be like himself, he straightway began to imitate their emotions (III. xxvii.), and to lose his freedom; this freedom was afterwards recovered by the patriarchs, led by the spirit of Christ; that is, by the idea of God, whereon alone it depends, that man may be free, and desire for others the good which he desires for himself, as we have shown above (IV. xxxvii.).

**126**—IV. Thus in life it is before all things useful to perfect the understanding, or reason, as far as we can, and in this alone man's highest happiness or blessedness consists, indeed blessedness is *nothing* (Ø) else}{ but}{ the contentment of spirit, which arises from the intuitive knowledge of God: now, to perfect the understanding is nothing else but to understand God, God's attributes, and the actions which follow from the necessity of his nature.

**127-128**—IX. *Nothing* (Ø) can be in more harmony with the nature of any given thing than other individuals of the same species; therefore (cf. vii.) for man in the preservation of his being and the enjoyment of the rational life there is *nothing* (Ø more useful than his fellow)—man who is led by reason.

**129**—Note.—Seeing that there is *nothing* (Ø) which is not followed by an effect (I. xxxvi.), and that we clearly and distinctly understand whatever follows from an idea, which in us is adequate (II. xl.), it follows that everyone has the power of clearly and distinctly understanding himself and his emotions, if not absolutely, at any rate in part, and consequently of bringing it about, that he should become less subject to them.

**130**—Than this remedy for the emotions (to return to the point from which I started), which consists in a true knowledge thereof, *nothing* (Ø more excellent), being within our power, can be devised.

**131**—But to conceive a thing as free can be *nothing* (Ø) else}{ than}{ to conceive it simply, while we are in ignorance of the causes whereby it has been determined to action (II. xxxv. note); therefore, an emotion towards a thing which we conceive simply is, other conditions being equal, greater than one, which we feel towards what is necessary, possible, or contingent, and, consequently, it is the greatest of all. Q.E.D.

**132**—But an emotion which springs from reason is necessarily referred to the common properties of things (see the def. of reason in II. xl. note. ii.), which we always regard as present (for there can be *nothing* (Ø) to exclude their present existence), and which we always conceive in the same manner (II. xxxviii.).

**133**—So, again, those who have been ill received by a woman they love think of *nothing* (Ø) but the inconstancy, treachery, and other stock faults of the fair sex; all of which they consign to *oblivion*, directly they are again taken into favour by their sweetheart.

**134**—Therefore to this extent the mind has not the power of conceiving things under the form of eternity, but it possesses such power, because it is of the nature of reason to conceive things under the form of eternity (II. xliv. Coroll. ii.), and also because it is of the nature of the mind to conceive the essence of the body under the form of eternity (V. xxiii.), for besides these two there is *nothing* (Ø) which belongs to the essence of mind (II. xiii.).

**135**—PROP. XXXVII. There is *nothing* (Ø in nature) which is contrary to this intellectual love, or which can take it away.

**136**—Therefore there is *nothing* (Ø in nature) which, &c. Q.E.D.

It doesn't matter whether Spinoza meant this (or, if it was his "hidden agenda"). It is there in the writing, or in the process of becoming writing, of which the reader becomes the vehicle in the last instance. Furthermore we know that the Rabbis of Amsterdam—who were well versed in the kabbalah—were not indifferent to the alternative ways a text could be read. The processing based on a sample of 136 (from a total of 153, we took those we could find) is in this aspect realistic.

The result is a score, or a *partitura*, obtained by sampling passages with *nothing* in them through a fixed procedure of italicising—and thereby underscoring—*nothing* and the use of brackets to draw attention to shifts in the sets of meanings, entailed by the inclusion of the empty set Ø. If subsequently intercepted for the purposes of a performance, the score would be transformed into a libretto. Moving from assumed part-to-whole relation of the sample, to work as an index.

As a libretto the score would be looped with the causal working of performance, while as a score it has only a superficial resemblance to composition. Because it can be stored for reading only, and never be performed. There is nothing to separate the two, if it were not for the difference between {} and }{. The temptation of being satisfied with what is obtained limited to {} is easy to detect: since the contents of the modified text engages with aspects of its history in mathematics.

If we read true and false as adequate and inadequate—which we can in Spinoza's system in Ethica—then there is this array of trapdoors that are available to readings likely to be inadequate. The text by Spinoza therefore open for an array of inadequate receptions, which in his thought were adequate. Which would then indicate that he was not weary of the *Ethica*—a text in writing— as extension, as we have done here. Or, he may have left it as the inadequacies of his culture.

Since scripture will make itself known in other aspects that those said, intended, chanted or read, but also in such aspects that come (rather out of the shadows) in *whisper*. What is conveyed to writing exceeds our presence to ourselves: whether it is as writers or readers. This is trivial. But

what is not (trivial) that the dialectics of *nothing* goes far back: not only in the kabbalah, but in mainstream Jewish learning. We cannot expect the rabbis to have set this aside.

If we admit that terms are defined through their use ([Wittgenstein](#)) then running **Ø** through the samples of text-passages from Spinoza's Ethica establishing a notional usage for *nothing* which is specific, we may draw some *provisional* **conclusions**.

—contrary to other terms in mathematical logic in general, **Ø** is *not* a generic term (in the above passages **Ø** contracts a variety of different uses, that makes up it's variety in Ethica).

—**Ø** is *specific* in the sense that }{ and {} are precisations of **Ø**: the terms on which **Ø** is set as a problem is clarified by }{ and {}.

—if *illusion* {} is *nothing* in an assertive sense and *fiction* }{ is *nothing* in a mitigated/*critical* sense, **Ø** will vary in terms of whether it is a basic assumption or a workgroup assumption ([Bion](#)).

—The three moderated uses of *nothing*—"nothing else", "nothing but" & "nothing else but"—are *fictional* }{; the absolute uses of *nothing* are *illusory* {} with the impact of *falsehood* if unchecked.

—*Fiction* }{ is critical in the sense of criticality: that is, crossed a certain critical threshold fiction may provoke a landslide of factual understanding (*catharsis*). While illusion {} is *cathexis*.

—Hence the 3 phases of classical *tragedy* (cathexis, crisis, catharsis) can be seen as cultural attempts at  establish a *ritual* whereby falsehood is *checked* (**Ø** as cultural/collective *trauma*).

—The 3 arrangements in the present *triptych* proposes a (*paratactical*) method of alternation whereby *crisis* (as an intensional sum) does *not* come out as 'the same': we have *specific* crises.

—This method is *generic*: a method of establishing a diagnostic of what the *specific crisis* in, and making its prognostic appear/reveal through *performance* (cf. Jodorowky's [psychomagic](#)).

—This conclusion does not act as a substitute of performance (mimicking and erasing it), but is intended to apply *in* performance: a method of screening, intercepting and framing.

—If **Ø** is conceived as the vectorial sum of {} and }{ its impact on language is not syntactical but instead champions a *paratax*: producing *paradigms* rather than syntagms.

—If reality is assessed through fictional *triangulation* (as attempted here) it is based on Spinoza's notion that the real is *unique*. Revealed through superposition, entanglement, intra-action ([Barad](#)).

Which means that we can understand the reasons why Spinoza's relation to Judaism could be at cause, in the verbatim of the text of his excommunication (which is harsh). The diatribe may simply have derived from the nature of what he was passing on. In the cabalistic treatise, of which it has been claimed that he was influenced, the language is by no means comparable. Indeed, it is a general feature of Jewish culture that the incidence and context of words are determining.

The difference that makes a difference in the realm of nothing—}{/{}—are not sorted out per-formatively, which they always are in other Jewish scripts: because they are not only read to be argued but to be *performed* (i.e. read by a swaying body in individuo-collective patterns that follow a certain pattern [also in situations of learning])[20]. Here is the text of the announcement of his excommunication by Jewish community of Amsterdam (original written in Portuguese):

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[20] During fieldwork in 1995 I visited a Shabbat service at the Kataman Shtiblakh—a small synagogue— in Jerusalem where a cantor (hazan) from South Africa intoned the liturgy with too much virtuosity (in the taste of the congregants): "we have come here to daven (pray) not for an opera performance" they said. They wished for simplicity and candour.

*

## The Text of Spinoza's Excommunication

*On the 6th of the month of Av, 5416, July 27, 1656, the excommunication of Baruch de Spinoza was proclaimed from the Ark in the synagogue of Talmud Torah, the united congregation of the Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam. The complete version of the proclamation, written in Portuguese, is found in the Book of Ordinances of the congregation (Livro dos Acordos de Nacao e Ascamot) and it includes some highly interesting details:*

"The Lords of the Ma'amad", i.e. the governing body of six parnassim and the gabbai, announce that

"having long known of the evil opinions and acts of Baruch de Spinoza, they have endeavored by various means and promises, to turn him from his evil ways. But having failed to make him mend his wicked ways, and, on the contrary, daily receiving more and more serious information about the abominable heresies which he practiced and taught and about his monstrous deeds, and having for this numerous trustworthy witnesses who have deposed and born witness to this effect in the presence of the said Espinoza, they became convinced of the truth of this matter; and after all of this has been investigated in the presence of the honorable hakhamim, they have decided, with their consent, that the said Espinoza should be excommunicated and expelled from the people of Israel..."

*The "hakhamim," namely the official rabbis of the community, with whose consent the resolution was made to excommunicate the "said Espinoza," were familiar with the traditional wording of the proclamations of excommunication and excerpts of these conventional formulations were incorporated in the announcement of Spinoza's excommunication:*

"By decree of the angels and by the command of the holy men, we excommunicate, expel, curse and damn Baruch de Espinoza, with the consent of God, Blessed be He, and with the consent of the entire holy congregation, and in front of these holy scrolls with the 613 precepts which are written therein; cursing him with the excommunication with which Joshua banned Jericho and with the curse which Elisha cursed the boys and with all the castigations which are written in the Book of the Law. Cursed be he by day and cursed be he by night; cursed be he when he lies down and cursed be he when he rises up. Cursed be he when he goes out and cursed be he when he comes in. The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven. And the Lord shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law. But you that cleave unto the Lord your God are alive every one of you this day."

*The proclamation of the excommunication concludes with the following famous lines of the actual warning:*

"That no one should communicate with him neither in writing nor accord him any favour nor stay with him under the same roof nor within four cubits in his vicinity; nor shall he read any treatise composed or written by him."

*

Now, this text was written, pronounced and proclaimed before Spinoza has reached his 24th year, while Ethica was published posthumously. So, it is not on the basis of Ethica that the ban was pronounced. The ideas he championed at that time were likely those entertained in his *theological political* treatise. So, the questions that I am raising here are those that often come with early and late contributions/ideas in the life of a philosopher (with a parallel e.g. in Ludwig Wittgenstein).

One can be struck by the *differences* between such early and late efforts, that can be mistaken as a radical review. But if we consider Spinoza and Wittgenstein—who wrote each their Tractatus, in their early years—the reviews that came late in the life of both, can be also be seen as

background of the early works brought up in front, completing the early Tractatus by an *investigation* of a complementary nature. Similar to a reversible figure/ground in perception.

If—in Fuller & Weizman's imagery[21]—they were *angels* in their early work (moving *upstream* of the current *state* of affairs that they critique), they may have been *cats* in their later work (homing in on the *detail* downstream of their impact). What I am interested in is *midstream*: their work as build-ers amidst the contingencies of the present. Along these lines: I am interested in their work as *termites*—their vocation as builders where the *materials* result from *eating up* current possibilities.

That is to say: in Spinoza's *Ethica* the *empty set Ø* introduces a *third* element—besides the finite and the infinite—which is the *other*. In sum, there is G-d, human beings and the *other*. It is a realm of contingency alongside human existence: it exceeds the life-span of humans, yet is younger than mountains. If conquered it is for the generations of humans and not for a single individual. It is contingent and historical. As cultural beings we can resemble it, without it resembling us.

From a Jewish vantage point, it is there as a plan for the glory of G-d and for the generations. And it is in this framework that a universal G-d is nonetheless a *personal* G-d. Jewish faith lies in this hope. I am drawing out this religious idea here, because if there is a universal neutrality in Spinoza's concept of G-d, there is no warmth in it. A sense of pure self without a personal glow. Which may be why he has been brought into dialogue with Buddhism. But what of emptiness?

We may agree that Spinoza's nothing is *not* empty. It is *not* the simple absence of something. It is often used to *enhance* a point that is being made. Alternatively, a lack which an ethical direction in life would somehow make up for. *Nothing else/but* is an example of the first kind (to be *enhanced*). While *nothing* (alone or isolated by brackets) is of the second kind (to be *redeemed*). From the text of his investigations in *Ethica*, it is clear that he *at once* knows and knows *not* of these things.

In the last section, I will demonstrate how an understanding of *nothing* that includes the 'empty set  Ø' came from certain occurrences; which did indeed happen but would not appear in any sense factual—even though they did occur—before they hatched as *fiction* in narratives. My stories of nothing are narratives of this kind. Here, the narrative does *not* come after the facts, but before them: which is linked to occurrences that are *not* factual *before* they are told.

So, it is in this sense that fact is born from fictions that are marked/seeded by things happening "under the radar" of facts. Here the narrative not only determines *what* they are, but *that* they are. Which means that there is a certain ethics of relating that determines the course of the world. This also includes language: there are a number of things that will not exist unless they are told. This does not mean that nothing has happened and that everything is constructed. What then?

It means that occurrences are *necessary* conditions for the existence of fact, but *not* sufficient conditions. And here lies the temptation: knowing of this power we may choose to *not* tell. It is a power we have over the world, and hold over each other. By wielding this power we can deny both the world and each other factual existence. We should not be surprised. Because it is no secret that humans are articulately/cleverly devious in these ways, and quite sophisticated at it.

Here, the realm of *nothing* determines the reign of a particular class of *falsehood*. If we think it is in our interest we can live with this sort of denial, and even opt for it. The reverse is also true, if we continue opting for it our interests will be revealed in due time. Performance can be seen as a human resort to counter this tendency. And to work for the opposite direction. In the realm of the other—or, the precincts of *nothing*—{} imply *denial*, while }{ will indicate *performance*.

For all his virtues, Spinoza lives *in* denial *and* performance: sharecropping performance *and* denial like most of us. While I have emphasised the performative side in Project Spinoza (DAC)—signific-antly how he *docked* the philosophical inquiry of Ethica into a geometrical concept of order—I

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[21] Fuller, Matthew & Weizman, Eyal. (2021). *Investigative aesthetics: conflicts and commons in the politics of truth*. Verso.

have here emphasised the aspects in which he lived in *denial*[22]. The point being that his "tie break" with the Jewish community didn't lead to anything good for him, nor for his philosophy.

If ranging the performative aspect of *Ethica*—the form and enactment of the initiative—over load of denial in the contents of his philosophy, is for the benefit of older traditions of knowledge under the conditions of modernism: given that the post-postmodernism we are presently living, is actually better named *late modernism*. That is, where modernism stands to fail such challenges as AI, or alternatively succeed: to turn human kind to an active mode before environmental damage.

The Learning Theatre here constitutes a stronghold of critical practice: or, performance cultivated in an aspect *educating* discernment. A likely ally to the triumph of history. The engagement of human beings in the work of shaping, and being shaped. And the success at claiming materiality *before* digitality: submitting the latter to the reign of the former. In forms of transactions with an ongoing character that impact and change our current notions of value creation. A **design**.

Theodor Barth 14.02.2023

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[22] Barth, Theodor. (2022). Project Spinoza: re/membering sensorial cogency—a presentation of a portfolio and a proposal of an anthroponomic reframing of field-records [parts I and II]. *DAC* (ejournal).