



Baruch Spinoza (1632-1667). *Ethica*—an other history of human kind. [Link](#).

What we call *discourse* is a playground located *one step off* from saying and doing, a question can be asked about the *assignments*—whether intercepted or delegated—between *solitary* existence in different walks of life, and inter-personal exchange in human *commons*. And whether we can determine a language for this in Spinoza's *Ethica*: more precisely, in Gilles Deleuze's queries and quandaries in *Ethica*. In particular, the ones relating to attributes. What they *do*.

It is clearly stated in *Ethica* that there is no way to determine what attributes are except for two that are within human reach: *thought* and *extension*. Which means that the infinity of attributes of substance—that are one *and* singular—can only be intercepted through thought and extension, and their modes: reason and perception, mind and body, intellect and emotions. So, the question is how they are *intercepted* and/or *delegated* by what Spinoza calls the 3rd kind of knowledge.



That is, *intuition*. Deleuze asks (2013, p. 22): «On s'est demandé si l'Éthique devait être lue en termes de pensée ou en termes de puissance (par exemple, les attributs sont-ils des puissances ou des concepts)?» "One could ask whether *Ethica* would have had to be read in terms of thinking or in terms of powers (for instance, are attributes powers or concepts)." (my transl.). How can we understand Deleuze's wording: 'have to be read'? Is his assignment delegated or intercepted?

Deleuze, Gilles. (2013/1970). *Spinoza—Philosophie pratique* (Eng. Spinoza—Practical philosophy). Éditions de Minuit.

In the terms discussed here the infinity of attributes can only be appraised indirectly: to the *solitary* pathfinder—each one of us—attributes will appear *modified*; to the goalseeking *commons* the attributes will appear as *modes*. The former is existential the latter is discursive. If delegated existentially they will be intercepted discursively. Conversely, if intercepted existentially they will be delegated discursively. The *traffic* between interception and delegation is likely *transactional*.

It readily appears how this sort of transaction would be the subject matter of a systematic *ethical* investigation: the geometric concept of his investigation surveys a landscape of *twisted* human

ways. The transactional scope of *Ethica* derives from the 3rd kind of knowledge: the transactions involving delegation and interception—in the existential and discursive trails combined—will account for the development of human intuition, and its assignments to ordeals of understanding.

Though lofty, Spinoza's take on intuition is not irrational: rather, as the epitome of the 3rd kind of knowledge, intuition is a learning matter. The learning assigned to philosophy—which Deleuze alludes to in the passage above—is the one specifically restricted to *thought* and *extension* (which Spinoza formulated in response to Descartes). For instance, in what is said and done along the existential trail, *thought* and *extension* will always emerge *modified*. Discursively they are *modes*.

Here, *assignments* relates to the *activation* of *signs*: not only by reading—which perhaps is what comes immediately to mind—but also by a growing usage evolving alongside intuition: the forms generated by transactions involving *interception* and *delegation*. The counterpoint to assignment is *assumption*: which we can define as the *pacification* of *signs*. This happens when existential modifications are assumed/*erased* and the discursive modes are assumed/*institutionalised*.

That is, a relation between the existential and the discursive as between part and whole and becomes institutionalised through *metonym*. Conversely, when neither are assumed—**1**) the activation of signs *and* **2**) the transactions *between* interception *and* delegation—attributes can be *triangulated* by their conjoint **A**) *modifications* (in existence) and **B**) *modes* (in discourse), through *synecdoche*; a part-to-whole relationship revealing *substance* in some *precise* aspects.

In sum, rather than asking whether attributes are concepts or powers, it may be more relevant—and true to Spinoza's own query—to consider that signs can either be *activated* or *pacified* through *assignment* and *assumption*, respectively: linked to the development or demise of intuition. Implying that the difference between the sign and what it stands for (which defines a sign as such) is *not* one thing. The difference differs when the sign *presents* and when it *represents*.

When the one activates, the other pacifies: the one assigns the other assumes; the *one* screens, intercepts/delegates and frames the *other* simulates, substitutes and erases. Evidently, the signs—thus determined by what they *do*—simply are *not* signs in the *same* sense. Which means that there are some pre-requisites that must be taking into account before anything can be assigned or assumed: when the *set* defined by the 'existential solitaire' and 'discursive common' is *empty*.

Hence the thesis that the *empty set*—inasmuch that there are *neither* modifications *nor* modes of attributes—is *not* one thing: we accordingly need two notations of the empty set, rather than one. The only existing notation lending itself to different inflections of the empty set, is Gottlob Frege's notation \emptyset = the empty set. What is proposed here is that the pacifying empty set is noted \emptyset (emptiness inflection *metonym*), while the activating empty set is noted \mathfrak{X} (*synecdoche*).

Which means that the inflections of the Boolean *true* and *false*—**0** and **1**—operate inside, or *within*, the empty set: differentiating between two inflections of emptiness (the one activating and the other pacifying). If we can take this to be Spinoza's chief errand in *Ethica*, we are equipped to take action from understanding the emptiness as *warm neutrality* (e.g., in a sample of modern architecture) as assigned, while emptiness as *environmental devastation* has a different end.

When returning to the formula $\mathbf{A} + \mathbf{Bi} = \mathbf{X}$ the latter (**X**) will feature the development of intuition—resulting from the transactions of interception and delegation—ranging from emptiness to fullness, or from warm neutrality to ethical engagement, when the relationship between (existential) *modifications* and (discursive) *modes* of attributes features the activation of signs, rather than assumption based pacification of signs. Emphasising communities of practice.



Spectral light-absorption of *mercury*—border transactions between light and matter. What happens at the border?