

Spiritual Automata and Bodies Without Organs: Spinoza, Deleuze, and Parallelism

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Abstract

In this paper, I seek to examine Deleuze's fascination with "spiritual automata" as a counterpoint to his more famous notion, the "body without organs". I shall argue that both are grounded in a deep reflection, on Deleuze's part, on the problems and issues generated by Spinoza's notion of parallel attributes. Ultimately, I argue, the development of the two notions is motivated by identical metaphysical concerns regarding the tenability of transformation, persistence, and affective interrelations between individuals. The answer, for both thinkers, is the insertion of a "third" relational term, which virtually interfaces with each other without violation of their parallel development. For Spinoza, such a term is the absolutely infinite substance; for Deleuze, it is instead the notion of sense and the faculty of sense-making.

Introduction

Gilles Deleuze was a thinker of limit, of boundaries, of borders (Lapoujade 2017: 319). At the same time, he was dedicated to exploring the surmounting of those same borders and the flexibility of those very boundaries. This tension, internal to his thought, largely explains his fascination with the early modern philosopher, Baruch Spinoza, whose uncompromising ontological monism pushed Deleuze's metaphysics into a serious reexamination of the notions of constitution, expression, and individuality. It is thanks to his interaction with Spinoza (together with Leibniz and Bergson) that Deleuze elaborated his conception of virtuality, and it is from Spinoza that he took the notion of "spiritual automaton" – one of the recurring tropes that traverses Deleuze's entire philosophical production. In my view, the spiritual automaton represents a perfect theoretical counterpoint to Deleuze's famous concept of "body without organs" (henceforth BwO). As I shall demonstrate in this essay, the development of these two notions shows signs of deriving from Deleuze's reflection on yet another Spinozistic concept, the so-called "parallelism" of minds and bodies. My goal, in the coming pages, is to contribute to our understanding of these conceptual totems by situating them within a constellation of related concepts, such as parallelism, spiritual automaticity, and affective interaction.

To reach this goal, I begin by examining Deleuze's own description of the spiritual automaton, drawing on two main sources: his early analysis of Spinoza's metaphysics in the *Expressionism* study; and his engagement with the moving image in the two volumes of *Cinema*, which appeared almost twenty years later. After establishing Deleuze's network of references regarding the spiritual automaton, I analyze his conception of the BwO as it appears in the *Logic of*

Sense and in *Anti-Oedipus*. In each of these twin analyses, I aim to show how both the spiritual automaton and the BwO correspond to necessarily incomplete figures in Deleuze's intellectual landscape. Far from damaging Deleuze's overall philosophy, this necessary incompleteness actually functions as a genetic mechanism for the manifestation of sense. Both the spiritual automaton and the BwO represent liminal signposts for understanding the gap between mindful and bodily affects. To understand the functioning of such incompleteness, I will employ Spinoza's notion of parallel entities, which provides a justification and a descriptive tool for affects happening (or event-ing) in distinct realms such as thought and extension. The development of this understanding entails a revolution of the notions of action and passion, which Spinoza enacted through his elaboration of the concept of "affect". By deploying this tool in my interpretation of Deleuze's conceptual network, I operationalize a connection between the BWO and the SA that shall prove beneficial to our understanding of these two crucial and prolific notions within Deleuze's philosophy.

Section I – An Automaton, not a Robot

The concept of spiritual automaton appears for the first time in the context of Deleuze's analysis of Spinoza's ontology. Deleuze deploys the spiritual automaton as a touchstone in the explanation of a specific puzzle internal to Spinoza's philosophy. That is, Deleuze wants to probe the tenability of the thesis according to which "the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (Spinoza 1985: E2p7). For Spinoza, the necessary corollary to this tenet is that "God's actual power of thinking is equal to his actual power of acting" (Spinoza 1985: E2p7c; Spinoza's corollary continues and explains this thesis in epistemological terms: "...that is, whatever follows formally from the infinite nature of God, follows also invariably objectively from the idea of God in the same order and connection, in God"). This Spinozist doctrine, rooted in metaphysical determinism, establishes a strict equation between the happening of things in Nature (the expression of God's essence as an immanent cause, as Deleuze puts it), and the understanding of those things in the realm of thought. The role assigned by Spinoza to God in this picture is not, to be sure, a theistic or even a deistic one. Rather, Spinoza understands God to embody the very essence of being, the substance of the universe – in this sense, God (also referred to as *nature*) is not dissimilar from the universe itself, when considered in its totality.

Deleuze's specific interest with this Spinozist doctrine lies with the notion of attributal causal containment. For Spinoza, the identity of the causal chain of the attribute of thought (the order and connection of ideas) and the causal chain of any other attribute in existence (the order and connection of things) does not entail their mutual penetrability. This may seem a univocal reference to the attribute of extension. However, it has been definitively argued that Spinoza intends with "things" to point to God's absolute infinity, i.e., an infinity of attributes. (Cf. Melamed 2018). In fact, this very doctrine rules out that ideas can be causes of things, and vice versa. Each "genre" of items – ideas, bodies – possesses its own independent causal chain, despite the

fact that the two causal chains mimic each other (even though this mimetic similarity finds some limits in the level of granularity allowed by structural features of the two domains). The conjunction of independence and mimesis in Spinoza's metaphysics of minds and bodies, and of ideas and things, is described by Deleuze through the term "parallelism", which he picks up from Leibniz. The conception of two parallel lines of causality, unraveling themselves to express the essence of the universe, fascinated Deleuze who dedicated much of the second part of his doctoral dissertation – later published under the title *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression (Expressionism in Philosophy)* – to explaining Spinoza's original take on the mind-body problem.

Spinoza's solution, as we have seen, implies a radical distinction and a causal independence between the two domains. To describe the functioning of a mind which does not involve the body in the procurement of its most basic ideas, Spinoza introduces the term "spiritual automaton", which refers to its Greek etymology to represent a mind which is "self-moving". To be clear, the automaton that Spinoza has in mind is not a "robot", a being which blindly executes its preset program; in fact, he uses the latter conception of automaton disparagingly in the *Theological-Political Treatise*, in order to refer satirically to those who accept a theological view without seeking to understand it (Cf. Spinoza 2016: XIII – G III/170/14).

By contrast, the positive view of automaton – the one that Deleuze will embrace – is proposed in Spinoza's *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*. As the title suggests, this early work by Spinoza is motivated by epistemological questions, and in particular by the demonstration of one central Spinozist tenet – namely, that «knowledge of the effect depends on knowledge of the cause» (Spinoza 1985: G II/32/25). Leaving aside the deep epistemological and metaphysical commitments that are implicit in this thesis, we can still observe how Spinoza's conviction of the above axiom leads him to suppose the isomorphism of ideas and things as parallel orders. If things are generated within a strict causal order, then their respective ideas will be generated along a similarly strict epistemological order. For this reason, Spinoza affirms that a mind that has been "emended" will simply produce ideas along those lines, "according to certain laws, like a spiritual automaton" (Spinoza 1985: G II/32/26).

After this (admittedly cursory) summary of Spinoza's presentation of the spiritual automaton, we can proceed to analyze Deleuze's reception of this concept. He is keen to remark that the expression signals "first of all that an idea, being a mode of thought, has its (efficient and formal) cause nowhere but in the attribute of Thought" (Deleuze 1992: 115). Deleuze reaffirms here the parallelist nature of the spiritual automaton, which draws its *raison d'être* from the respective causal containment of ideas and bodies. The spiritual automaton constitutes the formal and causal determination for each and every idea that it contains, and it shapes its contents – when fully operational – through its own causal power. According to Deleuze, this innovative solution to the mind-body problem "sets Spinoza apart from the tradition leading down from Antiquity: all efficient or formal (and *a fortiori* material and final) causality between ideas and things, things and ideas, is excluded" (Deleuze 1992: 115). Deleuze emphasizes the originality of Spinoza's criterion for the adequacy of ideas, which abandons the *adaequatio* of our idea to an external object and instead focuses on the derivation of that idea from the causal chain belonging to the order of ideas, or the attribute of Thought. The mind contains in itself the

potential to generate the totality of all the ideas that it possesses. The idea generated by the mind as spiritual automaton is qualifiable as a “singular *incorporeal* effect, which does not belong to the order of material causality” (Silantsyeva 2016: 358); the causal chain of ideas is entirely immaterial.

Furthermore, Deleuze’s genetic reading of the spiritual automaton is deepened by the consideration of a third element capable of synthetizing the relation of representation typical of the ideal domain and the causality typical of the real domain: the element of *sense*. Sense, in these initial movements of Deleuze’s philosophy, represents the deeper level at which “idea and object express something that is at once common to them, and yet belongs to each: a power, or the absolute in two of its power, those of thinking or knowing, and being or acting” (Deleuze 1992: 335). Following Spinoza, Deleuze reintroduces the *absolute* as the sense-making function that unifies the distinct causal series of ideas and things. The absolute is qualified (although not fully captured) in terms of its power, which is expressed in both series and that ultimately guarantees their unity through parallel unfolding developments.

The same conceptual preoccupations that animated Deleuze’s reflections on Spinoza are still present almost twenty years later in his consideration of cinema as a genetic medium. In Deleuze’s framework, the “movement” with which the cinematic image is endowed “gives rise to a *spiritual automaton* in us», «it converts into potential what was only possibility” (Deleuze 1989: 156). The impact of the moving image creates in us a shock, which stimulates our independent capacity for thinking and jumpstarts the thinker in us. It is in this sense that Deleuze can claim to be moving beyond early modern rationalism, so much so that

the spiritual automaton no longer designates – as it does in classical philosophy – the logical or abstract possibility of formally deducing thoughts from each other, but the circuit into which they enter with the movement-image, the shared power of what forces thinking and what thinks under the shock. (Deleuze 1989: 156)

From what we have considered above, however, Deleuze must not in fact consider Spinoza’s conception of the spiritual automaton as an “abstract possibility”; for all of its formality, indeed, Spinoza’s spiritual automaton had found in the notion of “sense” its redemption and the reunification of the causal threads of reality and formality, of ideas and things. Sense, as Deleuze will clarify later, is a unique notion that “turns one side toward things, and another side toward propositions. But it cannot be confused with the proposition which expressed it any more than with the state of affairs or the quality which the proposition denotes. It is exactly the boundary between propositions and things” or, in Spinozian terms, between ideas and things (Deleuze 1990: 22). This does once again collocate Deleuze in direct succession with Spinoza. As Uhlmann appropriately reminds us, “Spinoza sees meaning as residing not in words or images, but in understanding itself. The ‘idea’, for Spinoza, is not found in a word or an image; rather, it is the act of understanding itself” (Uhlmann 2020: 161). The power of thinking equals the power of acting, just like the order and connection of ideas equals the order and connection of things.

Sense thus transforms the spiritual automaton from programmed robot to genetic machine. Sense, in formal philosophy as in “shocking” cinema, is what provides to the spiritual automaton

its autonomy and allows it to activate its potential as an actualizing machine, endowed with generative – and not merely deductive – power. The mere representativity of the automaton is overcome by its understanding as “a machine of a superior order, one that sets thought in relation to an Outside that cannot be reduced to a world said to be ‘exterior’” (Bensmaïa 2005: 150). The Outside (or, to recover the term used in *Expressionism*, the absolute) is instantiated by the *power* of the spiritual automaton, just like it is instantiated by the causal *power* of the causal connections of the world. Once we realize that this Outside (or absolute) is not actually external, but expressed in parallelistic fashion by the two powers, we elevate the abstract and cold reasoning of the Rationalists to the generative power of the moving-image, which would be termed “idea” in Spinozist lingo.

Deleuze’s insistence on the unity of the generative powers, that can be expressed in distinct realms without losing its unity, grants us license to move our analysis beyond the limits of the attribute of Thought and beyond the causal chain of ideas. Our gaze – our aim – is now allowed to encompass bodies and things “in the real world”, in search of the notion of embodied power that functions as a correlate to the spiritual automaton.

Section II – An egg, not a chicken

In the previous section, I established the concept of spiritual automaton as a genetic machine endowed with power and potential. The spiritual automaton generates ideas through its own order and connection, without having to rely on the sensory universe or – more importantly – on any bodily connection. We now move to explore that very bodily realm which we had initially excluded from our analysis, following Spinoza’s parallelism and his doctrine of causal containment. Through the course of his philosophical itinerary, as I will show, Deleuze enucleated the notion of the “body without organs” as the physical counterpart to the sense-making potentiality of the spiritual automaton.

The BwO first appeared in the *Logic of Sense* as a “schizoid” contraposition to the mereological notion of object, both in the ontological sense and in the epistemic sense. Please note, in this essay, I will employ the adjective “mereological” as representing a philosophical stance which sees a study of the parts as conducive and necessary for the understanding of the whole. “Non-mereological”, by contrast, will indicate a tendency toward holism or, at the very least, toward a mutual grounding of the whole and the parts.

Deleuze, criticizing the work of Melanie Klein, emphasizes how the process of objectification and introjection – which lies at the bottom of any traditional sense-making effort – cannot properly account for the radical distinction between “bad” and “good” objects. (cf. Widder 2009). This distinction, for Deleuze, is at once epistemic and ontological, since the development of sense faces a radical alternative: it is either mereological and reconstructive; or genetic and holistic. The first case is realized through the positing of a parceled, individualized self in opposition to the object; by contrast, the holistic state of affairs appears as an immediate and non-dichotomic relationship with the making of sense. A “bad” object is an object known – or made

– through the mereological reconstruction of an Outside and an Inside; by contrast, the “good” object is the one known – or generated – through internal sense-making, which refrains from projection on the now-abandoned Outside. As Deleuze puts it:

...what the schizoid position opposes to bad partial objects – introjected and projected, toxic and excremental, oral and anal – *is not a good object, even if it were partial*. What is opposed is rather an *organism without parts*, a body without organs...having given up all introjection or projection, and being complete, at this price... *Two depths are opposed: a hollow depth, wherein bits whirl about and explode, and full depth*. These are two mixtures: one is made of hard and solid fragments which change; the other is liquid, fluid, and perfect, without parts or alterations *because it has the property* of melting and welding. (Deleuze 1990: 188-189; emphasis added)

In this passage, Deleuze explicitly introduces the BwO as a non-mereological generator of sense. This conceptualization avoids the mistake of conjecturing the body as a hollow receptacle for content, which originates elsewhere. Furthermore, the text of the *Logic of Sense* emphasizes how the generative properties intrinsic to the BWO (“melting and welding”, or in plainer terms – connecting) allow this somatic notion to escape the traditional conception of body as passive. In fact, Deleuze pushes the BWO as far as representing a parallelistic conception of sense-making, as “depth is not organized in series”. Depth, or sense, does not follow a progressive order that moves from world to body, onto the mind (Deleuze 1990: 224). The “undifferentiated plenitude” of the BWO “presents blocks of coexistence, bodies without organs or words without articulation” (Deleuze 1990: 224). As Spinoza would have it, the parallel coexistence of ideas (characterized as “words” by Deleuze in the quote above) and bodies is non-serial, as each belongs to a distinct “order and connection”.

It is true that the connection to Spinoza’s own conception of the body is less clearly stated in this context. Deleuze elaborated the BWO not just through the inspirations coming from Spinoza, but those originating in his investigation of many other thinkers as well (Leibniz, Freud, Jung, Artaud, Carroll, and Bacon). Nonetheless, thanks to the connection provided by the above passages, it is not too extravagant of an enterprise to identify the early intellectual gestation of the BwO in Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza. To make the task more difficult, however, we must acknowledge that Spinoza does not recognize a distinction between organic and inorganic matter. As a consequence, Spinoza’s equivalent understanding of any “body without organs” would have to apply – in naturalistic fashion – across all material domains.

A superficial reading of Spinoza’s discussion of bodily metaphysics might lead us to believe that he holds a bottom-up approach, where the features of the parts of the body (the “organs”) ultimately determine the properties of the whole. However, a closer look reveals that his stance leans towards an organicist and holist position. In *Letter 32*, for example – a text largely regarded by Spinoza scholars as the *vademecum* of his mereology – Spinoza affirms:

...every body, insofar as it exists modified in a definite way, must be considered as a part of the whole universe, must agree with its whole and must cohere with the remaining bodies.

And since the nature of universe is not limited...but is absolutely infinite, its parts are regulated in infinite ways by this nature of the infinite power and compelled to undergo infinitely many variations. (Spinoza 2016: G IV/173a/2-8)

Two points are of interest here. First, Spinoza turns the tables on Early Modern mechanists, who saw the universe as mereologically composed by smaller individuals, which ultimately regulated the workings of the whole. By contrast, Spinoza straightforwardly claims that finite individuals are but *parts* of the universe – the only legitimate whole – and must therefore adhere to its nature, to its internal development (cf. Costa 2021). Secondly, we must notice that, once again, the crucial point of Spinoza's argument resides in the notion of "power". It is the power of the universe that allows it to shape (to *in-form*, to apply a more Deleuzian category) its parts, its individuals, reduced here to organs.

In the *Ethics*, Spinoza had offered a similarly organicist understanding throughout the so-called *Physical Digression*. For the purposes of the present analysis, we need not reconstruct the demonstrative arc that brings Spinoza to conclude that «the whole of Nature is one Individual, whose parts, i.e., all bodies, vary in infinite ways, without any change of the whole Individual» (Spinoza 1985: E217s; G II/102/12-13). What is of interest, however, is the manner in which Spinoza cashes out this conception, in what Deleuze would call "sense-making" terms.

The parallelism established among the attributes of Thought and Extension is now enacted through a revolutionary conception of the capabilities of bodies and minds. Opening the door to what will become his groundbreaking notion of "affect", Spinoza affirms that

in proportion as a Body is more capable than other of doing many things at once, or being acted on in many ways at once, so its Mind is more capable than others of perceiving many things at once. And in proportion as the actions of a body depend more on itself alone, and as other bodies concur with it less in acting, so its mind is more capable of understanding distinctly. (Spinoza 1985: E2p13s; G II/97/7-13)

Here, the formal sense-making delegated to the mind is paralleled by an equipollent capacity of the body to affect and be affected, or in other words to *act*, while «depending on itself alone». The material sense-making is adequate only insofar as it is self-reliant.

Commenting on these passages, Deleuze affirms that the crucial questions of Spinoza's metaphysics of the body are the following: "What is the structure (*fabrica*) of the body? And: What can the body do?". The answer provided sheds ulterior light on the connection between the Spinozian body and the BWO. In Deleuze's eyes, "a body's structure is the composition of its relation. What a body can do corresponds to the nature and limits of its capacity to be affected" (Deleuze 1992: 218). While a literal reading of these comments might suggest a passivity on the part of the body, it is important to note that Spinoza's outlook is "ethical", albeit in an idiosyncratic way. For Spinoza, the goal of this understanding of the power of acting of the body is to equate its capacity for sense-making with the mind's capacity of understanding.

"Affected", in this sense, is importantly not a synonym of "being acted upon". As both Spinoza and Deleuze clarify, affects are those mutations within a body or a mind that increase or

decrease their respective capacity for action and understanding. If these mutations depend on the mind or the body alone, they are called “actions”, while “passion” is the term reserved to the mutations depending on external forces – may those be bodies or minds (Cf. Spinoza 1985 E3d3; G II/139/14-19. See also Deleuze 1992: 221). The interrelations (or lack thereof) between such actions and passions as they refer to the body or the mind will be our focus in the next section.

For now, with this Spinozian understanding of body in mind, let us return to the Deleuzian body without organs, as its more complete formulation appears in the *Anti-Oedipus*. In this work, Deleuze recovers the suggestion of “schizoid” behavior that had appeared in the *Logic of Sense*. The BWO appears as contrasted with the capitalist human byproduct, which Deleuze and Guattari describe as a “desiring-machine”. The surface resemblance with the “spiritual automata” described by Spinoza is obvious – although mitigated by a Marxist mediation, which dwarfs the parallelism sustained by the Spinozist metaphysics and instead incepts the idea of a “succession”, a serial production that generates the body without organs as an unwanted and perverted (“paranoid”) result of the desiring-machine (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 11). The BWO, however, as an object in relation with the world of desire and machines, quickly becomes intolerant and shakes off this association (much like Spinoza’s parallelism would, in theory, require). I am aware that this dynamic elaboration of the separation of thought and extension is not Spinozist, per se. Spinoza is quite clear in establishing the attributes as distinct within the essence of God “from eternity”. However, this elaboration does illustrate the Deleuze-Guattarian dynamic representation of the desirable separation of the two domains.

The BWO is able to reacquire the potential and generative capacity that it possessed in Spinoza’s understanding of it. As Deleuze and Guattari affirm, the mistake is to understand the BWO as a “chicken” (i.e., a fully formed being) when it should instead be captured through the image of an “egg”: pure power, closed to the exterior in its production of sense and content. In this context, Deleuze can recover – after the capitalist “fall” into the realm of machines – the sense-making capacity that the BWO held in the *Logic of Sense*:

Nothing here is representative; rather, it is all life and lived experience: the actual, lived emotion of having breasts does not resemble breasts, it does not represent them, any more than a predestined zone in the egg resembles the organ that it is going to be stimulated to produce within itself. (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 19)

The denial of representation enforced by the presentation of the BwO in *Anti-Oedipus* equates a rejection of the necessity of a mind-body interrelation, which is supposedly the only dispositive capable of generating sense. By contrast, Deleuze and Guattari construct a figure that rejects non-enacted potentiality (another one of Spinoza’s great conceptual enemies; cf. Lovejoy 1936: 74, 151). By doing so, they recover the opposition between sense and representation that characterizes the spiritual automaton. Representing an object (a “bad” object, in the language of the *Logic of Sense*) means subordinating the sense-making operation to the alleged relation between mind and body. Following Spinoza, Deleuze deems this approach as deleterious and ultimately failing (cf. Negri 1991: 65). Instead, by bearing in mind the notion of

parallelism that Deleuze inherits from Spinoza, we can understand the rationale of the denial of a relation of representation between the “lived emotion” of an organ and the “organ” itself. While the spiritual automaton is responsible for the genetic origin of sense in the realm of ideas, the BWO operates the same function in the realm of extension and bodies. The lived emotion of an organ is not the representation of the organ’s function, as the capitalistic mechanist reading would entail. By contrast, the body without organs becomes a “bodily automaton”, the perfect counterpoint to the “spiritual automaton” and its virtual completion.

As it has become clear in the last two movements of my analysis of the notion of BWO as Deleuze elaborates it, a great deal hinges on the possibility of representing affects – the sense-making projection of the individual unto the world, and vice versa – within a parallelist (“virtual”) paradigm. This is the task that we shall undertake in the next section. Once again, we will channel our efforts through Spinoza’s position on the issue, in order to acquire the tools required to properly capture Deleuze’s understanding of the affects.

Section III – An Affect, not a Passion

Spinoza’s understanding of affects – and affections – is multifaceted and complex. To avoid the overcomplication that would derive from attempting to capture affections in *all* their dimensions, I shall limit the present analysis to affects and affections of modes – i.e., singular individuals – when described as minds and bodies. Spinoza does, for example, describe modes themselves as affections of the one existing substance. The caveat above is meant to signal that I will not be discussing that understanding of modes in the present article.

Spinoza’s *Ethics* undertakes the task of describing human behavior on the basis of these affections. It begins such a description with a definition that reads: “By affect I understand affections of the Body by which the Body’s power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections” (Spinoza 1985: E3d3; G II/139/14-16). The first clause of this definition refers to modifications of the body, either internal or external (i.e., involving the body itself as the sole cause, or an external cause as well). The second clause of the definition refers instead to the ideas of these modification. Note, here, that because of Spinoza’s doctrine of parallelism, the bodily modifications *cannot* be the cause of the ideas-affections; instead, these formal entities must be generated in the realm of thought, by other ideas and minds.

Deleuze took great care in the analysis of this crucial Spinozian concept. Rather than focusing on the suggestive materialist implications of an imagined primacy of the corporeal, Deleuze calls our attention to a more important distinction, internal to Spinoza’s definition:

It has been remarked that as a general rule the affection (*affectio*) is said directly of the body, while the affect (*affectus*) refers to the mind. But the real difference does not reside there. It is between the body’s affection and idea, which involves the nature of the external body, and the affect, which involves an increase or decrease of the power of acting, for the body and the mind alike. (Deleuze 1988: 49)

Correctly, Deleuze emphasizes how the crucial divide in Spinoza's theory of affects is the one that separates the "internal" and "external" dimensions of a mode's interaction with other modes. Spinoza's concept of affect has been so influential in the history of philosophy precisely *because* it rejects the pigeonholing of these interactions through the criteria of bodily and mind-related mutual exclusion. On this subject, I direct the reader towards the rich literature on the so-called "affective turn", arguably begun by Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* and expanded through the mediation of Brian Massumi (e.g. Massumi 2015).

Despite Spinoza's firm belief in parallelism, the theory of affects is not a theory of affections (i.e., of modifications exclusive to the body or the mind). Instead, Spinoza reroutes affects through the notion of "power", which provides the ultimate ground for their discernment into actions and passions. Thanks to this philosophical machinery, he manages to account for the generation of affects without submitting them to metaphysical dualism (as Descartes or Malebranche had done).

As I have already noted in the previous section, this conceptual dispositive allows Spinoza to differentiate affects into actions and passions, on the basis of their belonging to the causal sphere of the subject, who is also the subject of the affect itself: «If we can be the adequate cause of any of these affections, I understand by the Affect an action; otherwise, a passion» (Spinoza 1985: E3d3; G II/139/17-19). The distinction between activity and passivity is internal to the ontological structure of the affect, and it orthogonally intersects the possibility of an increase or decrease of the subject's power of acting. As Deleuze puts it,

The *affectio* refers to a state of the affected body and implies the presence of the affecting body, whereas the *affectus* refers to the passage from one state to another, taking into account the correlative variation of the affecting bodies. Hence there is a difference in nature between the image affections or ideas and the feeling affects, although the feeling affects may be presented as a particular type of ideas or affections. (Deleuze 1988: 49)

As it is plain to see, for Deleuze the crucial distinction inherent to Spinoza's characterization of the *affectus* is the dimension of "feeling affects", a notion that – as we know – is likewise crucial for Deleuze's own understanding of the body as BWO. As Deleuze remarks, for the sake of simplicity we may often collapse the *affectus*, the felt variation, against the joint determination of "ideas or affections" as a particularization, a further determination. Nonetheless, the two belong to distinct chains of "order and connection", for Spinoza as for Deleuze.

We now have, thanks to this comparison, provided the bottom-ground explanatory concept at work both in Deleuze's conception of the affective capacity of body and mind (equal but disjointed) and in Spinoza's. But the question remains: how can this become a generative capacity? After all, the idea of affect, despite its possible transformation in an action, still implies a crucial relationship with the exterior world, which Deleuze attempts to elide from the sense-making operation of the BWO.

One interesting suggestion comes from Moira Gatens, who describes Deleuze's conception as "a plane of *experimentation* rather than organization, [...] conceived in molecular, mobile, and dynamic terms. Rather than being restricted to its 'function', each thing is conceived, on this

plane, as implicated in a ceaseless process of *becoming* something else” (Gatens 2000: 61). Let us apply this paradigm to the BWO as we described it in the previous section of the present paper. Deleuze describes the BWO as an arrangement of uniquely *felt* experiences, which do not represent or resemble the ideal or formal order of things. At the same time, the internal dynamism of the BWO guarantees its capacity – its power – to effectuate variations without them being orchestrated by the formal “order and connection” of ideas. As Deleuze reaffirms in his reading of Spinoza, “a body can be anything; it can be a linguistic corpus, a social body, a collectivity” (Deleuze 1988: 127). The genuine power of the BWO thus resides in its capacity for dynamic formation of *possible* organs, while undergoing a self-stimulated transformation.

A different but compatible interpretation is the one suggested by Daniel Smith, who argues that the BWO characterizes a moment in the life of a body where no distinction between the self and the Outside is felt, or experienced, in favor of a shared world of «intensities-in-motion». Correctly, Smith points out that the “full body” of the *Anti-Oedipus* is intimately at odds with the migrating “flows” that it experiences in its relationship with the Outside. He is also correct in stating that the only solution to this apparent dichotomy is the notion of sense-making, crucial to the project of the *Logic of Sense*, which appears as a resolute “transcendental” (Smith 2006: 147). Once again, we witness the emergence of sense as the absolute which grounds the sense-making operation. Just as it guided the genetic capacity of the spiritual automaton, it now allows the body without organs to access the full depth of its capacities without compromising its genetic autonomy.

The final question that we must now answer is the following: if the crux of Deleuze’s understanding of spiritual automata and bodies without organs is their capacity for self-stimulated, self-relying transformation, how come that this conception requires the apparently relational notion of *affect* to function? Would these categories not be better represented through the Leibnizian paradigm of a “monad”, something that has “no windows through which anything could enter them or depart from them”? (Leibniz 2014: §7). After all, it is the Leibnizian monad, and not the Spinozian individual, the *locus* where “the natural changes...come from an internal principle [that may be called active force], since an external cause would not be able to influence a monad’s interior” (Leibniz 2014: §11). It is tempting (although ultimately untenable) to represent the BWO as a physical declination of the concept of monad, a whole which contains the potential to develop each of its properties and specifications (the Leibnizian “detail”).

Yet, for Deleuze, it is vital to recognize the importance of the “Other” as what constitutes the paradoxical tension that justifies both the BWO and the spiritual automaton. We can observe this in the *Logic of Sense*, where Deleuze affirms:

When I, in turn and for my part, grasp the reality of what the Other was expressing, I do nothing but explicate the Other, as I develop and realize the corresponding possible world. It is true that the Other already bestows a certain reality on the possibilities which he encompasses – especially by speaking. The other is the existence of the encompassed possible. Language is the reality of the possible as such. The self is the development and the explication of what is possible, the process of its realization in the actual. (Deleuze 1990: 307)

The tension between actuality and possibility, to be sure, is one that Spinoza does not recognize (cf. Spinoza 1985: E4d3-4). However, it does represent Deleuze's manner of internalizing, through the BwO and the spiritual automaton, the concept of "power" that Spinoza considers pure actuality and that Deleuze, instead, may inscribe in the realm of virtuality. Unfortunately, a proper investigation of the concept of the "virtual", while central to the development of Deleuze's philosophy, exceeds the scope of the present paper. For excellent studies within this territory, see Pearson (2015) and Shields (2006).

In the passage above, quoted from the *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze assigned no sense-making role to the Other. However, the presence and expression of an Other – any other – limits the scope of what is possible, of what is within any individual's power to realize and make actual. The issue with this limitation is not its existence, which, in fact, is central to Spinoza's development of any notion of individuality (see Spinoza 1985: E1d2; E2d7). Instead, with Gatens, I identify the problem in "our tendency to mistake that which the other expresses for the thing expressed: in this way the 'other' (especially the powerful other) may structure and organize my perceptions of the world" (Gatens 2000: 66). The inescapable role fulfilled by the other is that of *delimiting one's power*. If affects are lived as passions – i.e., understood as *not* caused by the subject – one's power of thinking and acting is ultimately reduced, and so is the individual itself.

However, the sense-making operation is still and always reserved to the self, the only character who can unify the power of thinking of the spiritual automaton and the body without organs. It is the self, through the Deleuzian notion of *feeling* affect, that attributes sense to the otherwise causally and conceptually segregated units that make up the individual. The respective roles of the BwO and the spiritual automaton are thus reconstructed as positive ones. They do not merely result from the elision of the Other. Yet, this result is exclusively possible through Spinoza's doctrine of parallelism. Sense, recovered through the absolute, is the function that the human self utilizes to recover its unity, without the necessity of demolishing the unsurmountable barrier that separates the body and the mind. This barrier, it bears repeating, is bound to the non-affective elaboration of reality that both Deleuze and Spinoza oppose.

In summation: sense-making, activated through the affective faculty of *feeling*, enables in turn the conjunction of power of acting and power of thinking, the virtual reconciliation of body and mind. This solution is Deleuze's response to the problem we have delineated throughout this article, i.e., the question of how to embody the making of sense without submitting it to the function of representation. Through his confrontation with Spinoza, Deleuze elaborates the conceptual tools of spiritual automaton and BwO as independent genetic sense-makers, which do not rely on each other for their interaction with the Other.

The initial query that has motivated my analysis in this article has therefore found a point of resolution, which does admittedly require further interfacing with the extended *corpus* of Deleuze's writings. It is beyond the scope of a single article to account for each and every utilization of the BwO and the spiritual automaton in Deleuze's work. However, the effort of this article was to create a framework for the interpretation of these concepts and their connection with the initial movement of Deleuze's reflection on these matters, which I have identified in his early study of Spinoza's metaphysics and ethics. The two notions of the BwO and the

spiritual automaton have been shown to pertain to a parallelistic understanding of the world, which is nonetheless not fractured thanks to the insertion of the concept of sense and the operation of sense-making. Through sense, Deleuze overcomes the same difficulty which Spinoza had eliminated through the notion of God-or-Nature (*Deus sive Natura*, the absolute). Just like Spinoza's God is expressed by its modes in distinct attributes, Deleuze's sense is expressed by the multiplicity of BwOs and spiritual automata in their distinct genetic events. Again, through sense, Deleuze ensures that the genetic capacities belonging (respectively) to the body without organs and to the spiritual automaton remain virtual to each other, while actualizing themselves.

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