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Deleuze's Spinozist Gambler: Lessons on Games of Chance

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Abstract

At the end of Deleuze's lectures on Spinoza of 1980–1981, he asks his students to "imagine a Spinozist gambler." Yet he ends the course offering few clues about how to picture this figure. Here we provide an interpretation of the Spinozist gambler based on both its Spinozist conceptual context and its place in Deleuze's broader philosophy of gambling play. Accordingly, we examine Spinozist gambling in terms of Deleuze's account of Spinoza's three types of knowledge, and we compare the Spinozist gambler to Deleuze's more prominent figure of the Nietzschean dice-thrower. We thereby offer a tripartite characterization of the Spinozist gambler following its place in Spinoza's epistemology, which we further refine by examining Deleuze's comments on indeterminism in Spinoza and Nietzsche. We argue that, according to Deleuze, the Spinozist gambler controls chance through rational organization, whereas the Nietzschean gambler affirms and embraces chance itself. And by means of this analysis, we advance our knowledge of both Deleuze's Spinozism and his philosophy of play.

Keywords: Gilles Deleuze; Baruch Spinoza; Friedrich Nietzsche; Spinoza's three kinds of knowledge; play; gambling; indeterminism

1. Introduction

Deleuze ends his Spinoza course of 1980–1981 with a bit of mystery by assigning some homework, namely, to "imagine a Spinozist gambler," especially by consulting the *Ethics*. Unfortunately, he provides only sparse clues for how to picture this figure. He mentions it while detailing Spinoza's common notions and philosophy of gambling and seems to suggest that, although Spinoza wrote on probabilistic mathematics in application to dice play, this conception of gambling is not the proper kind because it lacks "Spinozist joy." What would it be instead? Deleuze is unable to tell us because he must turn immediately to his next course on painting, which begins in that same Spinoza session and starts off with a discussion of catastrophe, chaos, and chance in this artistic activity. What, then, might Deleuze's Spinozist gambler be, exactly, and what is the importance of this figure in his teachings on Spinoza and in his broader philosophy?

Despite the growing literature on Deleuze's reading of Spinoza[1] and on Deleuze's philosophy of play[2], this specific figure has gone largely unnoticed. After all these decades, let us now, at last, complete Deleuze's homework. To do so, we will firstly study the main Spinozist concepts at work, with a focus on the role of joy in acquiring Spinoza's three kinds of knowledge. This will allow us not only to distinguish, accordingly, three varieties of Spinozist gamblers, but also to clarify his interpretation of the complex doctrine of the three kinds of knowledge. Secondly, to make our characterization more precise, we will

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compare the Spinozist gambler to other types Deleuze discusses, with special focus on the Nietzschean dice-thrower, as illustrated by Francis Bacon's painting techniques. Finally, we conclude that Spinoza's gambler is distinguished from Deleuze's seemingly preferred Nietzschean forms of gambling, in that the former seeks to organize and control chance encounters, whereas the latter affirms and embraces them. By doing so, we hope to enhance our understanding of Deleuze's Spinozism by addressing the role of gambling, games, play, and epistemology within it, while also contributing additional thinking on the roles of joy and chance in Deleuze's broader philosophy of play.

2. Three Kinds of Knowledge and Spinozist Gambler

For Deleuze, the primary question of the *Ethics* is "What must we do in order to be affected by a maximum of joyful passions?" [12] (p. 273). This is because joyful passions increase our powers, and maximizing one's powers is the very meaning of the good. However, "nature does not favor us in this respect" [12] (p. 273): our encounters are largely contingent[3], and nothing guarantees that they will increase rather than diminish our power. So we should rely on reason to organize our encounters in ways that maximize joyful passions and minimize sad ones [12] (p. 274). The good gambler, then, should likewise rely on reason to make it possible for themself to maximize joyful passions and minimize sad ones. One obvious way to accomplish this goal would be by winning their gambling by organizing their encounters in a way that maximizes their advantageous ones. Yet winning may not be the sole way for a gambler to maximize joyful passions—a possibility that becomes apparent only once they understand themselves and their place within the broader network of relations that constitute the world.

Deleuze further remarks that "a philosopher is not only someone who invents notions, he also perhaps invents ways of perceiving" [15]. So, the Spinozist gambler would be someone who possesses a way of perceiving invented by Spinoza, as Deleuze calls it. What can be that perception? One important step in answering this question is to understand what kind of knowledge they operate under, and how this knowledge structures their affects, encounters, and decisions, because "different kinds of knowledge are also different ways of living, different modes of existing" [12] (p. 289). Accordingly, we must turn to Spinoza's epistemology and examine the three kinds of knowledge in order to see how each corresponds to a distinct mode of gambling.

2.1. Idea and Affect

Deleuze begins to lay out Spinoza's epistemology from his fundamental epistemological distinction between affect (*affectus*) and idea. The latter is a mode of thought that represents something, that is, it has objective reality, while the former is a mode of thought that does not represent anything at all. Loving something, that is, the affect or feeling of love, for instance, does not represent anything. It has an object, which is the loved thing, for sure, but the feeling of love is not represented by this object; the loved thing is not the objective reality of the feeling of love; the feeling of love has no objective reality. The idea of love, in contrast, does represent an object, which is the feeling of love. Similarly, the idea of the loved thing, whether it is an image or a concept, has the thing as its represented object and the thing thus constitutes the objective reality of that idea. An idea also has formal reality, which corresponds to the degree of reality or of perfection of the idea ([13] (pp. 48–51, 73–76) and [15]).

According to Deleuze, the idea has a chronological and logical primacy over affect, meaning that we first have an idea, which is always followed by an affect that can be either joyful or sad, such as love and hate, hope and fear, or confidence and despair. To love something, one must first have some idea of it: one sees an attractive person and is

immediately affected with a joyful affect, such as love or hope. This structure leads to a continuous variation of ideas and affects, as one constantly has varying ideas accompanied by successive affects. When one's power of acting is increased, the resulting affect is joy, while when it is diminished, they experience an affect of sadness ([13] (pp. 48–51, 73–76) and [15]).

In the case of the gambler, this process can be understood as follows: when a die is thrown, a card is played, or the ball lands on the roulette wheel, the gambler has an immediate idea, whether an affection idea (the sensible perception of the die, card, or ball), a common notion (a universalizable grasp of the relations or structures governing this event), or an essence idea (an intuitive apprehension of the encounter as such), accompanied by a corresponding affect. If the outcome is advantageous, the gambler experiences a joyful affect, such as hope or confidence, and if it is disadvantageous, a sad affect, such as fear or despair arises.

2.2. Affection Ideas

This basic epistemological distinction between affect and idea provides the groundwork for understanding Spinoza's hierarchy of knowledge. For Deleuze, Spinoza's epistemology unfolds through three corresponding types of ideas: affection (*affectio*) ideas, common notions, and essence ideas.

The affection-idea is the first kind of knowledge, the lowest kind, i.e., knowledge of things only by their effects, i.e., "inadequate ideas" or representations of effects without their causes. Deleuze describes an affection as "a state of a body insofar as it is subject to the action of another body" [15]. So, it is the relation between two bodies modifying each other, as perceived by each of the modified bodies. Each perception of the modified bodies is an affection for that particular body.

In E2p40s2, Spinoza outlines this epistemology, which encompasses the three kinds of knowledge. Accordingly, the lowest level is knowledge derived from sense experience (*imaginatio*), or from random experience, unorganized by the intellect. This conception can be traced back to his *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione*:

There is the Perception we have from random experience, that is, from experience that is not determined by the intellect. But it has this name only because it comes to us by chance, and we have no other experiment that opposes it. So it remains with us unshaken. (TIE, 19)

In the *Ethics*, he calls this "*imaginatio*" and cashes it out as a cognition of external bodies as present, acquired through ideas of affections, i.e., states of our own body, subject to the action of other bodies:

[. . .] affections of the human body whose ideas present external bodies as present to us, we shall call images of things, even if they do not reproduce the [NS: external] figures of things. And when the mind regards bodies in this way, we shall say that it imagines. (E2p17s)

And, later in E2p40s2, Spinoza further expands:

From what has been said above, it is clear that we perceive many things and form universal notions:

I. from singular things which have been represented to us through the senses in a way that is mutilated, confused, and without order for the intellect (see p29c); for that reason I have been accustomed to call such perceptions knowledge from random experience [.] (E2p40s2)

Accordingly, affection ideas are cognitive representations of external bodies to the extent that they enter into a relation with one's own body. They are "mutilated, confused, and without order for the intellect," or simply inadequate, because they present only a partial view of their causes. The mind, having access to merely a fragment of the causal

network that produces these ideas, necessarily forms an imagination shaped by these partial and incomplete causes, and thus lacks the full picture.

For Deleuze, this first kind of knowledge is constituted by the concatenation of inadequate ideas and affects, in which one perceives objects only through chance encounters and the effects they produce, grasping merely variable "signs" within Nature's common order rather than their causes [12] (p. 289). He further describes signs as the forms of expression corresponding to this first level of knowledge [12] (pp. 181–182, 289–290), [16] (pp. 138–141), [13] (pp. 73–74, 105–107), [17]. He explains that we live in a whole regime of signs, which takes various forms: indicative, abstractive, imperative, interpretive, vectorial, and ambiguous. Indicative signs are basic sensory effects that reflect only our own bodily nature rather than the external cause that produced them. Abstractive signs arise when our finite nature retains just one feature of what affects us, yielding confused, partial universals. Imperative signs occur when we mistake an effect for a purpose, interpreting natural events as commands or prohibitions. Interpretive signs emerge when imagination projects suprasensible agents as causes of our sensations, inflating them into gods or legislators. Beyond these scalar types, vectorial signs register affects that increase or diminish our power, which are joy or sadness. Ambiguous signs mix both, producing fluctuating affects. All signs share associability, variability, and equivocity: they refer not to objects but to chains of affections and affects generated by chance encounters among bodies.

In gambling, the regime of signs characteristic of the first kind of knowledge can be observed clearly. Indicative signs appear when the gambler takes basic sensory effects as reflecting something about the external situation, assuming the outcome will be advantageous when they observe a certain sensory effect, even though they merely register the current state of their own body. Abstractive signs arise for the gambler when they isolate a single feature of an encounter, such as a recent win, a particular number, or a recurring pattern, and abstract it from the broader network of relations, thereby forming a confused and partial universal on which their game will be based. Imperative signs are when the gambler mistakes effects for purposes, interpreting them as commands, or how it is meant to be, as if winning or losing was their fate, thereby introducing a teleological reading into events that are purely causal. Interpretive signs intensify this process through superstition, when imagination projects suprasensible causes onto chance encounters: lucky colours, rituals, routines, or the presence of particular people are treated as if they influenced outcomes. Vectorial signs register the fluctuations of power, as the gambler takes feelings of hope or confidence as indicators of a favourable outcome, and fear or anxiety as omens of loss. Finally, ambiguous signs arise when these regimes intermingle, producing unstable oscillations between joy and sadness, confidence and despair. In all these cases, signs do not refer to objects or causes but to chains of affections generated by chance encounters among bodies; they are associative, variable, and equivocal, binding the impulsive gambler to imagination.

Deleuze highlights the notion of "encounter" (*occursus*) to make sense of this mode of living: "When a body 'encounters' another body, or another idea, it happens that the two relations sometimes combine to form a more powerful whole, and sometimes one decomposes the other, destroying the cohesion of its parts" [13] (p. 19). To live at the level of affection-ideas, he says, is to live entirely through such chance encounters, which randomly form more powerful wholes or decompose the cohesion one's parts [15,17]. This leads to a random variation or fluctuation in one's powers and what Deleuze has already described as 'affects' that accompany this variation or fluctuation in one's powers. Peter encounters the sun, and his power increases; he spends the day in a dark room, and his power diminishes. These variations in power are accompanied by corresponding variations

in affect, as we have seen. Peter feels more joy when he encounters the sun and less joy when he remains in his dark bedroom.

This might be the knowledge that a pure and consistent empiricist would possess: knowledge drawn solely from sense experience, without any appeal to what lies behind these experiences, without recourse to induction, causal explanation, or intellectual organization. It is the epistemic world of Beavis and Butthead, a life driven entirely by chance encounters and the passions they provoke, governed by whatever happens to strike the body at a given moment: the impulse to score, to smoke, to eat, to drink. It is the mob mentality driven by immediate affects of fear and rage, leading to sudden reversals of loyalty and political dynamics, as depicted by Tacitus. It is a life lived at the level of immediate affections, where each new encounter overturns the last and no stable understanding emerges until one rises to the second or third kinds of knowledge. It is the regime of signs in which the primal affects of hate and love, fear and hope govern action, that keeps us dependent on fortune and vulnerable to manipulation, because what we "know" at any moment is just what our latest encounter has made us feel. It is how we act when we make choices under the influence of news cycles, social media outrage, or advertising cues.

If we think in terms of gambling, this corresponds to the worst possible gambler; an impulsive gambler of the kind we meet in Dostoevsky's novels like Alexei Ivanovich in *The Gambler* or Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov in *The Brothers Karamazov*, who live wholly at the level of affection ideas, thrown from one impulse to the next, mistaking the last streak of luck for a law of nature thereby falling into confidence and the last loss for cosmic persecution, thereby sinking into despair. They do not form common notions, do not organize encounters, do not grasp relations among events. Their decisions are results of a track of inadequate ideas, and the misleading signs of immediate sensation. They react rather than understand, pulled by joy when a bet lands and crushed by sadness when it fails, never escaping the cycle of passions that bind them to chance itself.

2.3. Common Notions

Next, we have common notions, or common ideas. Spinoza develops common notions through E2P37 to E2P40. It is a concept that he introduces in the *Ethics* and TTP that is absent in his earlier epistemology in TIE and KV [12] (p. 292). Spinoza remarkably calls them "the foundations of our reasoning" (E2p40s1) and the "foundations of philosophy" (TTP XIV III/179). Mogens Laerke notes that although common notions are central to Spinoza's epistemology, the doctrine still requires considerable conjecture because Spinoza "set these aside for another Treatise" and "decided to pass over them" in the *Ethics*, where the unwritten treatise was evidently meant to clarify their use, foundations, and relation to axioms and higher-order "second notions" (E2p40s1, II/120), [18] (p. 90). In E2p40s2, Spinoza remarks, "from the fact that we have common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things," we have the second kind of knowledge or knowledge by reason.

It is clear that Deleuze takes the challenge to reconstruct Spinoza's common notions and develops a far-reaching interpretation from the relatively limited material Spinoza provides. According to Deleuze, common notions are notions that are common to all minds. But this is because they primarily represent something common to all bodies and thus function as general rather than abstract ideas. He reveals that at this level each body is defined by a specific relation of motion and rest, and when the relations of two bodies agree, they compose a more powerful whole present in its parts, like in the example of chyle and lymph as parts of blood from Letter 32 to Henry Oldenburg. A common notion thus represents this composition of relations and the unity formed through their agreement. Now, all bodies share something in common—extension, motion, and rest—even when they disagree, as in the case of poison and the poisoned body. However, disagreement

never arises from what is common, it can only show where "differences and oppositions" (E2p29s) are formed [13] (pp. 54–55). Nevertheless, even though we cannot form common notions through disagreements, once we form common notions through agreements among bodies, we come to know the disagreements among them as well[4].

On this level, thus, reason starts to organize encounters, which consists of selecting and categorizing joyful encounters and in grasping common notions, that are the shared relations enabling composition, from which further relations are deduced and active, more rational affects are followed. What appears as a series of random encounters at the level of affection-ideas is revealed, at the level of common notions, to exhibit determinate patterns. In this regard, they are also the indispensable material from which common notions are extracted. However, this organization is not something naturally given to it, but rather an active process in which it categorizes things according to the relations of agreement and disagreements among them, as well as for the particular purpose of maximizing the power of the individual. Put briefly, when chance encounters result in an agreement among two bodies, they compose a new whole with each other that increases their powers and consequently affects them with joy, which allows them to generate a common notion with each other. By contrast, when two bodies disagree, their encounter decomposes the whole, diminishes its power of acting, and produces a corresponding sadness; from within this sadness no common notion can be generated, since there is nothing between the two bodies that they agree from which such a notion could arise. When we are not dominated by sadness, joyful encounters allow us to form the first and least general common notions, which represent what is shared between our body and another body that affects us with joy. These initial common notions give rise to active joys, which gradually replace passive joyful passions, even though the latter can never be completely eliminated, because the former never increase to a point where we become fully active that we "become the adequate cause of the affections that exercise our capacity to be affected" [12] (pp. 240–241). This increase in power enables us to form more general common notions, including those concerning bodies that oppose or sadden us. From these broader common notions arise further active joys, which overcome sadness and displace passions born of it [12] (pp. 273–288, 295), [13] (pp. 54–56), [15].

One implication is that sadness never makes anyone intelligent, because a sad affect arises from an object acting on us in a relation that disagrees with our own, nothing in sadness can lead us to form a common notion, which is why he insists that philosophy must be a meditation on life rather than on death, since death is by definition a sadness and always a bad encounter. Ageing, on the other hand, is to reach a point where common notions let you understand how other bodies now agree and disagree with your own, so that you can find the grace proper to your body rather than being subject to random encounters. This capacity is only made possible by progressively accumulating chance encounters and drawing from them the common notions they implicitly contain [15]. It is a kind of practical knowledge, then, in the manner of *phronesis*, rather than pure mathematics. It is learning how to live, like knowing how to swim or dance. Someone who does not know how to swim does not understand how their body must enter into a composition of relations with the wave; instead, they wait passively for the wave's impact, which inevitably produces fear and sadness. Learning, then, is the process of organizing encounters; to penetrate into the relations that allow one's body to combine with external movements rather than suffer their effects. This is true for any skill: swimming, dancing, navigating storms, even interpersonal life. When one grasps things not as affecting them but as composable relations, one begins to possess one's power of action [17].

This is a kind of wisdom grounded not in health or lust for life, but in knowing and appreciating what you are capable of, much as Spinoza himself did, even to the point of

telling other philosophers off while fending off figures like Leibniz, who, according to Deleuze, tried to steal from his manuscripts [15]. So, whereas on the first level of knowledge, one is randomly dragged around by sensations that are interplays between their body and their surrounding environment, on the second level, there is a kind of observing and experimenting involved. One starts to observe, experiment, collect data, and organize their knowledge according to the relations of not only their body to other objects, but also between those objects themselves. Even though one starts forming common notions from the joyful passions induced in them through their own body's relation to some external object, they extend to the relations between other objects themselves.

Furthermore, this process is not completely impartial or objective, but from a viewpoint, as it depends on the particular relations of a particular individual and on what increases their power and joy. The relations themselves are objective; what increases one's power and thus gives them joy is objective, but the knowledge that is organized according to this principle of what increases one's joy is not necessarily objective in the sense of applying to every individual. Some of them may apply to all human bodies: a certain dosage of arsenic will kill any human individual, but the specific amount might change from one individual to another. Other relations are even more singular: nuts, for instance, can increase some individuals' powers by providing essential nutrients, while decreasing others' if they are allergic to them [17]. Likewise, the effects of the same individual body or same event on another individual body might vary depending on the relational context. The same event, turning on the light, for instance, can either diminish or increase one's power of acting depending on the situation, producing hatred when it disrupts an activity, such as deep meditation, and joy when it aids one, such as searching for one's glasses in the dark [19]. This shows that affects, and consequently the common notions formed through them, are underdetermined by events or bodies taken in themselves, but by the broader relational context within which bodies encounter and compose with one another.

The eventual concepts we have, that are notions or common ideas, are universals[5]. Because a sad affection produced by a disagreeing body cannot lead one to form any idea of what they share with it, whereas a joyful affection, arising from a body that agrees with their nature, directly induces them to form a common notion, the common notions they develop are necessarily universal, applying to their own body and the particular bodies that joyfully agree with it. When they encounter a body that agrees with theirs and feel a joyful passive affection, this very joy prompts them to form the idea of what is common between them, which is why Spinoza, in Part Five of the *Ethics*, emphasizes the crucial role of joyful passions in generating common notions, noting that as long as we are not torn by sadness arising from contrary bodies, our mind's power to understand remains unobstructed [12] (p. 282).

However, universals come in varying degrees. Some universals are more universal than others [12] (pp. 275–276), [17]. The first common notions one develops will be the least universal, applying only to their own body and the particular bodies that joyfully agree with it, since nothing in our experience can inductively generate the most universal notions concerning bodies that oppose us. That all bodies are in space and time might be the most universal common notion we have regarding extended things, while what is common to two particular bodies would be one of the least universal common notions we can think of. The more universal they get, the more objective they will be, because as they get more universal, they will encompass more relations and ultimately the whole universe, in which case they will "bring Nature as a whole into play" [12] (p. 275).

Yet, Deleuze makes the caveat that Spinoza distinguishes the universality of common notions from a certain conception of abstract universality [12] (pp. 277–278), [13] (p. 57). He explains that an abstract idea would require separating in thought what cannot be

separated in representation. Removing glasses from paper is not abstraction but physical separation; selecting a sheet's front or back is not abstraction either, since each side can already appear separately in representation. True abstraction would be thinking something like "color without extension" or "extension without movement," which are inseparable in experience. Many philosophers, therefore, deny abstract ideas entirely, claiming such separations are impossible. They instead distinguish abstraction from general ideas, which do not involve separating inseparable elements. For Deleuze, this distinction is crucial for understanding why common notions are not abstractions. General ideas are not abstract things, but relations shared by multiple particulars—functions ideas can assume. There are no abstract ideas, only specific ideas that become general when they express a composed relation common to many cases, like a triangle's angle sum [17]. Accordingly, an abstract idea is inadequate because, first, it is characterized by a supposed sensible characteristic that is imagined by neglecting the differences, and, second, because sensible characteristics are accidental, random, and variable, depending on chance encounters [15]. An apple-shaped soap may look exactly like (i.e., have the exact same sensible characteristics as) the fruit apple, but it will have completely different agreement and disagreement relations with our body than the fruit apple when we eat it. Therefore, "common notions are *general* rather than *abstract* ideas" [12] (pp. 278–279), which is also in accordance with Deleuze's comparison of common notions to abstract ideas: by describing the former as a form of *phronesis*, a practical knowledge oriented toward living and acting, whereas abstract ideas remain purely theoretical or mental and lack practical efficacy [17].

Moreover, common notions are necessarily adequate ideas. Joyful passions, arising from inadequate ideas that are merely another body's effects on one's own body, do not grant them an adequate idea of things that agree with their nature. Thus, one must use these joyful passions to form the idea of what is common between their body and an external one, for only this idea, the common notion, is adequate [12] (p. 283). Deleuze's reasoning here is that if there is something common to two bodies with a corresponding idea, then this idea cannot be solely in one individual's mind, but rather within the substance itself, both corporeally and intellectually. And as the common notions get more universal, they will be equally in the part as in the whole, and thus present in substance (E2p38-39). So, common notions are the first adequate idea we have, and by being so, they break the chain of inadequate ideas that we seem to be compelled to [12] (pp. 279–280, 290–291), [13] (p. 55), [15][6].

Finally, adequate ideas increase our powers, as one adequate idea leads to a chain of other adequate ideas. Thus, the mind, which has an adequate idea, will be more and more active as it forms other adequate ideas, followed by the first. The mind becomes more active in this process because it is the adequate cause of these ideas, rather than merely being passively affected by objects external to itself [12] (p. 283).

Deleuze summarizes this process as such: When we encounter a body that agrees with our own, we first experience a passive joy; an increase in our power that still arises from an inadequate idea and gives rise to passions and desires rooted in imagination. Yet this very joy induces us to form a common notion, an adequate idea of what is shared between our body and the other. From this notion arises an active joy, explained by our own power of acting. This active joy joins the passive joy but transforms its accompanying passions, replacing them with desires that belong to reason and count as genuine actions [12] (p. 285).

The second kind of knowledge, for Spinoza, thus consists of five interconnected components. First, it is organized according to increases in power and the joys that accompany those increases. Second, it is structured through the relations that bodies bear to one another, rather than through the isolated effects of bodies on us. Third, this knowledge takes the form of universals, ranging from the least to the most universal common notions.

Fourth, these universals are necessarily adequate ideas, expressing something genuinely shared between bodies. Finally, because they are adequate, these ideas actively increase our power of acting and thereby enhance our capacity for further understanding.

Every episode of *The Simpsons* can be seen as a series of random encounters, much like David Lynch movies, where individual events compose no coherent whole on the face value. But maybe this apparent lack of unity is because of our perspective from within the characters' experience: we are witnessing a world without common notions, because the characters themselves are incapable of forming them. When one rises from the first to the second kind of knowledge, their ideas become adequate and their affects active; they can determine by their intellect the common relations among perceptions that appear to come from random experience, through which they become determined more from within themselves than from by external causes. This is the moment when Sherlock Holmes organizes seemingly unrelated pieces of evidence, or affection ideas, into coherent causal narrations through common notions. At the outset of an investigation, the world appears as a disorderly sequence of random encounters: scattered clues, contradictory testimonies, and emotionally charged incidents that seem governed by chance. Holmes's method consists precisely in organizing these encounters by identifying relations that recur across cases, thereby forming common notions that hold beyond any single event. What initially appears accidental becomes intelligible once grasped through these common notions.

For the rational gambler, common notions emerge through the active organization of encounters. However, although they are grounded in random encounters, these are not taken at face value but used as material from which an understanding of commonalities in relations can be extracted. Sadness never makes the gambler intelligent, since losses and failures do not themselves generate common notions, yet even unsuccessful plays can improve the gambler's power of understanding of their game insofar as the gambler learns from what they have done good in those plays and build their common notions on those. Like any practical skill, gambling improves with time and ageing; the gambler is worst in their first game and gradually improve as encounters allow them to discern how relations agree or disagree with their own characteristic manner of play. These relations concern not only the gambler's body in relation to cards, dice, or opponents, but also relations among those elements themselves, giving rise to tactics and strategies apt for their own characteristic relations that is their particular style of play. As such, common notions are always formed from a viewpoint: they do not necessarily apply universally to every gambler, yet they remain universal within the context of a given style of play. And more universal common notions can be found as one move upward to the rules that structure the game itself. Nevertheless, these universals are not abstractions, since separating in thought what cannot be separated in practice would be useless at best, and harmful at worst in play, as that would be slipping into abstractive signs. Once the gambler forms such an idea of what is common between themselves and the game, this idea is supposed to be an adequate idea as it cannot belong merely to imagination but expresses a relation that pertains to the game itself. Such adequate ideas increase the gambler's power of acting and thereby their capacity to win. Moreover, the rational gambler does not merely organize past encounters retrospectively, in the manner of Holmes, but also anticipates future ones. Although no one knows what a body can do, this ignorance reflects an epistemic limitation rather than the nature of being itself. As Deleuze emphasizes in his discussion of Spinoza's probability treatise, the *Calculation of Chances*, common notions can be developed for anticipating future encounters probabilistically; the gambler thus wagers not blindly on chance, but on relations learned through experience [23,24][7].

Whereas the first-kind gambler—the impulsive gambler—plays through imagination and impulses alone, driven by momentary affects, affections, and corresponding

signs produced by random encounters at the table, the second-kind gambler—the rational gambler—organizes their knowledge to increase their power of acting and joy of the game, which is ultimately winning the game by cleaning all their opponents. There are minor ways of increasing power and joy that serve this ultimate purpose. Their understanding of their game, let's say poker, is structured by universal relations such as probabilities, hand hierarchies, betting patterns, and stable behavioural tendencies, not by fluctuating impressions. They observe, test, and categorize opponents' strategies, forming common notions such as bluffing frequencies or positional advantages. These universals are adequate ideas grounded in reason, allowing the rational gambler to act on adequate knowledge of the causal relations between themselves and the game, and thus from internal power rather than reactive passion, thereby enhancing their joy in playing.

2.4. Essence Ideas

These two kinds of knowledge do not exhaust Spinoza's epistemology, though, as there is, finally, what he calls *scientia intuitiva*, or the adequate knowledge of the essence of things. We will take a brief look at how Spinoza describes this kind of knowledge, what Deleuze makes of it, and finally discuss whether it is or can be relevant to the knowledge of the gambler.

The third kind of knowledge is present since Spinoza's earliest writings and characterized by grasping the essence of things (TIE, 29; E2p40s2) or the thing itself (KV II.ii 2), and inerrant (TIE 29, KV II.i 2) or necessarily true (E2p41)[8]. In the *Ethics*, Spinoza describes it as intuition proceeding from "an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the [NS: formal] essence of things" (E2p40s2). According to Deleuze, Spinoza distinguishes common notions from essences in that a common notion expresses only a relation shared by several bodies, not a body's singular essence, which is its unique power of acting, while the third kind of knowledge is defined by this singular essence. Thus, the third step in knowledge is rising from common notions to the intuitive grasp of singular essences. We reach this kind of knowledge by first forming common notions that express God's essence, in relation to which we attain a direct and intuitive vision of God and of singular essences as contained in God and as conceived by God [12] (pp. 299–301, 303–304), [13] (p. 74), [17][9].

Spinoza's three kinds of knowledge now form a clear structure: the first kind consists of affections and passive affects, that is, the realm of signs; the second consists of common notions and the active joys they generate; the third consists of intuitive knowledge of essences. The second and third kinds alone are adequate and form the world of univocity, "where what is said, is said in one and the same sense for everything about which it's said." In Book V, Spinoza develops idea of this sense of one's own eternity: those who live mainly through first-kind affections feel little of this, while those who fulfil the greater part of themselves through common notions and essences lose only a small part of themselves, for most of their being participates in what is eternal [17].

Deleuze explains that any affection is an inadequate idea produced by a body's parts acting deterministically on another body's parts, yielding a passive affect, yet ultimately still constituting an affection of the essence expressed through the existing body. Thus, every affection is an affection of essence. But how is this possible? It is because every individual being is defined by a degree of power within an infinity of powers grounded in nature's absolute power [32]. Essence, in this framework, is this degree of power that belongs to a certain individual, expressed through a specific relation of motion and rest. This relation corresponds to the body's degree of power, realized through the extensive parts that constitute it for as long as it exists. Ultimately, "each essence is a part of God's power, and is thus conceived through God's essence itself, insofar as God's essence is

explicated through that essence" [12] (p. 304). Nevertheless, this understanding of both God's essence and the essences of other things proceeds by conceiving our own essence *sub specie aeternitatis*, so that this knowledge has no formal cause other than our own power of thinking, that is, God's power as expressed through our essence [12] (pp. 303–305), [23][10].

According to its essence, a body can be defined in two ways: kinetically and dynamically. Kinetically, a body is defined by a relation of movement and rest realized by an infinity of extensive parts. These parts constantly interact through external determinism, so the body's essence lies in the persistence of this relational pattern rather than in any fixed material components. Dynamically, a body is defined by its power of being affected. Since its extensive parts can undergo infinitely many interactions, the body always experiences affections and affects that fulfil this capacity. Joys and sadnesses thus express their essence, revealing how their power of action is actualized in changing circumstances and encounters [23].

Spinoza treats essence as a body's degree of power, expressed in two ways. First, inadequate ideas and passive affects are affections of essence insofar as essence is realized through an infinity of extensive parts interacting under a fixed relation. Common notions, by contrast, are perceptions of relations shared between bodies; their resulting active affects are also affections of essence, but now essence is understood not as extended parts but as a relational power expressing itself from within. At the highest level, ideas of the third kind and their active affects belong to essence insofar as it is in itself and for itself, a pure power of acting [23].

When one reaches the second and third kinds of knowledge, as we have seen, they have adequate ideas and active affects, meaning their affections arise from the internal power of their essence rather than from external causes. But if they are both adequate ideas and active affects how are the latter distinguished from the former? According to Deleuze, the distinction is qualitative: although the power attained through the second kind of knowledge cannot be increased in quantity, it can be intensified by knowledge of one's own essence, the essence of one's body. This is precisely the adequate idea that common notions lack, and it is what allows the transition from the second to the third kind of knowledge. The highest kind of knowledge, thus, consists of adequate ideas of our own essence *sub specie aeternitatis*, of the essences of other things in the same eternal perspective, and of God as the infinite cause containing and producing all essences, including our own [12] (pp. 304–306), [13] (p. 74).

A Spinozist gambler appears differently at each level of knowledge. At the first level, they are ruled by inadequate perceptions of chance; wins generate joyful passions, losses sad passions, both passive fluctuations determined by external encounters. At the second level, they form common notions: they grasp relations that structure the game; probabilities, patterns, risk-reward ratios, opponent behaviours, and so their perceptions become adequate, producing active affects that stabilize them. Here, they no longer swing with fortune but play from an internal composure rooted in an understanding of causal relations. At the third level, the gambler grasps their own essence as a power of acting within a broader network of power relations. Chance no longer appears as an external power but as something interiorly comprehended [34].

In this framework, for actual gambling practice, the second kind of knowledge seems to be the most relevant and sufficient; the third kind would benefit the gambler only by giving them a deeper, existential lucidity rather than a tactical advantage in the game itself. The third kind of knowledge gives insight into the singular essences of things, which is their intrinsic power of acting, not predictive information about their future behaviours or empirical outcomes, which are already fully accounted for by the relational and probabilistic understanding characteristic of the second kind of knowledge. Deleuze

emphasizes that intuition of essences is an internal, ontological grasp, not a strategic or empirical knowledge. Even if the gambler attained third-kind knowledge of their opponents or of the game, this would not yield practical advantage in the casino, because essences do not determine contingent sequences of events. The second kind of knowledge already provides everything relevant to practice: understanding relations, probabilities, strategies, and the stable features of encounters. The third kind transforms one's being, not one's predictive power. It produces internal freedom and active joy, but not superior calculation. As Deleuze stresses, intuition expresses "essence in itself and for itself," not empirical foresight [23].

That said, developing the third kind of knowledge, understanding one's own singular essence and its place within a larger whole, would also enable the gambler to understand how they enjoy, and thus to maximize joyful passions and minimize sad ones while playing, including in gambling. Common notions already provide an understanding of what generally increases one's power and produces joy, but essence-ideas disclose the specific degree of power proper to one's own body. Someone who grasps essence-ideas, including their own essence, is no longer bound by socially imposed values such as winning or losing; instead, they are able to form values in accordance with their own unique singular essence and its position within a broader network of neighbouring essences or degrees of powers. Consequently, once the gambler attains the third kind of knowledge, they are no longer confined to winning and losing, nor to the instrumental rationality of the second kind that merely calculates means to given ends but are instead able to determine what is genuinely best for their own particular composition of power. Unlike the impulsive gambler, the intuitive gambler is not a slave to their passions, and unlike the rational gambler, they are not solely a computing machine, but a free person in that they comprehend what is good for their own particular composition of power.

3. Playing with Philosophy

Thus, although Deleuze does almost nothing to characterize the Spinozist gambler, we can, from the Spinozist context, distinguish and describe three possible varieties based on the level of knowledge they obtain. But there is yet another context that can help us further determine the Spinozist gambler's conceptual features, namely, Deleuze's philosophy of play, which is largely thematized around gambling.

When we enter this domain of Deleuze's thinking, a tricky translation issue presents itself. We will examine texts and lectures where Deleuze, in French, discusses *jeu*, normally translated in English either as "game" or "play." Given the vital differences between their senses, translators have chosen one or the other in accordance with the context. They may even use the two English terms interchangeably in the same paragraph [35] (pp. 24–25), [36] (p. 28), or give both at the same time when the sense is ambiguous, as "game or play" [23]. For the verb *jouer* and its forms, "to play" and its variations are often used, including, "to play the game," whereas, in the context of a stage actor's playing, *jouer* has been rendered instead as "to act" or "to act out" [35] (p. 24), [36] (p. 28), [37] (p. 176), [38] (p. 171)[11]. *Joueur* has been translated as "player" or "gambler" (hence our figure here is the "spinoziste joueur") [23,35] (p. 24), [36] (p. 28). And although *jeu* has on occasion been rendered "gambling" [39], normally it is *parier* that is translated as "to gamble" or "to bet" [36] (p. 42) and *pari* as a "wager" or a "gamble" [35] (p. 37), [36] (p. 42), [40].

Given these variations across and within translated texts, we might turn to Roger Caillois's innovative terminology to guide our choices for English terms when characterizing Deleuze's philosophy of gambling play. Caillois, also writing in French, fashioned a terminological distinction to differentiate two poles of play: *paidia* and *ludus*. *Paidia* is associated with the easy, recreational play of children, and it is spontaneous, impulsive,

exuberant, freely improvisational, carefree, joyful, frolicsome, anarchic, unruly, and capricious [41] (pp. 13, 27–28). The other side of the continuum is *ludus*, which is play that is bound to "arbitrary, imperative, and purposely tedious conventions" that implement set techniques and utensils in order "to find diversion and amusement in arbitrary, perpetually recurrent obstacles" [41] (pp. 13, 29, 32–33). It often involves problem-solving and requires "effort, patience, skill, or ingenuity," and, it excludes games that "wholly depend upon the cast of a die" [41] (pp. 13, 29)[12]. As such, Caillois's *paidai* and *ludus* roughly map onto the English "play" and "game," respectively (see: [42] (p. 598)). This is a useful distinction for both translating and interpreting Deleuze's philosophy of play because he conceptually differentiates two kinds of *jeu*. The first sort is more ludic because it involves an adherence to pre-established, conventional rules. He speaks of these as the "familiar games" (*jeux connus*) or the "normal games" (*jeux normaux*) that we are accustomed to playing in daily life [37] (p. 74), [38] (p. 69). The second kind is more paidiaic, being freed from the constraints of rules; thus we might prefer to call it "ideal play" (*jeu idéal*) [37] (p. 76). A preference for "play" over "games" for this particular notion is further reinforced by the fact that ideal play for Deleuze seems more related to matters of metaphysics, aesthetics, thinking, existentialism, and the philosophy of life than to what we might call a *theory of games*[13].

In addition to Spinoza's sort of gambling play, Deleuze also discusses that of Heraclitus, Gottfried Leibniz, Blaise Pascal, Søren Kierkegaard, Stéphane Mallarmé, Friedrich Nietzsche, Lev Shestov, Jean-Paul Sartre, Francis Bacon, Jerry Lewis, and Michel Foucault, all of which presenting their own kind of gambler [35] (p. 36), [43–45] (pp. 66–67), [46] (pp. 62–63). Among these varieties of play, it is the Nietzschean "dice-throw" that predominates and often sets the standards by which the others are characterized and critically evaluated. Perhaps it is for this reason that Deleuze emphasizes that Spinoza's (supposed) treatise on gambling probability, the *Calculation of Chances*, focuses on "games with dice, the dice throw" [23,24] (pp. 73, 77–87). But how well does the Spinozist gambler fair when dicing against the Nietzschean player?

The Nietzschean dice-throw appears sporadically throughout Deleuze's courses and texts, ranging from his early *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962) [35] all the way to his and Félix Guattari's *What Is Philosophy?* (1991) [47]. Throughout all these treatments, we find Deleuze ascribing the following basic traits to the dice-throw: {1} it is joyful; {2} it affirms chaos and chance, and thus it does not calculate the values of foreseeable outcomes in order to devise effective betting strategies; {3} it affirms chance's necessity all in one throw; {4} it does not strictly heed any preexisting rules or conditions but rather invents new ones and thus new games and situations with each move or throw; and, {5} it is vital to the creative activity of thought and art, and as such, there are no "victory conditions" except whether or not something new has come about. As we now compare Nietzschean and Spinozist play point-for-point, we will find both resonances and tensions, which we further investigate in the next section when taking into account Deleuze's hybridization of these thinkers.

Joy, the first trait of the Nietzschean dice-throw, is certainly a priority for Spinozist gamblers. Their primary aspiration is to increase active, joyful affects and minimize sad ones. In fact, Deleuze may have stressed this exact point when, in the middle of his discussion of the Spinozist gambler, Anne Querrien interrupts with an unfortunately inaudible comment or question. Deleuze objects to whatever she says by exclaiming: "but [. . .] it's not Spinozist joy, it's not Spinozist joy!" [34]. We cannot be certain if he is still referring to Spinozist gambling. But we should not be surprised if he were, given this comment's immediate context and also the broader Spinozist one we outlined previously that strongly emphasizes joy.

For Nietzsche, Deleuze says, *to affirm* means to "dance" and "play;" and, to affirm one or another particular thing means to make it an object of joy [35] (pp. 17–18). Thus, for instance, even the tragic hero, when understood in this affirmative way, is a "joyful, graceful, dancing and gambling hero [*héros joueur*]" [35] (p. 18), [36] (p. 20). In fact, affirmative joy appears almost *boundless* for Nietzschean play. Nietzsche's Dionysus, for instance, fully embodies affirmation because he makes *everything* an object of joy, including "even the most bitter suffering" [35] (p. 17). Given Deleuze's emphasis on becoming in these contexts (see: [35] (pp. 19–24)), suffering is affirmative perhaps because even the destructive forces of "bad" encounters have the potential to help us vitally grow and mutate: "It is Dionysus who throws the dice. It is he who dances and *transforms* himself, who is [. . .] the god of a thousand joys" ([35], italics added (p. 18)). Considering that Spinozist gamblers find joy not in any kind of outcome but just the composition-building sort, should we not see them as deficient in comparison to the Nietzschean dice-thrower who affirmatively embraces all outcomes whatsoever?

Deleuze's ambivalent comments regarding the Pascalian gambler could reinforce this point. On the one hand, Deleuze says, writing the *Pensées* was a "real joy" for Pascal, insofar as he took great enjoyment in creating ordered lists of alternatives, similar to how gambling games can establish various options to wager upon, such as the many red or black numbered positions on a roulette wheel [48]. Pascal's famous wager can even be seen as a set of two main options to bet upon, namely, to exist as a believer, or otherwise, as a non-believer. Here, Pascal's bet requires that we take an exhilarating, life-defining *leap* into one or the other whole new mode of existing, with all its many foreseeable or unpredictable implications. In this way, the bet affirms all the "infinite immanent possibilities" of the choice [47] (p. 74).

Despite this, "Pascal does not pass for a model of gaiety," Deleuze says [48]. Granted, it is one's own—and not God's—existence that is "put in play" [*mise en jeu*] in the wager, and furthermore, the aim is to increase our "life," infinitely even, because the best possible outcome for the wager (God exists and we believe) rewards us with an everlasting, joyful life in heaven [43]. Nonetheless, Pascal responds to the uncertainties surrounding the gamble by apportioning and evaluating the possible outcomes in a way that predetermines and delimits their worth in accordance with a Christian theistic perspective that values another world over our immediate, lived one. In this way, the "whole alternative is governed by the ascetic ideal and the depreciation of life" [35] (p. 37). For this reason, Nietzsche "opposes *playing* to *betting* and *dancing* to *leaping*;" it is only the "bad player" who bets and the buffoon who leaps [35] (p. 37). Hence, the dice-throw "is not the game played by Pascal's gambler" [38] (p. 71)[14]. On this score, are there not some resemblances between the "bad" Pascalian and the Spinozist gamblers? By valuing what Deleuze calls a "mystical experience" in our union with God in the third kind of knowledge [17], as well as prioritizing compositional integrity over destructive deformations that might mutate us in unforeseen ways, might not Spinozist gambling similarly be confined by an ascetic ideal and a depreciation of the developmental vitality of life? It seems not. For Deleuze, it is not a "dark" sort of mysterious mysticism but rather a "non-religious [. . .] mystic of light" that maximizes our joy and beatitude [17].

The other problem that Deleuze notes with Pascal's wager is that it does not affirm chance and chaos, which brings us to our second point of comparison. As we noted, Pascal's response to the alternative choices is to *mathematically* calculate the potential losses and gains for each kind of outcome. Then he fashions a betting strategy (a "martingale" of sorts) to predetermine the safest and best bet. In that way, he tries to tame and limit—rather than encourage—the disruptive and unpredictable power of chance. By contrast, the Nietzschean dice-throw makes "chaos an object of affirmation instead of positing it as

something to be denied" [35] (p. 37). While the second and third kinds of Spinozist gamblers might not use a mathematical martingale strategy, as they instead employ lived, practical know-how, or otherwise, knowledge of compositional causality or singular essence [17], do they not nonetheless use this knowledge to predetermine the quantitative values for the potential outcomes of random encounters, assessing them in advance as producing more or less joy? And is not the quest to gain more and more knowledge also in its own way a long-term gambling strategy with quantitative aims for attaining "greater" outcomes, for taming chance and chaos, and for managing risk? If so, it also seems to fall short of the Nietzschean standard of gambling play.

The third main trait of the dice-throw is that it affirms chance's necessity all in one cast of the dice. Put very simply, this means to gamble in a way that affirms not just chance's power to decide this present outcome but also its power to *overturn* that very outcome again with a new throw, then that one with yet another cast, over and over, endlessly. In other words, chance here rises to the level of "necessity" when we affirm it as what shall always return, no matter the outcome given [35] (pp. 25–29). According to Deleuze, the Mallarméan dice-thrower, by contrast, sees necessity as what *abolishes* chance. For him, so long as each outcome is still open to be overthrown by chance, necessity has not prevailed. In other words, under Mallarmé's conception, what is necessary is what is both predetermined and predetermining. For the Nietzschean gambler, by contrast, what is necessary is that *nothing* be predeterminable, since chance can always disrupt any given causal framework, thereby subverting the grounds for any such determination [35] (pp. 33–34). Is this the Spinozist conception too? On the one hand, Spinoza seems to acknowledge that within the temporal limits of our human lives, we cannot obtain full knowledge of all causality or essence, and thus, we cannot ever fully predict every outcome of our random encounters, making chance something that we always have to face. However, for Spinoza, the realm of extensive bodies is causally deterministic through and through. Furthermore, the *ideal* end for Spinozist gambling is to *eliminate* the role of chance entirely in our lives such that before any encounter, we can predetermine whether it will prove good or bad for us and choose it accordingly [15]. If so, would that not be another way Spinozist gambling is deficient in Deleuze's broader philosophy of play? We will return to these questions in the next section.

Now, since chance in the "ideal play" of the dice-throw has the power to overturn every outcome, that means it overrides the conditions or "rules" governing any given situation, and, in their place, generates new rules, orders, and force dynamics [38] (p. 71). This is the fourth main trait of the dice-throw. In the Nietzschean context, chance is defined as "the relation of force with force" such that "By affirming chance we affirm the relation of *all* forces" [35] (pp. 40, 44). In other words, these force relations, taken altogether, are by nature never stable partly on account of chaos and chance. As Deleuze explains, "The encounters of forces [. . .] are [. . .] alien to every law" [35] (p. 44). Here, the dice-throw is what injects the disruptive forces that shake up the power dynamics of any organization of force-relations; in Nietzsche's poetic terms, when the dice land they make the earth *tremble* [35] (p. 25). Each set of force-relations (each "diagram" in Deleuze's terminology) "does not follow from the preceding one, but is in relation with the preceding one," with the "dice throws coming from the outside" and disrupting their order [49]. Here, the "second dice throw partially depends on the conditions produced [and] determined by the first" [50]. Continuing Nietzsche's metaphor, the previous situation is like a shaker cup containing the dice, which is handed to us, but that particular cup and dice were themselves previously established by chance [50], with there being no first or final cast [50]. Likewise, the current dice-throw will produce the next shaker, which will be passed on to overturn that new situation. Because chance intervenes, it is a sequence that introduces

discontinuity into its developments. Thus, "Chance is the opposite if a *continuum*" [35] (p. 44). But for the Spinozist gambler, even though encounters appear random from our limited perspective, does not the general causal framework for Spinoza remain largely the same after each chance outcome, no matter how disruptive? Put another way, does not even the most saddening, decompositional encounter still leave the world's causal order and its trajectory of development intact? So, would not Spinozist gambling in this way also fall short of the Nietzschean dice-throw? These questions in particular occupy our critical evaluation in the following section.

Finally, the dice-throw is the creative activity of thought and art, for Deleuze. He writes, "If one tries to play this game other than in thought, nothing happens; and if one tries to produce a result other the work of art, nothing is produced" [38] (p. 71). This is because, it would seem, philosophers need to "shake up" old structures of thought to create new concepts and ways of thinking [51–54], and artists, in order to create original new works, styles, and artforms must do the same with their given assumptions, conventions, and techniques [34,55–57]. Deleuze almost never offers concrete illustrations of the dice-throw for art creation, with a rare exception being his discussion of Francis Bacon's painting technique [45] (p. 66). Bacon's method was explicitly on Deleuze's mind in that same session when he discusses Spinozist gambling [23]. It also exhibits not only this fifth trait but the preceding four as well. For these reasons, let us examine it in more detail.

Bacon's artistic aim was to create sensational images that neither he nor anyone else could have conceived before [58,59] (pp. 138–140, 176). Accomplishing this requires chance for subverting probabilities in order to allow "improbable" imagery to arise [45] (p. 67). Probability here is the likelihood for a paint stroke of some kind to be placed somewhere on the canvas. Chance, by contrast, is a disruptive factor that overturns the conditions apportioning such probabilities.

Bacon's preferred casino game was roulette (see: [45] (p. 66)), [59] (pp. 51, 98), [60,61], so Deleuze characterizes Bacon's artistic gambling play as "roulette without a martingale" [45] (p. 66). Consider a roulette wheel with 37 pockets. Presumably, there is an equal probability for the ball to land in any one. Similarly, on the painter's initial blank canvas, there is, for the most part, a relatively equal probability for any mark to go anywhere on it[15]. And in roulette, each pocket is assigned a number and colour, which creates various outcome types with different probabilities. For instance, there might be a 2.63% probability that the ball will land on one particular number but 46.37% chance, on a red pocket [62]. Similarly, when Bacon begins roughly sketching the initial outlines of his images on the canvas, he establishes interrelated zones that encourage or discourage various kinds of marks for each [45] (p. 66), [58,59] (p. 21), [61]. For instance, there might be a foreground space set against a surrounding background, which institutes "force relations" between the zones that make refined and detailed strokes more probable in the foreground, but broader, more homogeneous, space-filling ones in the background [45] (pp. xii-xiii, 44, 66).

If Bacon just "played along" with these forces and probabilities, "betting on the odds" like a martingale strategy might advise, the resulting image would be a cliché with no originality and thus no artistic value. To create the improbable image, however, he needs the disruptive power of chance. But it is not mere probabilistic chance, like we see with some other "art as play" creators, as for instance, Marcel Duchamp "who let three threads fall on the painted canvas, and fixed them exactly where they fell" [45] (pp. 66–67). For Bacon, the chance forces do not follow prescribed rules and structures of play but rather must fundamentally alter them. For this, he draws from the chaos of his disorganized workspace and from within his own body to make random, non-representational marks, for instance, by throwing the paint impulsively, carelessly, and sometimes drunkenly onto the partly formed imagery, then further smearing it with a paint-soaked rag [58,59] (pp. 13,

52–53, 56, 58, 90, 94, 105, 122, 141), [60,61]. This disrupts the force relations and probabilities of these particular regions. Then he spreads these chaotic forces throughout the painting's other zones [34,45] (p. 71), [59] (pp. 56, 121), [60] "like one continuous accident mounting on top of another" [59] (p. 11), resulting in a new set of images that are "like the emergence of another world" [45] (p. 71).

Yet, given how disruptive the chance forces of Bacon's "dice-throw" can be, they may upset the imagery so much that the painting becomes a useless, dishevelled mess, causing him to throw out the entire work [59] (pp. 17, 92, 94), (see: [34]) and [45] (p. 77). Still, he might make the final mark a chance splatter, jeopardizing a nearly finished work [60]. And he was absolutely committed to this gambling play [45] (pp. 68, 76–77), [59] (pp. 50, 90); for instance, he painted on the unprimed side of the canvas [59] (pp. 195–196), causing his marks, including random ones, to be "indelibly made" [60]. Despite this extreme risk of "destroying the canvas," he maintained an "optimistic nature," always thinking that "something good is going to turn up" [60].

Thus we see that Bacon's technique provides concrete illustration for all five traits of the dice-throw: {1} it is joyful because involves a cheerful optimism in the face of risk; {2} it affirms chance and chaos because it is a chance-based technique, and he accepts any result *in advance* of its production; {3} he affirms the necessity of chance because he never stops using it, sometimes as the final mark, and more and more as time went on; {4} it changes the "game" by disrupting the force relations and zones of probability that otherwise would have predetermined the development; and {5} it is the creative artistic act because it produces something previously inconceivable.

And although Deleuze does not provide concrete illustrations for a dice-throw creating new concepts, we might conjecture that such cases also, in their own ways, exemplify some of its main features. For instance, one possible account could be that the dice-throw in thinking is our taking chances on random encounters with other fields of creation, including mathematics, science, painting, cinema, and so on, which sends shockwaves through our nervous system, scrambling our brain's neural workings and allowing us to make new conceptual connections[16]. Regardless, the "ideal play" of creative thinking or art creation does not admit of winners or losers as decided by preestablished rules like our familiar games do, but we can always be victorious if we "know how to play, that is, how to affirm and ramify chance" to create the new [38] (p. 71).

By contrast, Spinozist gamblers do not create radically new notions as much as they discover ones already existing in the mind of God. However, chance still is involved in discovering common notions at least, because obtaining new ones requires having composition-enhancing chance encounters that we never had or learned from before. However, unlike with the dice-throw, Spinoza's chance does not function to disrupt our previous ways of thinking but rather just adds to it accumulatively. Taking this and our previous points into account, does not the Spinozist gambler fall far short of the Nietzschean dice-throw that seems to serve as Deleuze's standard for gambling play?

4. What Can a Spinozist Gambler Do?

These tensions between the Spinozist and Nietzschean gamblers may appear odd when we take into account how much Deleuze's interpretations of both Spinoza and Nietzsche shape one another, often importing key concepts and terms from one to the other context. Deleuze even notes that, besides some pre-Socratic philosophers, Nietzsche only acknowledges Spinoza as a predecessor [35] (p. xv)[17]. According to Deleuze, they agree on the following fundamental claims: {1} that thinking takes priority over consciousness [13] (pp. 17–22); {2} that a good/bad distinction for living should replace a good/evil model for judgment [12] (p. 254), [13] (pp. 22–25), [32,66] ("K as in Kant"); {3} that active, affirmative

joys should be sought instead of sad, reactive passions [13] (pp. 25–29), [35] (p. 190), [66] ("I as in Idea"), [67,68] (pp. 83–84); {4} that a body is composed of differential, unequal forces that determine its powers of affecting and being affected [13] (pp. 27–28, 62), [67]; {5} that bodies are composed or decomposed by the chance encounters of forces [35] (p. 40); and {6} that we can never fully know all of a body's powers [35] (pp. 39–40), [67,69]. However, he says that their thinking is certainly not identical [70], and they specifically disagree about the variability of force relations [35] (p. 206 n. 18), which will prove crucial for our final assessment of the Spinozist gambler.

To fine-tune our characterization of the Spinozist gambler, we focus on the sixth concordance, that "we do not know what a body can do." Each random encounter, we noted, either increases or decreases our powers to affect or be affected. But, this changes our essence, too [12] (p. 225). Consider for instance how our capacities to be affected—and hence our essence—change drastically from childhood to old age [12] (p. 222). We are thus a *range* of such variation [12] (pp. 222–226). Yet, we cannot know that full range of our essential variability before experiencing our limits [12] (p. 226). We can only come to know it more and more by trying to become active and seeking adequate ideas. For the second kind of gambling, this would involve always taking chances on new kinds of experiences, because otherwise, we would not grow beyond our current set of common notions. Deleuze has us consider captains who take their ship past its—and their own—personal limits by entering a storm that is too destructive for them to handle. They still remain serenely on board as it sinks "not out of duty, but better to look at this thing, as if it were a matter of ripping forth a final secret about the composition of relations" [17]. So, to find our limits, we must gamble on where they might happen to be at any moment. In other words, it seems the Spinozist gambler of the second kind must affirm chance now and always, even until their very last "dice-throw," so to speak. This makes them more like the Nietzschean player.

But what about Spinozist gambling that operates on the third level? Deleuze says that as we gain adequate ideas, we develop a "desire to know ever more things in their essence or *sub specie aeternitatis*" [12] (p. 305). Yet, Deleuze claims, that process of acquiring knowledge of essence must always pass through the first and second levels first [12] (p. 307, 310), meaning that even the third kind of Spinozist gambling must still have chance encounters as its start. Moreover, Deleuze writes, "it is a vain hope, while we exist in duration, to have only active joys of the third kind, or just active affections in general. We will always have passions, and sadness together with our passive joys." Thus, as we noted before, we must make "inadequate ideas and passions take up only the *smallest part of ourselves*" [12] (pp. 310–311). Now, for our essence to eternally possess the greatest power of affection upon our death, while still living we must continue *trying* to experience "a maximum proportion of active affections of the second kind and (already) of the third." This makes our existence a "test" [12] (p. 317) or "active experimentation" [17], suggesting perhaps that we should never cease taking risks of some kind to gain this knowledge. And given that we should experiment to maximize our active affective power, perhaps we might think of life as a game of Spinozist gambling where we try to attain the highest level or "score," as it were. In this way, even Spinozist gamblers on the third level must affirm chance in their playing.

But even with this consideration, which brings us closer to the Nietzschean dice-thrower, the Spinozist gambler still seems to fall short. To see why, we should look at the criticism of Spinoza that Deleuze attributes to Nietzsche, namely that "Spinoza was not able to elevate himself to the conception of a will to power. He confused power with simple force and conceived of force in a reactive way (cf. *conatus* and conservation)" [35] (p. 206 n. 18). For Spinoza, weaker forces simply have less power than stronger ones, and outcomes of such force relations are determined mechanistically. But for Nietzsche,

there is the added element of the will to power, which does not operate according to a simple calculus of given values. Rather, will to power is the "genetic element" of forces; it wills their differential relations and values in the first place, rendering them "plastic" and "changing" by introducing chance into their encounters [35] (pp. 51, 53). Furthermore, on account of will to power, even weaker forces have the capacity to disintegrate superior ones, as they have accumulated enough stored energy that they can "explode" it upon the greater forces that they obey [35] (p. 63). Thus, what is at stake in the dice-throw for Deleuze is more than mere gambling on casino games, even though this does play a central role in his account. The dice-throw, as we saw above, is involved in the creative activity of artistic and conceptual creation, and we could also imagine other ways that it goes beyond mere gambling on casino games: it also can play a vital role in major life decisions that are educational, romantic, political, and so forth. For instance, as Shores suggests, the dice-throw as subversive political activity could help solve the problem of demotivation for averting climate change, by creating the chance for alternate futures to come about that are discontinuous with our current, *seemingly* certain trends [71].

What we find with Spinoza, by contrast, is that the random force/body encounters never *really* happen by chance but are only so from the perspective of one who cannot know the full system of causes involved in all force relations. However, for Nietzsche, we do not know what a body can do because it has not yet been determined. Furthermore, as Deleuze notes, there cannot be an increase or decrease in God's power of action because it is already unlimited [12] (p. 307), whereas the unlimitedness of power for Nietzsche is the will to power's being unconstrained by mechanistic, reactive causality, as it is freed by the power of true, indeterminate chance. Nietzsche's critique, then, is that Spinoza's notions of force and body are not affirmative enough because even the supposed active forces for Spinoza would still be reactive: they are just the mechanical results of other predetermined interactions. Nietzschean gambling can alter the course of events and recreate the world; Spinozist gambling, however, just follows along with it.

5. Conclusions

In this paper, we have distinguished three kinds of gamblers corresponding to Spinoza's three kinds of knowledge (the impulsive, the rational, and the intuitive gambler) and argued that, for Deleuze, the Spinozist gambler is one who plays and enjoys the game not through passions or impulses, but through rationally organized common notions. These notions provide them a clear understanding of the game, allowing them to control their chance encounters and maximize the probabilities of winning. At the same time, we have shown that intuition remains relevant for the Spinozist gambler as it can provide them with an understanding of themselves in the broader framework of power relations that would enable them not only to be invested in winning the game but in finding ways of enjoying it even without winning.

Furthermore, by situating the Spinozist gambler within Deleuze's broader philosophy of play, we have shown that the Nietzschean idea of the dice-thrower embraces chance encounters, instead of the Spinozist idea of controlling them. This contrast marks a decisive divergence between these two figures, and there is reason to infer that Deleuze ultimately endorses the former orientation toward chance over the latter, given its prevalence and use as an evaluative standard in his broader philosophy of play.

Even with this difference, there is still, for Deleuze, "a philosophy of 'life' in Spinoza; it consists precisely in denouncing all that separates us from life [. . .]. [. . .] What poisons life is hatred" and "sad passions" [13] (p. 26). The Spinozist gambler, no less than the Nietzschean dice-thrower, affirms life. But the Spinozist gambler does not gamble on *chance itself*, like the Nietzschean player does[18]. Now, note that Deleuze approves Clair Parnet's suggestion

that he is neither Spinozist nor Nietzschean [66] ("H as in History of Philosophy"). Perhaps, then, we should question whether Deleuze endorses the Nietzschean gambler over the Spinozist one, or the Spinozist over the Nietzschean. He might instead prefer something altogether different from both. In that case, we wonder: what makes a "*Deleuzian* gambler?" Let's leave this as homework for another study.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:*E: Ethics* (*Ethica*); *Ep.: Letters* (*Epistole*); *CM: Appendix containing Metaphysical Thoughts* (*Cogitata Metaphysica*); *KV: Short Treatise* (*Korte Verhandeling*); *TIE: Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* (*Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione*), *TTP: Theological-Political Treatise* (*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*) [72,73]. We refer to passages from the *Ethics* by means of the following abbreviations: a: axiom, c: corollary, d: definition (when it appears immediately on the right side of E), d: demonstration (in all other cases), E: *Ethics*, e: explanation, l: lemma, p: proposition, s: scholium, app: appendix, pref: preface. The Arabic number to the right of E indicates the part of the *Ethics*, such as "E1a3", which stands for the third axiom of part 1. References to Spinoza's other texts are abbreviated as follows: CM I.i = *Metaphysical Thoughts*, Part I, ch. i; KV I.i. 1 = *Short Treatise*, Part I, ch. i, sec. 1; TIE, 1 = *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, sec. 1, TTP I = *Theological-Political Treatise*, ch. I.

Notes

1 See especially: [1–3] (chs. 2, 9, 12), [4–6]. By contrast to the latter source by Howie [6] (see for instance p. 192), we lay greater stress on Deleuze's Nietzscheanism over his Spinozism for his philosophy of play given its predominance in this domain of his thinking.

2 See especially: [7] (ch. 4), [8–10] (ch. 3.3), and [11].

3 It should be noted that, for Deleuze, Spinoza is a strict determinist and necessitarian for whom chance is not a real entity, but only a defect in our understanding, since there is no contingency in nature, only the necessary determination of modes (CM I.iii, E1p29, E1p31s1, E2p31c), [12] (p. 38), [13] (pp. 79–80, 94). Accordingly, Spinoza's famous dictum that "no one knows what a body can do" (E3p2s) indicates an epistemic limitation rather than a metaphysical condition, as the latter is identical to the structure of a body, which corresponds to the nature and limits of its capacity to be affected [12] (pp. 218, 257), whereas the former corresponds to the mind's inadequate idea of the body [13] (p. 60). For more on Spinoza's distinction between epistemic and *tout court* contingency, see [14].

4 "Knowing how to age is arriving at the moment when the common notions must make you comprehend in what way things and other bodies disagree with your own" [15]."So, *I possess the cause: the cause of the effects of a body on mine is the nature of the composition of the relations between two bodies, or of the act by which the external body breaks down my relations. This is the cause.* If the inadequate idea was an idea of an effect separate from its cause, namely I receive the effect and I have no idea of the cause, *we can see that this new type of idea is necessarily adequate*. What is Spinoza going to call it? Once again, the other ideas are signs. What

name, is there a name, in Spinoza, that allows us to recognize this? Yes! He gives a very interesting name; we will see why. . . *He calls these ideas of compositions of relations, he calls them common notions*" ([17], emphasis added).

5 Alexandre Matheron further distinguishes, in addition to universal common notions, *proper common notions* and *the ideas that follow from these two sorts of common notions* [20] (p. 45).

6 Michael Della Rocca highlights a tension in Spinoza that if adequacy requires containing all causal antecedents, it seems nearly impossible for the finite human mind to possess genuinely adequate ideas [21] (p. 183, n. 29). In response to this tension, Eugene Marshall [22], for one, argues that adequate ideas are innate in the human mind but vary in power from person to person; improving the mind thus consists not in acquiring new ideas, but in intensifying and activating these innate ideas so that they become causally effective and consciously accessible. By contrast, Deleuze appears to adopt a less stringent interpretation of adequacy than Della Rocca, treating an idea as adequate insofar as it includes the relevant causal relations between oneself and external objects, rather than the totality of causal antecedents.

7 Deleuze attributes this text to Spinoza, as does M. J. Petry, who provides a detailed historical account justifying that attribution (see: [25]). However, the current consensus seems to be that it was not written by Spinoza (see: [26] (p. 302, n. 41)) and [27] (p. 523, n. 5). As our concern lies with Deleuze's interpretation of Spinoza, it remains pertinent to our analysis that Deleuze treats this text as expressing a part of Spinoza's thinking, even if the attribution proves wrong.

8 Cf. Kristin Primus [28] (pp. 280–281). Primus further attributes a third characteristic to the third kind of knowledge, namely that it is "intuitive in the sense that it does not require that one work through demonstrations or practice any 'art of reasoning'." However, this characterization is less straightforward and does not fully accord with Deleuze's account, which emphasizes the role of common notions in the passage to intuitive knowledge rather than bypassing rational activity altogether.

9 Cf. Matheron [20] (pp. 76–77). Other scholars, including Edwin Curley [29], Martial Gueroult [30], and Sanem Soyarslan [31] disagree that intuitive knowledge proceeds from reason, and thus deny that it is grounded in common notions.

10 Similar to Deleuze's interpretation of essence ideas as consisting of an understanding of God's essence, one's self essence, and essences of other objects, in a recent article, "Finding Oneself in God" [33], Primus describes *scientia intuitiva* as a confluence of an "intuitive understanding of the correct monist ontology" and "an intuitive understanding of oneself as existing in that monist framework."

11 Still, the acting sense of play for Deleuze is related to the gambling kind because the actor's (and mime's, dancer's, and sage's) task is to represent the aleatory aion time that the dice-throw inhabits [38] (pp. 74–76, 166–167, 170–173, 191–192).

12 However, there are other ways that chance-based (*aleaic*) games can be ludic, for instance when using technique to influence how chance outcomes are mechanically decided or with knowledge of how to better predict them, even though chance still ultimately decides the outcome [41] (p. 30). For an extensive and probing analysis of games of chance from the perspective of Deleuze's philosophy, see [11].

13 For a thorough overview of the development of the concept of play in these philosophical fields throughout the history of Western philosophy, see [10].

14 This distinction might explain why Deleuze, for the Nietzschean dice-throw, says that "to think is to play" (*penser, c'est jouer*) [44], but for the Pascalian figure of thinking, "to think is to bet" (*penser, c'est parier*) [48].

15 Deleuze acknowledges that general zones of differing probabilities, namely, a center and outer bounds, are established by the physical edges of the blank canvas; still, Jackson Pollock was able to reduce that effect by painting beyond those borders in his drip paintings [45,56].

16 For a fuller description of such an account of creativity in thinking involving chance disruption, see [63] (pp. 69–74).

17 See Nietzsche's "Postcard to Overbeck," dated 30 July 1981: "I have a *precursor*, and what a precursor! I hardly knew Spinoza [. . .]. Not only is his overtendency like mine—namely to make all knowledge the *most powerful* affect—but in five main points of his doctrine I recognize myself [. . .]: he denies the freedom of the will, teleology, the moral world-order, the unegoistic, and evil. Even though the divergencies are admittedly tremendous, they are due more to the difference in time, culture, and science. *In summa:* my lonesomeness [. . .] is now at least a twosomeness. Strange!" [64] (p. 92). See: [65].

18 Perhaps that makes Spinozist gambling a preferable philosophy of life, but determining this requires another endeavour.

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