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Yves Citton

«*ConcateNations.*
Globalization in a Spinozist Context»

Two common assumptions tend to blur our understanding of “globalization”. First, it is generally perceived as *a rather recent phenomenon*, dating back a few years, or at most a few decades. Best-selling books like Thomas Friedman’s *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* frame it within an opposition between the bi-polar, military-led, ideologically-structured world of the Cold War and the multi-centered, economically-driven and value-free process of globalization, with a turning point occurring around the 1980s. The second assumption presents globalization as being first and foremost *a matter of economics*, dealing with flows of goods and investments which have more or less remote cultural consequences.

The word and the notion of *concatenation* provide, as I hope to show in this paper, a remarkable vantage point to reverse these two assumptions¹. By shifting the focus to the *archeology* and the *imaginary* of globalization, one is led to consider “globalization” under the Lyotardian category of a *masternarrative* — a legitimizing myth centered on a universal protagonist and whose power of legitimization comes from a promise for the future. Right after Lyotard had made our age “postmodern” in view of our incredulity towards any metanarrative, we fell prey to the (not so) new *grand récit* of “globalization”. Exploring the imaginary dimension of this masternarrative can thus bring a much needed critical distance towards a constellation of signifiers, clichés, assumptions, confusions, beliefs, values, which currently thwart the public debate about the meaning, threats and promises of the transformations currently in process.

By going back to some of the roots of the globalization imaginary in 17th-century philosophy and in 18th-century political economy, this paper will argue that the *chain* which ties *nations* together is a bond of servitude only insofar as we ignore the analysis of “freedom” developed by determinist thinkers like Hobbes and Spinoza, and that it can instead become a tool of liberation once we follow the chain of consequences implied in

¹ This paper was prepared for the conference *Concatenations* held by the Department of French and Italian of the University of Pittsburgh in November 2002. Many thanks to Dennis Looney, Phil Watts, Giuseppina Mecchia, Daniel Russell, Francesca Savoia, Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Monika Losagio, as well as to the graduate students, for their organizational work.

their argument. In other words, what our age of “globalization” needs first and foremost is a new (Spinozist and counterintuitive) definition of “freedom”².

CHAYNS, CHAINE, CHAINS: THREE QUOTES IN HOBBS

Concatenatio: well before the 17th century, the Latin word had been used to express the idea of a chain (*catena*) tying together (*con-*) various events in a sequence of causes and effects. In his classic study, Arthur O. Lovejoy has well shown the permanence of the theme of *The Great Chain of Being*, from Plato and Plotinus to the French Enlightenment and German Romanticism. The two main dimensions of this topos, the *interconnectedness* and continuous *hierarchy* of all things, appear clearly in a text by Macrobius which informed much of the later tradition:

“since all things follow in a continuous succession, degenerating in sequence to the very bottom of the series, the attentive observer will discover a connection of parts [*una connexio*] from the Supreme God down to the last dregs of things, mutually linked together [*mutuis se vinculis religans*] and without a break [*nusquam interrupta*]; and this is Homer’s golden chain [*catena*], which God, he says, bade hang down from heaven to earth.”³

From Neoplatonism to Christian theology, this chain almost always pointed towards God, both as its first and most noble link, and as its overall author/maker. From the 17th century on, in close parallel with the development of “scientific” inquiry, an increasing number of philosophers attempted to conceive of this *catena* without attributing it to any Great Concatenator. A rich display of the political as well as of the ontological implications of this attempt is offered by the famous chapter XXI “Of the Liberty of Subjects” of Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan*.

In three occurrences of the word *chain*, Hobbes sets in place the main coordinates of the Modern take on the concatenation issue. It all starts with his (in)famous definition of freedom in purely mechanical terms:

“LIBERTY, or FREEDOM, signifieth (properly) the absence of Opposition; (by Opposition, I mean externall Impediments of motion;) and may be applied no less to Irrationall, and Inanimate creatures, than to Rationall. For whatsoever is so *tyed*, or environed, as it cannot move, but within a certain space, which space is determined by the opposition of some externall body, we say it hath not Liberty to go further. And so of all living creatures, whilest they are imprisoned, or *restrained* with walls, or *chayns* [...] But when the impediment of motion is in the constitution of the thing it selfe, we use not to say, it wants the Liberty; but the Power to move; as when a stone lyeth still, or a man is *fastened* to his bed by sicknesse.”⁴

From the onset, Freedom is defined in relation to Power. They both refer to the limits of our actual capacity to do something: *literal chains* in the first case (of an external impediment), *metaphorical chains* in the second case (of an internal impediment,

² This redefinition of (the other side of) “freedom” has been investigated in my book *L’Envers de la liberté. L’invention d’un imaginaire spinoziste dans la France des Lumières*, Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2006.

³ MACROBIUS, *Commentarius in somnium Scipionis*, Book I, chapter 14, as translated in Arthur O. LOVEJOY, *The Great Chain of Being* (1936), Harvard Paperback, 1976, p. 63.

⁴ Thomas HOBBS, *Leviathan* (1651), London: Penguin Classics, 261-262. Italics mine.

Concatenations

like a sickness “fastening” a man to his bed). The vocabulary of *Liberty* externalizes the obstacle, while that of *Power* internalizes it, but both are defined in a manner that erases all boundaries between rational (human) beings, irrational (animal) creatures, inanimate things (stone) and unindividualized entities (water).

The question of the concatenation of the parts of the universe appears a page later :

“*Liberty* and *Necessity* are Consistant: As in the water, that hath not only *liberty*, but a *necessity* of descending by a Channel: so likewise in the Actions which men voluntarily doe; which (because they proceed from their will) proceed from *liberty*; and yet because every act of mans will, and every desire, and inclination, proceedeth from some cause, and that from another cause, which causes in a continuall chaine (whose first link in the hand of God the first of all causes) proceed from *necessity*. So that to him that could see the connexion of those causes, the *necessity* of all mens voluntary actions would appear manifest.” (p. 263)

In spite of the parenthetical, and conventional, reference to God as *causa prima*, we are here at the core of the scandalous new worldview which later Christian writers will denounce indifferently as “atheism”, “materialism”, “fatalism”, or “Spinozism”. If all events and all actions — including those that human beings “freely” (i.e., voluntarily) “choose” to do — are only necessary links within a deterministic universal concatenation (“*a continuall chaine*”) of causes and effects, if even my desires, inclinations and choices are themselves mere effects of preexisting (exterior) causes, then the very foundations of our moral universe seem to be cut at their roots: without freedom of the will, no “responsibility”, and without responsibility, no possibility of accounting for the Good or Evil nature of our (neighbor’s) actions. As, over the following four centuries, scientific discourse (from biology to psychology and sociology) has increasingly made us “see the connexion of those causes”, “the necessity of mens voluntary actions” has appeared increasingly “manifest”, and it has become increasingly difficult for the free-will advocates to locate exactly where that “continuall chaine” could be satisfactorily broken⁵. Apart from Descartes’ pineal gland or various short-lived redefinitions of the “soul” (as distinct from the “mind”), a common solution has consisted in making the chain more complex (rather than attempting to break it): along the lines suggested by Hobbes himself in his controversy with Bramhall on free will, one has tended to see in “the concourse of all causes” not “one simple chain or concatenation, but an innumerable number of chains joined together, not in all parts, but in their first link”⁶ — our practical sentiment of freedom finding its last refuge in our impossibility ever to see “the whole cause” of our inclinations in such a hypercomplex maze of cross-determinations.

To prevent the string of anti-social consequences that seems to flow from his deterministic denial of the freedom of the will and from its undermining of the notion of responsibility, Hobbes brings a third reference to chains in the same chapter on liberty:

“But as men, for the atteyning of peace, and conservation of themselves thereby, have made an Artificiall Man, which we call a Common-wealth; so also have they made Artificiall Chains, called *Civill Lawes*, which they themselves by mutuall covenants, have fastened at one

⁵ For a good survey of those discussions, see Robert KANE, *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, Oxford University Press, 2002.

⁶ Thomas HOBBS, *Of Liberty and Necessity* (1654), in *Hobbes and Bramhall on Liberty and Necessity*, ed. by Vere Chappell, Cambridge UP, 1999, p. 20.

end, to the lips of that Man, or Assembly, to whom they have given the Sovereign Power; and at the other end to their own Ears. These bonds in their own nature but weak, may nevertheless be made to hold, by the danger, though not by the difficulty of breaking them.” (pp. 263-264)

As they constitute political societies, human beings only *add more chains* to the concatenation of causes constitutive of natural necessity. Laws are metaphorical-internalized chains: their efficacy relies on “the danger” of bringing upon oneself the real (literal) chains which are used to restrain law-breakers; when I refrain from stealing an old man’s wallet, the impediment to motion is — like in the sick man’s case — in the constitution of the thing itself (my will), i.e., pertains to a question of power rather than to a question of (corporal) liberty. The counterintuitive result of the institution and internalization of this artificial impediment is that, as a citizen living in a reasonably well-ordered society, I am incomparably more powerful and free than I could ever be in any pre-political state (of nature, isolation, lawlessness, and war). To summarize Hobbes’ counter-intuitive argument: chains emancipate us. Or more precisely: *emancipation relies on a good use of chains*.

SPINOZA’S EMANCIPATORY CONCATENATIONS

In spite of its intimidating abstraction, all of Spinoza’s philosophy has a very practical purpose, which is precisely to define and teach us what could be *a good use of chains* (causal and otherwise). It is therefore no coincidence if the word *concatenatio* appears in crucial moments of his writings, and offers us a striking vista on the overall movement of his thought. At first sight, Spinoza seems only to refine and further develop insights inherited from Hobbes, as well as from the earlier stock of images concerning the “great chain of being”. One can still hear echoes of Macrobius’ turns of phrases when an early work like the *Treatise on the Reformation of the Intellect* evokes the “unbreakable concatenation” [*irrefragabili concatenatione*] through which causes produce their effects, or when the same text invites us to investigate such causal links “without breaking the concatenation of things” [*nulla interrupta concatenatione rerum*]. Along the same lines, he defines (what we would call) “scientific explanation” as “a concatenation of [ideas in] the intellect which must reproduce the concatenation of [things in] nature” [*concatenatio intellectus, quae Naturae concatenationem referre debet*]⁷. He can thus denounce “prejudices” [*praejudicia*] as that which “prevents men from embracing the concatenation of things” [*rerum concatenationem amplecti*]⁸.

While this “concatenation of all natural things” [*rerum naturalium concatenatio*], synonym with the “immutable order of nature” [*fixum et immutabilem naturae ordinem*], constitutes the ultimate horizon of human knowledge, its infinite complexity puts it well out of reach of our limited intellect. We must acknowledge that “we flatly ignore how

⁷ Benedictus de SPINOZA, *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* (1661), ed. Gebhardt, *Opera*, 1924-26, vol. II, pp. 23, 30 and 35 (§§ 61 note, 80 and 95 in Bruder’s numbering). English translations of Spinoza’s works are available on the web at <http://www.spinoza.net/Main.htm> I have revised and amended the translations provided on this site (by Elwes and Gosset).

⁸ Benedictus de SPINOZA, *Ethica* (1677), Part I, Appendix. From now on referenced as *Ethics*.

things have been ordered and concatenated in reality” and that general “considerations about fate and the concatenation of causes can only help us very little in forming and arranging our ideas towards particular things”. Our incapacity to embrace the whole and the infinite details of the causal chains that constitute our world makes it therefore necessary “to explain things by their proximate causes” (rather than by their first or ultimate causes) and “to consider things as possible” (i.e., contingent, even if they are in fact fully determined)⁹.

Even though the actual details of the Great Chain of Causes remain out of our reach, *a clear understanding of its overall nature* is a necessary pre-condition to the proper orientation of our thoughts and actions. Two scandalous guiding principles made Spinoza’s metaphysics an object of abomination for the readers of his time. The first one is his (in)famous assimilation of God with Nature (*Deus seu Natura*) which leads to the denial of Creation, of a Creator, of Providence, i.e., of any traditional idea of the Judeo-Christian God. In terms of chains: the world is a concatenation, but *there is no Master-Concaterator*. The world is a process of auto-production, of self-organization, in the absence of any masterplan to guide its evolution, to give it an ultimate purpose, meaning, etc.

The second guiding principle of Spinoza’s philosophy asserts that “only *one substance* can be granted in nature” (*Ethics*, I, Prop 14, Cor 1). In opposition to most other philosophers, Spinoza denies that matter and thought (the body and the soul) belong to two radically different spheres or make up two heterogeneous substances: what he calls God, or Nature (which we would call, using a symptomatic definite article, “*the universe*”) has to be conceived *as One*. Translated into the vocabulary of chains, to say that there can be only one substance means that there can be only “one order, or concatenation of things” (one “holist” comprehensive and integrated chain, no matter how infinitely complex, multi-layered and intricate it actually is) (*Ethics*, III, Prop 2, Scho). Three implications of this call to conceive of our world as One made it particularly scandalous. The first is that it denies any essential specificity to the human world. Spinoza tirelessly reasserts that we humans are no more than “a part of nature”, and that most philosophies and religions mislead us when they portray mankind (or the mind within the human body) as “an empire within an empire” (*Ethics*, III, Praefatio): the same necessity and the same natural laws apply to everything (including our will).

The second implication gives us a first glimpse into the relevance of Spinoza’s thought to generate a fruitful understanding of “globalization”. One of the ideas that the readers of the time found the most outrageous in his system is that, according to its logic, Plato and a worm, the idea of God and the droppings of a pigeon, Spinoza’s bed and the Emperor of China are ultimately one and the same, insofar as they are mere “modifications” of one and the same substance. Such “monstrous absurdities” led Pierre Bayle to point out that a common war-report like *The Germans killed ten thousand Turks*, once translated into Spinozese, would read *God modified in Germans killed God modified*

⁹ Benedictus de SPINOZA, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670), Chapter IV, § 10. From now on referenced as TTP.

*in ten thousand Turks*¹⁰. While such a view looked utterly “extravagant”, “abominable” and “ridiculous” to Bayle and to most of his contemporaries, it sets a frame of analysis which proves everyday more adequate at the dawn of our third millennium. In the *transindividual theory of bodies* sketched in the *Ethics*, Spinoza invites us to “conceive the whole of Nature as one individual [*totam Naturam unum esse Individuum*], whose parts, that is all bodies, vary in infinite ways, without any change to the individual as a whole” (*Ethics*, II, Prop 13, Lemma 7, Scho). From this perspective, it is equally justifiable and necessary to consider as an “individual” a person, a part within that person (her stomach), a part within that part (a group of bacteria), or, in the other direction, the team with which this person works on a daily basis, the city in which she lives, the nation of which she is a citizen, the world region within which this nation’s economy is heavily integrated, the planet earth (the “globe” at the horizon of our “globalization”), and so on to the most composed individual, “the universe” (*Facies Totius Universi*). Building on the multilayered network of causal chains described by Hobbes, Spinoza offers a worldview in which the One (infinitely complex) concatenation of causes making up the universe keeps in ultimate solidarity all the “individuals” which our limited understanding arbitrarily isolates in it (for the practical purpose of fulfilling our various needs). Far from being “extravagant”, this approach brings us closer to the practical truth of phenomena like wars (human bodies modified in US soldiers killing human bodies modified in religious fanatics) or environmental threats (life on earth reaching the stage where its highest developments undermine its own survival).

In order better to understand our position as humans within this concatenation of universal solidarity, we can now turn to a third implication of the One-Substance principle, that of a *parallelism* between the attribute of Extension (material things, the body) and the attribute of Thought (ideas, the mind). For Spinoza, the cognitive world is in strict parallel with the material world: “the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things” (*Ethics*, II, Prop 7). Nothing can affect an idea without something equivalent affecting a body, and conversely. As in the case of a transparent sheet of plastic, nothing can be printed on one side which would not be seen from the other: whatever is perceptible on one has to be equally perceptible on the other. The scandal (and the puzzling elegance) of this solution to the old mind-body question consists in that it precludes any “influence” of the body on the mind or of the mind on the body. None can influence (or determine, or condition) the other, since there is *only one and the same concatenation of causes* conceived by us under two different attributes (ie., from two different points of view).

With this reconfiguration of the mind-body problem, Spinoza displaces the traditional questions: the issue is no longer to decide which one comes first, or how one can influence the other; the main (and new) issue becomes to determine *the logic according to which things get concatenated*. And while this may look frighteningly technical for an article devoted to “globalization”, we need to follow the details of Spinoza’s demonstration on this point, which is crucial to the efficacy of his thought.

¹⁰ Pierre BAYLE, *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1696), article «Spinoza», remarque N, § IV, in *Ecrits sur Spinoza*, Paris, Berg, 1983, p. 69.

Concatenations

What is at stake here is the distinction between two registers of functioning of the human mind, the imaginary and the rational.

The logic of *the imaginary register* is that of the impressions made by external objects on our senses and on our memory. Sensory impressions are the result of an interaction between our own body (our sensory organs) and the external bodies that affect them. The order and concatenation of these impressions depend upon the largely *aleatory encounters* between the two. As I walk in the street to come to campus, I pass by a stranger who holds a bunch of roses, and I enjoy their smell: as we have seen, even for a deterministic philosophy like Spinoza's, this encounter has to be considered as contingent, because the two causal chains (of my going to the university and of the stranger offering flowers) are independent within the limited scope of the proximate causes to which we must limit ourselves. Virtually all of the ideas I may have during the day are brought about by such aleatory encounters between my sensory organs and the objects that affect them. Virtually all of the ideas I have stored in my memory are therefore ruled by chance encounters between my body and external bodies. The principle of concatenation between ideas in the imaginary register is that of association by contiguity and resemblance: to take an example given by Spinoza, if a soldier sees traces of horseshoes, he will think of cavalry and battles, whereas a peasant will think plows and fields. Even if many individuals can find themselves in similar situations, and can therefore end up developing similar ideas, this type of associations is by definition idiosyncratic, since it is tied to the objects that *my* body happens to encounter during its singular course of life.

By contrast, the principle of concatenation between ideas in *the rational register* is that of *causality*. As our knowledge develops, we come to understand [*intelligere*] that certain types of conditions systematically produce certain types of effects. Reason, for Spinoza, consists in understanding an event by its causes. When ideas are (properly) concatenated by the intellect [*intellectus*, another name for reason], this concatenation of ideas espouses the concatenation of causes which determines the workings of the universe. While the imaginary is idiosyncratic (as well as family- and culture-specific), rational intellection can claim universal validity. The difference between the two registers is summarized in a scholium devoted to the definition of the memory :

“I say that this concatenation [of the imaginary register] takes place according to the order and concatenation of the affections of the human body [*secundum ordinem et concatenationem affectionum Corporis humani*] so as to differentiate it from the concatenation of ideas which takes place according to the order of the intellect [*secundum ordinem intellectus*], by which the mind perceives things through their first causes and which is the same in all human beings.”
(*Ethics*, II, Prop 18, Scho)

Apart from its consequences on the question of universalism, this distinction is crucial since it holds the key to the foundation of a new ethics, to a (re)definition of the Good and of what we “ought to” do — a definition fully compatible with its deterministic premises. What we, as humans, “ought to” do is develop our rational intellection of the world as far as we can. This development of our intellect ultimately hinges on *our power to concatenate*. And this is the point where Spinoza's philosophy overcomes the passive and reactive connotations usually attached to the image of concatenation and chains,

determinism and fatalism, and opens a wide perspective of activity, emancipation and invention. Yes, we are inescapably linked to the great chain of causes which constitutes the universe, but, by the very fact that we are a part of nature, *we can actively participate in its constant process of causation and creation*. We can be concatenaters, as much as we are links: the fact that we are passively *concatenated* with the overall and inescapable order of the universe does not prevent us from actively *concatenating* — within the modest scope of our local environment — our affections, ideas and bodily movements.

This starts with a proper hygiene of life, which takes the form of a certain amount of control that our mind and body can acquire over what affects them. “As long as we don’t run against affects which are contrary to our nature, we have the power to arrange and concatenate [*potestatem habemus ordinandi et concatenandi*] the affections of our body according to the order of the intellect [*secundum ordinem ad intellectum*]”, that is, “so that we will not easily be affected by bad affects” (*Ethics*, V, Prop 10 et Scho). Practically, this means not only that we can avoid the contact with nefarious external bodies (flames, poisons), but also that we have a certain power “to separate our affects from the thought of an external cause”, and re-link our ideas in a different order (*Ethics*, V, Prop 20, Scho): instead of becoming angry, violent and revengeful when someone harms us, a proper understanding of the necessary concatenation of things will lead us to master our aggressive affects, and see instead what can be done most effectively to prevent the future repetition of a similar harm.

As “intellectuals” — to be understood not merely as specialized workers of the intellect, but rather as (co-)producers of intellection in cooperation and solidarity with *all* other human beings — we also have the power “to direct and concatenate our clear and distinct perceptions” [*nostras claras et distinctas perceptiones dirigere et concatenare*]¹¹, so that more causal links can come to light and be put to use towards improving our prospects of life. The power [*potentia*] specific to these particular things which we identify as “human beings” (an inseparable coalescence of mind and body) resides in their *power to invent*¹²: their power to discover new (unsuspected) causal links, their power to create new technological devices, new forms of social cooperation, new political institutions, new aesthetic experiences. If the *Ethics* carries an imperative as its final lesson, it clearly is: “Develop your intellect as much as you can, in order to be as inventive as you can!”

From the starting point of a deterministic concatenation of causes which debunked our claim to free-will, until this final perspective of a properly human freedom relying on our power to concatenate according to the order of the intellect — *De potentia intellectus seu de libertate humana* is the title of the fifth and last part of the *Ethics* —, Spinoza offers a philosophy of emancipation¹³. But a very peculiar and original one, which only a

¹¹ Benedictus de SPINOZA, Letter to Bouwmeester, June 10, 1666 (*Ep.* XXXVII).

¹² To paraphrase the title of a recent book by Maurizio LAZZARATO, *Puissances de l’invention. La psychologie économique de Gabriel Tarde contre l’économie politique*, Paris, Les empêcheurs de penser en rond, 2002. Although no apparent relation links Tarde’s work to Spinoza’s, his reflection is essential for whomever attempts to develop a theory of our human power of invention (in the cognitive, political or aesthetical realm). See for instance Gabriel Tarde, *La logique sociale* (1893), Paris, Les empêcheurs de penser en rond, 1999.

¹³ A number of epoch-making studies have totally renewed our reading of Spinoza’s political philosophy over the last 30 years. The most important ones include: Alexandre MATHERON, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza*

few later thinkers have fully grasped and pursued (Diderot, Nietzsche and Deleuze obviously come to mind.) Within this unorthodox framework, liberty is not defined in relation to a stable state, which one would enjoy or be deprived of, but as *an endless process of liberation*: one can always become *more* free (i.e., more rational, more powerful) than one currently is. More originally still, in contrast to most other political theories, liberty is not conceived in terms of *contractual rights*, but purely in terms of *actual power*: I am only as free as what I do. Along with Hobbes' intuitions, I can never be free alone: I need social institutions (and their artificial chains of civil laws), and, more fundamentally, I need *the cooperation of all* my fellow-humans in order to be as free (and inventive) as I can. For once we peel off the elitist tone of some of its quotes, the logic of Spinoza's thought leads to *the most radical form of democracy*: because (1) the supreme good is the development of the general intellect; because (2) this development requires the cooperation of the highest number of well-instructed brains (and therefore of well-fed and well-maintained bodies); because (3) the most powerful mode of cooperation institutionalizes the fact that all power comes from the multitude of bodies which make up the collectivity; and because (4) it is in the nature of any stable institution to betray and constrain the power of auto-production, which calls for a constant process of political (re)invention and adaptation — Spinoza, as early as 1677, paved the way for a conception of *democracy-as-process* which should inspire us, today more than ever, to look *far beyond* the traps and limitations of our current parliamentary systems of representation.

More to the point of globalization, Spinoza's democracy is deeply *pluralistic*. Against most of our modern tradition inspired by both Christianity and Kant, Spinoza emphatically denies that there would be *one* (pre-given) "essence of man" to which every individual should conform (to be endowed with a soul, with free will, to have access to a moral realm). Not only are we parts of nature (and nothing else or nothing more), but each human being (as well as each cat or each pebble) constitutes "a singular essence". And while social cooperation requires a certain amount of conformity among the agents, so that they can fit [*convenire*] within a collective scheme, its power of (re)invention and its ultimate strength will depend upon the capacity for each participant to express his/her (personal or cultural) singularity and difference — as it is the case with (modernist) artistic creation, which provides a good model to understand Spinoza's political ideal. Consensus and homogeneity are a threat as much as they are a requirement: here again, the yardstick that enables us to draw the lines between the good and the bad is provided by the question: *does such and such event increase or diminish our power to invent?* On top of offering an already globalizing vision of mankind in its inextricable concatenation with nature (including human nature, its affects and other limitations), Spinoza provides us with a political blueprint for globalization conceived as a universalistic process of demo-

(Paris: Minuit, 1969); Antonio NEGRI, *L'anomalia selvaggia. Saggio su potere e potenza in Baruch Spinoza* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1981); Etienne BALIBAR, *Spinoza et la politique* (Paris: PUF, 1985); and more recently the remarkably insightful books by Laurent BOVE, *La stratégie du conatus. Affirmation et résistance chez Spinoza* (Paris: Vrin, 1996) and Pascal SEVERAC, *Le Devenir actif chez Spinoza*, Paris: Champion, 2005. This renewal has been carried in the USA by Warren MONTAG & Ted STOLZE, *The New Spinoza* (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1997) and Warren MONTAG, *Bodies, Masses, Power. Spinoza and His Contemporaries* (New York: Verso, 1999).

cratization (empowerment of the multitudes) and as an enrichment of our powers of (self-)invention through the confrontation with difference — that is, as a renewed way to concatenate our civil laws and our ideas.

CONCATENATIONS IN EARLY ECONOMIC LIBERALISM

The true impact of Spinoza's writings on 18th-century thought remains a contested issue. While I tend to favor the type of views illustrated by Jonathan Israel's recent study, which places Spinoza at the center of a vast network of influences permeating virtually all spheres of the Enlightenment movement¹⁴, it seems to me equally probable that the inner logic of European development, between 1650 and 1800, would lead several authors, more or less independently, to (re)invent a similar view of human nature and of human societies. The fact is that from Fontenelle, Boulainviller, Fréret, or Vauvenargues to Voltaire, Montesquieu, Helvetius, Du Pont de Nemours, Diderot, Bonnet, d'Holbach, Deschamps and countless others, the concatenation motif (*l'enchaînement nécessaire des causes et des parties de l'univers*) — and more specifically the question of the inexistence of a masterplan guiding the concatenation — plays a crucial role in the development of the *Philosophes* movement.

To focus on the early perception of globalization, it is obviously more than a coincidence if the writers mentioned above lived in Holland, Great Britain and France, since these countries were at the core of the international division of labor structuring the world-system of the period. The Enlightenment corresponded to the most intense period of activity of the transatlantic slave trade, which quadrupled from the 17th to the 18th century — mostly in order to provide French and English palates with cheap sugar, “a truly international crop combining an Asian plant, European capital, African labor, and American soil”¹⁵. As Voltaire vividly pictured in the Surinam episode of *Candide*, the concatenated global markets of the time made extensive use of very literal chains on non-European human bodies : the taste of the white candies enjoyed in Europe was already made bitter by the awareness of the black man's red blood that tainted their production.

From a diffuse guilt towards the distant sufferings generated by the Western lifestyles to anxieties about a hegemonic global language (French at the time), from the first comprehensive international conferences (Münster, 1648; Utrecht, 1713) to the development of a reliable postal system linking the most important cities in Western Europe, from the increasing curiosity towards Chinese philosophy to the profits brought home (to Spinoza's father or to Voltaire's portfolio) by transnational merchant capitalism, the supra-national stakes of the project of modernity became apparent very early on — and their theorization was *contemporary* to the development of the Nation-State system

¹⁴ Jonathan ISRAEL, *Radical Enlightenment. Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750*, Oxford UP, 2001. The classical reference for the French domain remains Paul VERNIÈRE, *Spinoza et la pensée française avant la Révolution*, Paris: PUF, 1954, to be completed with Olivier BLOCH (ed.), *Spinoza au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris: Klincksieck, 1990.

¹⁵ Kenneth POMERANZ & Steven TOPIK, *The World That Trade Created. Society, Culture and the World Economy, 1400-the Present*. New York: Sharpe, 1999, p. 95.

(far from being a sudden discovery of our “postmodern” era). I will mention only two quotes as symptomatic of this early awareness of globalization. The first one is taken from a work by physiocratic author Nicolas Baudeau, who repeats as a commonplace in 1770 something Voltaire had already written in his *Défense du Mondain* thirty years earlier:

“You see reunited under your eyes and hands, on your breakfast table, the productions from all climates and both hemispheres. China oversaw the production of these cups and plates; this coffee grew in Arabia; the sugar you put in it was cultivated in America by unfortunate Africans; the metal of your coffee maker comes from Potosi; this linen, brought from Riga, was crafted by the industry of the Dutch; and our countryside provided the bread and the cream”¹⁶.

The second quote, written by Louis Antoine de Caraccioli in 1776 in his *Europe française*, extends to the sphere of culture this perception of living in a globalized and shrinking world:

“Nothing is more advantageous than having overcome, thanks to public roads and posts, the immense interval which kept Europeans away from each other. It seems as if there were no longer any distance between them. Paris touches Petersburg, Rome touches Constantinople, & it is now only one and the same family which inhabits various regions [of the earth].”¹⁷

But beyond such symptomatic statements, what matters more are the explanatory models which were already elaborated to account for the inner mechanisms of such supranational phenomena — and/or to provide a “scientific” caution to the “globalization” metanarrative. Between 1750 and 1775, the founding fathers of political economy (Hume, the Physiocrats, Turgot, Smith) jointly developed a doctrine (economic liberalism) which, for our current purpose, could be summarized in four main points.

(a) *The economic order should espouse as closely as possible the concatenation of causes which make up the order of Nature.* From the very project of the “physio-ocratic” school (to give power back to Nature) to Turgot claiming that “the course of commerce is no less necessary, no less irresistible, than the course of nature”¹⁸, political economy implemented the Spinozian call to treat man as a “part of nature”, rather than as an (autonomous) “empire within an empire”.

(b) *Everything is interconnected in the human world (as it is in Nature).* Du Pont de Nemours summarizes well the mantra of early political economy when he states that “Everything is interrelated [*Tout est lié*], everything holds to everything on earth [*tout se tient sur la terre*], everything is tied by secret chains [*tout a des chaînes secrètes*]”¹⁹. The lexicon of “chains” is ubiquitous in these early statements in favor of the “free” market: “commercial enterprises are made to be chained [*enchaînées*] to each other” (in the

¹⁶ Nicolas BAUDEAU, *Explication du Tableau Économique à Madame de **** (1770), in Eugène Daire, *Physiocrates*, Paris: Guillaumin, 1846, p. 846.

¹⁷ Louis Antoine de CARACCIOLI, *L'Europe française. Paris modèle des nations*, Turin: Duchesne, 1776, p. 351.

¹⁸ Anne Jacques Robert TURGOT, «Letter to the Abbe Terray on the Marque des Fers» (1773) in *The Life and Writings of Turgot*, New York: Franklin, 1895, p. 382.

¹⁹ Pierre Samuel DU PONT DE NEMOURS, *De l'exportation et de l'importation des grains* (1764) in *Oeuvres politiques et économiques*, Nédelnd: KTO Press, 1979, vol I, p. 50.

productive cycle, as well as by the pressure of competition)²⁰; society as a whole appears as “a chain of reciprocal dependencies”²¹; the newborn science of economics makes sure that “consequences are so well chained [*enchaînées*] to each other” that its conclusions will be “inescapable”²².

(c) *The economic order transcends political boundaries, and the various national markets are bound to integrate within a single global market.* In 1776, Condillac already described Europe as “one single common market” [*un seul marché commun*], insofar as easily transportable items (like precious metals) were concerned²³. As the means of transportation improve, this single market is bound to cover more goods and more territories. According to Le Mercier de la Rivière, a global society should not be the object of “utopian” dreams, for it *already* is a *fait accompli*:

“[Cosmopolitan philosophers] failed to see that this general society, which they longed to establish, already existed; that it was the result of nature itself; that it was not a question of forming it, but of maintaining it, of not disturbing it, of knowing *clearly* the laws which constitute its essential order, so that we can subject ourselves to it through the only force of the clear advantages which we find in adopting it.”²⁴

(d) *Laissez faire, laissez passer!* Since the “natural and essential order of political societies” is the one which *naturally*, i.e., spontaneously, establishes itself when the course of commerce is left “undisturbed”, Gournay’s motto summarizes the best possible policy a government can follow for its own good: *let* the traders *do* their business, *let* the flow of goods *pass* through transparent borders. It is no coincidence if Smith’s famous image of the “invisible hand” appears in a chapter devoted to promoting the free circulation of goods across borders, and to fighting against trade barriers and tariffs²⁵. The free-trade vulgate which came out of (the simplification of) these writers’ ideas presents a double side of determinism and liberty with which we are by now familiar: it is precisely the *freedom* granted to traders in the global market which puts national governments under the *chains* of a superior necessity.

The concatenation motif plays therefore a central role in the foundations of economic liberalism. The free trade argument rests on the statement *Everything is concatenated*: it presents the great chain of nations as an ineluctable fact, which *already* imposes its predetermined logic, to which we must necessarily and passively submit (if we do not want foolishly to go against our own interests). Given such “fatalism”, given the strong reference to natural determinations, given a parallel trust in auto-organization, given an equal faith in scientific Reason, given also more anecdotal features (in

²⁰ Pierre François Joachim Henri LE MERCIER DE LA RIVIERE, *L'intérêt général de l'Etat ou la liberté du commerce des blés*, Amsterdam : Desaint, 1770, p. 153.

²¹ Pierre François Joachim Henri LE MERCIER DE LA RIVIERE, *L'ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques* (1767), Paris: Geuthner, 1910, p. 17.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

²³ Etienne Bonnot de CONDILLAC, *Le commerce et le gouvernement, considérés l'un par rapport à l'autre* (1776), Genève: Slatkine, 1980, p. 128.

²⁴ LE MERCIER DE LA RIVIERE, *L'ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques*, op. cit., p. 245.

²⁵ Adam SMITH, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), University of Chicago Press, 1976, Book IV, chapter II “Of restraints upon the importation from foreign countries of such goods as can be produced at home”.

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appearance) like a common reference to China — we should not be surprised to see the doctrine of the Physiocrats denounced by defenders of Christianity in terms strikingly similar to those used to discredit Spinozism. In his own early Critique of (physiocratic) Political Economy, the traditionalist abbé Legros is for instance led to develop attacks which can equally well apply to Quesnay, Spinoza, Helvetius, Diderot or d’Holbach:

“if this grand order, this concatenation [*cet enchaînement*], this general law of movement are eternal [...] if they are necessary, then they exist by themselves, by the necessity of their nature; they therefore replace the Divinity, they take its place; if the grand order is one and the only one, then there no longer is any moral order, any metaphysical order, any supernatural order.”²⁶

Spinozist or not, the metanarrative of free-trade globalization, along with its promise of rivers of prosperity flowing over the whole planet — a promise repeated most of all in the face of dramatic inequalities, economic downturns and delocalization of production — was ready as early as the 1770s, as this summary by Condillac should suffice to suggest:

“[once complete and permanent freedom has been granted to trade] if the circulation of wealth takes place with some inequality, one should not fear that this inequality could ever lead to setting extreme poverty [*la misère*] in opposition to opulence. All nations [*tous les peuples*] will work following each other’s example, because they will all want to benefit from the same advantage; in this competition [*concurrence*], manufactures will close little by little in the provinces which they have made richer, and where the price of labor will have increased, while they will open in other provinces which they must make wealthier, and where labor is cheaper; they will go from province to province; everywhere, they will deposit a part of the wealth of the [global] nation, and trade will be like a long river which distributes its flows into a multitude of channels in order to irrigate, one after the other, all the lands. This revolution will cease only to start again.”²⁷

If the main articulations of the globalization metanarrative were already well in place by the 1770s, so were also the strongest arguments for its refutation. After acknowledging the elegance of the liberal theory, Morelly — the author of the scandalous *Code de la Nature* often attributed to Diderot — anticipated in 1753 what remains today more than ever its main blind spot:

“What!, you will say, isn’t trade [*le commerce*] — which binds together fellow-citizens and nations [*les Peuples*] of the earth, with its foundations in self-interests — a rich spring of conveniences, of delights, of wealth, of magnificence, of industry, of good taste, of politeness, etc.? It certainly is; but less than a third of mankind actually benefits from it; the others inherit the work and the worries, with barely enough to avoid starvation.”²⁸

²⁶ Jean Charles François LEGROS, *Examen et analyse du système des philosophes économistes par un solitaire*, Genève, Bardes, 1787, pp. 142-143.

²⁷ CONDILLAC, *Le commerce et le gouvernement*, op. cit., p. 253.

²⁸ MORELLY, *La Basiliade, ou naufrage des isles flottantes* (1753), Paris/Messine, 1753, vol I, p. 74.

THINKERS OF THE WORLD, RE-CONCATENATE!

Was Morelly the first “anti-globalization” writer? Were Diderot, Raynal and Galiani, in their early denunciations of colonial exploitation and of the delusions of liberal economics, the direct ancestors of today’s “alter-globalization” demonstrators? Thinking in terms of concatenations help us see why such questions are much more deeply flawed than their mere anachronism suggests. Even as they fight to emancipate us from the “iron laws” of economic neo-liberalism, even as they rebel against what Thomas Friedmann suggestively called the “Golden Straight Jacket” (i.e., the neoliberal policies imposed on national governments by the international herd of investors), how do these “opponents” “act”, if not by forming (metaphorical and literal) *human chains* in the streets of Seattle or Genova, as well as on the back streets of the Information Super Highways? It is symptomatic that they increasingly reject the label “anti-globalization”²⁹. Their point is not to deny the reality of the interconnectedness waved by neoliberals: let’s welcome the slogan *Everything is concatenated*, they often say, but let’s supplement it with the other side of the same coin: *We can re-concatenate things differently*.

The increasingly dense and intensive concatenation which characterizes “globalization” is *simultaneously* a source of increasing constraints for every agent (body parts, individuals, families, companies, neighborhoods, nations) and a potential source of new forms of emancipation. In Spinozese, the principle at stake is that (a) it requires a certain power *to be affected by other bodies* as well as to affect them, and (b) the power to affect always *varies in proportion* with the power to be affected. The (limited) power of a stone does not go much beyond being able to crush whatever finds itself caught under its weight; it is in direct proportion to its (equally limited) power of being affected (reduced to a sensitivity to the laws of gravity). What differentiates our human bodies from a stone is a parallel increase in our *power to affect* other bodies and in our *power to be affected* by them.

The more intimately we are concatenated with the rest of the world, the more sensitive we are to its variations, the more we can affect it in return. Not to deny that there are dramatic inequalities, differentials and asymmetries in power between individual agents, of course: the point is to understand [*intelligere*, and this might be an appropriate definition of *intelligence*] what specific and always limited power comes with every nexus in the concatenation of causes. The practical problem then becomes (and this might be the only appropriate *ethical* question): what helps me *actualize* this power (we’ll call that “Good”) and what keeps me *separated from* this power (we’ll call it “Bad”).

To label such an approach “Spinozist” is obviously an oversimplification. What we are dealing with is rather a whole, rich and diverse tradition of thought which keeps (re)inventing itself from Lucretius and the Stoics to Machiavelli, Hobbes, Spinoza, Diderot, Nietzsche, Tarde, and all the way to Deleuze, Negri or a journal like *Multitudes*³⁰. To illustrate this tradition, I will sample four sets of 18th-century (re-)concatenaters, four

²⁹ See for instance the body of thinking generated by and around Antonio NEGRI and Michael HARDT, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, 2000.

³⁰ Published four times a year in Paris; past articles available online at <http://multitudes.samizdat.net/>.

links arbitrarily isolated in this long chain of intellectual, political and cultural activists. Their only common point is that they all challenged the borders of the Nation-States, at the very moment when these institutions were only taking shape.

Cosmopolitics. Between 1650 and 1815, a number of writer-activists promoted various projects of political unification in Europe. Although their motivations vary widely, from nationalistic hidden agendas to Christian pacifism, and from Crusade projects to proto-socialist internationalism, they all wanted to bring to a higher level the lessons of Hobbes' political theory: human happiness requires the chaining of the individual agents (nations) under the fear of a common power (a federation). Such projects of a European Union both theorized the actual practice of international conferences and opened up new paths for a reflection which took two centuries to (start to) materialize. In all their diversity, and with all their ambiguities, figures like the abbé de Saint-Pierre, Anacharsis Cloots or Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon were good examples of these active concatenaters in early cosmopolitics.

Political Economy. The trendy windmill of neoliberalism often prevents us from seeing the obvious: those fathers of modern economics, who claimed the loudest that everything is (already) concatenated, were also very actively involved in re-concatenating the ideas and the institutions of their time. Not only did they establish strongly transnational links —Hume, Smith, Turgot and the Physiocrats all met and/or exchanged letters; the main experiments in applied physiocracy took place in Germany; Turgot wrote his main theoretical treatise to convert China to the beauties of the free market—, but the Physiocrats as a group were the first ones to constitute this highly efficient form of agency known today as a “think-tank”. From highly theoretical articles in the first specialized publications devoted to the “new science”, to “economic catechisms” in form of plays to be performed in villages so as to reach the illiterate masses, and from networking activities among the intelligentsia of the times to the infiltration of the royal administration, they did manage to push reforms through the implementation phase (even if such implementation on the grain trade eventually backfired). Quesnay, Baudeau, Dupont, Turgot, Lemercier de la Rivière were the living proofs that even the “spontaneous logic of the market” requires a lot of political activism to (re)concatenate our economic interactions.

The Encyclopedist Movement. The purpose (and the recurrent underlying image) of the *Encyclopédie* was not only to “express, as much as it is possible, the order and concatenation of human ideas” [*exposer autant qu'il est possible, l'ordre et l'enchaînement des connaissances humaines*], but also to contribute to the “chain” [*la chaîne*] which unites the sciences and the arts by intensifying “the interconnections between discoveries” [*la liaison que les découvertes ont entre elles*]³¹. The whole project of (the Radical) Enlightenment is a vast enterprise of re-concatenation: when d'Holbach translates Hobbes or when he spreads Spinozism in the *Système de la Nature*, when Diderot directs the *Encyclopédie* or composes the *Voyage de Bougainville*, they both mobilize a wide and international network of connections (travelers, colporteurs of forbidden books, scientific

³¹ Jean Le Rond D'ALEMBERT, *Discours préliminaire de l'Encyclopédie* (1751), in *Encyclopédie*, Paris: GF, 1986, tome I, p. 76.

correspondents, readers of the *Correspondance Littéraire*, Tahitian characters, funds from the Russian court) in order to “transform our common ways of thinking”, i.e., in order to make us re-concatenate our ideas, our affects, our values along newly invented lines.

Multitudes. All these intellectual endeavors developed in interaction with social movements, to which they reacted (usually led by the dominant affect of fear) and which they sometimes fed in return (boosting affects of hope). The new historical scholarship helps us conceive such movements (slave rebellions, peasant resistance, proto-proletarian organizations), beyond the category of “the people” (permeated by connotations of race and nation), through the Spinozist notion of *multitude*: when “crowds” determine the course of the National Assembly by burning castles, or impose the “just price” of bread on their local baker under the threat of their sheer number³²; when the flows of goods carried by colonial trade drag behind them workers constituting multi-ethnic communities on ships or in ports³³; when the workers’ capacity to flee (escape, migrate, change jobs) appears as the *primum mobile* in the development of labor relations over the last 500 years³⁴; in all such cases, it is the very *fluidity* of the multitudes which enables them to exploit and subvert the channels of their exploitation. Their re-concatenation through trade unions, political parties, or social safety nets appears in this perspective both as a conquest and as a danger: like all chains, these new bonds are at the same time a form of empowerment and a constraint.

Cloots, Hume, DuPont, d’Holbach, Diderot, and probably a good number of the obscure agitators who carved new paths of emancipation of the multitudes, have all been labeled — depending on the period and the milieu — “Spinozist”, “determinist”, “materialist”, “atheist”, “fatalist”, “communist”. To conclude, let’s attempt to summarize what their long tradition of reflection and work on the Great Chain of Nations can teach us today about “globalization”.

1. *Chains of command*. Whenever we think in terms of concatenations, the first challenge consists in broadening our view from noticing the obvious *chains of enslavement* to mapping the more elusive *chains of “command”* which structure our planet — in the specific sense given to this word by Adam Smith when he quotes Hobbes’ equation between wealth and power, measuring them by “the quantity of labor which [the rich person] can *command*”³⁵. We are in a “post”-colonial age only insofar as intercontinental chains have refashioned their appearance. A change for the better, obviously, and certainly not an insignificant one. But a change in surface more than in structure, since it is still the economico-political chains of Western capital which “command” the (under)development of four fifths of mankind.

³² John MARKOFF, *The Abolition of Feudalism. Peasants, Lords and Legislators in the French Revolution*, Pennsylvania State UP, 1996; Florence GAUTHIER and Guy Robert IKNI (ed.), *La guerre du blé au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris: Editions de la Passion, 1988.

³³ Marcus REDIKER, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea. Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750*, Cambridge University Press, 1987; Marcus REDIKER & Peter LINEBAUGH, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

³⁴ Yann MOULIER BOUTANG, *De l’esclavage au salariat. Economie politique du salariat bridé*, Paris: PUF, 1998.

³⁵ Adam SMITH, *Wealth of Nations*, op. cit., Book I, chapter V, pp. 34-35.

2. *The Nation*. Within these chains of command, the status of the Nation(-State) cannot be decided in the realm of abstract theory, but depends upon the singularity of each historical situation. In the rich Western world, national borders, passports and immigration laws tend to produce the highly oppressive chains of a new form of apartheid³⁶, which exposes (much needed and abundantly used) “undocumented” workers to the harshest forms of exploitation and abuse. In other parts of the world, or on specific issues like the protection of local cultures, an appeal to the Nation-State may still be a powerful tool of self-defense, an emancipating chain likely to “command” a significant quantity of political labor in order to curb and resist the Hollywoodization of the world. To evaluate the merits and demerits of a reference to the Nation, we should consider the etymology of the term, which evokes the “birthing” process [*natus*]: each individual’s “extraction” (out of the material world, out of a family, a social group, a geographical area) is necessarily unique, and yet it is also, and no less necessarily, the result of a process involving a whole network of participants. Each individual is defined by the singular *catena* of causes which, together [*con-*], produced its singular *natio*. An appeal to the *nation* is justifiable only within a promotion of this double singularity — which involves the promotion of the other singularities participating in the *concatena*.

3. *Power vs Rights*. Beyond such trivial observations, a Spinozist view of concatenations allows us to redefine the basic principles on which a truly cosmopolitan and constructive work towards building a Great Chain of Nations could be grounded. In contrast with the neo-Kantian obsession with Human Rights which has bogged down political rhetoric over the last 30 years³⁷, Spinoza (along with Hobbes) leads us systematically to reduce considerations of *right* to measurements of *power*. Nothing can protect us from chains of enslavement except other chains (of command). Human reality is not based on the inner virtue of contracts, but on the underlying relations of force which structure them. In the field of local politics as well as on the geopolitical stage, emancipation cannot be conceived merely as the acquisition of formal rights; it is achieved only through the actual use of actual powers. When Spinoza writes that “the true aim of government is liberty”, this does not simply mean that everybody is *allowed* to be informed, to vote and to speak out, but that “the human mind and body actually and safely fulfill their functions” to the maximum extent of their power [*mens et corpus tuto suis functionibus fungantur*], which implies that people “make actual use of their free Reason” [*libera Ratione utantur*], and therefore actually participate in the political process (TTP, XX, § 19-20). In the Great Chain of Nations, it means that our efforts in re-concatenation should aim at helping the dominated multitudes (wherever they are) to acquire the practical means (whatever they are) to make actual use of their free reason.

4. *Liberty and Fear*. It is obvious that the Spinozist approach leads to a drastic redefinition of the notion of Liberty. In contrast to most common views, liberty does not consist in being “free from someone else’s command”. An awareness of our concatenated fates reveals that we are inextricably bound to countless chains of commands (through the

³⁶ For the use of this term, see Etienne BALIBAR, *Nous, citoyens d’Europe? Les frontières, l’Etat, le peuple*, Paris : La Découverte, 2001, in particular pp. 190-192.

³⁷ For a good critique of the shortcomings and delusions of this Human Rights ideology, see Alain BADIOU, *Ethics. An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (1993), Engl. transl. P. Hallward, New York: Verso, 2000.

division of labor, the participation we have in each other's fate, the knowledge we share, the love we inspire in each other, etc.) If, as we have seen, institutions concatenate us more rather than less, there is one thing from which their chains can emancipate us: "the ultimate aim of government is [...] to free every man from fear [*unumquemque metu liberare*], so that he may live as safely as it is possible" (TTP, XX, § 19-20). Beyond its commonplace (Hobbesian) implications at the domestic level, this emphasis on the relation between freedom and fear anticipates many current (i.e., post-9/11) reflections on geopolitics. On the one hand, the concatenation of technological processes (air traffic, skyscrapers, nuclear power plants, ozone layer depletion, CO2 emissions, etc.) has generated global fears which tie all humans together, *volens nolens*, in a deepening "community of fate"³⁸ — of which the current boogie man of "terrorism" is only a very superficial and highly misleading figure. On the other hand, the use of fear is a good indicator of the nature of the political regime in place: "for a free multitude is guided more by hope than fear [*libera multitudo majori spe quam metu ducitur*]; a conquered one, more by fear than hope; inasmuch as the former aims at cultivating life [*vitam colere*], the latter but at escaping death"³⁹. In other words: distrust governments that constantly play on reactive affects of fear and revenge by putting crime or terror at the top of their agenda, for such rhetoric is the symptom of a deficit of freedom in the multitude. True liberty calls for constructive projects driven by hopes rather than repressive measures feeding off the anxieties they fuel in return. "Well-ordered societies" do not so much need to be "defended", as they need to be "cultivated", constantly re-invented.

5. *Liberty and Reason*. More radically even, Spinoza's overall determinism allows us to disconnect true liberty from its traditional anchorage in the individual's will, preferences and choices. The fact that a majority of citizens wholeheartedly support their government's decisions is no ultimate proof of a well-functioning democracy: for "spirits [*animi*] are to a certain point under the domination of the sovereign [*sub imperio summae potestatis*], who can in many ways bring about that the greatest parts of the people, believe, love, hate whatever the sovereign wants". The strongest and most invisible of chains are the ones consented upon by those who bear them: "he is most under the dominion of another who with his whole heart determines to obey another's command [*qui alteri integro animo ad omnia ejus mandata obtemperare deliberat*]" (TTP, XVII § 11-12). The tripartition offered by Spinoza somewhere else in the *Theologico-Political Treatise* encapsulates neatly what is at stake with his notion of freedom:

"A slave [*servus*] is one who is bound to obey his master's orders, though they are given solely in his master's interests [*utilitatem imperantis tantum spectant*]; a son [*filiius*] is one who obeys his father's orders, given in his own interests [*quod sibi utile est*]; a subject [*subditus*] obeys the orders of the sovereign power, given for the common interest, wherein he is included [*quod communi et consequenter quoque sibi utile est*]"

"The true slave is he who is led away by his pleasures [*a sua voluptate ita trahitur*] and can neither see what is good for him nor act accordingly [*nihil quod sibi utile est videre necque agere potest*]; he alone is free who lives with his whole spirit under the sole guidance of reason [*qui integro animo ex solo ductu Rationis vivit*]" (TTP, XVI, § 61 & 55)

³⁸ On this notion, see Herman van GUNSTEREN, *A Theory of Citizenship. Organizing Plurality in Contemporary Democracies*, New York: Westview Press, 1998.

³⁹ Benedictus de SPINOZA, *Tractatus Politicus* (1677), chapter V, § 6. From now on referred to as TP.

Nobody is nor can be (absolutely) free in this sense. We can only become *more* free, more emancipated from our parents', priests', teachers', lawmakers', advertisers' orders, as well as from our various addictions, shopping urges, cinephilic drives and other bookworming obsessions. On this continuum of emancipation, the litmus-test of liberty (and of its opposite, slavery) is *not* to be located in the voluntary or involuntary nature of the action, *nor* in the fact that one obeys someone else's command or not (we all bear the chains of concatenations); it is to be found in whether our actions help us to act in closer conformity with our (common) interest, that is, ultimately, whether our actions help us (individually and collectively) to become more rational, more intelligent. Our emancipation not only depends upon but consists in improving our capacity better to re-concatenate ideas, so that we (individually and collectively) avoid the "bad encounters" of poisonous foods, destructive floods, clashes of passions, clan rivalries, and World Wars.

6. *Inventing multitudes*. "Reason" does not *exist*. Not only because men are, and will always be, subjected to (irrational) affects. But, more fundamentally, because the Spinozist *Ratio* is not something to conform to, but something to *invent*, to create, to *constitute* — and it is something that can only be invented *in common*, through the cooperation and communication of a multitude of human brains. To adapt Laurent Bove's suggestive formula, for Spinoza, *there is reason in number* ("du nombre naît la raison")⁴⁰ — and, through reason, strength. Here again, in this most fundamental and most radical affirmation of the democratic principle, the notion of concatenation is indirectly present. In a sentence that could be used to denounce "totalitarian" tendencies in Spinoza's political thought, the *Political Treatise* draws consequences from the fact that men do not spontaneously behave rationally:

"if human nature were so constituted, that men most desired what is most useful, no art would be needed to produce unity and confidence. But, as it is admittedly far otherwise with human nature, a dominion must of necessity be so ordered [*imperium necessario ita instituendum est*], that all, governing and governed alike, whether they will or no, shall do what makes for the general welfare; that is, that all, whether of their own impulse, or by force or necessity, shall be compelled to live according to the dictate of reason [*ut omnes sponte, vel vi, vel necessitate coacti sint ex rationis praescripto vivere*]. (TP VI § 3)

Both aspects of the concatenation motif coincide in the use of the word *coacti*. At first sight of course, we see the always-daunting danger of oppressive chains: all must be compelled (*coacti*) to follow the dictates of reason (according to the most common meaning of *cogere*: "to constrain, to force, to compel"). But that same word also brings up the fundamentally democratic, autonomous and communal nature of this rational necessity: in its root, *co-acti* expresses the co-operation which constitutes this compulsion (according to the original meaning of *cum-agere*: "to lead together, to reunite, to tighten up, to condense").

This is the horizon opened up by the Spinozist view on "globalization". We humans must constitute a common reality, we must invent institutions which will compel

⁴⁰ Laurent BOVE, *La stratégie du conatus*, op. cit., p. 254. To support his formula, Bove mentions TP VII § 4; TP VIII § 6-7; TP IX § 14 and TP XI § 1.

(*compellere*: “to push together”) us to live according to the dictate of reason. Such “chains” cannot be imposed from above: ultimately, they will necessarily rely on the power of the multitudes, which will either accept them, or destroy them when they generate too much “indignation”. As re-concatenators of ideas, we are all co-actors, compulsors in this movement of auto-constitution of a human world. When faced with specific choices — should I activate this link? should I attempt to break this linkage?—, we can look towards the Spinozist tradition for a general rule of thumb: *does this connection tend to empower the inventive capacities of the multitudes by helping its individuals (brains, families, social groups, nations) to express their singularity and to further their individuation?* It is in light of this conditional imperative that Spinozism invites us to design cosmopolitics in the multifarious and multiseccular flows of globalization.