The reflection about the category of prejudice has been one of the biggest themes of modern thinking from the scientific revolution through the Enlightenment and Positivism, up to the twentieth-century debate about the philosophy of science. The theme of prejudice intersects with the one of nature, of knowledge and of the obstacles that prevent a correct comprehension of reality. This reflection comes primarily from Francis Bacon. He identifies the purification of the intellect from "*idola*"(prejudices) which blind the mind, as the first step of the quest for knowledge. It goes on with Descartes's theory. According to him, the first act of the new philosophy is the choice to separate the mind from the senses and to free the mind of prejudice: "*quin etiam nullis author sum ut haec legant, nisi tantùm iis qui seriò mecum meditari, metemque a sensibus, simulque ab omnibus praejudiciis, abducere poterunt ac volent*".[1] This reflection leads to the great Enlightenment's fight against superstition and prejudices, sources of distortion of our knowledge of the world and of social discriminations. Voltaire says that prejudice "*est une opinion sans jugement. Ainsi dans toute la terre on inspire aux enfants toutes les opinions qu'on veut, avant qu'ils puissent juger*."[2] And he goes on saying that, even if not all prejudices are false and negative, it's useful to submit them to the judgments of reason in order to recognize which of them are the good ones: "*ceux que le jugement ratifie quand on raisonne*.[3]

Kant is amazed that someone could ask himself if prejudices are useful, and goes on saying: "*Es ist zum Erstaunen, daß in unserm Zeitalter dergleichen Fragen, besonders die wegen Begünstigung der Vorurteile, noch können aufgegeben warden*".[4] Prejudices are source of wrong judgments and are caused by the lack of reflection, because prejudices are temporary judgments taken as principles or definitive judgments.[5] Moreover, Kant goes on saying that prejudices aren't singular concepts; in fact, it is not a prejudice to affirm that an individual is dishonest, but it would be a prejudice to extend that assessment to a whole category of people.[6] Prejudice is therefore an undeserved generalization.

D'Holbach resumes with more radical tones the position of the Enlightenment about this theme: "*L'ignorance, les erreurs et les préjugés des hommes sont les sources de leurs maux. La vérité doit tôt ou tard triompher de l'erreur*."[7] The fight against prejudice has not only the aim to open the way to the real knowledge of reality; it's the unavoidable step of progressive individual and social improvement. Experience and reason are essential to triumph on prejudices[8] and the instrument is instruction:

Pour que la morale ait du pouvoir sur les hommes, il faut les éclairer sur leurs vrais intérets; pour qu'ils soient éclarés, il faut que la vérité puisse les instruire, pour les instruire, il faut que le préjugé soit désarmé par la raison, c'est alors que les nations, tirées de cette enfance que leurs tuteurs s'efforcent d'éterniser, s'occuperont de la réforme de leurs institutions, des abus de la législation, des idées fausses qu'inspirent l'education, les usages nuisibles dont elles souffrent à chaque instant."[9] *The role of the educator was given to the "philosophe" presented as "medicin du genre humain" (physician of mankind).*[10] *The "philosophe" has to address himself to principals and to people "La verité a deux moyen de triompher de l'erreur: soit en descendant des chefs aux nations, soit en remontant des nations à leurs chefs.*[11]

D'Holbach continues by saying that the most efficient of the two ways is the second one, because illuminated chiefs can die and be substituted by despots, while an "*instruit et raisonnable*" population can't die. From this extended debate about prejudice, here summarily outlined, emerge some distinctive elements of the concept in matter. Prejudice is a pre-established opinion, a rush to judgment, lacking of a rational justification or of precise knowledge of the judged object, a conviction made up without any foundation. It acquires a negative value with hard social consequences.

Obviously, we must remember as well the critics who spoke against the Enlightenment's and positivist traditions. I mean the reassessment of prejudice that finds its highest expression in Gadamer's theory. Prejudice is the pre-comprehension, that is the knowledge that pre-exists the experience and so it's a condition of making a reflective judgment about the world. In a hermeneutics perspective, prejudice is the necessary intuitive pre-cognition that the interpreter can't leave out of consideration. Gadamer distinguishes between positive and negative reading of the term "prejudice". The positive prejudice makes comprehensions possible while the negative obstacles and hardens it. The difference between the two isn't in the bigger or in the smaller correspondence to the real world. On the contrary, both negative and positive prejudices can't be preventively distinguished. The distinction becomes clear during the process of understanding. The subject consciously uses them in an endless debate with the other possible "horizons of sense".[12]

In the wake of these philosophical debates the great and complex analysis of psychology has been gradually introduced with the discussion between cognitivism and constructivism. The

social-constructivist approach seems to be close to the criticism of the Enlightenment's tradition developed by Gadamer and the hermeneutical approach. Social constructivism develops a particular attention for the language understood as an instrument of interpretation of the world and of comparison of "horizons of sense". On the other hand, studies about the definition of prejudice as a cognitive mistake have been developed. For example, Allport which inserts the emotional element in the cognitivist definition: "Prejudice is an antipathy based on faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group or an individual of a group."[13]

During the years, more or less successful strategies against prejudices developed strategies tending to eliminate and reduce them. Gordon Allport himself developed already 60 years ago the hypothesis of contact. If prejudices come from a lack of knowledge among different groups, the contact with individuals of the out-groups will help to discover that a lot of prejudices and stereotypes are wrong. Recent researches have however underlined that prejudices is higher in towns with more immigrants, where the possibilities of a contact are higher.[14] So contact and knowledge do not always bring to more positive relationships.

We don't want to underline these analyses here, even if they are important and fruitful. We want to leave from a question: did we really destroy or at least attenuate the negative strength of prejudices after centuries of fight against it? Actually, prejudices exist and they'll always and always continue to direct collective and social life, and they often foment aversion and hostility towards other individuals, groups, nations and races. The idea of the Enlightenment that prejudice is to be fought with rational and objective knowledge freeing us from fast and preconceived opinions, as well as the position of hermeneutics calling for an awareness capable to distinguish the prejudices able to produce new cognitive horizons from the ones that stop it and render the vision of the world infertile, does not seem able to produce fully efficient strategies of liberation.

In order to understand this difficulty, I'd like to go back to the beginning of the reflection about prejudice made in modern thinking, and specifically to that author, who can't be easily put in any simplistic category: Spinoza. He is hardly categorizable because his doctrine puts itself in the confluence of different traditions: the Renaissance's immanentist naturalism,[15] the re-elaborations of elements already present in medieval philosophy[16] and in Jewish thinking,[17] and the study of the new mathematical science of nature. All this

makes Spinoza not so much a forerunner of the radical Enlightenment,[18] but an "anomalous" thinker, as Toni Negri writes, an atypical modernity.[19] This atypical modernity can perhaps allow us to shed light on the complex phenomenon of prejudice. According to Spinoza, this phenomenon lies at the confluence of different elements: language, habit, experience, and daily morality.

Spinoza is among those who think that it's necessary to remove prejudices from the mind, prejudices "*quae impedire poterant quominus meae demonstrationes percipererunt*".[20] In his writings, we find a very long list of prejudices: the final causality attributed to God or to nature; the illusion of human free will; moral concepts of right and wrong, merit and sin, reward and punishment; the aesthetic concepts of beautiful and ugly, perfection and imperfection, order and confusion; concepts elaborated by theologians; miracles as a God's works that lie outside the natural order.[21]

According to Spinoza, where do all these prejudices that he enumerates come from? Spinoza's reflection about the category of prejudice runs through different levels, from the epistemological to the political one and it strictly connects to his theory of language.[22] Spinoza didn't write a treatise on language, but nearly every one of his writings attempts some analysis of language. Let's see what he says about this subject.

Words are conventional and arbitrary signs of things "*prout sunt in imaginatione*".[23] Signs are images in the way explained by the scholium of the second part of his *E.* after proposition 17, that is affections of the human body whose ideas represent to us exterior bodies as if they were present to us. These images, as Spinoza explains, aren't figures or the more or less objective reproduction of things. They are the product of interaction of our body with other bodies and they simultaneously express both the power of our body and the power of other bodies. Images are bodily traces of these meetings that "say" of both bodies, and that "confuse" both bodies in a unique sign. The body's affection corresponding to the idea of this affection is what Spinoza calls "affect". In turn affect expresses the increased or decreased power of the body (*corporis agendi potentia*).[24] Thus language is a web of patterns of affectivity.

The origin of the language is so explained thanks to the body.[25] In this way language is part of an immediate and not adequate knowledge, and so it's always the expression of a

confused knowledge. There is a double confusion: in front of the infinite complexity of reality, the human body, which is finite for definition, makes a process of practical simplification of which language is one of the products. In the scholium of proposition 40 E.II, when Spinoza explains to us the origin of the notions we call "Transcendental" and "Universal", he illustrates this process of confusion and simplification. Our limited body is able to form just a limited number of distinct images. When the number of images becomes excessive, Spinoza says that images will be confused in the body and also the mind will be unable to distinguish all those images, and therefore it will apply only one tag: that is a general term, a word (e.g. a being, a thing, a man, a horse, etc.). Language is what is used to classify.[26]

It's interesting to remember the development of the "term" human being. When the human body is affected by a lot of traces that form a lot of images of man as the mind can't record the distinctive traits of each human being, such as his colour or his height, it tends to clearly imagine just those aspects that have almost the same effect on the body, i.e. those aspects that hit it with more vividness and that the mind more easily reminds: the term "man" (human being) will be applied to this group of aspects. But Spinoza goes on saying that those aspects that the mind retains with more vividness, can change in each individual according to the particular "*ingenium*" (temper) of the individual itself or the particular tendency to admire some aspects more than others:

Exempli gratia qui saepius cum admiratione hominum staturam contemplati sunt, sub nomine hominis intelligent animal erectae staturae; qui vero aliud assueti sunt contemplari, aliam hominum communem imaginem formabunt nempe hominem esse animal risibile, animal bipes sine plumis, animal rationale et sic de reliquis unusquisque pro dispositione sui corporis rerum universales imagines formabit.[27]

The word is a sign easy to remember and has a recognising function, which consists of advising that an object or a situation is already been recognised, i.e. that it is already known. This memory process of terms organises itself according to the concatenation of bodily affections:

ut exempli gratia ex cogitatione vocis pomi homo romanus statim in cogitationem fructus incidet qui nullam cum articulato illo sono habet similitudinem nec aliquid commune nisi

quod ejusdem hominis corpus ab his duobus affectum saepe fuit hoc est quod ipse homo saepa vocem pomum audivit dum ipsum fructum videret et sic unusquisque ex una in aliam cogitationem incidet prout rerum imagines uniscujusque consuetudo in corpore ordinavit.[28]

The word is a sign that, moreover and above all, tells us about the relationship we establish between things and the use we usually do of them in relation with our needs: "*Nam miles exempli gratia vivis in arena equi vestigiis statim ex cogitatione equi in cogitationem aratri, agri etc. incidet et sic unusquisque prout rerum imagines consuevit hoc vel alio modo jungere et concatenare, ex una in hanc vel aliam incidet cogitationem.*"[29]

Words belong to the imagination, while language is the product of the immediate knowledge of the first immediate answer to our need. In the interaction with things, the body keeps traces of what more positively answers to the survival effort. In Spinoza's terms, it increases or decreases its power to act, and we give a name to it. Language doesn't tell us about the truth of things. We mustn't search the meaning of words in the content of truth, but in its practical value, in its use value. For example, Spinoza says to us that the first meaning (*prima significatio*) of "true" and "false" seems to come from narrations: these tales have been called "true" when the told fact had really (*revera*) happened; a fact that had happened nowhere, instead, was called "false".[30] Here Spinoza puts in mutual relation the meaning of a word with an experience. And the experience has not a secondary place in Spinoza thinking, even if the majority of commentators deny the importance of the experience in the rationalist philosophy of the author of *E*. Returning to the acute observations by P.F. Moreau,[31] it is worth remembering that in his works, Spinoza does not strive to give the experience the lowest place as possible; on the contrary, in all his works experience is often shown with positive traits, and not only as the "vague experience" of the first kind of knowledge. Expressions such as "*experientia docet*", "*experientia docuit*", "*experientia suadet*", "*experientia monstrat*", "*experientia comprobat*", "*experientia confirmat*" are frequent in all his works, including *E.*. Experience theaches, then; but what does it teach?

We have just one excerpt where Spinoza directly speaks about experience. In letter X to Simon de Vries,[32] Spinoza tells us that experience is necessary for that of which essence doesn't involve existence: the "*modi*". In other words, experience let us know facts that

can't be deducted from the definition of the object. It's not just the existence of the finished *modi*; it's something more: our actions, our soul's affective impulses, all the infinite variations of our being, living and acting that are made by the meeting of our essence with the things surrounding us. We are not able to deduce "*more geometrico*" the infinite variety of the human events; we can just see them after that experience has presented them to us. However, we must pay a lot of attention: the teaching of experience has got some limits. Since experience does not teach about the essence, it never shows the cause of things, and it's not able to tell us when such causes cease to act and others intervene. In any case, what experience tells us is always real. Experience does not cheat: it's the reading that we do of experience that can be wrong. The ideologies, myths, superstitions and prejudices and also the language, with which we human beings redress the facts, prevent most times to take advantage from experience.

Language is also and in the same time the product of interaction of human bodies among them. In other terms, language is a social product. Therefore, Spinoza says, it's common people who find and invent new words: "*vulgus vocabula primum invenit*." Language is a product of collective interaction; it's the language (*langue*) of a population. And, as such, it's immediately in relation with collective experiences and needs of that population. Only later, with a metaphoric translation (*metaphorice translata est*) do "philosophers" use terms to indicate the agreement of an idea with its object and begin using them to indicate things. "*Atque hanc philosophi postea usurparunt ad denotandam convenientiam ideae cum suo ideato*".[33] And so, when we use the terms "true" and "false" about, for example, gold, it's as the represented gold told something about itself: it told that it's or it's not gold. But, as Spinoza continues, from the point of view of the meaning, this is an illegitimate use of words. This way to give meanings to the words is just rhetorical, and it has not a cognitive aim, but only a practical use for persuasion. It can open to manipulation and domination.

A word does not guarantee the correspondence between representations and things. Human beings (all together as *vulgus*) understand their relation to things not in the order of truth, but in relation to their immediate needs, through bodily affections. The analysis about the terms "true" and "false" of *CM* is the first example of what P. F. Moreau[34] called an operation of "philosophical etymology" that Spinoza will repeat in the fourth part of his *E.* for the term "perfect" and in the *TTP* for the term "Law". Thanks to this operation of philosophical etymology, Spinoza shows in the appendix of the first part of his *Ethics* how

the finalist prejudice always requires a critical analysis of language based on this philosophical etymology.

We remember that language is invented by the "*vulgus*", i.e. by common people, by ignorant people, and so it's from the beginning (*ab origine*) connected to inadequate ideas. The "genetic" or generative cause of language is imagination. That means that it belongs to the order and structure of this kind of spontaneous knowledge; this knowledge that Spinoza calls "*cognitio ab experientia vag*a", where "*vaga*" means wandering, precarious, without a precise direction. Obviously, the word as a sign of an inadequate knowledge conserves a trace of the actual idea, but this idea of affection of the bodies of common people in the interaction with other bodies is an inadequate and confused idea: it's an image. And the word as the term that designates this idea is the image of an image. The totality of words leans on the mechanism of memory thanks to some disposition of the body: "*verba… prout vage et aliqua dispositiones corporis componuntur in memoria*."[35]

We said that the improper use of words can open to the manipulation and to the subjection. Spinoza warns us that prejudices and superstitions are not only the product of manipulation of dominants over the dominated ones. They can rise spontaneously. Let's suppose for example a group of individuals that live together. These people are common people who don't use reason, but live under the yoke of imagination. They impose names to images born from affections of their bodies that interact with each other. As we have already see their imagination is not able to distinguish every specific aspect of each individual, but it will fix in mind those aspects that, for their inclination and habit, strike them most: white skin, size, colour of eyes and hair, etc. This image of human being has characteristics corresponding exactly to the instinctive bent of the group, and to what causes admiration. These individuals are so brought to recognise that sort of human being as the neighbour, and they find the term "man" to designate it. Considering the term as the object they will tend not to recognise as man or human being individuals that don't fit well with that image. Racial prejudice is thus born.

If then we consider that the effects are an idea of the mind to which an affection of the body corresponds at the same time, and that when the mind has confused and inadequate ideas it's passive, and that a confused idea is a passion of the soul, then we understand that prejudice is inevitably accompanied by a passion: admiration for the counterpart, diffidence

or fear for the different, etc. And since men tend by nature to strictly associate when they fall prey to a common passion such as hope, fear or common desire of revenge,[36] prejudice (which always goes with a passion) risks of being among the natural foundations of political society. However, what characterises a society of human beings, a nation from another, has not its origins in nature. Nature just creates individuals. The habit, the reiterated experience of custom and laws shape the people's "*ingenium*". In the *TTP,* Spinoza wonders why the Jewish people had moved away so often from the observance of the laws. Was it by nature? No, he answers. The language, the laws and the customs distinguish a community from another and it is just from this the particular nature of a community that its condition and its prejudices derive.[37] Through the language, the customs and the laws, prejudices shape the character of a community, and therefore they participate in the constitutive power of imagination. At the same time, individual and collective experiences are often misinterpreted by prejudices.

How can we escape from the chain of prejudices? Is knowledge—theoretical, rational—enough to modify prejudices that revealed to be behavioural attitudes, collective affects in addition to illusory tales? Without going back to all aspects of Spinoza's theory, I'm going to touch upon some suggestions that we can infer from his theory to develop strategies for liberation.

First, we must remember what Spinoza demonstrates in the fourth part of his *E.*. Till the real knowledge of good and bad remains purely theoretical, it doesn't modify the human condition; on the contrary, it risks making it worse, because it's unarmed in front of the power of the affects.[38] It's therefore useful to develop a strategy of the affects—what Spinoza does in the fourth part of his *E.*, where he develops what P. Macherey calls "a daily ethics" that "*introduit dans l'espace qui paraît séparer la servitude de la liberté toutes un monde de nuances microscopiques, de determinations intermediaires*".[39] This strategy of the affects can't get out of being also a strategy of the language. Perhaps this is also the very difficult (*perardua*) way which Spinoza speaks about at the end of his *E.*; very difficult because, as we have seen, language is a sign of inadequate knowledge, corresponding the bondage of passions. The dominion of words is such that also philosophy remained prisoner of words and has fallen into a lot of mistakes: "*Attamen non miror philosophos verbales, sive grammaticales in similes errores incidere: res enim ex nominibus judicant.*"[40] Nevertheless, at the heart of the philosophical project, Spinoza puts the achievement of a

Real Good that is communicable.[41]

How can we communicate, speak and, for the philosopher, write, in order to stay clear from illusions, mistakes and prejudices of the imagination, if the language takes root in the imagination?

Spinoza's answer is not the one to create another language, as for example mathematics did. Neither we can change the language that means to eliminate some words, in order to create others or substitute them with others. We have to transformer the use of the language, by using the same words, the words of common use, to signify something else: "*Haec nomina ex communi usu aliud significare scio. Sed meum institutum non est verborum significationem sed rerum naturam explicare easque iis vocabulis indicare quorum significatio quam ex usu habent, a significatione qua eadem usurpare volo, non omnino abhorret, quod semel monuisse sufficiat.*"[42] That' s what Spinoza does in his *E.*, when he asks himself about definitions. But not only this; the whole of Spinoza's work urges attention and caution in the use of language: "*Caute*". In the whole *E.*, he uses this motto just once and exclusively when referring to human language: "*Nam quia haec tria, imagines scilicet verba et ideae, a multis vel plane confunduntur vel non satis accurate vel denique non satis caute distinguuntur*".[43] Caution in the use of words, caution in expressions, caution in the use of metaphors.

Spinoza's philosophical etymology is therefore a criticism of the use of language, which results into a double consciousness.

First: language is a collective product and it's meant for the community. Also, the philosophic discourse can be a discourse that really redirects the human being on the real communicable good, when it is within common people's reach, when language can bond with the common people, and thus prepare them to listen to the truth: "*Ad captum vulgi loqui, et illa omnia operari, quae nihil impedimenti adferunt, quominus nostrum scopum attingamus. Nam non parum emolumenti ab eo possumus acquirere, modo ipsius captui, quantum fieri potest, concedamus ; adde, quod tali modo amicas praebebunt aures ad veritatem audiendam.*"[44] Modifying the use of language can't be just the work of a person or of a group of intellectuals. The wiser person too is always exposed to the danger of the passions and so she's exposed to the risk of obtuseness; but human beings can also correct

their faults by examining the questions, listening, discussing and trying all the intermediate solutions to find what nobody had already thought.[45]

Second: language has an ambiguous strength in itself; words are useful to produce transformations towards the better or the worse. When we make an improper use of it, unknowingly or deliberately, and we manipulate the meanings, the effect can be the loss of individual or social freedom. From here follows Spinoza's call for caution and attention in the use of words, but at the same time the lack of any specific strategy of and about language divided from that strategy for mastering affects, i.e. the daily morality in the fourth part of his *E*.

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Endnotes

[1] René Descartes, Meditationes de prima philosophia, AT, VII, 9 ("I yet apprehend that they cannot be adequately understood by many, both because they are also a little lengthy and dependent the one on the other, and principally because they demand a mind wholly free of prejudices, and one which can be easily detached from the affairs of the senses." René Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, ed. Stanley Tweyman, Routlegde, New York, 1993, p. 36, translated by Elisabeth S Haldane and G.R.T Ross).

[2] Voltaire, *Dictionnaire philosophique portatif*. Nouvelle edition. Avec des notes; beaucoup plus correcte & plus ample que les précédentes, vol. 2, Amsterdam, chez Varberg, 1765, p. 216: "Prejudice is an opinion without judgment. Thus all over the world do people inspire children with all the opinions they desire, before the children can judge." Voltaire, *The Philosophical Dictionary*, Selected and Translated by H.I. Woolf, Knopf, New York, 1924.

[3] Ibidem. "they are those which are ratified by judgment when one reasons." Ibidem.

[4] Immanuel Kant, *Logik, Sämmtliche Werke,* bind 4, herausgegeben von Karl Rosenkranz und Fried. Wilh. Schubert, Leopold Voss, Leipzig, 1838, p. 89. "It is astonishing that in our age such question can still be advanced, especially that concerning the encouragement of prejudices." Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on logic*, translated and edited by J. Michael Young, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

[5] See ibidem.

[6] See ibidem.

[7] Paul Henri Thiry d'Holbach, *Essai sur les préjugés ou De l'influence des opinions sur les moeurs et sur le bonheur des Hommes. Ouvrage contenant L'apologie de la philosophie par Mr. D.M*. Londres: Editeur anonyme, 1770, p. 1. "Human beings' ignorance, errors and prejudices are the sources of their evils. The truth is the remedy. …. The truth must sooner or later triumph over error. " (my own translation)

[8] Ibidem, p. 36.

[9] Ibidem, p. 250; "In order to get morals has ascendancy over human beings, it is necessary to enlighten them on their true interests; in order to make them enlightened, it is necessary that the truth can educate them, for educate them, it is necessary that prejudice is disarmed by reason, then, the nations, free from the childhood that their tutors strive to make eternal, will engage themselves to reform their institutions, to fight against the abuse of legislation, the false ideas that inspire education, the harmful practices of which they suffer at every moment."(my own translation)

[10] Ibidem, p. 168.

[11] Ibidem, p. 170 : “Truth has two ways to triumph over error: either by going down from the chiefs to the nations, or by ascending from the nations to their chiefs.” (my translation).

[12] See cfr H.G. Gadamer, *Wharheit und Methode*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 1960.

[13] Gordon Allport, *The nature of prejudice*, Reading, MA, USA: Addison-Wesley, 1979, p. 9.

[14] See Chiara Volpato and Anna Maria Manganelli-Rattazzi, “Pregiudizio e immigrazione. Effetti del contatto sulle relazioni interetniche”, in *Ricerche di psicologia*, 3-4, 2000.

[15] See Ernst Cassirer, *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit*. Berlin, Verlag: Bruno Cassirer, 1922, pp. 73 and following.

[16] See Pietro di Vona, *Studi sull’ontologia di Spinoza* I, Firenze, Nuova Italia, 1960.

[17] See I. S. Revah, “Spinoza et les Heretiques de la communauté judéo-portuguais d’ Amsterdam”, in *Revue d’histoire et des religions*, 154, 1958, pp. 173-2I8; Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, Cambridge Mass. 2 voll., 1934; Geneviève Brykman, *La Judêité de Spinoza*, Paris, Ed. Vrin, 1973.

[18] See J. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment, Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001.

[19] Toni Negri, *L’anomalia selvaggia: saggio su potere e potenza in Baruch Spinoza*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1981

[20] E.I, appendix, G. II, pp. 77: “which might impede the comprehension of my demonstrations”, Elwes,pag 55. The critical edition used in the text is: Spinoza *Opera*, Hrsg. von Carl Gebhardt Heidelberg: Carl Winters, 1925. 4 Bände. For the English translation of *Ethica* we have here referred to: Spinoza, *Ethics*, translated by R.H.M.Elwes, the Floating press publishing, 2009. The following abbreviations have been used to refer to Spinoza’s

writings: E = Ethica, Epistolae = Correspondence, CM = Cogitata Metaphysica, TTP = Tractatus theologico- politicus, TP = Tractatus politicus.

[21] See .E.I, appendix, G.II, pp. 77-83.

[22] The attention on the problem of language in Spinoza is quite recent. Robert Misrahi had already dedicated several enlighting pages of this problem in his R. Misrahi, *Le désir et la réflexion dans la philosophie de Spinoza,* Paris – London – New York, Gordon and Breach, 1972, pp. 186-206. We also remeber F. Chiereghin, "Introduzione a Spinoza. La critica del sapere matematico e le aporie del linguaggio", in *Verifiche*, V, 1976, 1, pp. 3-23; V. Brunelli, "Religione e dottrina del linguaggio", in *Verifiche* VI ,1977, 4, pp. 755-787; F. Biasutti, *La dottrina della scienza in Spinoza*, Padova, Patron, 1979, pp. 140-145; L. Bove, "La théorie du langage chez Spinoza", in *L'Enseignement Philosophique* ,1991, 4, pp. 16-33 e 2005, 1, pp. 24-38; P.-F. Moreau, Spinoza: *L'expérience et l'éternité*, Paris, PUF, 1994, pp. 307-378, and "Langage et pouvoir chez Spinoza", in P.-F. Moreau, J. Robelin (éd. par), *Langage et Pouvoir à l'Âge Classique,* Besançon, Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2000, pp. 57-67. Lastly let's remember L. Vinciguerra, *Spinoza et le signe. La genèse de l'imagination*, Paris, J. Vrin, 2005.

[23] TI, G.I, , p. 33: "as they are in the imagination".

[24] E.III, def.3, G.II, p. 139.

[25] See L. Bove, cit. p. 18.

[26] See CM. I, 1, G.I, p. 231.

[27] E.II, prop.XL, sch.1, G.II, p.107. "For instance, those who have most often regarded with admiration the stature of man, will by the name of man understand an animal of erect stature; those who have been accustomed to regard some other attribute, will form a different general image of man, for instance, that man is a laughing animal, a two-footed animal without feathers, a rational animal, and thus, in other cases, everyone will form general images of things according to the habit of his body." Elswer, p. 122.

[28] Ibidem, “from the thought of the word *pomum* (an apple), a Roman would straightway arrive at the thought of the fruit apple, which has no similitude with the articulate sound in question, nor anything in common with it, except that the body of the man has often been affected by these two things; that is, that the man has often heard the word *pomum,* while he was looking at the fruit; similarly every man will go on from one thought to another, according as his habit has ordered the images of things in his body.” Ibidem

[29] E.II, prop. XVIII, sch.G.II, p. 63 “For a soldier, for instance, when he sees the tracks of a horse in sand, will at once pass from the thought of a horse to the thought of a horseman, and thence to the thought of war, &c.; while a countryman will proceed from the thought of a horse to the thought of a plough, a field, &c. Thus every man will follow this or that train of thought, according as he has been in the habit of conjoining and associating the mental images of things in this or that manner.” Elwes, p.102.

[30] See CM, I,6, G.I, p. 246.

[31] See P.F. Moreau, *Experience*, cit. These remarks on experience are taken from my own work, Paola de Cuzzani: ““Essere donna” e cittadinanza. La differenza sessuale nella filosofia di Spinoza” in *Donne e filosofia*, a cura di M. Marsonet, ERGA ed. Genova, 2011, pp. 27-37.

[32] See Epistolae, G. IV, p. 47.

[33] CM, I,VI. G.I. p. 246: “later philosophers made use of this signification to denote the agreement or disagreement of an idea with his object” in Spinoza *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy: with Metaphysical Thoughts* , transl. by Samuel Shirley, ed by S. Barbone and L.Rice, Hackett publishing C.Indianapolis/Cambridge, 1998, p. 107.

[34] See P. F. Moreau, *Spinoza, l’ expérience et l’éternité*, PUF, p. 366.

[35] TI G. I, p. 33: “we form many conceptions in accordance with confused arrangements of words in the memory, dependent on particular bodily conditions”. Translated by R. H. M. Elwes.

[36] See TP, III, 9, G.III, p. 284.

[37] See TTP, cap.XVII, G.III, p.217.

[38] See E. IV, 17. sch, G. II, p.177.

[39] P. Macherey, "Ethique IV, propositions 70-71. La vie sociale des hommes libres", *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 1994, n°4, p. 459. "…that introduces into space, which seems to separate servitude from liberty, a whole world of microscopic nuances, of intermediate determinations" (my own translation).

[40] CM.I1, G.I, p. 235: "Still, I am not surprise that verbal or grammatical philosophers fall into errors like these, for they judge things from words", transl. by Samuel Shirley, op. cit. p. 96.

[41] See TI, G. I, p. 5.

[42] E.III, aff. Def.20, expl. "I am aware that these terms are employed in senses somewhat different from those usually assigned. But my purpose is to explain, not the meaning of words, but the nature of things. I therefore make use of such terms, as may convey my meaning without any violent departure from their ordinary signification. One statement of my method will suffice." Trans. Elwes, p. 235.

[43] E. II, prop 49, sch, "These three–namely, images, words, and ideas–are by many persons either entirely confused together, or not distinguished with sufficient accuracy or care" Elwes, p.138.

[44] TI.G.II, p. 9, "To speak in a manner intelligible to the multitude, and to comply with every general custom that does not hinder the attainment of our purpose. (17:3) For we can gain from the multitude no small advantages, provided that we strive to accommodate ourselves to its understanding as far as possible: moreover, we shall in this way gain a friendly audience for the reception of the truth." Transl. by Elwes.

[45] TP. 9, XIV, G.III, p. 352.