

Department of Philosophy (IFF)

Nietzsche and Spinoza

From Ontology to Ethics

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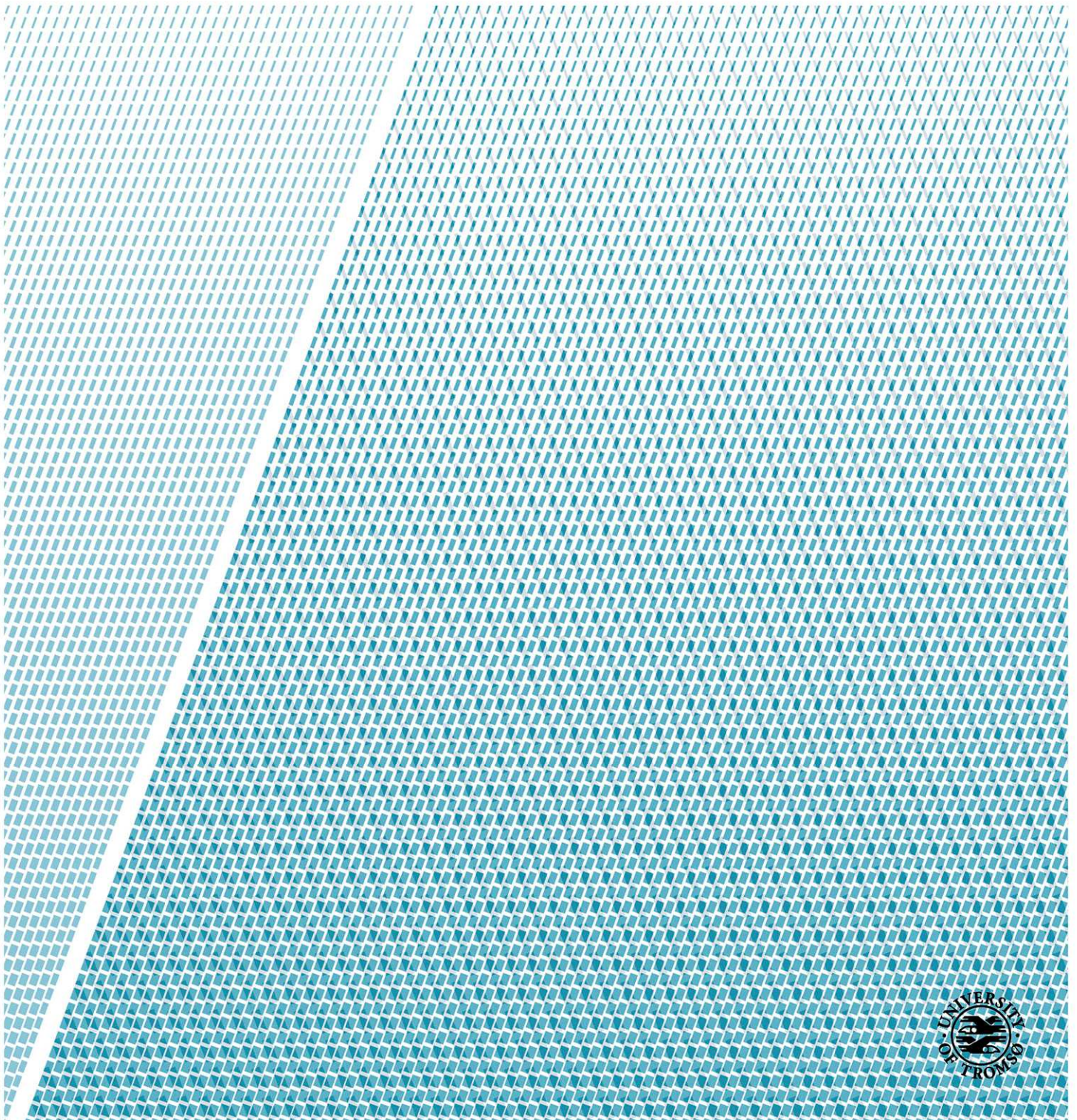


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1 Forord

Jeg begynte å studere filosofi fordi jeg ville fine svar. Noe av det viktigste jeg har lært i løpe av mine studier er at målet med filosofi er ikke nødvendigvis å finne svar. Jeg tror at en filosof ikke er definert av hans evne til å gi en konkret og utfyllende beskrivelse av noe, men heller hans evne til å forholde seg til noe på en kompleks måte. En filosof ser på enhver ting som en fraktal: jo nærmere du studerer den jo mer uregelmessig og komplekst ser du at den er. Det som ser ut som en rett linje fra langt hold er ved nærmere undersøkelse en uendelig kompleks geometrisk figur. På samme måte kan ethvert konsept undersøkes nærmere eller fra et annet synspunkt. Jeg tror at ved å skrive denne oppgaven har jeg fått en mer kompleks forståelse av det jeg har undersøkt, men svar mangler jeg fremdeles.

Jeg har valgt å skrive oppgaven min på engelsk. Dette er fordi en stor del av faglitteraturen jeg har lest mens jeg har studert filosofi har vært på engelsk. Jeg må derfor konkludere med at det å kunne skrive engelsk på et akademisk nivå er en nyttig egenskap innefor filosofi. Å skrive oppgaven på engelsk har ikke vært lett. Jeg har enda mye trening igjen før jeg kan si at jeg har mestret språket, men etter å ha skrevet denne oppgaven er jeg i alle fall komfortabel nok med språket til å prøve igjen.

Jeg har fått mye hjelp mens jeg har skrevet denne oppgaven. Først vil jeg takke administrasjonen ved instituttet for filosofi. Ikke bare har de hjulpet meg når jeg har spurt om hjelp, men de har alltid forutsett mine behov. Jeg vil også takke min gode venn Karl-Erlend Mikalsen som har hjulpet meg med rettskrivingen. Til slutt vil jeg takke veilederen min, professor Beatrix Himmelmann, som har hjulpet meg med alt.

2 Introduction

What do two of the most widely recognized modern philosophers, Friedrich Nietzsche and Benedictus de Spinoza, have in common? One would believe that they were quite different, as Nietzsche famously wrote “God is dead”, while Spinoza claimed that God is everything. There are actually several similarities in the philosophies of the two thinkers, as Nietzsche points out in a letter to Franz Overbeck in 1881. In this letter Nietzsche expresses wonder and joy over finding a kindred spirit in Spinoza.

I am completely surprised, elated! I have a predecessor, and what predecessor at that! I hardly knew Spinoza at all: that I was driven to him now was an “instinctual act.” it's not only that his general tendencies are the same as mine – to make insight the most powerful affect – in five main points of his teachings I recognize myself, the most abnormal and loneliest thinker is closest to me in these things especially: he denies free will –; purpose –; a moral world order –; the nonegotistical –; evil –; even though the differences are clearly enormous, these can mainly be found in the difference of time, culture and science. To sum up: my loneliness, which, as if I were atop a high mountain, often gave me trouble breathing and made my blood flow, has now, at least, found some company. – Curious!¹

One of the similarities that Nietzsche mentions when he discusses Spinoza is their shared appreciation of insight. Insight is an important part of both philosophers' ethical theories, as both aim at instructing people to understand the world in a complex way. Such a complex understanding of the world is a good in itself according to both of them, and is therefore conducive to a better way of life. Nietzsche and Spinoza both arrive at this conclusion after investigating the nature of knowledge as part of their respective metaphysical philosophies.

Despite the similarity in their ethical theories, they have very different ideas about cognition. Spinoza claims that humans can use their intellect in order to derive eternal laws organizing the universe, while Nietzsche claims that all attempts at making genuine eternal laws are doomed to fail. This difference in their metaphysical understanding gives rise to the central concepts of Nietzsche's and Spinoza's ethics, *amor fati* and *amor intellectualis dei*. I agree with Yirmiyahu Yovel who claims that these two concepts *can provide an adequate verbal*

¹ KSB 6, no. 135

*representation of the complex relationship between Nietzsche and Spinoza*².

To explore the relationship between Nietzsche and Spinoza, I want to show how both developed their ontological theories from an immanent³ understanding of the world and how they both derived their ethical theories from this metaphysical understanding of the world. In order to do this, I have divided my thesis into three parts: (1) Nietzsche, (2) Spinoza and (3) Nietzsche and Spinoza.

In the “Nietzsche” part I investigate how Nietzsche can consider the will to power as the ontological basis for the world. I start out with Roger Joseph Boscovich’s atomic theory (atomic point particle theory) which inspired Nietzsche’s account of a dynamic world of force. I then look at how Nietzsche “supplements” Boscovich’s atomic theory by suggesting an ‘internal world’ of will to power. Nietzsche believes that the pervasive understanding of causation only describes effects and fails to explain what the “*causa efficiens*”⁴ is. According to Nietzsche we can assume that all causation is nothing more than will acting on will.

I then go on to see how Nietzsche understands humans through a reductionist panpsychist perspective. Humans, like the rest of reality, exist according to the organizing principle of the will to power in such a way that a multitude of wills get organized into power structures. Human drives are examples of the effect of such power structures. The feeling of knowing is also an effect of the dynamic interplay between these drives, and because it influences your actions it is a powerful position that these drives are striving to achieve. Because of this you cannot rely on your own understanding of the world, as it is based on a struggle for power and not objective truth. On the other hand Nietzsche also writes that this erroneous way of understanding the world is a prerequisite for happiness, because to see the world for what it is, a metaphysical wasteland, would be unbearable to most people.

This brings me to Nietzsche’s intention behind his metaphysical sketch. The question is why did Nietzsche develop a metaphysical understanding of the world if there cannot be any eternal truths?

Nietzsche argues that the world should not be understood as ordered by laws, but rather that you should understand it in terms of perspectives. A perspective should not be evaluated according to its authenticity, but rather according to its ability to “advance life”. The strongest

² Yovel (1988) p.183

³ Immanence means that the divine is seen to be a manifestation in or encompassing the material world.

⁴ Latin for “effective cause”

among us can hold multiple perspectives, and this is the basis for Nietzsche's ethical theory – *amor fati*: man should not hide from the fact that the world is complex and always changing. Humans should choose the life-advancing path by not only affirming the actuality of their existence but rather loving the necessity of it.

I start the “Spinoza” part by discussing Spinoza's conception of God and why it is different from a teleological concept of God. Spinoza claims that the immanent universe can be understood naturalistically because it is governed by laws. These laws work according to the Principle of Sufficient Reason, meaning that everything can be traced back to a cause. I then look at what can cause existence itself: the first cause. This cause is substance, which is self-caused and not contingent upon anything else. Spinoza also reasoned that there can only be one substance which is the cause of all modes, which are expressed through an infinite number of attributes. It is this self-caused substance which Spinoza calls God, and from him all of reality receives its reality, meaning that every single mode and its actions are contingent upon God. This is not to say that God looks down on humans and changes the world as it suits him, but rather that we as humans can express God's eternal will according to eternal natural laws; in this way one could say that God has no free will.

I then move on to Spinoza's understanding of human beings. I will start with modal parallelism which is a principle that states that the order and connection between modes expressed through different attributes must be the same. I then look at the driving force behind all of reality: *conatus* – a striving for “being in oneself”. If you are in line with your own *conatus*, in contrast to being influenced by outside influences, you will achieve a greater level of activity and become a “purer expression” of God – anything that affects this level of activity Spinoza calls affects, and he derives all possible affects from *conatus*. Finally, I want to look at the ethics of *Ethics*: Spinoza's normative claim: *amor intellectualis dei* – the intellectual love of God. This is Spinoza's understanding of how humans can live best as thinking modes: by using the most reliable method of understanding (mathematics) on everything, just like Spinoza has done in his *Ethics*.

In the third part of my thesis I am going to look at contemporary comments on the connection between Nietzsche and Spinoza. I am going to look at three articles; these are: Greg Whitlock's *Roger Boscovich, Benedict De Spinoza and Friedrich Nietzsche: The Untold Story*, Richard Schacht's *The Nietzsche-Spinoza Problem: Spinoza as Precursor?* and Yirmiyahu Yovel's *Nietzsche and Spinoza: amor fati and amor dei*. Whitlock, Schacht and

Yovel are all confronted with Nietzsche's inconsistent relationship towards Spinoza; it would appear as if Nietzsche understands Spinoza in two different and contradictory ways; as a fellow naturalist and as an opponent: a metaphysician. These three articles all try to give an explanation for this inconsistency.

Whitlock proposes that Nietzsche used Boscovich's atomic point particle theory and an inverse version of Spinoza's pantheism in order to create his own ontological theory. This is to say that Nietzsche's ontological theory is opposed to Spinoza's pantheism and this is why Nietzsche criticizes Spinoza. Schacht on the other hand argues that Nietzsche's critique of Spinoza (especially Nietzsche's critique of the concept of *conatus*) is an attempt on Nietzsche's part to reinterpret Spinoza as a Nietzschean by criticizing those parts of Spinoza's philosophy that do not fit in with his own philosophy.

I disagree with both Whitlock and Schacht as I believe that Yovel is correct when he presents Nietzsche's and Spinoza's ethical principles, *amor fati* and *amor intellectualis dei*, as a good representation of their relationship. Yovel concludes that the main difference between Nietzsche and Spinoza is their disagreement regarding necessity. While Nietzsche understands necessity as opaque, Spinoza understands it as transparent. According to Yovel, the reason behind Nietzsche's critique of Spinoza is the fact that Spinoza represented a genealogical scandal for Nietzsche: Spinoza is at the same time Nietzsche's progenitor and representative of what Yovel describes as a *petty "slave" moralist*.

3 Nietzsche

Friedrich Nietzsche was born in Prussia to a family of vicars and grew up in a house filled with women. He excelled academically and was appointed professor of classical philology at the University of Basel before he had obtained his PhD degree at the early age of 24. Nietzsche served as a medical orderly in the Franco-Prussian war, but was discharged because of his bad health. His health problems forced him to resign from his professorship. In 1872 Nietzsche published his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*. The work was angrily criticized by many respected professional scholars of Greek literature. Nietzsche lived a solitary life in near poverty until his mental breakdown in 1889.

3.1 Nietzsche's style of writing

Nietzsche is a perspectivist, and I believe that this explains his aphoristic style of writing. This style does not shackle him to one perspective as an academic paper would, but allows him to change perspectives.

One would believe that such a style would only create a confusing, directionless mess; but Nietzsche believed that his was a productive style because no perspective whatsoever is “The True Perspective”. No perspective is objectively better than any other, so the best you can do as a seeker of wisdom is to have multiple perspectives.

Because of Nietzsche’s perspectivism you could compare some of his notes and aphorisms and find instances where he seems to contradict himself. This means that to read Nietzsche involves a great deal of interpretation in order to derive a consistent argument.

3.2 Different definitions of the will to power

A brief note on the different meanings of the will to power: the will to power is not only an ontological concept for Nietzsche. Throughout his writings Nietzsche uses the term 'will' in several different ways. In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche operates with a metaphysical concept of 'will' which he borrows from Schopenhauer. Later Nietzsche treats the will as the principle of valuation, which means that the will is regarded as a certain power to interpret the world. Nietzsche also deals with the will in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*; here the will is something the child (which is the finale metamorphosis of the spirit) gains.

3.3 Nietzsche's ontological understanding of the will to power

In his books, but particularly in the notes left behind after his death (Nachlaß) Nietzsche

writes about his unique view of the basic characteristics and properties of reality. This is his metaphysical⁵ understanding of the world, in where he spells out his ontological⁶ sketch. Nietzsche understands reality as fundamentally consisting of the will to power. Nietzsche writes: *This world is the will to power – and nothing besides! And you yourselves too are this will to power – and nothing besides!*⁷ Everything is fundamentally will to power – every rock, tree and snowflake, when broken down to its constitutional parts, is a will to power. What could drive Nietzsche to postulate this outlandish theory⁸ - that not only do rocks have a will but a will to power? To understand this, we must trace this theory back to its origin. This is difficult because Nietzsche never explicitly laid out his entire ontological theory.

In his essay *Roger Boscovich, Benedict De Spinoza and Friedrich Nietzsche: The Untold Story*⁹, Greg Whitlock presents the theory that Nietzsche's reading of the Dalmatian mathematician Roger Joseph Boscovich (Rudjer Josef Boskovic) (1711-1787) gives him the theoretical basis for the will to power as an ontological concept¹⁰. Boscovich represents the generation of mathematicians that came after Newton. Boscovich's rejection of the idea that atoms have mass was the next evolutionary step beyond Newton's atomic theory, as Boscovich's dynamic world view presented a predecessor of modern field theory¹¹. Whitlock's claim is supported by a letter from Nietzsche to Peter Gast, in which Nietzsche points out that matter, as a concept, is to be refuted. In this letter Nietzsche highlights Boscovich and Copernicus as the greatest champions in the fight against the illusions that our eyes presents to us¹². We can read about a similar homage to Boscovich and Copernicus in *Beyond Good and Evil* where Nietzsche writes that *Boscovich thought us to renounce the last thing that 'still stood' about the earth, the belief in 'substance', in 'matter', in the bit of earth, the particle, the atom*¹³. In order to be able to assess Whitlock's claim and investigate the basis for

⁵ Metaphysics comes from the Greek words μετά ("beyond", "upon" or "after") and φυσικά ("physics"): metaphysics is the study of the preconditions for reality, for example the nature of being, possibility, and cause and effect.

⁶ Ontology comes from the Greek words *on*, (being), and *logos*, (science): ontology is the science of the essential properties of being. Ontology is a branch of metaphysics.

⁷ KSA 11:38[12]

⁸ *Nietzsche's metaphysical ideas are no doubt outlandish by the standards of the contemporary mainstream* Poellner 2013 p.695

⁹ Greg Whitlock; *Roger Boscovich, Benedict De Spinoza and Friedrich Nietzsche. The Untold Story* in Nietzsche-Studien, Volume 25 (1996)

¹⁰ Whitlock mentions that Karl Schlechta and Anni Anders were the first to discover the existence of a Boscovich-Nietzsche connection in their collaborative work, *Friedrich Nietzsche. Von den verborgenen Anfängen seines Philosophierens* (1962)

¹¹ Poellner (2013) p.680

¹² KSB 6 Brief 213

¹³ BGE 12

Nietzsche's ontological theory, we must investigate the book where Boscovich presented his dynamic world view: *Theoria Philosophiæ Naturalis*¹⁴.

3.4 Theoria Philosophiæ Naturalis

The full title of the book is *Theoria philosophiæ naturalis redacta ad unicam legem virium in natura existentium*¹⁵. The first edition was written and published in Vienna in 1758. The writing of the book was requested by Father Scherffer, who was the first editor of the book in Boscovich's absence. The subject of the book was conceived as far back as 1745, when Roger Joseph Boscovich discovered, while writing his dissertation *De viribus vivis* a difficulty with his contemporaries' understanding of mechanics.

3.4.1 The problem with the mechanical philosophers' understanding of collision

Boscovich's criticizes the mechanical world view. Among the mechanical philosophers we find Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. As mechanical philosophers they claim that the world consists of matter in motion and the universe can be sufficiently described in terms of forces working on matter. Boscovich claimed to have found an inconsistency in the mechanical understanding of collision between objects. The "Mechanicians", as Boscovich calls them, reasoned that in a collision kinetic energy had to be transferred from one object to the next very efficiently because they observed that an object could gain a great amount of velocity in a single moment of time through collision. Boscovich argued that collisions did not hold a unique position among forces, but rather that the Mechanicians' understanding was flawed.

The Mechanicians' understanding of collisions was based on a common sense understanding of the world. In everyday life we encounter objects that apparently hit each other and at that moment they change velocity. Boscovich claims that this collision that we all have witnessed cannot happen. To demonstrate this he introduces a thought experiment: imagine ball A traveling in a straight line at 6 units of speed. Behind it, traveling on the exact same line, ball B is traveling at 12 units of speed. From experience we know that if ball B hits ball A both would continue to travel at 9 units of speed. But it is what happens at the alleged moment of contact that interests Boscovich. Boscovich objects to the common sense understanding of collisions because the two balls cannot change their velocity directly by 3 units as this would violate the Law of Continuity.

The Law of Continuity states that any object that changes from one state to another must go

¹⁴ Latin for *A Theory of Natural Philosophy*.

¹⁵ Latin for *Theory of Natural philosophy derived to the single Law of forces which exist in Nature*

through all intermediate stages. This is to say that when ball B goes from 12 to 9 units of speed, it has to first go from 12 to 11 and then from 11 to 10 before it can reach 9 units of speed. So far this is not a great argument against the Mechanician's model of collision. You only need to modify the Mechanician's model in order to say that the change in velocity that is caused by collision happens in stages, but the change happens so fast that it is impossible for a human being to detect the intermediate stages of velocity. For the common observer this change in velocity would appear to be instantaneous. We can now go back to Boscovich's thought experiment and apply the Mechanician's modified explanation to it.

The Mechanician's alternative explanation violates another law of physics: the impenetrability of matter, the law that states that matter cannot be penetrated. If, at the moment of contact, ball A changes velocity from 6 to 7 units of speed and ball B changes from 12 to 11, then at precisely this moment, no matter how short it is, ball B moves faster than ball A. This means that ball B must traverse more space than ball A, even though they are in absolute contact with each other. So if we are to use the Mechanician's modified explanation, then we must admit that any collision must involve an overlapping of matter; two things must occupy the same point of space. The impenetrability of matter does not allow for this to happen, therefore Boscovich sets out to find an alternative model to explain collisions between objects.

3.4.2 The Law of Continuity

Because the idea of absolute contact between objects violates the Law of Continuity we must reject the idea of collisions between objects. The mathematician Colin Maclaurin also considered the problem of the Mechanician's understanding of collision between objects¹⁶. In contrast to Boscovich, Maclaurin kept the mechanical understanding of collision and instead abandoned the Law of Continuity. To prove the validity of his theory, Boscovich has to prove that in all cases “*any quantity, in passing from one magnitude to another, must pass through all intermediate magnitudes of the same class.*”¹⁷; in other words, he has to prove the Law of Continuity. Boscovich uses inductive reasoning¹⁸ to show how well the Law of Continuity describes nature and, therefore, must be a principle derived from nature itself.

Before we look at Boscovich's proofs for the Law of Continuity, let us look at how Boscovich

¹⁶ *Indeed the fines geometrician & philosopher of our time, Maclaurin, after he too had considered the collision of solid bodies & observed that there is nothing which could maintain & preserve the Law of Continuity ought to be abandoned.* Boscovich (1977) Article 30, p.27

¹⁷ Boscovich (1977) Article 32, p.27

¹⁸ Inductive reasoning is a method of reasoning where you try to deduce a principle from a multitude of instances.

justifies using the inductive method to prove a law of physics. Boscovich does admit that inductive reasoning is not a logically valid method because a principle that is deduced by inductive reasoning cannot be taken as absolute proof, unless you take into account every case that has happened and every case that possibly *can* happen. In order to disprove a principle deduced from inductive reasoning, you only need one instant that does not correspond with your hypothesis. This means that to be absolutely sure that the principle is true you need to consider every possible case. Regardless of this Boscovich writes: *Especially when we investigate the general laws of Nature, induction has very great power; & there is scarcely any other method beside it for the discovery of these laws*¹⁹. Boscovich points out that induction has been used to deduce the qualities of physical bodies: extension, figurability, mobility, impenetrability, inertia and universal gravity. This is to say that anybody must at least concede to the fact that induction is a helpful tool when discerning natural principles, even though it does not produce absolutely certain results. As Boscovich suggests, the criterion for whether you can use induction or not is that all the cases can be examined to such a degree that they can, and do, confirm the law in question, and that you investigate a considerable amount of cases. If you have used the inductive method and found a principle that holds up to this scrutiny then, according to Boscovich, that principle can be considered a law, and it must be true in all cases and at all times.

Now that we have seen Boscovich's argument for the validity of the inductive method we can continue with Boscovich's inductive proof for the Law of Continuity. In nature motion always happens in continuous lines; we can see this in orbits of planets and comets, and because of the regular orbit of the earth we have day and night at regular intervals. All motions that depend on gravity, elasticity or magnetism preserve continuity. This happens because natural forces are inclined to preserve continuity, and so there cannot exist any sharp angles in nature. Something may look like a sharp angle with the naked eye; but if we study it close enough, we will see that it is curved. Even the sharpest edges are curved under a strong enough microscope.

In addition to the proof gained from inductive reasoning, there is also a metaphysical proof for the Law of Continuity. Aristotle tells us that there cannot be a gap in continuity because any given thing must be connected with the thing that preceded it, and thus continuity must always be preserved. Aristotle explains that the nature of continuity is such that the point

¹⁹ Boscovich (1977) Article 40, p.30

marking the separation between objects in the continuity must be a single indivisible point; the boundary between objects has no thickness because that would break the continuity. This one point cannot consist of two points; the end of one object and the beginning of the next. From this we can see that everything exists in a continuum and that there cannot occur a sudden change in continuity because that would violate the nature of continuity.

Because the Law of Continuity must always be upheld, we have to conclude that nature is subsumed in such a way that sudden changes breaking with continuity cannot happen; we must therefore assume that objects must slow down before they are in absolute contact with each other. This means that one of two possibilities must be true: either there is a repulsive force that influences the velocity of just one or both of the objects before they collide. We can assume that the latter is the case because there is a natural law stating that: *all forces that are known to us act on both bodies, equally, and in opposite directions*²⁰. To prove this natural law, Boscovich once again uses inductive reasoning and presents a list of examples where forces work equally on both bodies, such as the attraction between magnets, the force that a spring asserts, the gravitational pull that Jupiter and Saturn exert on one another or how the moon is held in orbit by the earth's gravity while at the same time, in inverse proportion, the moon's gravity influences the earth and is the cause of the tides.

1.1.1 Repulsive force

So far we have discovered that the Law of Continuity is a valid natural law, and that continuity must always be preserved. For this to be possible, there must exist a repulsive force between bodies that are in very close proximity to each other. To further investigate this repulsive force we must ask what the limits of this force are.

First let us see what happens in the example of the two balls chasing each other if the second ball traveled faster than 12 units. In our original example the repulsive force must have negated 6 units of speed before the balls come into contact with each other. Since we now know that continuity must at all times be preserved, we must assume that if the second ball had moved at a faster speed, then that speed must also have been negated by the repulsive force. If the second ball had moved faster, then the repulsive force would have had less time to influence the ball. This means that the repulsive force must influence the ball even more in this example because it will require more force to conserve continuity²¹. Because of this

²⁰ Boscovich (1977) Article 74, p.40

²¹ *All forces known to us, which act for any intervals of time so as to produce velocity, give effects that are*

Boscovich concludes: *We arrive therefore at repulsive forces that increase as the distance diminish, & increase indefinitely*²². This means that the repulsive force is always able to prevent absolute contact between bodies and continuity is always preserved.

So far we have only looked at the repulsive force that acts on bodies in very close proximity to each other; but what happens when the bodies are further apart? To explain this, Boscovich refers to Newton. Newton's law of universal gravitation states that the attraction of the gravitational force between the center points of two masses is directly proportional to the product of their masses and inversely proportional to the square of the distance of their separation. The gravitational force is attractive and acts along a line drawn between the two centers of mass. Boscovich claims that the repulsive force that he himself has described and Newton's gravitational forces are one and the same. This is to say that the repulsion and attraction between masses are functions of the masses themselves. This single force produces different effects (repulsive and attractive) in bodies dependent on their distance from each other. This is to say that the repulsive force that we will encounter if we force two objects to collide changes to an attractive force if we increase the distance between the two masses, and will get weaker at a ratio of the squares of the distance. In many respects the force which acts between objects is like a hard spring. If you take a spring and start to compress it, it will resist and try to hold its original shape (just as the repulsive force at very small distances). If you then start to pull the spring apart it will first achieve its original shape, but then the force will change and the spring will try to contract (like the gravitational force).

I want to comment briefly on the relationship between Boscovich and Newton. Boscovich's theory is in many ways a continuation of Newton's theory. Boscovich's theory was greatly inspired by Sir Isaac Newton and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, but it differs from the theories of both of them²³. Boscovich was not the first to propose a repulsive force; Newton proposed in the last of his *Questions on Optics* that where attraction ends repulsion begins. Unlike Newton Boscovich believes that this understanding of force is an indication that the mechanician's understanding of the fundamental elements is wrong. We will now take a closer look at how Boscovich construes his own atomic theory.

proportional to the times for which they act, & also to the magnitudes of the forces themselves. Boscovich (1977) Article 76, page 42

²² Boscovich (1977) Article 77, page 42

²³ [I present] *a system that is midway between that of Leibniz & that of Newton; it has very much in common with both, & differs very much from either* Boscovich (1977) Article 1, page 19

1.1.2 Boscovich's atomic point particle theory

Boscovich's understanding of how masses work on each other causes him to propose his own atomic theory. In order to design this theory, he needs an understanding of the primary element of matter: the atom. Boscovich believes atoms to be points of force. Boscovich reasons that the force that works in a repulsive fashion when objects are in very close proximity and in an attractive fashion at greater distances must be a feature of matter itself (just like impenetrability) because it works equally on objects regardless of what material they are made of, their size, and so on. This must mean that the attractive/repulsive force is a fundamental quality of matter itself.

Boscovich proposes that this primary element of matter must be *perfectly simple*: it cannot consist of any separate parts. If matter ultimately consisted of parts, then the repulsive force would have ripped those parts apart, as the repulsive force only increases when the distance between matter becomes shorter. Accordingly, matter must ultimately consist of "simple" elements, which cannot be separated and broken down to smaller parts. These primary elements that have no parts cannot have any volume, which means that they have no mass²⁴. The only quality Boscovich ascribes to the fundamental element of matter is the resisting and attracting force.

Because the fundamental element must be simple, non-extended and poses attractive and repulsive forces, we can assume that there only exists one single type of primary element of matter. This is to say that Boscovich sees the world as monistic²⁵. Boscovich is suggesting an alternative to the mechanical understanding of the world: a world that ultimately only consists of indivisible and non-extended points of force. The attractive/repulsive force that Boscovich identifies as the fundamental quality of matter is all there is. Force is not something that effects matter: fundamentally matter consists of force. This is Boscovich's dynamic world view.

3.4.3 Force points are homogeneous

As mentioned above, Boscovich's theory is inspired by Leibniz, specifically Leibniz's dynamic theory of monads. In this theory Leibniz claimed that the primary elements of matter cannot be homogeneous because the universe consists of a great multitude of wildly different

²⁴ *Taking it for granted, then, that the elements are simple & non-composite, there can be no doubt as to whether they are also non-extended* Boscovich (1977) Article 83, p 44

²⁵ The term "monism" describes any theory that states that existing things can be explained in terms of a single reality or substance.

objects, to such a degree that among a forest full of leaves it is impossible to find two leaves that are exactly the alike. Leibniz reasons that if the building blocks (the elements that all matter is made of) were only of one type, then the results (matter) would only have a small degree of diversity. Imagine a city that was built only using bricks, the houses would mostly be made up of square shapes because of the material they are made of.

Boscovich disagrees with Leibniz; there can be a great amount of diversity in a system that is fundamentally based on a single type of elemental particle. Boscovich accuses Leibniz of a lack of vision; he believes that Leibniz must look deeper to grasp the homogeneity of the primary elements. Boscovich imagines that these primary elements are very small, in fact so small that they can never be seen by humans. An object that humans can sense must therefore consist of a greater amount of these primary elements. This huge amount of primary elements gets its qualities (such as shape, density, and so on) from the position and distance between these primary elements. All force points have some influence on each other, as the gravitational pull between objects only gets weaker as the distance between them gets bigger, but never vanishes. So all force points exert some influence on all other force points, though to a far lesser degree if they are far apart. Because the number of possible combinations of elements is near infinite, there can be a large degree of variation in sensible matter. This means that not only do all the leaves in the forest have some small influence on each other, so the formation of one leaf is informed by the whole forest, but also every single force point in some way influences every other force point.

In order to illustrate that a wide variety can arise from a single type of primary element, let us imagine nature as a giant library. This library is filled with many different books in many different languages. Analogous to nature each book in the library is an individual in nature, and each language is a domain. Now let us say that a human being were to encounter this library for the first time without instructions telling him what it was. This is the way humans encounter nature for the first time. If this human being started to catalog the books in an attempt to gain some understanding of them, he would discover that some words appear in some of the books but not in others. With a basis in this data, he can now begin to categorize the books into different languages. His research would then lead him to discover that the same 26 letters were used to construct every possible word in the books. Now suppose that he studied the letters under a microscope and found that all the letters were made of tiny black dots of similar size which, viewed by the naked eye, gave the impression of a continuous line. These dots are the force points.

Boscovich imagines the world as fundamentally consisting of points of force that only appear to us as sensible objects with sensible qualities because they exert force on each other. Boscovich's world view is incompatible with the mechanical world view where matter is supposed to act as the "seat" for forces. In contrast Boscovich understands force as existing in itself instead of acting on matter.

3.5 Boscovich's legacy and Nietzsche's pan dynamic world view

Boscovich was a great natural philosopher; from the inconsistency he found in the mechanists' understanding of collisions he deduced the existence of a force, which led him to a new understanding of matter and reality. His atomic point particle theory rejects the massy corpuscular atom of Newtonian natural philosophy and helped physics beyond what Nietzsche calls "matter superstition"²⁶. The importance of Boscovich's theory as a rejection of mechanical theory and a step towards modern field theory is undeniable²⁷, but the question we must investigate is what Nietzsche derived from this atomic theory. I believe that Nietzsche adopted Boscovich's pan dynamic world view²⁸, as we can read in this note:

The triumphant concept of 'force', with which our physicists have created God and the world, needs supplementing: it must be ascribed an inner world which I call 'will to power', i.e., an insatiable craving to manifest power; or to employ, exercise power, as a creative drive, etc. The physicists cannot eliminate 'action at a distance' from their principles, nor a force of repulsion (or attraction).²⁹

In this note Nietzsche credits physicists with a view of the world that is fundamentally based on force, and he mentions *force of repulsion (or attraction)*. I take this to mean that Nietzsche is here referring to Boscovich and that Nietzsche's concept of force is the same as Boscovich's, and that Nietzsche's ontological understanding of the will to power is a "supplementing" of Boscovich's concept of force.

To investigate why Nietzsche feels the need to supplement Boscovich's dynamic world view

²⁶ KSA 11:26[302]

²⁷ [Boscovich] ends up with a dynamist conception – a predecessor of modern field theory – of physical world as constituted by real, attractive and repulsive, forces centered on unextended physical points Poellner (2013) p.680

²⁸ My claim is that there is no part of Nietzsche's pan dynamism, and the metaphysics that he derives from it, that is incompatible with Boscovich's atomic point particle theory. It is well documented that Nietzsche read Boscovich (BGE 12 and Nietzsche's correspondence with Gast) and so it cannot be a coincidence that Nietzsche's dynamic world view is so similar to Boscovich's. One could of course argue that Nietzsche read the work of other physicists, and it is quite possible that he found some inspiration in them, but Boscovich still remain as the best source when investigating the theoretical foundation for Nietzsche pan dynamism.

²⁹ KSA 11:36[31]

and in which way the will to power is connected to Boscovich's concept of force, I am relying on a chapter by Peter Poellner - *Nietzsche's Metaphysical Sketches: Causality and Will to Power*. In this chapter Poellner argues that Nietzsche's concept of force is *partly motivated by his reflections on causation and on physical science*³⁰. Nietzsche believed that a sufficient explanation of any cause must include an account of the effective nature of that cause³¹; this is because our common understanding of causality involves a belief in an "effective thing" – a thing that is the source of the event. Such investigations into the nature of causation are outside the interest of science, as it lies in describing causal events rather than explaining their nature.

In order to explain the nature of causality we need to discover *the 'qualities' responsible for the 'compulsion' involved in individual causal sequences*³². As we have already seen from Boscovich's atomic point particle theory everything can be reduced to non-extended points of force. But this is, according to Nietzsche³³, still only a description and not an explanation of what the effective part of force is. Let us now look at where Nietzsche believes we can find the source of causation.

*We must not assume that there are several sorts of causality until we have tested the possibility that one alone will suffice [...] the question is ultimately whether we really recognize that the will can effect things, whether we believe in the causality of the will: if we do (and to believe in this is basically to believe in causality itself), we must experiment to test hypothetically whether the causality of the will is the only causality. A 'will' can have an effect only upon another 'will', of course, and not upon 'matter' (not upon 'nerves', for example): one must dare to hypothesize, in short, that wherever 'effects' are identified, a will is having an effect upon another will – and that all mechanical events, in so far as an energy is active in them, are really the energy of the will, the effect of the will.*³⁴

Nietzsche argues here that it is possible that there might exist only one "sort of causality": the effective will. And unlike the mechanical understanding of causality the force and the *seat of*

³⁰ Poellner (2013) p.676

³¹ *By Nietzsche's lights, the pre-philosophical notion of a cause therefore involves the idea of a particular with an efficacious nature, such that in suitable conditions it manifests a force or necessitating 'compulsion' 'producing' those events we call its effects.* Poellner (2013) p.676-677

³² Poellner (2013) p.679

³³ *Nietzsche accepts[Boscovich's]general dynamist approach (KGW VII.2:26 [432]), although he does not regard Boscovich's proto-field theory of the physical world as itself adequately explanatory* Poellner (2013) p.680

³⁴ BGE 36

a driving force is one and the same thing³⁵. Nietzsche claims that by rejecting mechanical causality in favor of a dynamic world view he turns towards an alternative understanding of causality. We do not need an invented *sign language*³⁶ to understand, but is “given” to us: the causality of the will. To understand the world as the interplay between wills is to understand the world from inside the “human sphere”, while to understand it mechanically is to invent a new fictitious sphere.

Nietzsche seems to adopt the same kind of monistic understanding of the world that we found in Boscovich; but what Boscovich named force points Nietzsche interprets as will. Nietzsche interprets Boscovich’s force points as nothing more than a striving towards more power. This understanding of the world is what Nietzsche calls *the human analogy*³⁷: to understand all events as caused by the same “will-acting-on-will” type of causality that we know from *the only sphere known to us*³⁸. This is to say that according to Nietzsche all events are motivated by an intention, more specifically a will to power. This panpsychist³⁹ understanding of the world rejects the explanatory power of physics in favor of psychology. Nietzsche seems to suggest that the world is monistic; that there is only one type of primary element, the will to power, and that everything must fundamentally consist of it⁴⁰. In order to get a better understanding of Nietzsche’s panpsychism and his concept of the will to power and how it functions as an organizing principle, we must investigate “the human sphere” – ourselves.

3.6 The human body as a battle between wills

In several aphorisms Nietzsche seems to reduce all human cognition to a simple battle between wills. He does this to criticize a belief in truth as having an exalted (or even supernatural) position⁴¹. In this panpsychist reductionist⁴² perspective Nietzsche seems to claim

³⁵ *The concept "atom," the distinction between the "seat of a driving force and the force itself," is a sign language derived from our logical-psychical world. KSA 13:14[122]*

³⁶ *Is mechanism only a sign language for the internal factual world of struggling and conquering quanta of will? All the presuppositions of mechanistic theory -matter, atom, gravity, pressure and stress-are not "facts-in-themselves" but interpretations with the aid of psychical fictions. KSA 13:14[82]*

³⁷ *one is obliged to understand all motion, all "appearances," all "laws," only as symptoms of an inner event and to employ man as an analogy to this end. In the case of an animal, it is possible to trace all its drives to the will to power; likewise all the functions of organic life to this one source. KSA 11:36[31]*

³⁸ *If we translate the concept "cause" back to the only sphere known to us, from which we have derived it, we cannot imagine any change that does not involve a will to power. We do not know how to explain a change except as the encroachment of one power upon another power. KSA 13:14[81]*

³⁹ Panpsychism is the theory that everything in nature has a psychological nature analogues with humans

⁴⁰ *This new world conception is his reworking of the boscovichian dynamic world conception. It is built from centers of force into fields of force, and in turn into the apparently solid macro-objects of experience. Whitlock (1996) p.219*

⁴¹ *It is of cardinal importance that one should abolish the true world. It is the great inspirer of doubt and devaluator in respect of the world we are: it has been our most dangerous attempt yet to assassinate life. (...)*

that because all causality can be reduced to will acting on will, with the intention of gaining more power, you must be able to reduce all of man's activity to the will to power - cognition cannot be seen as anything other than an instrument of power. This specific perspective on humans is helpful to us in order to understand "the will to truth" being caused by the will to power⁴³.

Before we can investigate "the will to truth" we must understand what the body is. Seen through Nietzsche's panpsychist reductionist perspective the human body is, like everything else, nothing more than a multitude of wills. All wills are governed by the same principle: the will to power, this means that they all want to feel their power growing. A will is the smallest quantum of force – we cannot imagine a more fundamental nature of force than a quantum of force striving for more power. This is *not* to say that the will to power is teleological⁴⁴. The will to power is the necessity of force striving towards more power – more influence. In this sense the universe works according to an organizing principle. Imagine that we separated everything into its fundamental building blocks; the world would be nothing but chaos as every quantum of force would try to impose its will, its "organization scheme", on the rest of existence. But from this chaos some of these quanta would be subjugated by other quanta and order would start to emerge from this homogeneous "soup" of wills. By subjugating other wills a single will organizes a constellation of wills, and in this way a single will forces its influence upon other wills. The human body is also such an organization of different wills that are all trying to amass greater power by constructing greater "power constellations"; and the human psyche emerges from the workings of will.

A human being consists of a complex interaction between competing organized entities. This is to say that we are not one "unit" but rather a collection of wills that want to extend their influence – an *aristocracy of "cells"*⁴⁵. This is to say that all human drives (the causes of our

The "will to truth" would then have to be investigated psychologically: it is not a moral force, but a form of the will to power. This would have to be proved by showing that it employs every immoral means: metaphysicians above all. KSA 13:14[103] see also KSA 12:5[22], KSA 12:6[11], KSA 12:9[89], KSA 12:9[144] and KSA 13:14[152]

⁴² Reductionists claim that nothing is more than the sum of its parts and that in order to fully explain a phenomenon you need to describe its fundamental nature.

⁴³ *All the drives and powers that morality praises seem to me to be essentially the same as those it defames and rejects: e.g., justice as will to power, will to truth as a tool of the will to power.* KSA 12:7[24]

⁴⁴ Teleology is a philosophical account that holds that final causes exist in nature, meaning that design and purpose analogous to that found in human actions are inherent also in the rest of nature.

⁴⁵ *The assumption of one single subject is perhaps unnecessary; perhaps it is just as permissible to assume a multiplicity of subjects, whose interaction and struggle is the basis of our thought and our consciousness in general? A kind of aristocracy of "cells" in which dominion resides? To be sure, an aristocracy of equals, used to ruling jointly and understanding how to command?* KSA 11:40[42]

actions) can be understood as being made out of the fundamental building blocks of the universe – wills. As power structures, organized according to the will to power, these drives are in a constant struggle with each other as they all are striving for more influence.

We can observe the effect of this fundamental nature of humans in the fact that the subject is a malleable thing that has the ability to change. We can experience a manifestation of this internal “power struggle” as the feeling of being torn between our vastly different selfish wants, biological needs and our moral conscience⁴⁶. According to Nietzsche this is caused by the fact that our drives, like all other existing things, are power constellations that are in competition to acquire more power and extend their influences. Also so-called “irrational behavior” (for example when people act against their better judgments or lose control as obsessions or addictions make them act detrimental to their own wellbeing) can be explained by different drives gaining influence. The objective of the drives is not to preserve life, but rather to exert control by being the cause of actions – to be the effective thing.

Let us now look at how the “will to truth” is an effect of the will to power: While the competition between drives causes humans to be malleable, it is the overarching principle of the will to power that causes the human mind to strive for understanding the world in terms of “sameness”. Because the will to power is the fundamental principle that everything works according to, humans have the ability to see the world as patterns and connections⁴⁷. According to Nietzsche your understanding of something is also a drive, meaning that a change of mind can be understood as one power structure subjugating another power structure.

This means that all knowledge is nothing more than an effect of a drive; knowledge do not elucidate subjects, rather it works like any other drive: it is motivated by a striving towards more influence, and in so doing it becomes a bigger part of your understanding of the world and becomes the cause of your actions⁴⁸. It is because knowledge is a powerful position that power structures strives to create a complete and static picture of the thing in your mind⁴⁹. We

⁴⁶ *a single individual contains within him a vast confusion of contradictory valuations and consequently of contradictory drives.* KSA 11:26[119]

⁴⁷ *the will to sameness is the will to power. - the belief that something is thus and thus, the essence of judgment, is the consequence of a will that as far as possible it shall be the same.* KSA 12:2[90]

⁴⁸ *It is our needs that interpret the world; our drives and their For and Against. Every drive is a kind of lust to rule; each one has its perspective that it would like to compel all the other drives to accept as a norm.* KSA 12:7[60]

⁴⁹ *Continual transition forbids us to speak of "individuals," etc; the "number" of beings is itself in flux. We would know nothing of time and motion if we did not, in a coarse fashion, believe we see what is at "rest" beside what is in motion.* KSA 11:36[23]

are now going to take a closer look at how the will to power informs our understanding of the world.

3.7 The human spirit

Nietzsche's claims that there is a distinction between what he calls 'The Self' and 'Ego'. 'The Self' is your body⁵⁰; Nietzsche calls the body 'The Self' because without the body you do not have any existence. The 'ego' on the other hand is your feeling of identity: the 'I' – the belief that you are a subject, a particular continuous agent who is the efficient cause of your actions. Nietzsche claims that the body is a *great reason*, meaning that it evaluates meaning beyond the understanding of the 'I'⁵¹. The 'I' is only a tool that the body uses. The 'I' works as the meaning that unites the multiplicity of wills; it also imposes peace on the war between wills and is the guide that leads the multiplicity of wills towards the goal of more power⁵².

The 'I' is an illusion – Nietzsche claims that your sense of a self is caused by a multitude of wills. The spirit we experience is an effect and not the cause of our inner life. If you are experiencing the illusion of an "I", it is because a single drive has achieved a greater level of dominance than the other drives⁵³ and has actually become the primary agent behind your actions⁵⁴. This position of dominance that the drive has obtained has an effect on all your mental faculties, even your understanding.

Nietzsche claims that there is an incompatibility between the simplicity humans want to read out of reality and the complexity that can be read out of it. The only understanding of the world we can have is a flawed approximation of the world⁵⁵ – a perspective. Nietzsche seems to suggest in some passages that this "approximation" is not different from a lie. It is a lie we tell ourselves in the best of conscience, as we cannot bear the metaphysical wasteland⁵⁶ without this shelter, but it is still a lie. As humans we only relate to the world as it appears to

⁵⁰ *Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, stands a mighty commander, an unknown sage – he is called Self. He lives in your body, he is your body.* Zarathustra, Of the Despisers of the Body

⁵¹ *You say 'I' and you are proud of this word. But greater than this (...) is your body and its great intelligence, which does not say 'I' but performs 'I'.* Zarathustra, Of the Despisers of the Body

⁵² *The body is a great intelligence, a multiplicity with one sense, a war and a peace, a heard and a herdsman.* Zarathustra, Of the Despisers of the Body

⁵³ *That imperious something that the common people call 'spirit' wants to be the master, in itself and around itself, and to feel its mastery* BEG 230

⁵⁴ The existence of a single dominant drive does not mean that its position is set in stone; the battle between wills is never ending, so the level of dominance that a will has can fluctuate, and so another drive can take over.

⁵⁵ *A world of becoming could not, in the strict sense, be 'grasped', be 'known': only inasmuch as the 'grasping' and 'knowing' intellect finds an already created, crude world, cobbled together out of deceptions but having become solid, inasmuch as this kind of illusion has preserved life* KSA 11:36[23]

⁵⁶ [Nietzsche] *leaves man in a metaphysical wasteland, a world of conflict and transience which cannot be captured by rational categories and from which all metaphysical consolation is banned.* Yovel (1988) p.187

us, and the human spirit is trying to exert power over this understanding of the world by making it like itself⁵⁷. Accordingly, the world seems more like something that is familiar to you, something that is like your spirit⁵⁸.

3.8 The practical effects of the will to power in humans

As we have just seen, is Nietzsche critical of all human cognition which he understands according to his panpsychist reductionist perspective. Through this perspective is the human spirit seen as a source of self-deception and the “will to truth” a tool used to gain more power. But Nietzsche is a perspectivist – the understanding of your world view as a type of self-deception is only one perspective (one could even argue that Nietzsche is exaggerating in order to criticize what he sees as a misplaced blind trust in the concept of truth). Nietzsche presents multiple perspectives on the human spirit and the ways it influences any understanding of the world. In order to display the ways in which Nietzsche can entertain different perspectives we are now going to look at how the human spirit can be understood as something that is beneficial or even essential to life. Nietzsche writes about the shaping power of human beings:

*[B]y shaping power I mean that power to develop its own singular character out of itself, to shape and assimilate what is past and alien, to heal wounds, to replace what has been lost, to recreate broken forms out of itself alone.*⁵⁹

This “shaping power” is the same effect that the human spirit asserts – it is the same organizing principle according to which everything works: the will to power. Nietzsche is here writing about the same spirit that we have looked at earlier, but seen in a different way. The description of the spirit that Nietzsche presents here is another perspective: how a strong spirit can be seen as a healthy trait. Let us now look at the detrimental effect of a weak spirit to understand why Nietzsche believes it is healthy to have a strong spirit.

When Nietzsche writes “health” he means a feeling of health and everything that accompanies it: a feeling of joy, a high level of activity, and a fruitful life. Nietzsche's point is that adult humans experience melancholy and depression in a way that young children and animals do not. These detrimental effects are caused by our ability to remember. Because we remember

⁵⁷ To “humanize” the world, i.e., to feel ourselves more and more masters within it- KSA 11:25[312]

⁵⁸ The spirit's energy in appropriating what is foreign to it is revealed by its strong tendency to make the new resemble the old, to simplify multiplicity, to overlook or reject whatever is completely contradictory; the spirit likewise arbitrarily underlines, emphasizes, or distorts certain qualities and contours in everything that is foreign to it or of the 'outer world' BEG 230

⁵⁹ On the Utility and Liability of History for Life (1874)

things we can see the world in greater complexity than animals can, and it is this complex understanding of the world that we have created for ourselves that is a burden⁶⁰.

3.8.1 Blissful forgetfulness

A clearly defined border between what is known and what is not is a prerequisite for *cheerfulness, good conscience, joyous deeds, faith in what is to come*⁶¹. This means that there is a hidden skill that anyone seeking a healthy life must master: forgetting. It is counterintuitive, but forgetting is not a lack of the ability to remember. It is not a lack of skill at all. It is something to learn, something to master. If you were to live un-historically, only knowing yourself, you would not be burdened by a complex understanding of the world. Therefore you would only have very basic needs to fulfill, and the mental focus needed to achieve them.

We can see this in animals: they have straight-forward minds. Because of this lack of complexity they have no problem activating their entire being, all their wills, to achieve a particular goal. On the other hand, someone who cannot forget is doomed to only know chaos; he will always see the world in the greater context of continuous change, as always becoming. Because such a weak-willed individual would not have any dominant will that could control all other wills, there would be a constant clashing of wills. This un-forgetting man would not even possess the focus necessary in order to perceive something in the chaos of becoming that he would identify as himself. You need the focus you gain from living un-historically to achieve success in your endeavors. If you always take into account the ever-changing outside world you cannot *be* one thing. There cannot be any happiness without forgetting.

Humans are born without any history, just like animals. What makes humans human is our ability to bring the past back into our lives by making the past into history by organizing it into our mental representation of the world. The human spirit tends to be on the weak side because we have a mind that makes us able to understand abstract concepts. While in the mind of animals all the wills are directed against a single goal and can mobilize all its energy to achieve this single task⁶², humans see the world as more complex with multiple perspectives. But if humans lost the “un-historical” we would lose much of human life because it is in the un-historical we find a focus on life itself.

⁶⁰ *The human being (...) braces himself against the great and ever-greater burden of the past* On the Utility and Liability of History for Life (1874)

⁶¹ On the Utility and Liability of History for Life (1874)

⁶² *This is the expression of the diseased condition in man, in contrast to the animals in which all existing instincts answer to quite definite tasks.* KSA 11:26[119]

3.9 Nietzsche's intention behind his metaphysical sketch

We have seen how Nietzsche uses Boscovich's atomic point particle theory to find the effective thing and construe an understanding of the world as organized according to the will to power. This is, without doubt, a metaphysical understanding of the world. Nonetheless, Nietzsche also criticizes metaphysicians. Let us take a look at what Nietzsche writes about his own project regarding his understanding of humanity and how it is different from the project of metaphysicians:

[T]o return man to nature; to master the many conceited and gushing interpretations and secondary meanings that have heretofore been scribbled and painted over that eternal original text homo natura; to ensure that henceforth man faces man in the same way that currently, grown tough within the discipline of science, he faces other nature, (...) deaf to the seductive melodies of the old metaphysical birdcatchers who have too long been piping at him, 'You are more! You are greater! You are of a different origin!' – that may be a strange and crazy project (...). Why have we chosen it, this crazy project? Or to ask it another way, 'Why bother with knowledge?' Everyone will ask us about it. And we, pressed in this way, we who have asked ourselves just the same thing a hundred times over, we have found and do find no better answer...⁶³

In this aphorism Nietzsche seems to contrast his naturalistic understanding of humans with that of metaphysicians, who believe humans are of a nature that is of a higher echelon than what science can describe. Nietzsche ends this aphorism by asking why we should bother with knowledge, and he seems, at least in this aphorism, to claim that there is no good answer to this question.

I will try to show why there is good reason to strive for understanding the world in more complex ways. To discover why the metaphysicians' search for eternal truth is doomed to fail and why Nietzsche believes we should indeed bother with knowledge, we must start by investigating Nietzsche's rejection of laws.

3.10 Why the universe is not necessarily governed by laws

I want to take a closer look at Nietzsche's critique of mechanical causality and its translation

⁶³ BGE 230

of the world into an invented language⁶⁴. Nietzsche criticizes the concepts of “necessity” and “laws”⁶⁵. The mechanists saw the world as fundamentally based on matter when they explained phenomena by referring to causality as we find it in the material world, for example: “ball A hits ball B, this transfers some of the kinetic energy of A to B”. This way of describing the world only makes sense if everything works according to strict natural laws. Nietzsche criticizes this view by showing that it is based on a very specific perspective and therefore cannot be taken to be the only way of interpreting the world.

It may help humans to translate the world of force into rules and necessities because it may help them in practical endeavors, such as engineering; but just because it is helpful and advantageous in practical matters does not mean that it is eternally true. Let us take a closer look at the fundamental belief in universal laws, and let us see why we do not necessarily need universal laws to understand the universe.

Nietzsche claims that the nature of the force quanta, the will to power, cannot be fully understood in terms of laws. This is to say that Nietzsche suggests that instead of understanding the world as organized by laws⁶⁶, we are better served by understanding the world as a continuous expression of power. The nature of force is such that force is always expressed to its fullest degree – fundamentally force always *is*, nothing more and nothing less⁶⁷. And so because all force expresses itself entirely there is a constant clash between forces.

Seen from Nietzsche’s perspective, the universe looks like a chaos of forces⁶⁸ – forces clashing together and working on each other in different ways, but always striving for more strength. This constant struggle *is* the universe and everything it includes. This means that things are the way they are, not because they are governed by laws, but because of the strength and resistance of every thing and its relationship to the rest of the universe. One would believe that the universe would be a chaotic place if it were not governed by laws and

⁶⁴ *Mechanistic theory as a theory of motion is already a translation into the sense language of man* KSA 13:14[79]

⁶⁵ Critique of the mechanistic theory.- *Let us here dismiss the two popular concepts "necessity" and "law": the former introduces a false constraint into the world, the latter a false freedom* KSA 13:14[79]

⁶⁶ *Subject, object, a doer added to the doing, the doing separated from that which it does: let us not forget that this is mere semeiotics and nothing real.* KSA 13:14[79]

⁶⁷ *A quantum of power is designated by the effect it produces and that which it resists. The adiabatic state is missing, though it is thinkable. It is essentially a will to violate and to defend oneself against violation.* KSA 13:14[79]

⁶⁸ *And do you know what "the world" is to me? Shall I show it to you in my mirror? This world: a monster of energy, without beginning, without end; a firm, iron magnitude of force that does not grow bigger or smaller, that does not expend itself but only transforms itself* KSA 11:38[12]

rather shaped by the constant clashing of forces. But because forces are always fully expressed, it is possible to predict events in the world to a certain degree. But this limited predictability is not the same as a universe governed by laws⁶⁹.

Mechanists believed that the natural laws are supreme universal principles; every particular thing exists according to them and they govern all movements – they constitute the structures according to which everything is ordered. Nietzsche's objection is that it is wrong to read eternal laws out of this appearance of regularity and orderliness that is caused by our human disposition of recognizing patterns in the world. What Mechanists fail to see is that understanding the world in terms of natural laws is just one of many possible interpretations of the world. Nietzsche's claim is that the world can be also interpreted as will to power, absolutely lacking laws, and it will be just as predictable because of the nature of force. Nietzsche explains this as follows:

But as I say, this is interpretation, not text; and someone could come along with the opposite intention and interpretive skill who, looking at the very same nature and referring to the very same phenomena, would read out of it the ruthlessly tyrannical and unrelenting assertion of power claims. Such an interpreter would put to you the universality and unconditionality in all 'will to power' in such a way that virtually every word, even the word 'tyranny', would ultimately appear useless or at least only as a modifying, mitigating metaphor – as too human. Yet this philosopher, too, would end by making the same claims for his world as you others do for yours, namely that its course is 'necessary' and 'predictable', not because laws are at work in it, but rather because the laws are absolutely lacking, and in every moment every power draws its final consequence.⁷⁰

Nietzsche's claim is that it is possible to doubt the existence of laws, and because of this it is possible to understand the world as something else. Does this mean that Nietzsche claims that his world view is better than the mechanical world view, and that he has discovered the truth behind the universe? Is it even possible to compare world views in order to find the best one? To answer these questions, we need to look at Nietzsche's theory of perspectivism.

⁶⁹ *There is no law: every power draws its ultimate consequence at every moment. Calculability exists precisely because things are unable to be other than they are.* KSA 13:14[79]

⁷⁰ BGE 22

3.11 Perspectivism

The basis for perspectivism is the claim that any understanding includes evaluation and has to be seen as perspectival⁷¹. For example a table: as a user of the table you could understand it in terms of its utility as an object that can hold up your coffee cup, while as a wood worker you could understand it in terms of its economic value as a good to sell. In desperate times you could even see the table as a source of firewood. No single way of understanding is the one and only way. For this reason it is impossible to claim that any fact is universally and eternally true⁷². No human being can achieve complete knowledge of the world and nobody can claim to possess the particular perspective of the world that is always true.

Nietzsche seems to suggest that people have a choice. Either we can ignore the complexity of the world and seek asylum from it in a single, particular perspective – an oversimplified understanding of the world. Or we could choose to see the world as a place in constant flux where one perspective is not better than any other. Accepting this view is tantamount to daring to open your eyes and daring to hold multiple perspectives at the same time.

According to Nietzsche ideal knowledge can never be achieved, but we can consider a plethora of perspectives as equal and consider all subjects in many different ways⁷³. The *metaphysical birdcatchers* searching for eternal truth are doomed to fail because there is always another perspective in which you will find another “eternal” truth. We cannot hope to understand, and by understanding reading ourselves into the ‘metaphysical wasteland’. But what is the point of Nietzsche’s entire metaphysical sketch if it turns out that Nietzsche believes that it is not more valid and fruitful than any other metaphysical theory? To investigate this question we are going to look at the fourth aphorism of *Beyond Good and Evil*.

The first section of BGE is entitled *On the Prejudices of Philosophers*, the fourth aphorism deals with how philosophers evaluate facts. Nietzsche claims that “truth” is at least not the primary standard of measurement when philosophers evaluate a claim. According to Nietzsche philosophers (like everybody else) judge claims by asking how beneficial it is for

⁷¹ *Insight: all evaluation is made from a definite perspective: that of the preservation of the individual, a community, a race, a state, a church, a faith, a culture.* KSA 11:26[119]

⁷² *"There are only-- facts" — I would say: No, facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations. We cannot establish any fact "in itself": perhaps it is folly to want to do such a thing.* KSA 12:7[60]

⁷³ *In so far as the word "knowledge" has any meaning, the world is knowable; but it is interpretable otherwise, it has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings. — "Perspectivism".* KSA 12:7[60]

the activity that is life⁷⁴. Our ability to evaluate claims is not based on logic, it is based on appearance, meaning the world we live in. We cannot turn away from this way of evaluating without turning away from life itself⁷⁵. In light of BGE 4, we can see that Nietzsche sets “advancement of life” as *the* standard for the relevance of any claim. We must evaluate Nietzsche’s metaphysical sketch by this standard and ask how understanding the world in terms of the will to power may help us live better lives.

3.12 Amor fati

Peter Poellner also arrives at the conclusion that Nietzsche does not consider ‘truth’ as a significant standard when evaluating a claim. Nietzsche holds this view because the metaphysical nature of the world is opaque to us⁷⁶ and so we should be *indifferent* to the answers to metaphysical questions. They seem to be purely theoretical and have no “life-advancing properties”. It is life-advancing to live in the world of appearance (in contrast to searching for eternal truths) – because this is the only world there is to live in. It is life-advancing to know that the understanding of this world is nothing but a perspective⁷⁷ - meaning to accept the apparent world as an illusion but at the same time choosing to live in that illusion entirely.

Nietzsche paints a picture of an immanent world where we as sentient beings are forced to reckon with the tension between the inescapable transient nature of the world⁷⁸ and the disillusionment of knowing this⁷⁹. But according to Nietzsche there is a way to deal with this

⁷⁴ *We do not object to judgment just because it is false (...) The question is rather to what extent the judgment furthers life, preserves life, preserves the species, perhaps even cultivates the species* BGE 4

⁷⁵ *we are in principle inclined to claim that judgments that are the most false (...) are the most indispensable to us, that man could not live without accepting logical fictions, without measuring reality by the purely invented world of the unconditional, self-referential, without a continual falsification of the world by means of the number – that to give up false judgments would be to give up life, to deny life.* BGE 4

⁷⁶ *No conceivable evidence-gathering or experiment of the kind we employ in everyday practical life or in the sciences can settle standard metaphysical questions* Poellner (2013) p.696

⁷⁷ *I have suddenly awoke in the midst of this dream, but merely to the consciousness that I just dream, and that I must dream on in order not to perish; just as the sleep-walker must dream on in order not to tumble down. What is it that is now "appearance" to me! Verily, not the antithesis of any kind of essence, - what knowledge can I assert of any kind of essence whatsoever, except merely the predicates of its appearance! Verily not a dead mask which one could put upon an unknown X, and which to be sure one could also remove! Appearance is for me the operating and living thing itself; which goes so far in its self-mockery as to make me feel that here there is appearance, and Will o' the Wisp, and spirit-dance, and nothing more,* GS 54

⁷⁸ *Nietzsche's experience of immanence leaves no room for order, permanence, fixed laws, inherent rationality, or truth; it presupposes a mode of existence from which not only God, but, as Nietzsche says, "God's shadows" have also been removed. Man exists here in an ever-transient flux of (cosmic) "will to power," without redemption, without fixed truth, with nothing to explain his life or justify his death.* Yovel (1988) p.186

⁷⁹ *Man has no separate, eternal soul, no "transcendental self" to replace it, or an a priori reason demanding to impose itself externally upon nature and life. As a finite mode, man is however but a drop in the immanent universe and as such is inescapably bound and constrained by it; this fact (or destiny)* Yovel (1988) p.186

tension without hiding from it⁸⁰. Nietzsche advocates the virtues of choosing to open your eyes to the complexity of the world, but only the strongest and most resilient beings are able to bear this burden⁸¹. Nietzsche celebrates immanent human interaction with the world and suggests that in order to overcome yourself (meaning your own illusion of the world as being similar to you), you should not only accept the necessity of your situation, but rather love your being, your existence, the necessity of your fate: the will to power⁸².

By loving the necessity of things you will see necessity as beautiful – you will see existence in itself as beautiful. Because of this you will not in good conscience be able to relate to the world in a negative fashion, but rather always be positive and productive – always loving necessity itself⁸³. This is *amor fati*, love of fate, Nietzsche's ethical theory within the framework of an immanent understanding of the world. It is in light of this ethical imperative that Nietzsche's critique of the pervasive mechanical understanding of causality⁸⁴ must be understood. From this understanding of causality Nietzsche derives his metaphysical sketch which conceives of existence as something organized by the will to power. It is the organizing principle of reality in its entirety. This panpsychist account includes human beings, as their minds must work according to the same principle. And it is this understanding of humans that is of importance to Nietzsche: to see yourself not as a particular and unified subject, but as a battlefield of wills. Seen through this perspective your entire being is nothing but wills working to become master – to become the effective thing. This is to say that the feeling you have of your "self" is an illusion and action is far more important than the actor. Nietzsche's recommendation on how to relate to this fact is to make it part of yourself and understand it on a more practical level as *amor fati*: you must not only know that this is your fate, you must love the necessity of it being your fate.

⁸⁰ *the assent and celebrating acceptance of immanent existence in Nietzsche's amor fati must take the defiant and self-overcoming form of a "nevertheless." Amor fati is based upon a fundamental dissonance between the individual and the world* Yovel (1988) p.187

⁸¹ *The highest man would have the greatest multiplicity of drives, in the relatively greatest strength that can be endured. Indeed, where the plant "man" shows himself strongest one finds instincts that conflict powerfully (e.g., in Shakespeare), but are controlled.* KSA 11:27[59]

⁸² *[Man] must interiorize, understand, and assent to with the full intensity of his life, if he is to endow his bare existence with a worthwhile meaning compatible with the boundaries of immanence, such as freedom in Spinoza, or authentic existence in Nietzsche.* Yovel (1988) p.186

⁸³ *I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; then I shall be one of those who make things beautiful. Amor fati: let that be my love henceforth! (...) Looking away shall be my only negation. And all in all and on the whole: some day I wish to be only a Yes-sayer* GS 276

⁸⁴ Nietzsche claims that the effective thing is not the object, but rather the panpsychist fundamental element of the will to power.

4 Spinoza

Baruch Spinoza, born Benedito de Espinosa, was a Jew born in Amsterdam. His family was originally from Portugal, but left for the more progressive Netherlands. In the summer of 1656 Spinoza was brandished as a heretic for his philosophy; after his banishment he changed his name from the Hebrew Baruch to its Latin form Benedictus. W.T. Jones writes about Spinoza:

*Spinoza was in many ways similar to Socrates. Like Socrates he was accused of atheism, because, being a far more deeply religious man than his persecutors, he was not satisfied with the outer forms that contented them.*⁸⁵

4.1 Spinoza and the enlightenment

The Enlightenment was primarily a celebration of humans' ability to understand and improve the natural world through reason. Nature was seen as an orderly domain governed by strict mathematical laws, and humans saw themselves as capable of understanding the secrets of nature through the exercise of their unaided faculties. Spinoza's systematic rationalist metaphysics, which he develops in *Ethics*, is an early naturalistic approach to understanding the world. Because of his naturalism Spinoza also rejects the existence of a transcendent supreme being in favor of a God whom is identical to nature in its entirety. This is in line with the Enlightenment's ideals

4.2 Spinoza's style of writing

In *Ethics* Spinoza presents his arguments slowly and meticulously. The book mainly consists of a long line of propositions; each proposition only advances the argument in the smallest possible way. Each one is like a carefully crafted building block that is meticulously added in order to build a theory that is not derived from assumptions but is instead exclusively based on reason. To achieve this, Spinoza uses an axiomatic method. *Ethics* is modeled upon Euclid's *Elements*, which was written around 300 B.C. *Elements* is the most influential work in mathematics; to this day it serves as the basis of geometry. Like Euclid Spinoza starts with a number of definitions which must be necessarily true, and proceeds to deduce from these the rest of his philosophy. Spinoza does this to bring the same level of certainty to his theory that mathematics enjoys.

The propositions of *Ethics* read very much like mathematical formulas, as they logically

⁸⁵ Jones, (1975) p.193

follow every line of argumentation to its conclusion. I believe that this must have been Spinoza's goal to write about the world and humans, but at the same time not to preach dogma or serve his own interests. It is as if Spinoza wanted to cleanse himself of confusion and use nothing else than his own reason to become the conduit for the reason of God and follow the naturalistic argument to its conclusion. This is to say that Spinoza wanted to meditate on the most profound aspects of reality and build a system from it. Someone may comment that Spinoza is trying to ignore everything that makes him human in order to enter a state of absolute reason. Spinoza would disagree; he believes that the human mind is constituted by reason and it is therefore more human to base your thinking entirely on reason than not to.

4.3 Spinoza's theory of God

I want to start by looking at Spinoza's ontological theory. At the center of this ontology is Spinoza's belief in an absolutely infinite being that he calls God. When presented like this it sounds like a religious belief. Does this mean that Spinoza was indoctrinated into a monotheistic belief system? And because of his prejudices he could not imagine a universe without an omnipresent God? I will try to show that this is not the case and that instead Spinoza uses an axiomatic method to ground every single step of his argumentation in reason. Spinoza uses reason to prove that his concept of God must necessarily exist and is a feasible explanation for existence itself.

Spinoza's God is meant to be an alternative to the Judeo-Christian God, an alternative that is not born from faith, but from what Spinoza saw as the most accurate scientific method: mathematics. Spinoza must have been frustrated with the way religion presented God as the ultimate arbitrator of all things, while at the same time God resides somewhere else, always somewhere outside the grasp of humans and their questions about the nature of the universe. In this way God never needs to be accountable to humans, because he is always outside their grasp, always somewhere more profound, deeper and more basic. Spinoza takes the religious account of God on its word and builds a naturalistic system based on the assumption that there must exist something that is the basic building block of all of reality, and this must be God. In this way Spinoza “cornered” the concept of God; there is nothing more profound, nothing more basic to hide behind. Whatever God is, we must find him here. From this understanding of the basic building block of reality Spinoza builds a system to understand the universe.

4.4 God and the laws of the universe

Spinoza believed that we do not live in a world in which the natural laws are malleable. This

means that the natural laws are universal and must therefore be applicable to every possible situation. This is to say that even God is not above science. Science has proven itself to be omnipresent, and we must therefore explain God in accordance with it. God does not retreat into a sphere of spirituality when humans discover the eternal laws of the universe. God *is* these laws.

Spinoza's approach is novel because the divine was at the time (and still to this day is by many) seen as incompatible with science because it cannot be examined in a scientific way. Some would argue that God is above all – that he is even the lord of math, meaning that he can change the answer to 1+1 if he so chooses. Spinoza disagrees: he claims that God is not above all, he *is* all. Spinoza would rather reject the Holy Scriptures and the dogma of religion than explaining God in transcendental terms⁸⁶.

God has always retreated. First he lived on top of Mt. Olympus, but man scaled all known peaks and found no God. Then God resided above the moon with the perfection of the stars – removed from the chaos that we find below. But man studied the night sky and explained all its movements by natural laws, and still we could not find him. So God retreated into the reason of Plato's world of ideas, where no human eyes could ever scrutinize him. Spinoza will not stand for the Lord's coward retreat into ever more distant realms. Rather Spinoza wants to drag him back into the world of man and show that he never left.

It is worth noting that despite his goal of providing a naturalistic account of God as an alternative to a religious account Spinoza ends up mirroring Judeo-Christian religion by claiming that God is eternal, infinite and that by following the way of his “god of reason” you can achieve salvation and happiness⁸⁷. The salvation that Spinoza is promising involves the prospect of humans saving themselves through reason from the afflictions brought upon them by other modes. This “salvation through reason” elevates man above the confusing and chaotic life that unreasonable men live and transforms him into a purer expression of God.

⁸⁶ *For Spinoza, scripture must be treated like any other collection of writings directed at a specific audience at a specific time. This no-special-status attitude towards scripture is simply a reflection of Spinoza's naturalism(...) Spinoza thus – here as elsewhere – attempts to naturalize the divine.* Della Rocca (2008) p.237

⁸⁷ *In Spinoza the immanent world inherits the divine status and many of the properties of the defunct transcendent God. Self-caused and self-justified, it is eternal and infinite (both in quantity and in perfection). Its existence follows necessarily from its essence, is governed by fixed and eternal laws, and is rationally intelligible throughout. As for man, he exists "in God" and shares in the same universal rationality by which eventually he can rise above his finitude and realize eternity within his temporal existence.* Yovel (1988) p.186

4.5 Spinoza's critique of religion

Andreas Urs Sommer writes in his article *Nietzsche's Readings on Spinoza: A Contextualist Study, Particularly on the Reception of Kuno Fischer* about Spinoza's project of explaining God in naturalistic terms. Sommer refers to Fischer who claims that Spinoza wanted to use mathematics in order to evict people from their comfortable *asylum ignorantiae*⁸⁸ which they have construed by believing in teleology⁸⁹. We can read about Spinoza's rejection of teleology in the appendix to part one of *Ethics*.

Spinoza argues that because of the human condition man is wrongfully prone to accept a teleological world view. Spinoza argues that any such final causes cannot exist in the universe and humans' belief in such things stems from a wrongful anthropocentric⁹⁰ conclusion derived from our situation inside the human condition. As part of his critique of the teleological world view Spinoza shows how the human condition leads to an anthropocentric world view. Spinoza then gives an account of how humans with anthropocentric world views in prehistoric times might have developed a teleological world view. Spinoza goes on to prove that God cannot act with a final end in sight, and lastly Spinoza criticizes secondary qualities because they only result from an anthropocentric world view.

4.5.1 The distinction between the "true self" and the "other parts"

Spinoza believed that any teleological world view is caused by humans' awareness of *a desire to seek their own advantage*⁹¹ (we will later look at why we must necessarily have this awareness when we have a look at the concept of conatus). While humans are aware of this desire, its causes are hidden from them. Because of this we are lead to believe that we possess free will. We can see an example of what Spinoza is writing about in our daily speech. People tend to think of our "actual self" as the part of ourselves that is hidden inside our physical body, and it is this part of us that hopes and dreams for the future and is not influenced by anything else. This "real self" is often contrasted with our physical bodies, our moods and actions. The belief in this distinction between the "true self" and "other parts of the self" is the reason why the cause of the "true self" is hidden and the cause of the "other parts" is easier to gain knowledge about. This is to say that our understanding of our physical body, mood and

⁸⁸ Asylum of ignorance

⁸⁹ *Real cognition discovers and explains things and drives this explanation forward unlike the imagined and false cognition, that is, ignorance, which is satisfied by the concept of purpose and turns this concept into its comfortable asylum.* Sommer (2012) p.160 quoting Fischer's *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie*, (1882) p.235.

⁹⁰ Anthropocentric is the act of interpreting or regarding the world in terms of human values and experiences.

⁹¹ Appendix to part one

cultural influence is entirely informed by our observations: the observation of how a child is born causes the belief that the body must be contingent on our parents. The experience of how someone's mood can be influenced by drugs or mental illness causes the belief that mood is caused by outside forces. The fact that different societies motivate different behaviors in people causes a belief in cultural influences. Because we humans experience our body, mood and culture as contingent on forces that are outside our control, we do not consider them as part of our "true self" to the same degree as our *desire to seek [our] own advantage* (or "our hopes and dreams for the future" as I phrased it), the cause of which is not apparent to them. Because this cause is hidden we believe that our *desire to seek [our] own advantage* is spontaneously generated and stems from our "true self" and is therefore not contingent on anything other than ourselves. This understanding of our "true self" as being of a higher echelon than our physical body and feelings is the reason why we value this "true self" more than those other parts of ourselves.

4.5.2 Spinoza's critique of the teleological world view

We construe our world view around the idea of a final cause of things, i.e. teleology. According to Spinoza this is because we *act always with an end in view* (I will discuss more about why humans are always oriented towards a purpose later when I am discussing Spinoza's idea of conatus). Let us look at an example of how humans start to see the world as teleological. Imagine a primitive man out in the wilderness, untouched by civilization. He is looking at all the stones on the ground as he names them. He does this because he understands things in terms of how he can use them to gain an advantage. When inspecting the rocks from this perspective, he sees some of them as too small to be useful, so he names them "pebbles". Others are too big to move, so he calls them "boulders". But some of the rocks are of the appropriate size and quality, so the primitive man names them "building materials" and uses them to build a house. The man also sees the trees as "good for firewood" or "good for building", the plants as "good" or "poison", and the animals as "food" or "dangerous predators". Obviously this way of looking at the world is very helpful when we seek our own advantage. But what happens when the primitive man tries to apply the same teleology in order to understand the world? Spinoza explains how humans go from seeking their own advantage to worshipping mad gods.

[S]ince they find within themselves and outside themselves a considerable number of means very convenient for the pursuit of their own advantage – as, for instance, eyes for seeing, teeth for chewing, cereals and living creatures for food, the sun for giving

light, the sea for breeding fish – the result is that they look on all the things of Nature as means to their own advantage. And realizing that these were found, not produced by them, they come to believe that there is someone else who produced these means for their use. For looking on things as means, they could not believe them to be self-created, but on the analogy of the means which they are accustomed to produce for themselves, they were bound to conclude that there was some governor or governors of Nature, endowed with human freedom, who have attended to all their needs and made everything for their use. And having no information on the subject, they also had to estimate the character of these rulers by their own, and so they asserted that the gods direct everything for man's use so that they may bind men to them and be held in the highest honor by them. So it came about that every individual devised different methods of worshipping God as he thought fit in order that God should love him beyond others and direct the whole of Nature so as to serve his blind cupidity and insatiable greed. Thus it was that this misconception developed into superstition and became deep-rooted in the minds of men, and it was for this reason that every man strove most earnestly to understand and to explain the final causes of all things. But in seeking to show that Nature does nothing in vain – that is, nothing that is not to man's advantage – they seem to have shown only this, that Nature and the gods are as crazy as mankind.

To prove that God cannot act with a final end in mind Spinoza explains that given that this was true God would have to want something that he lacks, something that would mean that he is not an infinite being encompassing everything that exists, and therefore not God.

4.5.3 Spinoza's critique of secondary qualities

Spinoza believes that an anthropocentric world view is incompatible with a clear and truthful understanding of the world⁹². To truly understand the world as it is - to understand its essence and what must follow from it – you can only rely on mathematics which saves mankind from utter ignorance⁹³. Because an anthropocentric world view is not concerned with truth (i.e. the essence of a thing and what must follow from it), Spinoza criticizes secondary qualities such as: good, bad, order, chaos, hot, cold, beauty and ugliness. Spinoza's objection to this way of

⁹² *When men become convinced that everything that is created is created on their behalf, they were bound to consider as the most important quality in every individual thing that which was most useful to them, and to regard as the highest excellence all those things by which they were most benefited.* Appendix to part one p27

⁹³ *truth might have evaded mankind forever had not Mathematics, which is concerned not with ends but only with the essences and properties of figures, revealed to men a different standard of truth.* Appendix to part one p26

understanding things is that the understanding does not follow from the essence of the thing but is rather exclusively derived from our human needs.

4.6 A causal universe

Instead of advocating a world view based on personal needs, Spinoza wants to understand the universe according to an eternal divine order. Spinoza believes in an ordered universe, which is the same belief that Euclidean geometry is born from. Spinoza assumes that everything in the universe can be explained causally; that is, everything must have a cause that either comes from the thing itself or from some outside source⁹⁴. Spinoza's understanding of the universe as fundamentally causal is also known as the Principle of Sufficient Reason, a term coined by Leibniz⁹⁵; but the idea can be traced back to Aristotle. This understanding pervades every deliberation presented in *Ethics*.

4.7 Spinoza's fundamental assumption and the definitions that must follow from it

Spinoza chose to present his argument in a style which closely resembles an axiomatic style of arguing. An axiomatic system starts with a set of definitions and logically infers propositions from them. The whole system rests on the validity of the definitions; so if the definitions are wrong, then the propositions inferred from them must also be wrong. This means that we must investigate how Spinoza comes up with his definitions and how he knows that they are correct.

In the beginning of part 1 of *Ethics* Spinoza introduces three concepts that are essential to his explanation of God, the universe, and everything. These concepts are substance, attribute and mode – these concepts are meant to provide the reader with the vocabulary needed to understand Spinoza's deliberations. Spinoza introduces the concepts in the form of definitions, but he never explicitly explains in the *Ethics* why he chooses to use these concepts. A mindful reading of the first part of *Ethics* reveals Spinoza's proof of the validity of these concepts. The proofs are part of Spinoza's axiomatic deliberations and cannot easily be taken out of context. Because of this we need to learn about how Spinoza understands the world in order to understand what Spinoza means when he writes about substance, attributes or mode.

⁹⁴ For every thing a cause or reason must be assigned either for its existence or for its nonexistence (...) Now this reason or cause must either be contained in the nature of the thing or be external to it. IP11D¹II

⁹⁵ Leibniz (...) understood the power of the PSR [Principle of Sufficient Reason] and made it the centerpiece of his system. Indeed, Leibniz was, in some ways, more up-front in his use of the PSR. He – not Spinoza – used the term “Principle of Sufficient Reason,” and Leibniz explicitly made the PSR one of the “two great principles” on which all reasoning is based. Della Rocca (2008) p.276

4.8 The Principle of Sufficient Reason

To explain why Spinoza believes that God must necessarily exist, we have to investigate the Principle of Sufficient Reason. Spinoza presents this principle in the axioms in the first part of *Ethics*, though he does not call it the Principle of Sufficient Reason. This principle is one of the basic (if not *the* basic) principles of logic itself. It states that everything has to have a cause.

Before we continue, let us take a quick look at what Spinoza means by “cause”. One would think that when Spinoza writes “X causes Y” this means that X is prior to Y in a causal chain of events, but that is not the case. Don Garrett, in his essay *Spinoza's “Ontological” Argument*, argues that “X causes Y,” in Spinoza's usage, is best understood as meaning “X provides (at least part of) the reason for the being or nature of Y”.⁹⁶ It is from this very core of logic itself that Spinoza starts out, and from this starting point he can deduce that God is existence itself. To put it another way: Spinoza analyzes the nature of knowledge in order to gain knowledge about the nature of reality. This means that God is the constitutional part of everything that exists, the basis of everything, and therefore the cause of everything (I will explain why Spinoza believes this in the next paragraph).

The Principle of Sufficient Reason means that everything that comes into being must have a cause. This is the foundation of Spinoza's philosophy, and also the reason why he presents it in an axiomatic style. If we choose to believe Spinoza and accept a principle of strict causality, we are faced with an existence where every event must necessarily have been preceded by a prior event that was its cause. What Spinoza is suggesting is a universe that is restricted by rules in such a way that it can be viewed as an infinite chain of events that are causally linked to each other.

4.9 Substance

According to the Principle of Sufficient Reason everything needs a cause, but then what was the first cause? What is the cause of creation itself? How did the universe start if there always needs to be a prior event? Let us start to answer this question by investigating what existence itself is ultimately made of: According to Spinoza the most fundamental component in any object is existence itself. With genius simplicity Spinoza points out that if you remove the quality of existence (whatever that might be) from anything it cannot exist, therefore the quality of existence must be the constitutive element of any given object. This means that the

⁹⁶ Garrett (1979) p.6

question “what is the first cause?” is really a question of “what is the cause of existence itself?” Spinoza approaches the question of existence itself by claiming that there must exist something that posits the quality of existence into existing objects. Spinoza chooses to name whatever this is *substantia*, a Latin word which translates to “*that which is underlying*”. From the concept of substance it follows that it is its nature to exist; it never started to exist but has always done so⁹⁷. This is to say that Spinoza claims that there was no beginning and substance has no external cause, because unlike everything else in existence substance is self-caused. Substance is unique because unlike everything else that exists it is not a link in the chain of causality; we must rather understand it as the material the chain is made of. Substance is everything that exists.

4.9.1 Substance monism

Like Boscovich, Spinoza has an answer to the question of how a diverse world can be caused by a single type of substance. To prove that there is only one single substance, Spinoza tries to show that all other possibilities are in fact impossible. To do this, Spinoza presents the materialists’ view as a counter argument (the same villains that later will plague Boscovich and Nietzsche also disagree with Spinoza). The materialists believe that matter consists of parts and is divisible⁹⁸, while Spinoza sees the universe as infinite and indivisible because he believes that substance cannot be divided⁹⁹. Materialists disagree. They claim that everything can be reduced to quantifiable units, and because of this there cannot exist one single substance:

[I]f an infinite length is measured in feet, it will have to consist of an infinite number of feet; and if it is measured in inches, it will consist of an infinite number of inches. So one infinite number will be twelve times greater than another infinite number.¹⁰⁰

The materialists believe that material substance must be governed by a set of rules, and a possibly *supremely perfect being*¹⁰¹ must work according to a different set of rules. This would prove that there cannot exist merely one substance, but rather that there must exist at

⁹⁷ *By that which is self-caused I mean that whose essence involves existence; or that whose nature can be conceived only as existing.* ID1

⁹⁸ *I will refute my opponents' arguments (...) they think that corporeal substance, insofar as it is substance, is made up of parts, and so they deny that it can be infinite, and consequently that it can pertain to [God].* IP15S

⁹⁹ *Absolutely infinite substance is indivisible.* IP13

¹⁰⁰ IP15S

¹⁰¹ *Since God, they say, is a supremely perfect being, he cannot be that which is acted upon. But corporeal substance, being divisible, can be acted upon. It therefore follows that corporeal substance does not pertain to God's essence.* IP15S

least one divine substance, which is perfect, and one material substance, which consists of parts.

The materialist's theory is fundamentally opposed to Spinoza's theory. Spinoza claims that the argument that the materialists use is invalid because it is impossible to measure an infinite quantity¹⁰². We have already seen that Spinoza deduces the idea of a single substance from the Principle of Sufficient Reason. We know that there can only be one substance because if substance is anything else than the most basic constituent of existence you could theoretically divide substance. This would mean that this theoretical substance consisted of more fundamental parts, and so could not be "that which is underlying".

According to Spinoza this is impossible; if substance could be divided, the parts of the substance would either retain the nature of substance or not. If the parts were to retain the nature of substance, then a substance would have been the cause of another substance, which according to Spinoza is impossible (I will discuss this topic later). On the other hand, if the parts would lose their nature as substance they would no longer have any cause and therefore could not exist. According to Spinoza, this is also impossible because substance must necessarily exist. Since all possible scenarios are impossible, Spinoza concludes that substance cannot be divided¹⁰³.

4.10 Attributes and modes

We can see from the deliberation above that all existing objects in the universe must share the defining feature of existence that is caused by substance – an object lacking this quality would not exist. We know that substance is a single infinite thing; despite this we experience a world that does not appear to us as uniform. Rather the world looks like a collection of separate objects. The only explanation for this is that substance is able to exist in the form of all individual objects. Spinoza claims that all individual objects are modifications of the same substance¹⁰⁴. Because of this he names individual things modes¹⁰⁵, as in "modes of substance".

¹⁰² *no other conclusion can be reached but that infinite quantity is not measurable and cannot be made up of finite parts.* IP15S

¹⁰³ *No attribute of substance can be truly conceived from which it would follow that substance can be divided.* IP12

¹⁰⁴ *How many things are there in the world? Spinoza's answer: one. What might seem to be other things are merely ways in which the one thing exists.* Della Rocca (2008) p.33

¹⁰⁵ *By mode I mean the affections of substance, that is, that which is in something else and is conceived through something else.* ID5

Some modes are expressed through different types of existence. As humans we know that there are at least two categories of existence: Extension (the category of existence that involves all things) and Thought (the category of existence that involves all ideas). Spinoza claims that humans categorize things according to what kind of a mode's existence they can perceive. Spinoza names these different categorizations of existence attributes¹⁰⁶. If humans could step outside themselves and occupy the position of eternity, we would see that to label one mode as an idea and another as a thing would only be useful to humans. From the point of view of eternity we would see that everything is an expression of substance and that it merely appears to humans in the guise of different modes.

4.11 God

Spinoza believes in pantheism¹⁰⁷; he defines God as *an absolutely infinite being, that is, substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence*.¹⁰⁸ We already know that there must exist a single substance. To investigate Spinoza's claims regarding God we must find out if this substance is infinite. In order to prove that substance must be infinite, Spinoza argues that anything must either be finite or infinite¹⁰⁹; and substance must exist as something infinite because it cannot exist as finite. According to Spinoza a finite thing is a thing that is limited by something:

*A thing is said to be finite in its own kind when it can be limited by another thing of the same nature. For example, a body is said to be finite because we can always conceive of another body greater than it. So too, a thought is limited by another thought. But body is not limited by thought, nor thought by body.*¹¹⁰

We can read here that an infinite thing is a thing that is impossible to limit. This means that if substance were to be finite there would have to exist something that can limit it. But what can limit substance? It would have to be of the same nature as substance, meaning that it would have to be a second substance. But Spinoza claims that another substance is impossible because there is nothing that can be the cause of such a second substance.

To understand Spinoza's claim, we have to investigate what kind of rules govern causal relations. Spinoza claims that things must have something in common in order to have any

¹⁰⁶ By attribute I mean that which the intellect perceives of substance as constituting its essence. ID4

¹⁰⁷ Pantheism is the belief that God is everything.

¹⁰⁸ ID6

¹⁰⁹ [substance] must therefore exist either as finite or as infinite. IP8D¹

¹¹⁰ ID2

causal relation to each other¹¹¹. Spinoza comes to this conclusion because he understands God as existence itself, and therefore God must be part of everything meaning that all existence comes from him because he is existence itself. As the constituting part of existence God is a prerequisite for anything to exist. Spinoza reasons that because God has something in common with all existing modes, things that have nothing in common cannot be the cause of each other.

Because whatever might cause a second substance must have something in common with it, Spinoza claims that such a cause cannot exist. Spinoza claims that God is the only substance, as he is a self-causing substance that is necessary in order to explain existence itself; and there is no necessity in the existence of two or more substances. A theoretical second substance cannot be self-caused as well because there is no limit to the primary substance, meaning that a second substance would need to be of the same nature as the primary substance but at the same time be distinct from it. A second substance that would be the same as the primary substance in every aspect would actually be the primary substance, and therefore could not limit it. If there is a second substance then it must either be caused by substance or by modes of substance. This is because everything that exists must fall into one of these two categories¹¹². Spinoza denies that any of these possibilities can be true. A substance cannot be caused by a mode because modes are per definition expressions of substance; if modes could create substances, they would not be modes. This means that substance must be prior to modes¹¹³. Neither can substance be the cause of this second substance, because if a second substance existed, it would have to be distinguishable from the first one. The only way for two substances to be distinguishable is that they express themselves through different attributes. If two substances expressed themselves in different ways, they would not have anything in common. And as we already seen, Spinoza believe that two things that do not have anything in common cannot be the cause of each other, and therefore there does not exist anything that can be the cause of a second substance.

Spinoza also explains the uniqueness of substances through the attribute of Thought: God is not only the cause of existence with regard to physical things but also with regard to ideas. This means that substance must be the most basic concept in the universe as well: in the same way that substance is the most basic constituent of things it is also the most basic constituent

¹¹¹ *When things have nothing in common, one cannot be the cause of the other.* IP3

¹¹² *in the universe there exists nothing but substance and their affections,* IP6C

¹¹³ *Substance is by nature prior to its affections.* IP1

of ideas. Substance is such a basic concept that it cannot be made up of other concepts. If you were to form an adequate idea of this theoretical second substance, that is, an idea that corresponds to the thing it is an idea of¹¹⁴, the idea would need to include its cause. Because the idea of God is its own cause, it does not include any other concepts, and is therefore the most fundamental concept there is. The idea of the theoretical second substance, on the other hand, must include something else and cannot be understood solely through itself, and therefore it cannot be a substance¹¹⁵.

According to Spinoza substance must be infinite because it is existence itself, and therefore fits Spinoza's definition of God. To say that substance is existence itself is the same as saying that because substance is the underlying cause for existence in objects, substance must have a nature that is existence. That is, substance must be self-caused because it is existence itself. Self-caused things must exist permanently because it is in their nature to exist, and they must exist everywhere – eternity follows from existence itself.¹¹⁶

4.11.1 What can be inferred from the fact that substance is infinite?

Spinoza believes that God as an infinite being must be expressed through infinite attributes. This means that God cannot be limited to the two attributes that humans know of (Thought and Extension). There must exist an infinite amount of completely different types of existence. The world Spinoza imagines is one of infinite dimensions. Each of these dimensions consists of objects that are fundamentally different from each other. This means that even if we could account for every atom in the whole of the material universe and also grasp every single idea that could exist, we would not even be close to fathom the vastness that is God: because Extension and Thought are only two of God infinite dimensions.

Spinoza can infer a number of things from the fact that God is the only substance, for instance the world being deterministic and the rejection of free will. Spinoza wants to show that the universe is an immanent expression of God. This contradicts the ancient view of God as “the first mover”, where a being serves as the initial force that started the universe in contrast to being an essential part of it. In order to prove that the universe is an immanent expression of God, Spinoza has to show that God is by necessity an omnipresent force in the universe that

¹¹⁴ By adequate idea I mean an idea which, insofar as it is considered in itself without relation to its object, has all the properties, that is, intrinsic characteristics, of a true idea. IID4

¹¹⁵ if a substance could be produced by something else, the knowledge of substance would have to depend on the knowledge of its cause (IAx4), and so (ID3) it would not be substance. IP6D¹II

¹¹⁶ By eternity I mean existence itself insofar as it is conceived as necessarily following solely from the definition of an eternal thing. ID8

shapes it in a definitive and distinctive manner.

4.12 Realitas

Why does the universe work as it does? Spinoza has proven that God exists, is eternal, infinite and that everything is an expression of God. But he has not explained *why* God is expressed the way he is. To answer this question, we need to examine Spinoza's claim that everything must follow from God because he is an infinite being¹¹⁷, and that the universe is governed by laws. The laws can only come from God¹¹⁸ because everything is in God and nothing can be conceived outside God.

Spinoza claims that God *expresses eternal and infinite essence*. This eternal and infinite essence which God expresses I have earlier called the quality of existence. Existence is a function of eternity, and vice versa. I now want to explore this in greater detail. An absolutely infinite being would necessarily need to express itself through infinite attributes; otherwise it would not be an infinite being. Because attributes are what the intellect perceives of substance as constituting its essence, a being that can express itself through infinite attributes would need to possess infinite essence. Spinoza writes: *The more realitas or being a thing has, the more attributes it has.*¹¹⁹ In the English translations of *Ethics* realitas is usually translated as reality. This is not entirely correct. By realitas Spinoza means content – the more realitas our intellect can perceive of a mode the richer our idea of that mode is, meaning that the essence of the thing is richer. Because God expresses himself through infinite attributes, he must have infinite realitas. A being with infinite realitas must be absolutely perfect¹²⁰; and if a being is absolutely perfect, it cannot lack in anything. This means that because of his infinite realitas God must be the cause of everything and must be eternal.

4.13 God is the cause of the continual existence of modes

Spinoza wants to show that God must be the cause of the continual existence of modes. To do this, he must show that the continual existence of modes cannot come from the modes themselves, that is, the essence of modes cannot be the cause for their continual existence. Spinoza demonstrates this by claiming that his definition of being self-caused¹²¹ is incompatible with his definition of modes. Because modes are defined as *that which is in*

¹¹⁷ *From the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinite things in infinite ways* IP16

¹¹⁸ *God acts solely from the laws of his own nature, constrained by none.* IP17

¹¹⁹ IP9

¹²⁰ *By realitas and perfection I mean the same thing.* IID6

¹²¹ *By that which is self-caused I mean that whose essence involves existence; or that whose nature can be conceived only as existing.* ID1

*something else and is conceived through something else*¹²², a mode cannot exist only from the power of its own essence, i.e. it cannot be self caused like a substance

When approaching the question of what can cause existence in modes, we must distinguish between finite and infinite types of modes. Infinite modes differ from finite modes in that infinite modes must follow directly from God¹²³ or through the medium of an infinite mode¹²⁴. A finite mode cannot come into being as a direct consequence of God because if it did, it would be an infinite mode. This begs the question: if neither God nor infinite modes can be the direct cause of finite modes, but at the same time everything needs a cause, what could then be the cause of finite modes? The only answer possible is that finite modes must be caused by other finite modes. Let us now consider a couple of facts with which Spinoza has already provided us: God is eternal and infinite, and infinite things must follow from an infinite being. This means that an infinite amount of finite things must exist as well as an infinite amount of time: because God is an infinite being. Because all things that can exist must exist, finite things must exist.

Even though God is ultimately the cause of their existence, finite things do not suddenly pop into existence or disappear because God wills it. Because finite things need to be caused by other finite things, every finite thing has to be causally related to other finite things. Imagine that the universe were an infinite billiard table, and imagine all modes that have ever existed as an infinite amount of billiard balls scattered on the table. When these balls bump into each other they are transferring some of their kinetic energy over to other balls which then start moving, this transference of kinetic energy is like one mode being the cause of another mode. If you could record the movements of all the balls on this infinite table, you would be left with a map resembling an infinite spider web. This is how Spinoza conceives of the universe: as an infinite web of causal relations, without any beginning or end.

This infinite web is difficult to understand because we as humans are finite beings, and accordingly have trouble understanding beginnings. But Spinoza has such faith in his axiomatic system that, when he derives from it that the consequence of an infinite being must be that the universe must have always existed, he chooses to believe that. The world view with which Spinoza is left is one where there is no “first mover” who could have pushed the

¹²² ID5

¹²³ *All things that follow from the absolute nature of any attribute of God must have existed always, and as infinite; that is, through the said attribute they are eternal and infinite.* IP21

¹²⁴ *Whatever follows from some attribute of God, insofar as the attribute is modified by a modification that exists necessarily and as infinite through that same attribute, must also exist both necessarily and infinite.* IP22

first ball on the infinite table; instead the universe must have always existed by virtue of the necessity of an infinite being.

4.13.1 God as the cause of actions in modes

We can now see that according to Spinoza the existence of finite modes in the universe must be caused by God through the medium of other finite modes. But according to Spinoza, all actions must also always have a cause. I will now take a closer look at Spinoza's proof of the idea that all actions must necessarily be caused by God. Spinoza claims that modes which act must have been determined to act the way they do by God, and things that do not act cannot determine themselves to act¹²⁵. Spinoza's argument hinges on the fact that “contingent” and “free” are mutual exclusive concepts, so a being said to be contingent cannot be said to be free. Spinoza writes:

[I]n things there is absolutely nothing by virtue of which they can be said to be “contingent,” I now wish to explain briefly what we should understand by “contingent”; but I must first deal with “necessary” and “impossible.” A thing is termed “necessary” either by reason of its essence or by reason of its cause. For a thing's existence necessarily follows either from its essence and definition or from a given efficient cause. Again, it is for these same reasons that a thing is termed “impossible” - that is, either because its essence or definition involves a contradiction or because there is no external cause determining to bring it into existence. But a thing is termed “contingent” for no other reason than the deficiency of our knowledge. For if we do not know whether the essence does not involve a contradiction, we still cannot make any certain judgment as to its existence because the chain of causes is hidden from us, then that thing cannot appear to us either as necessary or as impossible. So we term it either “contingent” or “possible.”¹²⁶

We can now see that the idea that God determines our actions directly contradicts the notion of free will. To explore Gods ability to determine the actions of modes, I will try to show how Spinoza's argument can be used to dismiss the notion of free will. Spinoza argues that no mode can be said to be free because everything, including the actions of individual modes, must be determined by divine laws that follow necessarily from an infinite being¹²⁷. Let us

¹²⁵ A thing which has been determined to act in a particular way has necessarily been so determined by God; and a thing which has not been determined by God cannot determine itself to act. IP26

¹²⁶ IP33S1

¹²⁷ For Spinoza, not only do modes depend on God by being mere states of God, their dependence is so complete

say that we humans, as definite modes of an attribute of God, are said to be free beings because our intellect is superior to the intellect of other modes, for example drops of water. But if humans really were free beings, we should possess the ability to change our fundamental being (our essence). But instead of being masters of our fundamental being, we are instead contingent on our fundamental being. Because all humans are necessarily products of their own essence, they must be contingent on the divine laws of the universe and not free, this is true for all modes. This is to say that humans are determined by God through their essence and existence.

4.14 In which way Spinoza understands natural laws

Spinoza claims that he has discovered the reason why things act. He believed that the actions of all modes are an expression of God. This means that when I lifting my arm, a dog barking, a comet showing up in the night sky or anything else does what it does because of God. This is not to say that everything happens because God wills it to be. What Spinoza means is that all modes are subject to laws, and these natural laws follow from the most basic component of existence – God. Modes must be created and continue to exist in accordance with the rules that necessarily follow from God. What we are left with is a world view that is based on God but is not similar to the world described by religions. God is not above the laws of the universe like a king might be above the laws of the land. As is true with everything else in existence God *is* the laws. This is to say that God is, at the same time, that which limits the subject and the subject that is being limited.

Spinoza sees individual things as expressions of God; they cannot exist as anything else than the things they exist as in this very moment because they are limited and thereby shaped into definitive modes by the natural laws. But the laws about which Spinoza is writing are not like the laws of a human society – the laws which necessarily follow the existence of God are prerequisites for the existence of modes. Without these laws substance would not have been shaped into modes. The laws of the universe are like God's divine touch that determines absolutely everything about the mode. The laws of the universe do not only define the starting point of everything; rather, all movements of modes that have ever happened are the only movements that this constant divine influence can possibly allow to happen. Spinoza presents proofs that God must be the cause of the essence of modes. Consider this thought experiment: if the essence of things were not caused by God, then we should be able to conceive of the

that it is absolutely impossible for any mode – and thus for the entire series of modes – to be different in any respect from the way it actually is. Della Rocca (2008) p.69-70

existence of essence without the concept of existence itself, which is God. But you cannot conceive of anything without existence itself. This means that the concept of the essence of modes must necessarily include the concept of God¹²⁸.

4.14.1 God has no free will

According to Spinoza's terminology the will of a finite creature must be classified as a mode of the attribute of Thought¹²⁹. The nature of modes is that they must be caused by an outside force, so a finite will as a finite mode of Thought cannot be free but must be contingent on another finite mode. But what about an infinite will – the attribute of Thought itself – is it free? God as an infinite being must possess an infinite will, but is this will also contingent? To further investigate the nature of an infinite will, let us try to imagine it: we already know that any infinite mode must either be a necessity of God or follow from another infinite mode; i.e. an infinite will is also caused by something and must therefore be considered contingent. Because God is not above the laws of the universe, his will cannot be called free but only contingent; the same laws that cause the wills of modes to be contingent do the same for God.

4.15 Spinoza's understanding of humans and their potential

What does it mean to be a conscious human being in a universe without free will? If there is no absolute freedom but everything in your life is contingent on something else what is the point of acting at all? Is it better to be contingent on one thing rather than another? Spinoza investigates these questions in a naturalistic manner. This is to say that Spinoza believes that everything can be explained in terms of natural science, and this must include every aspect of humanity¹³⁰. To understand humans fully naturalistically, Spinoza tackles questions regarding what it means to think, the nature of man and what is the best way humans can live given the nature of the world. In order to understand Spinoza's conception of human beings, we are going to look at the attribute of Thought and Extension and the connection between them. We are also going to look at some important concepts like conatus, activity, essence, affections and amor intellectualis dei.

4.16 Modal parallelism

To understand how Spinoza views humans, we must look at how he understands ideas – we

¹²⁸ *God is the efficient cause not only of the existence of things but also of their essence.* IP25

¹²⁹ *Will cannot be called a free cause, but only a necessary cause.* IP32

¹³⁰ *Since there is no transcendent world, no moral world order, no a priori norms and obligations, and no purposive organization of the universe, but only a world governed by a play of mechanical forces, therefore the individual's total life must be explained and grounded in a strictly natural principle of desire which also individuates him or her as a single entity.* Yovel (1988) p.191

need to understand the relationship between the attributes of Thought and Extension. The reason for this is that Spinoza does not strictly understand humans' psyche as a product of their environment, because Spinoza does not subscribe to the model of human ideas that states that humans develop new ideas through their interaction with the outside world. Spinoza claims that ideas can only be caused by other ideas. He reasons that Thought and Extension are simply attributes of the single substance. This is to say that a horse and the idea of that horse are caused by the same expression of substance. We only experience different aspects of this single piece of horse "shaped" substance because we experience the same mode in two different ways, and so we understand the idea of a physical object as distinct from that physical object, when in fact the idea and the object is the same mode of substance.

The world that Spinoza imagines is one in which different attributes are nothing but different ways of comprehending the same substance, but at the same time they are separated. This means that the same thing that happens in the world of extensions happens in the world of ideas. So when you encounter something new and form an idea of it, what really happens is that a specific expression of substance encounters another specific expression of substance. Under the attribute of Extension one body is encountering another body, but this same encounter can also be understood under the attribute of Thought where the mind encounters an idea¹³¹. This is to say that the same that happens in the attribute of Extension is also happening in the attribute of Thought¹³². This view that one and the same order exists under each of the attributes is called "modal parallelism".

4.17 Conatus

Because Spinoza wants to understand everything that exists naturalistically, he derives his understanding of humans from his understanding of existence in itself. It might seem strange to base your understanding of man on something other than observations of individuals, but Spinoza sees such methods as fundamentally flawed. Instead, Spinoza tries to understand why humans act the way they do by trying to uncover the cause of all actions. Spinoza claims that from his understanding of existence it follows that everything that exists must be driven to continue to exist. Spinoza names this drive conatus; it is Latin for "striving" or "endeavor". This means that God is not "the first mover", but rather that his essence is the motor that runs every single thing. To put it another way: all phenomena in the universe amount to God's

¹³¹ *a circle existing in nature and the idea of the existing circle, which is also in God, are one and the same thing (...) therefore, whether we conceive nature under the attribute of Extension, or under the attribute of Thought (...) we shall find one and the same order, or one and the same connection of causes IIP7S*

¹³² *The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things. IIP7*

essence being expressed. This eternal inference from the definition of God makes an ever expanding spider web of causal relations. This claim that existence itself causes a striving for self-preservation in all existing things is a type of panpsychism.

We now turn back to the subject of human beings as we investigate the concept of conatus further and how it relates to humans. First we will take a closer look at what essence is.

We must understand God, existence in itself and the essence of modes as one and the same thing. As a mode you are an expression of God; this is to say that your essence is an expression of God by virtue of the fact that you exist. According to Spinoza we can learn something about the nature of essence from the fact that the definition of a thing is an expression of that thing's essence.

Spinoza believes that because the definition of a thing cannot negate the thing but only affirm its existence, the essence of a thing can only posit existence and never negate it. This makes sense because the essence of a thing is God, which is existence in itself, and there cannot exist anything that negates God. This is to say that our essence only posits a striving to “be in ourselves”¹³³. To “be in yourself” means to exist according to your essence, we will later take a closer look at what “existing according to your essence” means. We can experience how conatus manifests itself in matter as a natural inclination to resist outside force and stay in its previous position, that is, inertia. But conatus can also be understood as a mental phenomenon. Because this mental state of continual striving is caused by the nature of substance, it must be present in every existing mode. So every rock, tree, water drop and idea must have a drive to strive to exist in accordance to their own essence.

According to Spinoza's substance monism, existence in itself is the most fundamental component of the universe. This means that existing must be the foundation for conatus in the sense that the most fundamental manifestation of conatus is a striving for continual existence. This is to say that the striving never stops¹³⁴. This does not mean that modes are oriented towards a teleological goal (I have already discussed the rejection of teleology that Spinoza presents in the appendix to part I of *Ethics*). To say that conatus causes a striving for continued existence is not the same as saying that existing things must have a final goal; conatus is just the necessary cause of substance – the striving is just a function of existence. In

¹³³ *The conatus with which each thing endeavors to persist in its own being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing itself.* IIP7

¹³⁴ *The conatus with which each single thing endeavors to persist in its own being does not involve finite time, but infinite time.* IIP8

this way we as modes of God are “commanded” to exist, and to exist is synonymous with striving for continual existence; the most fundamental affect that conatus causes is a striving for self-preservation¹³⁵.

Because there cannot exist anything in the nature of a thing that can destroy it, everything that is destroyed is done so by external causes¹³⁶. This means that there is nothing that can be defined as only existing for a time and then, by its own nature, cause itself to be destroyed. Let us further investigate what can destroy a mode.

Spinoza writes: *Each thing, insofar as it is in itself, endeavors to persist in its own being.*¹³⁷ What Spinoza is saying here is that the existence of modes is conditional – we can never *exist* from our own essence alone. But we can *act* from our own essence, and in this sense we can become masters of our own “destiny” and to a lesser degree be controlled by outside forces.

According to Spinoza there cannot exist anything that can be defined as self-destructive. This must be true even for a stick of dynamite, something which is designed to be destroyed. In this case the dynamite is in fact two modes: the lit fuse and the dynamite. The flame that burns the fuse is not *in itself*, that is, its actions are not from its own essence but are instead conditional on whoever lit the fuse, and so certain conditions that define its existence are forced upon it. If we are to believe Spinoza, even a flame that exists from its own essence would persist in its own being. The same is true for humans who commit suicide – they must have been driven to this action by outside forces because it cannot follow from their nature¹³⁸.

4.18 Activity

As we now continue our investigation of Spinoza’s understanding of man we must look at what effects conatus has in humans; this brings us to the concept of activity. To “be active” means to be in yourself, that is, be in accordance with your conatus - to be free from being defined by outside influences and through this freedom achieve greater perfection by acting according to God. Let me try to explain: to be a mode means to receive your essence from God because to be a mode means to be an expression of God. Because of this your realitas

¹³⁵ Conatus in Spinoza is basically the striving for self-preservation. "Everything ... endeavors to persist in its being" (Eth. III 6) is the first principle from which the rest is derived, encompassing all human affects from the most common to the highest philosophical degree. Yovel (1988) p.191

¹³⁶ No thing can be destroyed except by an external cause. IIP4

¹³⁷ IIP6

¹³⁸ Therefore nobody, unless he is overcome by external causes, and those contrary to his own nature, neglects to seek his own advantage, that is, to preserve his own being. Nobody, I repeat, from the necessity of his nature, but driven by external causes, turns away from taking food, or commits suicide which can take place in many manners. IVP20S

comes from God, that is, the richness of what defines you. What happens if you exist in accordance with your essence is that you exist as a richer expression of God because you are a purer expression of your own essence, which is the same as being a purer expression of God.

In order to understand what Spinoza means by activity, we must remember that you as a mode of God are a specific expression of God. It is nothing else than your nature as a unique expression that is the source of your level of activity. This is to say that you have a greater level of agency when you are not influenced by outside forces. We cannot understand human agency as acting in spite of God, as it is impossible for any mode to do so – every event *only* exists as a result of God’s essence, and only God can be absolutely free and exist and act only from his own essence.

According to Spinoza human agency is not opposed to God because humans cannot be understood as something other than an expression of God; so humans do not have to act despite God to act from their own essence. This means that if you act “from God” you are acting from your own essence, and in so doing you are the adequate cause. To be the adequate cause in this way is what Spinoza means by being active; to be active is to act only from your essence and not being controlled by other modes.

4.19 The essence of man

Spinoza claims that as humans we can only be active if we think in accordance with reason¹³⁹. This is because reason is the ability to derive adequate ideas (that is, a “true idea”) from other adequate ideas¹⁴⁰. This is significant in regard to Spinoza’s definition of humans. Spinoza writes: *Man thinks*¹⁴¹, this is not only to say that humans have the ability to think, but rather that man *is* a thinking thing, that is, thinking is the defining characteristic of humans – thinking pertains to the essence of a man¹⁴². If you take it away from a human, then it cannot be defined as a human. This is to say that Spinoza does not define humans by their biology, meaning that a *Homo sapiens* without brain activity is not a human, whereas an intelligent being from another planet would be. While this seems like a strange thing to say, it is actually not so different from how we actually use the term “human”. For example when animals use

¹³⁹ *The active state of the mind arises only from adequate ideas; its passive states depend solely on inadequate ideas.* IIP3

¹⁴⁰ *an idea follows in the human mind from ideas that are adequate in it* IIP40D¹

¹⁴¹ IIAx2

¹⁴² *I say that there pertains to the essence of a thing that which, when granted, the thing is necessarily posited, and by the annulling of which the thing is necessarily annulled; or that without which the thing can neither be nor be conceived, and, vice versa, that which cannot be or be conceived without the thing.* IID2

reason to solve problems¹⁴³ some might call their behavior “human-like”, or someone might see a corps as “un-human”.

As we can see, it is the nature of humans to be reasonable. To be reasonable means that if a mind has an adequate idea, then the mind is the effective cause of that idea, and to have an adequate idea of your own essence is to have an understanding of God because your essence comes from God. Spinoza’s claim is that such an understanding constitutes a greater level of activity for humans because a mind with ideas that follows from God has *a state of greater perfection*¹⁴⁴, meaning that it has more realitas. On the other hand, drives that are not derived from your own essence constitute a hindrance for your understanding. This is not to say that you cannot take control over these affects and in so doing be the adequate cause of them by understanding them¹⁴⁵. Spinoza claims to have identified how humans can better themselves, and that this betterment is connected to our drives and what causes them. This means that in order to understand how Spinoza’s ethics work we must look at his understanding of affects.

4.20 Affects

Affects are anything that affects humans’ level of activity¹⁴⁶. Spinoza treats the subject of affects in the third part of *Ethics*. In this chapter he wants to show that human affects are part of nature, and that it is possible to understand them only using natural laws¹⁴⁷. Spinoza explains that all affects are derived from conatus because it is the most fundamental drive¹⁴⁸.

As we already know, conatus is a striving to be in your own essence. From this drive, Spinoza claims, you can derive three primary affects: pain, pleasure and desire. Desire is a conscious appetite for the things that help man to be in his own nature, that is, a consciousness of your own conatus. The feeling of pleasure is a transition from a lesser understanding of the things that affect you to a greater understanding of those things (pleasure is an achievement of conatus), while pain is the opposite transition (pain is the failure to achieve conatus). From

¹⁴³ For instance has several species of primates and birds been shown to be able to use tools in novel ways in order to solve problems.

¹⁴⁴ IIP11S

¹⁴⁵ *A passive emotion ceases to be a passive emotion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it.* VP3

¹⁴⁶ *By affects I understand the affections of the body by which the body's power of activity is increased or diminished, assisted or checked, together with the ideas of these affections.* IID3

¹⁴⁷ *Most of those who have written about affects and human conduct seem to be dealing not with natural phenomena that follow the common laws of Nature but with phenomena outside Nature. They appear to go so far as to conceive man in Nature as a kingdom within a kingdom. (...) in Nature nothing happens which can be attributed to its defectiveness, for Nature is always the same; that is, the laws and rules of Nature according to which all things happen and change from one form to another are everywhere and always the same.* Preface to part III

¹⁴⁸ *No virtue can be conceived as prior to this one, namely, the conatus to preserve oneself.* IVP22

these three primary affects you can derive all other affects¹⁴⁹. For example love is *pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause*, while hatred is *pain accompanied by the idea of an external cause*¹⁵⁰. Spinoza has a long list of affects that all ultimately stems from conatus, for example: joy, fear, humility, self-love, self-contentment, honor, scorn, satiety, weariness, derision, contempt, horror, devotion, wonder, repentance and superstition¹⁵¹. These affects shape who and what we are, and more importantly, whether we are in accordance with our own essence or not. According to Spinoza “to be in yourself” is the only normative pursuit that you as a mode of God can possibly hope to accomplish. This leads us to the question that the entire book has lead up to and the question that gave it its name: How can humans live the best possible life?

4.21 Amor intellectualis dei

We already know that to live in accordance with your essence is to be more perfect and a purer expression of God (as your essence comes from God), and we also know that humans exist as thinking modes (that is, man can be defined as possessing reason). We must conclude that for humans to be in accordance with their essence they must think in accordance with reason. This can only be done if all our ideas are caused by adequate ideas. In the appendix to part I Spinoza reveals that mathematics represents a higher echelon of thinking. By using mathematics humans are saved from ideas that are at best educated guesswork. In order to become better “thinking modes” and enjoy a higher level of activity, we have to understand everything by using a method that can ensure the same level of certainty that mathematics can offer.

Spinoza calls such an understanding *amor intellectualis dei*, Latin for “intellectual love of God”, and it is Spinoza's goal that by studying and understanding his *Ethics* you will gain this intellectual love of God. What Spinoza has done with his book is to show how God is everything, even your own essence; and the only way to understand this is using reason alone. Spinoza wrote *Ethics* holding his method of reasoning to the standard of mathematics, in the same way Euclid employed his method in order to describe geometrical figures. By understanding Spinoza's naturalistic ontology our lives become better. This is so because

¹⁴⁹ *I acknowledge no primary emotion other than these three [i.e., pleasure, pain, and desire]; for I shall subsequently show that the others arise from these three* IIP11S

¹⁵⁰ IIP13

¹⁵¹ *Both aggression and empathy, violence and mutual help will issue from this single, natural principle [conatus], depending on circumstances, the laws of psychology, and one's degree of knowledge (that is, of emancipation).* Yovel (1988) p.191

reason is the nature of humans, meaning that reason is not only of ethical value, but is of *the* highest ethical value. This means that *amor intellectualis dei* arises from an understanding of how the essence of any given mode exists necessarily one of the attributes of God. This necessarily true understanding is derived directly from God. It is in this absolutely true knowledge that humans can find lasting joy, peace from outside influences and freedom to act exclusively from their own essence¹⁵²

¹⁵² *The wise man, insofar as he is considered as such, suffers scarcely any disturbance of spirit, but being conscious, by virtue of a certain eternal necessity, of himself, of God and of things* VP42S

5 Nietzsche and Spinoza

5.1 Greg Whitlock – Roger Boscovich, Benedict De Spinoza and Friedrich Nietzsche: The untold story

In his article Whitlock wants to look at the connection between Nietzsche, Spinoza and Boscovich. Whitlock argues that both Boscovich and Spinoza are important figures in Nietzsche's ontological understanding and development of the will to power¹⁵³. Whitlock proposes that Nietzsche appropriated Boscovich's atomic point particle theory in order to develop a theory that was the opposite of Spinoza's pantheism.

To investigate Whitlock's claim we are first going to look at Nietzsche's ontology; there are two of Whitlock's points I want to focus on: Nietzsche's rejection of substance and his rejection of infinite force. Secondly we are going to look at the conception of Nietzsche's theory of the will to power, that can be traced back, according to Whitlock, to Boscovich concept of force and Spinoza's concept of conatus.

5.1.1 Nietzsche's discovery of Boscovich's atomic point particle theory

To investigate Whitlock's claim let us first look at the connection between Nietzsche and Boscovich before looking at Nietzsche's inversion of Spinoza. Whitlock claims that Nietzsche studied Boscovich thoroughly,¹⁵⁴ and that what he found was the main influence for his "new world conception"¹⁵⁵: a way of understanding the world as being fundamentally comprised of will to power. Before arriving at this idea, Nietzsche studied Boscovich, and here he must have been confronted with a world view that was radically different from the mechanical/materialist world view. In order to show how important Boscovich was to Nietzsche, Whitlock points to Nietzsche's correspondence with Peter Gast. In these letters Nietzsche and Gast discuss the importance of Boscovich in contrast to the mechanistic physicist Robert Mayer. This is what Whitlock concludes from this correspondence:

It is clear from the correspondence with Gast that the primary significance of Boscovich as a thinker, so far as Nietzsche is concerned, lies in his rejection of the massy corpuscular atom of newtonian natural philosophy and in his discovery of

¹⁵³ My account will also link Nietzsche-Spinoza studies to Nietzsche-Boscovich studies. By bringing these three thinkers together, I will give an entirely new aspect to the issue of the "discovery of the will to power." Whitlock (1996) p.203

¹⁵⁴ it is nonetheless true that, after consulting Lange and then Rechner's Atomenlehre Nietzsche went directly to Boscovich's Theoria Philosophiae Naturalis and spent intensive effort in its study. Whitlock (1996) p.202

¹⁵⁵ the discovery of finite force was the decisive moment in the "new world conception." (...) the source of this scientific conception was Boscovich's Theoria. This completely rejects Martin Heidegger's representation of Nietzsche's relation to science. Whitlock (1996) p.203

atomic point particle theory.

In understanding the correspondence between Nietzsche and Gast, one should realize that Boscovich represents to Nietzsche "die dynamische Welt-Betrachtung, whereas Robert Mayer represents what he calls "die mechanistisch atomische Welt-Betrachtung."¹⁵⁶

This is to say that Nietzsche found in Boscovich's *atomic point particle theory* a rejection of the idea that the fundamental components of the universe have mass. This is contrary to Newton's account of the world¹⁵⁷. It is from Boscovich's atomic theory that Nietzsche began to build his ontological theory of will to power¹⁵⁸.

Boscovich's world view allowed Nietzsche to understand the quanta of force as the active part instead of action always being understood in connection to matter, and allowed him to reject the mechanical/materialist world view. Without being bound to a mechanical/materialist world view, Nietzsche could understand the world as dynamic, that is, a world that works by the interplay of forces, instead of the universe working according to mechanical causality (as is the fundamental assumption of the mechanical/materialist world view). In Nietzsche's new world view the mechanical causality that we perceive is in reality nothing more than the result of the underlying dynamic world. Another difference between the dynamic world view and the mechanical/materialist world view is that the dynamic world view cannot be reduced to simple instances of cause and effect; you must understand that all forces are connected to each other, so every cause and effect involves the whole universe.

5.1.2 Spinoza as Nietzsche's adversary

According to Whitlock, Nietzsche was attracted to a view of the world that does not assume the existence of material atoms because he saw the mechanical/materialist world view as a remnant from a theological understanding of the world. This is to say that to assume the existence of material atoms is to imagine the world in all too-human terms (we will take a closer look at this later). But when Nietzsche found Boscovich's atomic point particle theory, he could make use of it to construct a new understanding of the world. This new

¹⁵⁶ Whitlock (1996) p.204

¹⁵⁷ *The mechanistic worldview believes in the massy corpuscular "clump-atoms" of newtonian physics "cause and effect," "laws of nature," and especially irritating to Nietzsche, the "law of entropy."* Whitlock (1996) p.204

¹⁵⁸ *The idea that there is no matter, but only force, is one that Nietzsche will return to again and again in his notebooks. It is clear from the Nachlaß that force is the central concept in Nietzsche's theory of will to power, and it will become clear later that the origin of Nietzsche's concept of force is to be found in Boscovich's Theoria Philosophiae Naturalis.* Whitlock (1996) p.204

understanding is Nietzsche's *new world conception*. Whitlock writes:

*Boscovich offered a scientific and potentially atheistic universe which rejected the last semblance of substance, i.e. material atoms. Thus Nietzsche wanted to use Boscovich's physical theory to construct a "new world conception," which would constitute an advance beyond mechanistic theory in its rejection of material atoms and also be totally void of metaphysical or theological components. One may assume that Nietzsche wanted the new world conception not as a metaphysical dogma, but as a justifying vision for free spirits who seek non-theological perspectives.*¹⁵⁹

As we can see here, Whitlock argues that the goal Nietzsche pursued with this *new world conception* was to provide a world view that was emancipated from metaphysics and theology. What Nietzsche conceived of was a post-metaphysical world view that understands the universe as containing a finite amount of force and a finite amount of novelty.

I find it surprising, but Whitlock introduces Spinoza as a representative for the metaphysical world view (we will come back to why I find this surprising later) by showing how Nietzsche's new world conception is opposed to Spinoza's pantheism. I think Whitlock is trying to show how Nietzsche is successful in his attempt to make a new world conception that is *void of metaphysical or theological components*. I also think it is likely that Whitlock found Spinoza as the best representative in this matter because of Nietzsche's frequent critique of Spinoza, and especially because Nietzsche writes critically about Spinoza's ontology.

We are now going to look at Whitlock's claims that Nietzsche's new world conception is diametrically opposed to the concept of substance and Spinoza's idea of infinite force.

5.1.3 Nietzsche's rejection of substance

Whitlock claims that Nietzsche employs Boscovich's rejection of extension as an argument against reductionist science¹⁶⁰. Whitlock also shows that Nietzsche considers Boscovich's theory of a dynamic world of forces a better description of the world than the *massy corpuscles of newtonian natural philosophy*¹⁶¹. According to Whitlock Nietzsche adopts

¹⁵⁹ Whitlock (1996) p.206

¹⁶⁰ *Nietzsche comments in many notes that matter is merely one hypothesis drawn from the metaphysics of substance. In the long march of reductionist science, the concept of matter constitutes the final relic of the metaphysics of substance. By eliminating this holdover, Boscovich completes the destruction of the metaphysics of substance. With his victorious concept of force, substance no longer has its raison d'être.* Whitlock p.207

¹⁶¹ Whitlock (1996) p.208

Boscovich's rejection of the concept of matter because he sees matter as the result of a belief in metaphysics.

We know that Boscovich played a central role in Nietzsche's rejection of reductionist science because Nietzsche explicitly mentions Boscovich, along with Copernicus, as opposing material atomism¹⁶². So far so good; Whitlock paints a picture of Nietzsche making use of Boscovich in order to attack what Nietzsche sees as the leading world view of his time¹⁶³. But at this point, Whitlock's argument is a little hard to follow, as Whitlock states that Nietzsche's attack on the position of the reductionists proves that Nietzsche rejects Spinoza's idea of substance. It seems to me that Whitlock holds it as self-evident that the concept of substance that Nietzsche uses is diametrically opposed to the rejection of *massy corpuscles of newtonian natural philosophy*. This is to say that Whitlock sees Spinoza as a reductionist, but this never becomes clear as Whitlock never properly explains what he thinks Spinoza means by "substance".

In lack of a proper explanation, I am left to conclude that Whitlock understands (or rather confuses) "substance" as synonymous with "matter" or "extension". This is wrong. Spinoza uses the term in its original Latin meaning ("that which is underlying"), that is, existence itself, where extension is only one of the attributes that it expresses itself through. Boscovich's atomic point particle theory and Spinoza's pantheism is actually compatible with each other on this point – quanta of energy *are* substance.

Because he does not understand Spinoza's term of "substance" Whitlock misinterprets Spinoza as a reductionist, and therefore believes that Nietzsche's critique of the reductionists is also directed against Spinoza¹⁶⁴. This is absurd, Spinoza was not a reductionist; if he should be classified as anything, he was a rationalist; believing that mathematics is the only source for reliable knowledge.

¹⁶² *As regards materialistic atomism, hardly anything has ever been so well refuted (...) This we owe primarily to the Pole Boscovich, who along with the Pole Copernicus achieved the greatest victory yet in opposing the appearance of things.* BEG 12

¹⁶³ *Of all the interpretations of the world attempted hitherto, the mechanistic one seems today to stand victorious in the foreground.* KSA 11,36[34]

¹⁶⁴ *What, as a first formulation, is the relation between Roger Joseph Boscovich, Benedict de Spinoza and Friedrich Nietzsche? In essence, Nietzsche uses Boscovich's theory to construct a universe opposed in every way to Spinoza's pantheism. Boscovich offered a scientific and potentially atheistic universe which rejected the last semblance of substance, i.e. material atoms.* Whitlock (1996) p.206

5.1.4 Nietzsche's rejection of infinite force

Whitlock's theory is that Nietzsche learned about finite force from reading Boscovich¹⁶⁵, but that Nietzsche goes beyond Boscovich's theory and proposes that in a world of finite force and finite space the atomic point particles can only be arranged in a finite number of ways (this finite number is very large, as everything that can possibly exist is counted, but it is not infinite). In this way Nietzsche derives a theory of finite force (and finite novelty) from Boscovich's atomic point particle theory.

According to Whitlock Nietzsche got the idea of finite novelty by *inverting spinozism*¹⁶⁶. This is to say that Whitlock suggests that Nietzsche must have studied Spinoza and found an infinite god that is the cause of a universe of infinite novelty¹⁶⁷. Whitlock claims that Nietzsche must have seen Spinoza's pantheism as diametrically opposed to the new world conception because it is based on metaphysics. And that it was Spinoza's pantheism that gave Nietzsche the idea that if the world was not based on infinite force then there could only ever exist a finite amount of novelty¹⁶⁸. To investigate Whitlock's claims we are going to take a closer look at Nietzsche's critique of Spinoza's metaphysics inspired pantheism by looking at aphorism 109 of *Gay Science* and KSA 11, 36[15].

Aphorism 109 of *Gay Science* is important to Whitlock because he believes that it shows that Nietzsche perceived a *great divide between metaphysics of substance and his new world conception*¹⁶⁹. In this aphorism Nietzsche cautions us against falling prone to all too-human

¹⁶⁵ Boscovich rejects the last remnant of substance when he adopts the point particle atomic theory. Yet the number of such particles is finite and the distances between centers of force finite. Thus force will form a finite universe. Whitlock (1996) p.210

¹⁶⁶ while it was Boscovich's reasoning that had lead from rejection of substance to finite force, it is Spinoza's reasoning (albeit inverted) which leads from finite force to finite novelty. And this makes sense, since any finite universe will be able to contain a finite amount of anything. Indeed, Boscovich says that infinitude is not found in nature, even though there may be an infinite insertibility of points in a finite space. Whether or not the scientific spirit requires the postulates of finite space and force remains a peripheral question to my inquiry. Whitlock (1996) p.211

¹⁶⁷ One finds in the notebooks of 1880—82 several notes which reason that infinite force implies infinite novelty and finite force implies finite novelty (e. g. KSA 9, 11[213], KSA 9, 11[269] and KSA 9, 11(305)). Considering that this period is one of intensive study of Spinoza, and that he is one of the few sources of this obscure phrase, it is reasonable to conclude that Nietzsche is working here with a principle found originally in Spinoza. Proposition XVI of Spinoza's *Ethics* (Book One) deduces an infinite novelty of modifications of substance from its infinite power: "From the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinite things in infinite ways [...]." And Nietzsche likewise reasons that finite power entails finite novelty in the universe. Whitlock (1996) p.210

¹⁶⁸ Nietzsche's new world conception is defined by finite force. This completely inverts the metaphysics of Spinoza. Infinite force, a necessary postulate for Spinoza, entails infinite novelty, creation ex nihilo, infinite extension and other remnants of theology. Finite force entails finite novelty, conservation of energy and finite space. Finite force, but without material atoms was the new perspective Nietzsche sought and found in fragmentary form in Boscovich's theory. Whitlock (1996) p.207

¹⁶⁹ "Our presuppositions: no God: finite force." This is the great divide between metaphysics of substance and his new world conception. In his notebooks of 1880-1882, we find a number of significant aphorisms arguing for

myopia because it will lead us to understand the entire universe in terms of our all too-human concepts. Nietzsche presents some examples of too-human world views (the world as organic, the world as a machine). But what interests Whitlock is Nietzsche's obvious allusion to Spinoza's pantheism whenever Nietzsche writes about the drive towards self-preservation, the eternal substance, and the infinite novelty that must follow from it and how he rejects them as being the *shadow of God*.

Nietzsche presents this world view as if it was based on a metaphysical belief in God, and as a belief that keeps humans from understanding the world naturalistically. Nietzsche is motivated by his fundamental belief that humans choose to understand the world as something that is human-like, instead of facing the truth. If we ever can hope to face the universe, instead of our own comforting delusions, we must move away from the concept of order because it is too-human, instead we need to understand the universe as having no order, and instead understand the universe as profoundly non-human and therefore cannot conform to our too-human categories.

In KSA 11, 36[15] Nietzsche compares the finite universe, something that necessarily follows from Boscovich's point particle atomic theory, to a universe of infinite novelty, such as the world Spinoza imagines as a necessary consequence of his idea of God. In this note Nietzsche writes that anybody who believes in a goal-oriented universe only does so because he or she is too indoctrinated with the metaphysical belief in a creator God. An example of this all too-human belief is *the idea that the world is intentionally evading a goal and even has the means expressly to prevent itself from being drawn into a cyclical course*¹⁷⁰.

Nietzsche claims that these people believe that the *goallessness of the world* is a goal in itself, and because of this assumption they reason that there must exist a principle of eternal novelty to prevent repetition. In contrast to this idea Nietzsche argues that the world must be finite, and finite force must mean finite novelty. Nietzsche thinks that this is proven by the fact that an enormous amount of time have elapsed since the beginning of the universe and the universe is still in constant change, meaning that the idea of a goal to be achieved, an end-state from where no more change occurs, cannot be applicable to the world. But this does not mean that there is any intentionality; the lack of goals is nothing more than a necessary consequence of an ever-changing universe.

the finitude of force. These notes constitute forerunners to Fröhliche Wissenschaft 109, an aphorism of extreme importance for my interpretation. Whitlock (1996) p.209

¹⁷⁰ KSA 11, 36[15]

Whitlock argues that this shows that Nietzsche saw Spinoza's world view of infinite force and novelty as inspired by metaphysics. So because Nietzsche wanted to develop a world view deprived of any metaphysics he has to reject Spinoza's idea of a source of infinite power that can be rearranged an infinite number of times¹⁷¹.

While it is true that Nietzsche criticized Spinoza's beliefs in infinite novelty for being based on metaphysics this does not prove that Nietzsche developed his idea of finite force and novelty from Spinoza's idea of infinite force. I believe that Whitlock fails to present enough evidence to prove his. I would instead argue that it is just as likely that Nietzsche deduced the idea of finite novelty from the idea of a universe of finite force, meaning that you do not need Spinoza to explain Nietzsche's theory, and that it is enough to refer to Boscovich's point particle theory.

5.1.5 Boscovich's and Spinoza's role in Nietzsche's conception of the will to power

Nietzsche gets his concept of force from physics, specifically from Boscovich¹⁷². But Nietzsche appropriates Boscovich's concept of force and makes a new theory: the will to power. Nietzsche claims that Boscovich's atomic point particles are nothing more than will to power¹⁷³. Whitlock claims that Nietzsche does not develop the idea that the fundamental component of the universe is mental in nature by himself, but that Nietzsche finds this idea in Spinoza, specifically Spinoza's concept of conatus¹⁷⁴.

Conatus is the propensity of substance to stay in its own nature, or to put it another way: conatus is the function of existence itself (substance) to continue to exist. According to Spinoza this fundamental nature of substance is ultimately the cause of any affects in humans (or any other being for that matter). In this manner Nietzsche's concept of will to power is

¹⁷¹ *The metaphysics of substance requires infinite force to power its infinite modifications; the physics of finite force always considers infinitude as unimaginable, abstract and not actually found in nature. Nietzsche believes that the metaphysics of substance logically entails infinite force: and he believes he can produce an argument that the very rejection of substance entails finite force. This argument he finds in Boscovich's Theoria Philosophiae Naturalis.* Whitlock(1996)p.210

¹⁷² *KSA II, 36[31] and KSA II, 36[34] we find two notes connecting Boscovich's dynamic world view to the idea of force and in turn connecting force to the idea of will to power.* Whitlock (1996) p.208

¹⁷³ This [KSA II, 40[37]] is the final transition from boscovichian force. Nietzsche still holds the boscovichian legacy that there is no matter, there is only force. But now Nietzsche has made his own autonomous addition, for all force is will to power. Nietzsche, like Boscovich, now has a unified theory of force. The term "Willenskraft" in the passage above illustrates the debt Nietzsche owes to Boscovich's theory of force especially well. Whitlock (1996) p.217

¹⁷⁴ *As my account would have it, then, the theory of will to power begins as the concept of dynamic force as taken from Roger Joseph Boscovich. From a critique of Boscovich's spiritless scientific view of force, Nietzsche concluded the need for an inner will to force, which he received from Spinoza's concept of conatus.* Whitlock (1996) p.217

similar to conatus. It also constitutes the nature of existence itself, and is the basis for all affects. The difference between the two fundamental natures lies in what effects they express. For Nietzsche the will to power causes force to exert control over more force, causing everything that exists to seek to grow and exert itself, while for Spinoza conatus causes substance to ultimately seek its own continual existence. Nietzsche criticizes Spinoza's conatus in BEG 13, claiming that life is ultimately a releasing of strength, not a preservation of it.

If we now come back to Whitlock's claim that the will to power is based on conatus we see that it is not without merits; as the two concepts holds similar positions in Nietzsche's and Spinoza's ontologies while differing in what effects they have. While I believe that Whitlock here points to an important similarity between Nietzsche and Spinoza I also think he misses the point. I think it is far more likely that Nietzsche's and Spinoza's similar ontologies is a result of their similar naturalistic philosophies, meaning that they both sought to explain affects in a naturalistic way, and both (independently of each other) reasoned that the mental world and the physical world have to be explained by the same theory; meaning that the fundamental nature of the physical world is at the same time the fundamental nature of the mental world, which means that the physical atom must be a mental phenomenon.

5.2 Richard Schacht – The Nietzsche-Spinoza Problem: Spinoza as Precursor?

The goal of Richard Schacht's article is to understand the complex and richly ambivalent relationship between Nietzsche and Spinoza, in order to gain a better understanding of them both. In the title of the article Schacht refers to the "Nietzsche-Spinoza problem"; the problem is Nietzsche's relationship to Spinoza. As readers of Nietzsche we are left wondering if Nietzsche saw Spinoza as a brother because of their shared naturalism or as an enemy because of his metaphysics.

To discover the truth behind the Nietzsche-Spinoza problem Schacht starts by showing how the psychological theories of both Nietzsche and Spinoza are connected through their similar ideas of naturalism, and why their psychologies are important to their theories of the betterment of man. But regardless of Nietzsche's and Spinoza's similar naturalism it only describes their common belief in the appropriate way of understanding the world. This does not entail that they must have a similar understanding of the fundamental nature of the world. Instead Nietzsche and Spinoza represent opposing views regarding the nature of reality. It is

worth noting that Nietzsche does not mention this fundamental difference between the two of them, and instead criticizes Spinoza personally.

To explain Nietzsche's critique of Spinoza (especially Nietzsche's critique of the concept of conatus) Schacht argues that Nietzsche is trying to reinterpret Spinoza as a Nietzscheian by criticizing the parts of Spinoza's philosophy that does not fit in with his own philosophy.

5.2.1 Nietzsche's and Spinoza's shared naturalism

Schacht tries to classify both Nietzsche and Spinoza as naturalists, to prove this he points to how they both are similar because they are misunderstood because of their shared rejection of *religious and metaphysical interpretations of our nature*, [meaning that they have been] *lumped together [with] all those who (like Nietzsche) rejects extra-naturalistic, religious or metaphysical interpretations of our nature*¹⁷⁵.

Schacht on the other hand has a different understanding of Nietzsche and Spinoza and describes them as "non-reductionist naturalists". By classifying them as naturalists, Schacht is saying that both Nietzsche and Spinoza looked at the natural world and tried to understand it according to scientific laws. This is not to say that they had the same understanding of science, only that their approach to understand the world is similar. As we will see does their similar approach lead to somewhat different results.

The difference between the two thinkers was that Spinoza was an early naturalist, so he did not have access to the empirical science that Nietzsche uses frequently and nonchalantly (and often criticizes). The difference in *time, culture and science*¹⁷⁶ causes Spinoza's naturalism, in contrast to Nietzsche's, to not involve observation but instead being based entirely on reason.

As Schacht points out Nietzsche's and Spinoza's shared brand of naturalism caused them to interpret the natural world as something that is more complex than the sum of its parts. This is in contrast to the reductionist understanding:

For them the nature of which we are a part amounts to something more than merely natural and material existence, and that our emergent and attainable humanity reflects and expresses something inherent in the basic character of reality itself that is the real

¹⁷⁵ Schacht (2001) p.258

¹⁷⁶ Nietzsche's letter to Overbeck, July 30, 1881

*meaning of the idea of the divine*¹⁷⁷

This “idea of the divine” is an important similarity between Nietzsche and Spinoza for Schacht. I on the other hand believe that Schacht’s choice of words is not entirely suitable to describe a notion that Nietzsche and Spinoza shared, as only Spinoza’s philosophy is strongly connected to religion, while Nietzsche is equally strong in his critique of religion. Regardless of this let us look at Nietzsche’s and Spinoza’s understanding of what Schacht calls “the divine”.

Schacht mentions “the idea of the divine” in relation to Nietzsche’s and Spinoza’s naturalistic understanding of humanity. This is because Schacht understands the “divine” in connection with Nietzsche’s and Spinoza’s respective ideas of *the fundamental character and impetus of the natural and only world and reality there is*¹⁷⁸. This is to say that both see this “divinity” as a natural expression of the natural world, but they disagree on what this “divine” characteristic is.

Let us now have a closer look at this divine characteristic. The divinity of the natural world can be expressed through the human ability to *transcend our merely natural existence by way of its transformation*¹⁷⁹. To achieve this “natural transcendence” you need to understand yourself, meaning that you have to make yourself the subject of a psychological analysis. Both Nietzsche and Spinoza share a belief in the attainability of a naturalistic *higher humanity*, meaning that you do not need metaphysics or religion to explain the process. The only way to understand (and possibly achieve) the “divine” characteristic of humans, the higher humanity, is by psychology. Schacht points out that both believed that psychological insight was the key to *capitalizing upon certain of our general human resources, transforming and giving altered expression to powers that are merely natural to begin with*¹⁸⁰.

Nietzsche and Spinoza are similar in that both believe that the more a person understands himself the more agency he has, meaning that humans play an active part in their own destinies. So even though you are in a naturalistic world and your entire being can be described naturalistically you have the ability to change your own nature. Both Nietzsche and Spinoza argue that in order to do this you must change how you understand yourself and your relationship with the world. Nietzsche calls his new perspective *amor fati* while Spinoza calls

¹⁷⁷ Schacht (2001) p.258

¹⁷⁸ Schacht (2001) p.259

¹⁷⁹ Schacht (2001) p.259

¹⁸⁰ Schacht (2001) p.259

his *amor intellectualis dei*. Schacht also mentions that for both Nietzsche and Spinoza this ability to change our nature is naturally occurring, although not common.

5.2.2 Spinoza as Nietzsche's predecessor

Schacht opens his article by quoting Nietzsche's letter to Overbeck from July 30, 1881. Schacht does this to show that Nietzsche, at least to Overbeck, designates Spinoza as his predecessor, and that their differences are nothing more than differences in *time, culture and science*, and not in any meaningful philosophical way.

Schacht wants to investigate Nietzsche's kinship with Spinoza. I believe he succeeds in proving in what way Nietzsche saw Spinoza as a predecessor as he presents evidence that show that Nietzsche must have recognized that Spinoza's pantheism is based on the same type of naturalism as his own is. The proof I am referring to is Nietzsche's *lack* of criticism of Spinoza's religious choice of words.

There are two reasons one might expect to find such a criticism in Nietzsche's texts. It is not unreasonable to think that Nietzsche, who famously wrote "God is dead", would reject a theory that holds that God is the direct cause of existence itself. As Schacht points out Nietzsche never criticized Spinoza's language. Also, this lack of criticisms is noteworthy because Nietzsche is vocal regarding many other shortcomings he finds in Spinoza (as we will see later).

From these observations Schacht reasons that Nietzsche's lack of criticism means that he recognizes that Spinoza's concept of "God" means nothing more than "nature". In fact Spinoza *rejects* the Judeo-Christian concept of God and thinks of divinity in a non-theological way, meaning that Spinoza tries to give a naturalistic explanation for this religious concept. Even though he used the term "God" Spinoza was Nietzsche's predecessor in "de-deifying" nature and humanity. In this way Schacht sees Spinoza as Nietzsche's predecessor as *the first of the great modern philosophers*¹⁸¹ to reject the notion of a Judeo-Christian God.

As Nietzsche's predecessor, Spinoza understands humans in much the same way Nietzsche himself did: as strictly natural entities. Because of this both believe that there is no great divide between the mental and the physical¹⁸², but rather that ontology and psychology are

¹⁸¹ Schacht (2001) p.260

¹⁸² *Nietzsche clearly recognized in [Spinoza] a kindred spirit – and quite rightly. He did so for many reasons, prominent among which were his appreciation of the attempt made by Spinoza to read humanity back into nature, and to propose a psychology and anthropology that linked the mental with the physical and physiological*

fundamentally linked. Schacht writes:

[Spinoza and Nietzsche] *links his psychology to a comprehensive interpretation of life and the world (...). Spinoza's "God or nature," conceived as an essentially rational single substance embracing all existence, informs and colors his psychology and account of our nature – as does Nietzsche's "will to power," construed as an essentially nonrational disposition accounting for the manner in which everything in this world comes to be and passes away.*¹⁸³

Schacht goes on to explain that both Nietzsche and Spinoza derive an "ur-disposition" from their ontology. Both see all human psychological phenomena as derived from this single ur-disposition. For Nietzsche this disposition is the will to power while for Spinoza it is conatus.

5.2.3 The fundamental difference between Nietzsche's and Spinoza's philosophies, and Nietzsche's critique of Spinoza

A similarity that Schacht fails to point out, but I find important when discussing Nietzsche's and Spinoza's methods, is how both develop their methods of philosophizing from their respective ideas of the fundamental nature of the universe, but their methods differ because while Nietzsche believes that the world is fundamentally based on ever-changing chaos Spinoza believes it is based on eternal laws¹⁸⁴. Spinoza's belief in eternal laws lead him to a geometrical method inspired by Euclid, while Nietzsche's belief in chaos lead him to use his perspectivism.

While Schacht does not comment on this similarity he does mention that Nietzsche criticized Spinoza for his belief in eternally true mathematics, as Nietzsche suspects that Spinoza's philosophy are not entirely based on what Spinoza calls "the essence of things". The essence of things is what is expressed through mathematics and it is in contrast to the vague and often contradictory images that we have of our immediate environment.

Nietzsche claims that this kind of eternally true knowledge that Spinoza seeks is impossible. Nietzsche understands the universe as something that is fundamentally chaotic and that there is nothing that is eternally true, and because of this anybody who seeks such "true" and "eternal" knowledge are only fooling themselves and are in reality blind to their own motivations.

in a fundamental way. Schacht (2001) p.258-259

¹⁸³ Schacht (2001) p.259-260

¹⁸⁴ *They do differ radically with respect to the question of whether all of reality is or is not a fundamentally rational affair* Schacht (2001) p.261

This idea that the belief in anything eternal is born from “all-to-human” motivations fuels much of Nietzsche’s critique of Spinoza. In order to prove Spinoza’s lack of personal insight and general lack of “strength of character”, Nietzsche engages in a psychological evaluation of Spinoza. Nietzsche wants to show that it is weakness, the lack of will to power, that forces Spinoza to adopt a position contrary from a naturalistic understanding of the world, because a naturalistic understanding of the world requires strength to endure.

There is a long list of published aphorisms where Nietzsche criticizes Spinoza on his lack of personal insight. I am here only presenting a short list of them in quick succession.

GS 333 – In this aphorism Nietzsche refers to Spinoza’s idea of knowledge: *Non ridere, non lugere, neque detestari, sed intelligere*: “to know is a state without laughter, mourning and cursing”. Nietzsche disagrees, he does not see the state of “knowing” as different from any other state of the mind, for example any other feelings. The feeling of knowing is in fact a balance between affects.

Before this balance is found there is a battle between the affects where each affect holds its own position. Only when the affects find a common center is peace restored and we achieve the feeling of “knowing”. This is to say that according to Nietzsche we only know “knowing” from “ignorance” by a feeling of peace – to know is nothing but the reconciliation of affects, and in this reconciliation we can find peace from the drives of the affects.

Because humans identify the state of knowing as an escape from the unrest of the constant drive of affects we believe that “knowing” is an exalted state; removed from the animalistic affects. Because he defines the state of “knowing” as a false sanctuary from the animalistic affects, which only those that are too weak to endure these affects seek, Nietzsche claims that the love of reason that he suspects Spinoza to have is motivated by his inability to endure the feeling of not knowing. That is, his search for eternal knowledge is motivated by weakness. And because he is not strong enough to remain “not knowing” he is trying to “dissect” all emotions to escape their drives.

BGE 5 – Nietzsche claims that Spinoza is not true to his own motives and reasons. According to Nietzsche philosophers, or at least philosophers that are not also critical of their own and others psyche (something that excludes himself), do not recognize that they are not motivated by their own strive for knowledge, but rather by an affect seeking to bend others to its will.

BGE 25 – In this aphorism Nietzsche writes about philosophers in general and their

willingness to become martyrs for their philosophy. Spinoza is mentioned specifically, as Nietzsche claims that Spinoza's sacrifice in the name of philosophy and truth does nothing but make him stubborn and scornful. As a seeker of truth and lover of wisdom one should not die for a set of philosophical dogmas. Instead you should be free to see the nuances of reality and adopt a wide variety of perspectives, as a free spirit does.

BGE 198 – In this aphorism Nietzsche writes about ethical systems, and how any system of morality (which includes Spinoza's) is too general. It “throws the baby out with the bath water” by limiting the ways a person can express himself, that is, to do and be whatever he can. Because of this limitation any moral system condemns people to mediocrity.

5.2.4 The teleological nature of conatus

From the many aphorisms where Nietzsche criticizes Spinoza we are going to take a closer look at BGE 13. In this aphorism Nietzsche criticizes physiologists for believing that the basic instinct of any organism is self-preservation. Nietzsche shows how his own theory of will to power contradicts this idea and therefore contradicts Spinoza's idea of conatus. Nietzsche claims that the belief that the instinct for self-preservation is the “ur-disposition” is a *superfluous teleological principle*. I believe that Spinoza would disagree with Nietzsche's characterization of conatus, since Spinoza explicitly rejects all teleological principles in the appendix to part one of his book *Ethics*.

In this context Schacht asks if conatus can be understood as a superfluous teleological principle, and if that is the case, can Nietzsche's own will to power suffer the same faith?¹⁸⁵ Schacht does not provide any definitive answers to these questions, but he does argue that Nietzsche's will to power is not teleological in nature, but he fails to provide the same kind of argument with regard to conatus. Instead Schacht assumes that Nietzsche's critique of conatus can only be understood as Nietzsche's attempt to reinterpret Spinoza.

5.2.5 Schacht's claim that Nietzsche is criticizing Spinoza to prepare the way for a more favorable reception of his own alternative interpretation

Schacht launches a theory to explain why, even though they have a great many things in common, Nietzsche criticizes Spinoza. Schacht claims that Nietzsche's critique is meant to *prepare the way for a more favorable reception of his own alternative interpretation*¹⁸⁶.

¹⁸⁵ here Nietzsche is very close to Spinoza; and it may at least be wondered whether his “will to power” is any less teleological than Spinoza's conatus to self-preservation Schacht (2001) p. 266

¹⁸⁶ Schacht (2001) p.269

Schacht claims that the teleological principle of self-preservation that Nietzsche criticizes is the only significant difference between Nietzsche's concept of will to power and Spinoza's conatus¹⁸⁷, so Nietzsche's critique is meant to paint Spinoza as a sort of Nietzschean¹⁸⁸.

I would argue that Schacht's treatment of Spinoza lacks complexity, and that Schacht fails to produce any real evidence to back his claim. To really understand Nietzsche's critique of Spinoza we need to first look at conatus and understand why it is not a teleological principle. I will then conclude my discussion of Schacht's article by looking at Schacht's conception of Spinoza and, finally, I will give my own comment on Nietzsche's critique of conatus.

Spinoza presents his concept of conatus as a necessary consequence of his idea of substance. We can read about conatus first in IIIIP6D, which is based on IP25C, which is based on IP15, which reads: *Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God*. This is to say that conatus is a function of substance. I will briefly recount Spinoza's argument: Because there cannot be a contradiction in substance, and modes are in substance, no modes can by the power of their own nature destroy themselves. So any destruction of modes must be caused by outside influences. What Spinoza is saying here is that because of what it means to exist a mode cannot have a nature that causes it to stop existing. The function of any nature must be to affirm its own existence. So the nature of modes (conatus) is to "be in itself" because of the nature of substance.

Schacht argues that Nietzsche's concept of the will to power is not a teleological concept because it does not describe *an intention to bring about the attainment of a particular sort of result – for example the possession of power conceived as control over some domain of objects or creatures*¹⁸⁹. Instead he conceives of the will to power as *the disposition of all dynamic quanta to "assert" themselves (as it were) in relationship to other dynamic quanta, "expanding" their force in ways that may result in their replenishment or their exhaustion*¹⁹⁰. But conatus is not a teleological concept; conatus is nothing more than what modes do when they are not constrained by outside forces, and as such it is not a goal. So Nietzsche is wrong when he calls conatus a superfluous teleological principle.

¹⁸⁷ *It is on this point that Nietzsche accuses Spinoza of an inconsistency, by introducing a piece of teleology that is incompatible with his rejection of all teleology. If it is eliminated, one is left with just the "power of activity" itself, the expression of which may or may not have "perseverance" as a consequence. But this is very close indeed to Nietzsche's own conception.* Schacht (2001) p.270

¹⁸⁸ *Nietzsche's basic complaint against Spinoza is that this is exactly what he ought to have held – and that he instead imposed a teleology of self-preservation upon this picture for reasons (or motives) of an all-too-human sort.* Schacht (2001) p.271

¹⁸⁹ Schacht (2001) p.270

¹⁹⁰ Schacht (2001) p.270-271

I think I have shown in great detail in my chapters on Spinoza that conatus is not an attempt to achieve a goal, but rather the propensity of any mode, given that it is not influenced by any outside forces, to stay in its own essence. This is to say that as a mode you are imbued by a force by virtue of your existence. This force is conatus and it is an expression of existence itself.

5.3 Yirmiyahu Yovel – Nietzsche and Spinoza: amor fati and amor dei

Yirmiyahu Yovel's aim with his article is to illuminate the connection between Nietzsche and Spinoza. To do this Yovel looks at the difference between Nietzsche's concept of amor fati and Spinoza's concept of *amor intellectualis dei*. Amor fati is a *polemic transformation* of amor intellectualis dei. These formulae represent the complex relationship between Nietzsche and Spinoza, as Nietzsche resembles Spinoza in many respects.

Yovel describes their relationship as follows: *Perhaps no two philosophers are as akin as Spinoza and Nietzsche, yet no two others are as opposed as they are.*¹⁹¹ The complex relationship to which Yovel alludes pertains to Nietzsche's and Spinoza's philosophies sharing the quality of being *modern philosophies of immanence*. But at the same time the two philosophers are also opposed to each other because of their differing theories regarding the fundamental question of immanence. The question of the nature of immanence is important to the discussion of *amor fati* and *amor intellectualis dei* because both Nietzsche and Spinoza understood the world in a strictly naturalistic way: so the fundamental nature of the world must be the basis for any ethical theory.

5.3.1 Similarities between Nietzsche and Spinoza

Yovel refers to Goethe in order to connect Nietzsche and Spinoza and to show that Nietzsche saw similarities between Spinoza and himself. Yovel quotes aphorism 49 from Nietzsche's book *Twilight of the idols: Skirmishes of an untimely man* where Nietzsche writes that Goethe *sought help from Spinoza to overcome the eighteenth century*. Yovel argues that we can see in this aphorism that Nietzsche took Goethe to be someone who sought the *Spinozistic ideal* that amor intellectualis dei posits, but also that Nietzsche paints Goethe as someone who believes in Nietzsche's own ideal of the *Übermensch*.

Yovel understands this aphorism to mean that Nietzsche acknowledged Goethe's ideal of overcoming his time by looking to nature and that Nietzsche recognized his own ideal of

¹⁹¹ Yovel (1988) p.183

approaching life in it. It is because of this that Nietzsche writes this aphorism in which he “appropriates” Goethe as a Nietzschean. In this aphorism we can also see that Nietzsche understands Spinoza as the genealogical source of this Nietzschean Goethe: this fact shows that Nietzsche conceives of Spinoza as the progenitor of his own philosophy¹⁹².

Yovel also claims that Nietzsche and Spinoza are similar in how they were treated by their contemporaries, as they both are representatives of what Yovel calls *dark enlightenment*. What Yovel means is that both Nietzsche and Spinoza suffered a common fate as both uncovered facts that their contemporaries found unsettling. Because of this, both were alienated from their respective societies and thought of as cultural villains¹⁹³. Yovel’s concept of *dark enlightenment* sets Spinoza and Nietzsche in a historical context together with Machiavelli, Hobbes, Darwin, Marx and Freud. All these “dark enlighteners” share a common theme in that they all worked towards *shatter[ing] complacent self-images and comforting illusions* by providing a *disillusioning cure*¹⁹⁴.

5.3.2 Knowledge

To explain Nietzsche’s interest in Spinoza, Yovel refers to Nietzsche’s letter to Overbeck from July 30, 1881. Yovel believes that the enthusiasm Nietzsche expresses for Spinoza in this letter must be inspired by Nietzsche’s interest in Spinoza’s *strict naturalism*, as he believes it is similar to his own *naturalistic revolt*. Yovel comes to this conclusion because he believes that the five main points of Spinoza’s doctrine to which Nietzsche refers in his letter to Overbeck (making knowledge the most powerful affect, the denial of free will, teleology, the moral order, the unegoistic and evil) all are derived from this strict naturalism.

Yovel focuses on Nietzsche’s claim that both he and Spinoza make knowledge the most powerful affect. Yovel disagrees; he claims that Nietzsche’s and Spinoza’s approaches to knowledge are quite different from each other, and that the difference between them corresponds to the difference between their concepts of *amor fati* and *amor intellectualis dei*. Yovel writes:

Nietzsche, in a more Socratic stance, attributes to knowledge the salutary affective

¹⁹² [Nietzsche] looks upon Goethe's ideal, Nietzsche recognizes himself in it(...) and traces it partly back to Spinoza. Spinoza has thus a privileged role in forming Goethe's position which Nietzsche sees as the kernel of his own. Yovel (1988) p.184

¹⁹³ their lives consumingly submerged in their philosophical work, and both making unsettling discoveries which alienated them from most of their contemporaries (who saw them as cultural villains), and from the major bulk of tradition. Yovel (1988) p.187

¹⁹⁴ Yovel (1988) p.189

*power in the critical, not the doctrinal sense; it is the kind of "knowledge" that is gained through disillusionment. This knowledge teaches no fixed positive truth, but purifies the individual of decadent images and false metaphysical consolations, preparing him (or her) for the final self-overcoming assent of amor fati. In Spinoza, the immediate affective tone of knowledge is joy, the sensation of the enhanced power of life; Nietzsche, on the contrary, incessantly stresses the painful nature of knowledge and measures the power (and worth) of a person by "how much truth he can bear." Knowledge, in the sense of disillusionment or critical enlightenment, is a source of suffering and a temptation to despair - which the Nietzschean man will overcome and transform into Dionysian joy.*¹⁹⁵

As we can see here is Nietzsche's idea of gaining knowledge connected to the suffering that you must endure in order to overcome disillusionment and find joy in knowledge. The painful burden of knowledge consists in encountering the world as it is: as ever-changing. Nietzsche's claim is that any true "seeker of wisdom" must reject the common understanding of the world as something permanent. This is to say that knowledge must take the form of disillusionment and overcoming of the common state of mind. This is very different from Spinoza, who believes that knowledge is nothing more than modes discovering, by way of divine reasoning, eternal knowledge.

5.3.3 The fundamental nature of the world

The only way to conceive of an ethical theory in an immanent world is to focus on self-overcoming; this is because the ethics of an immanent world cannot be based on *extra-natural powers, norms, categories, transcendental precepts, and other similar candidates to usurp the role of the transcendent God*¹⁹⁶. The only standard there can be for judging any human is the human itself, accordingly, "being good" can only mean "to be better than you have been before". Yovel believes that both Nietzsche and Spinoza succeed in developing such an ethical theory suitable for an immanent world:

Ethical achievements must have nature as their sole source, substrate and principle. As strict naturalism goes hand in hand in both Nietzsche and Spinoza with a powerful ethical project, the latter must be construed as an ethics of self-overcoming, whereby the immanent natural principle (conatus in Spinoza, will to power in Nietzsche) shapes

¹⁹⁵ Yovel (1988) p.185

¹⁹⁶ Yovel (1988) p.189

*itself into something higher than its raw givenness, producing a value that does not conflict with nature or transcend it toward some supra-natural norm, but resides in the new organization and quality of the same natural principle and the mode of life to which it gives birth.*¹⁹⁷

Yovel is saying here that both Nietzsche's and Spinoza's ethics are grounded on their strict naturalism. Both philosophers believe that before you can understand how man can better himself, you need to understand the workings of the universe. The two philosophers agree that there is only one principle that guides everything that exists; the will to power according to Nietzsche and conatus according to Spinoza. Yovel calls these principles the *natural principles* of their *strictly natural monism*. By 'strictly natural monism' Yovel means that both philosophers believe that the immanent world must contain in itself the force to exist: there must be an underlying principle that causes the world to exist (the will to power and conatus).

This is not to say that conatus and the will to power are the same. While they hold a similar position for both philosophers, the two concepts differ from each other in how they cause beings to act. While Nietzsche believes that life itself is the attempt of immanent entities to go beyond their own boundaries, Spinoza on the other hand believes that the nature of everything must be to persist in their own being.

Yovel also notes another similarity between conatus and the will to power in that their effects are not limited to human nature. Yovel writes that it is the *uniformism* of these principles that leads Nietzsche and Spinoza to also apply them to physical entities. Spinoza's conatus causes physical entities to stay in one position and resist when being forced to move from that position (we call this inertia). Nietzsche's will to power on the other hand causes forces to work in order to spread its influence.

5.3.4 Amor fati and Amor Intellectualis Dei

Amor fati, Latin for "love of fate", is the central tenet of Nietzsche's ethical theory, that is to say it is his normative suggestion for the betterment of humans. Love of fate entails a strictly positive outlook on life, meaning that you must understand life as nothing more than an opportunity to act and to struggle. It is not enough to survive and merely tolerate the situation that you are in; you must love the necessity of your fate and not wish for any other fate. To be a great person you must love *being* in itself, and as a result of your love of being you will love

¹⁹⁷ Yovel (1988) p.189-190

any situation you are in¹⁹⁸. To love fate means to understand that the necessity of any given event is beautiful, and being such a lover of fate enables you to create beautiful things.

This means that amor fati is normative without including any moral value judgments. Nietzsche presents a way for humans to achieve “greatness” without the idea of an action being good or bad. His ethical theory only demands that you love existence, regardless of whether you find yourself in good or bad fortune, in fact quite the opposite: Nietzsche's ethical theory of amor fati actually demands of the active denial of values. A value-less moral principle such as amor fati is the only possible moral tenet that makes sense in a meaningless world.

Amor fati and amor intellectualis dei are similar in certain respects: both concepts are normative and point towards the embracing of necessity as the way of bettering oneself. But Nietzsche rejects amor intellectualis dei because it lacks passion. This is in contrast to Nietzsche's own amor fati, which includes *loving immediacy* – the necessity of every moment should inspire a love for it. Spinoza's amor intellectualis dei is conversely to be purely rational, free of affection.

In Gay Science 372 we see that Nietzsche specifically mentions Spinoza (and specifically his concept of amor intellectualis dei) as an example of an idealists turning away from *the music of life*, because he feared that it would *melt down* his *philosopher's virtues*. It seems that amor intellectualis dei is a theorem that is especially well suited for Nietzsche's critique of idealists because it refers to an intellectual love of God. For Nietzsche this love represents a flawed understanding of love, which – in Nietzsche's view – is nothing more than a passionate feeling¹⁹⁹.

Amor intellectualis dei and amor fati differ from each other because Nietzsche and Spinoza understand necessity in different ways. While Nietzsche envisions the world as ever-changing, Spinoza envisions it as the necessary conclusion of existence itself: this difference in their world view induces them to envision necessity differently.

For Nietzsche the only thing that is necessary is change, so the object of love is the moment. Spinoza, by contrast, understands everything that happens as a necessity of God, and that it

¹⁹⁸ My formula for greatness in human being is amor fati: that one wants nothing to be other than it is (...) Not merely to endure that which happens of necessity, still less to dissemble it Ecco homo; Why I am so Cleaver 10

¹⁹⁹ what was left of Spinoza, amor intellectualis dei, is mere clatter and no more than that: What is amor, what is deus, if there is not one drop of blood in them The Gay Science, Book V, aphorism 372

cannot happen any other way. Nietzsche sees Spinoza's object of love as something eternal that is outside the world – something metaphysical.

But it is in fact not so evident that the idea of amor fati does have fewer metaphysical implications than the idea of amor intellectualis dei. You could argue that Nietzsche failed in his attempt to develop a version of Spinoza's amor intellectualis dei that is free from metaphysics; and that Nietzsche is not as different from Spinoza as he claims to be.

5.3.5 The immanent world

Yovel believes that amor fati and amor intellectualis dei share some traits: both are normative ethical theories regarding human life in an immanent world²⁰⁰, (because of this none of them poses any normative values²⁰¹). This naturalistic approach towards a subject that is usually based on transcendent norms sets Nietzsche's and Spinoza's ethics apart from most other ethical theories.

The ethics advocated by the two of them is meant to not restraint life (in contrast to asceticism, which limits the expression of life), but rather to enhance and re-shape life; accordingly, their ethics are not supposed to aim for a super-natural goal but rather to foster life and to help people finding meaning in life itself without referring to something outside of it. To investigate their ethical theories, we must first look at how Nietzsche and Spinoza understand the immanent world and then look at how they construe their respective ethical theories for this world.

Both Nietzsche and Spinoza agree that the idea of a transcendent God has no place in the immanent world; the world cannot provide man any consoling semblance of his own image. The world cannot be understood in these terms – it must be understood as immanent. This means that humans also must be understood in this manner, and it is through this perspective that Nietzsche and Spinoza discover the horrible truth that we are neither inherently morally good nor evil, we just *are*.

This is to say that humans are not special; for Spinoza we are like any other modes of substance and for Nietzsche a human being is just another power structure. We are *fully immanent beings* who are inescapably bound to and constrained by the immanent universe.

²⁰⁰ Nietzsche and Spinoza offer two rival options within the same radical conception, that of total immanence. Yovel (1988) p.185

²⁰¹ As life has no source of meaning beyond itself, it must be endowed with meaning on the basis of its instantaneous character Yovel (1988) p.196

The fact that we are limited by the immanent universe *is* the necessity in which both Nietzsche and Spinoza believe, and because of this the only way humans can “grow”, become more, is to *assent to the full intensity of life (...) within the boundaries of immanence*²⁰².

While they do agree that the universe is immanent, Nietzsche and Spinoza disagree regarding the nature of immanence. Spinoza understands the necessity of life in an immanent world in terms of *a system of self-justifying laws*, while Nietzsche interprets necessity as an *opaque and indeterminate fatum which nothing can justify* [and which cannot be captured] *by rational categories, causes, or laws*²⁰³. This difference leads Nietzsche to criticize Spinoza for what he sees as Spinoza’s inconsistent attitude towards anthropomorphism. To understand Nietzsche’s critique, we must look at how Spinoza understands reason.

Spinoza’s fundamental belief is that reason is an innate quality of the world; this causes the world to be intelligibly organized because there is only one single system of reason according to which everything is organized. Humans use this system in order to understand the world. This means that as far as humans have reason, the only reason they have access to is the universal reason.

This belief in a universal reason is what Nietzsche criticizes Spinoza for. Nietzsche claims that the universe is without reason or permanent universal laws – such beliefs are nothing but shelters against the true nature of the world: ever-changing chaos. This means that mechanical causality must be taken to be just *another form of anthropomorphism*²⁰⁴. Readers of Spinoza may find this critique from Nietzsche surprising because Spinoza rejects precisely this idea (we can find this rejection in Spinoza’s appendix to part one of his *Ethics*). Nietzsche still holds that Spinoza’s beliefs in *the inherent rationality and timelessness of God* is a projection of human-like qualities onto an ever-changing world²⁰⁵.

Because of Nietzsche’s and Spinoza’s differing views on immanence their respective concepts of amor fati and amor intellectualis dei are also different. In Spinoza’s inherent rational world

²⁰² Yovel (1988) p.186

²⁰³ Yovel (1988) p.186

²⁰⁴ Yovel (1988) p.196

²⁰⁵ *Nietzsche's attitude may be construed as a more radical Spinozism. Spinoza, Nietzsche maintains, did not carry his battle against anthropomorphism far enough. He denied the Hegelian idea of a subject-like universe and insisted that man confront reality as the non-humanized being it is. But in maintaining the law-like and eternal organization of the universe Spinoza went on projecting a human-like and human-made form upon a world that inherently lacks any permanence. This, to Nietzsche, puts Spinoza back into the camp of Hegel, their classic dispute notwithstanding.* Yovel (1988) p.187

*amor dei expresses a harmonious agreement with the universe*²⁰⁶, while in Nietzsche's world of flux *amor fati involves an inner rupture and distance, bridged by an act of defying affirmation*²⁰⁷. It is because of this difference that the two forms of amor are achieved in different ways: *amor intellectualis dei* is achieved by inferring logically, aiming at understanding the order of the universe, while *amor fati* is an act of defiance, aiming at loving the flux of the world. *Amor intellectualis dei* is an intellectual process, while *amor fati* involves the entire being of the person²⁰⁸. Yovel also points out that *amor intellectualis dei* is a link between a person and God while *amor fati* upholds the distance between the world and the person.

5.3.6 Nietzsche's problem with Spinoza

There are multiple aphorisms in which Nietzsche is critical of Spinoza (for example: BEG 5, BEG 25, GS 349, GS 372 and GS 439), Yovel explains this animosity towards Spinoza by showing that Spinoza was a genealogical scandal for Nietzsche. This scandal consisted of Nietzsche's conflicting views of Spinoza; he conceived of him as a progenitor, a predecessor of his own philosophy. But while Nietzsche saw strong similarities between himself and Spinoza, both personally and philosophically, Spinoza also represented what Nietzsche thought of as the worst kind of anthropocentric delusion. Yovel claims that Nietzsche sees Spinoza as a *petty "slave" moralist*²⁰⁹.

Spinoza's philosophy is very close to Nietzsche's, and at the same time Spinoza represent what Nietzsche fought against, and so Nietzsche dealt with it by attacking his brother.

²⁰⁶ Yovel (1988) p.200

²⁰⁷ Yovel (1988) p.200

²⁰⁸ *In Nietzsche, necessity cannot be explicated in terms of cause and effect, let alone of logical links; it is an opaque necessity - the resistance and flux of disidentical things within an inexplicable world of immanence from which there is no escape; and accepting it in amor fati is not an act of the intellect but involves the person's whole life and will to power and includes an act of defiance.* Yovel (1988) p.201

²⁰⁹ Yovel (1988) p.203

6 Conclusion

I have tried to show in which ways Nietzsche and Spinoza based their understanding of human beings and their potentials on naturalistic ontologies. Nietzsche's and Spinoza's shared naturalistic outlook is the reason why they both pursue the same goal: to understand ontology, psychology and ethics as immanent phenomena. This shared outlook makes Nietzsche's and Spinoza's world views similar in certain respects. They both rejected a materialistic understanding of the world and instead developed their own monistic and panpsychist accounts; they both agree that there is one *substantia* and that everything works according to one principle (the will to power and conatus).

Nietzsche and Spinoza also had similar philosophical aspirations. Both emulated Socrates in that they wanted to "disturb" people and evict them from their comfortable beliefs. They wanted to show that reality resists simple answers and that everything should be viewed as complex. By seeing the world as complex, subjects that appeared to be intimately known to us before become profoundly alien. We lose the feeling of security that 'knowing' gives us. Because this kind of undermining of the pervasive understanding of the time might be seen as an attack on society itself, both Spinoza and Nietzsche were persecuted for their *dark enlightenment*.

6.1 Nietzsche

Nietzsche was convinced that the world does not offer humans any shelter from that which he conceived of as a metaphysical wasteland; any such relief you may find is only an effect of the will to power. Nietzsche uses Boscovich's atomic theory as the basis for his own ontological theory.

Boscovich claims that the force particles the universe consists of must be regarded as the homogeneous, perfectly simple, unextended, indivisible primary element of matter. Nietzsche develops Boscovich's pan dynamism in to his own panpsychism. Seen through this perspective the world is nothing but wild savagery, devoid of any humanity, but rather driven by a truly superhuman force of nature. The power quantum does not follow any other commands than those of power; they exert their force completely all the time. The only thing that matters is the power quanta's resistance and its superior strength.

The world understood as a plurality of wills to power involves the idea of an ever changing interplay of wills. Not only does Nietzsche see the ever changing world as unable to offer the

individual any stability, the individual is not constant. You yourself consist of wills and exist according to the same principle of the will to power. Cognition is a tool whose function is to gain greater power, rather than to make sense of the world.

We are left with a view of the world that resists our attempts to categorize it and express it as eternal laws. As humans we cannot hope to relate to the “real world” in an objective way. The closest we can come and the utmost we can do is to entertain multiple perspectives on the world instead of confining ourselves to only one allegedly ‘true’ perspective.

6.2 Spinoza

In the spirit of the enlightenment Spinoza employs the fundamental idea of the Principle of Sufficient Reason in order to show that everything in the world works according to strict rules, even God himself. For Spinoza Nature and God are the same: the substance underlying all things. God is eternal, infinite and self-caused. All of existence comes from God, and because of him everything exists by necessity.

Spinoza rejects the religious understanding of God and presents his own idea of God as derived from reason. There cannot exist any reason that is different from the reason we have access to. This means that everything, even God and human behavior, can be fully and completely explicated according to laws. Our actions can therefore not be contingent on any transcendent qualities, and must therefore follow from the organization of our immanent body. From this we must infer that there is nothing special about humans, we are just another element within the universe: everything we do is nothing more than the effects of our being.

Spinoza's God does not set any normative rules, but still it is possible to act against him. If reason is of a divine nature, then dogma and blind faith is the closest you will come to sinning against Spinoza's God. In order to act “from” God you need to act from your own nature and not be influenced by outside forces.

Spinoza's understanding of man is highly significant seen from a historical point of view, specifically in regards to psychology. Spinoza claimed that reason is the nature of the human mind and only ideas that do not follow the strict laws of reason would cause a mind to be anything else than productive and reasonable. This means that a person with a troubled mind can be cured of his mental afflictions if he gets a better understanding of how affects influence his mind. In this way you could argue that Spinoza gave an outline for psychoanalysis over 150 years before Sigmund Freud was born.

6.3 Nietzsche and Spinoza

Let us see what we can learn from Whitlock's, Schacht's and Yovel's articles. From Whitlock's article we learn that Nietzsche was inspired by Boscovich with regards to his concept of force and that this inspiration led Nietzsche to develop his theory of the will to power. Furthermore we learned that Nietzsche's and Spinoza's ontological theories address the similar topics but draw differing conclusions.

From Schacht's article we learn that Nietzsche's and Spinoza's interest in similar topics stems from their shared naturalistic outlook. Not only do they both derive their ontologies from a naturalistic understanding of the universe, they also elaborate their respective psychological and ethical theories from this shared outlook. Schacht has a closer look at Nietzsche's and Spinoza's fundamental understanding of the universe and finds that even though they both interpret the world in the same way they read completely different things out of it. While Spinoza sees the world as being based on perpetual change, Spinoza sees it as based on eternal laws.

Yovel claims that the similarities and differences in Nietzsche's and Spinoza's normative ethical principles, *amor fati* and *amor intellectualis dei*, are a good representation of the relationship between the two philosophers. *Amor fati* and *amor intellectualis dei* are both immanent ethical theories. In contrast to transcendent ethical theories (which Nietzsche and Spinoza condemn as anthropocentric) they do not set any standard for good and evil. The two conceptions posit no super-natural goals, but rather focus on enhancing life within an immanent world. To accomplish this, humans must embrace necessity; but it is Nietzsche's and Spinoza's differing understanding of necessity that distinguishes *amor fati* from *amor intellectualis dei*.

Amor intellectualis dei is based on the intellect, meaning that to achieve it you'll have to understand how everything is derived from God. *Amor fati*, on the other hand, is a love of change. This difference arises because Nietzsche and Spinoza understand the fundamental character of the world in very different ways: for Nietzsche the world is in perpetual change while for Spinoza it is defined by eternal laws. Finally Yovel explains that the reason why there is so much critique of Spinoza in Nietzsche's published work is to be found in the fact that Spinoza is a precursor for Nietzsche, but at the same time he represents a philosophy that Nietzsche sets out to disprove.

6.4 The complex relationship between Nietzsche and Spinoza

Nietzsche's and Spinoza's ethical theories both advocate relating to the world in a more complex way than is strictly necessary for survival because a complex understanding of the world is a good in itself. I cannot imagine philosophy without advocating such complexity. I believe therefore that amor fati and amor intellectualis dei can be seen as arguments that speak in favor of a philosophical understanding of the world.

When comparing Nietzsche and Spinoza, I have not discovered what exactly Nietzsche thought about Spinoza; I do not even think Nietzsche's thoughts and feelings towards Spinoza are philosophically relevant. What is relevant, however, is that we can gain a greater understanding of Nietzsche's and Spinoza's contribution to philosophy by understanding their relationship in greater detail and complexity.

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