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SPINOZA'S ETHICS

A COLLECTIVE COMMENTARY

Edited by

MICHAEL HAMPE, URSULA RENZ
& ROBERT SCHNEPF

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

English citations of Spinoza's *Ethics* are taken from Edwin Curley's edition and translation (cf. the bibliography). Their location within the *Ethics* is indicated using the following standard scheme: The first number refers to the part (1 to 5) of the *Ethics*, the subsequent letters specify the kind of sentence according to the list of abbreviations below, and the last number counts the sentences of that kind within a part of the *Ethics*.

a	axioma
app	appendix
c	corollarium
d	definitio
dem	demonstratio
exp	explanatio
lem	lemma
p	propositio
post	postulatum
praef	praefatio
s	scholium

So, e.g., 2p13 lem7s refers to the scholium of lemma 7 after proposition 13 of the second part of the *Ethics*. Rarely some more sophisticated abbreviations will appear like 3AD1exp. This refers to the explication of the first of the "Definitions of the Affects" at the end of Part 3 of the *Ethics*.

Other works of Spinoza are cited by using

CM	Cogitata Metaphysica
Ep.	Letters (epistulae)
ST	Short Treatise
TIE	Tractatus de intellectus emendatione
TP	Tractatus politicus (e.g. TP 2/6 = Chapter 2, Paragraph 6)
TPP	Tractatus theologico-politicus (e.g. TPP 5 = Chapter 5; TTP: 438 = Page 438; TPP 5: 438 = Chapter 5, Page 438)

G 1, G 2, G 3, G 4 refer to the volumes ot the Latin edition (*Spinoza opera*) by Carl Gebhardt.

Other abbreviations:

AT Descartes: *Œuvres*, in the edition by Ch. Adams and P. Tannery
PPC Principia Philosophiae Cartesianae

PREFACE

This volume is an enlarged version of the collective commentary on Spinoza's *Ethics* which appeared in German in the series *Klassiker Auslegen* in 2006. It seeks to provide a commentary on all parts of the *Ethics*, while at the same time offering an insight into the way scholars from different philosophical traditions discuss Spinoza. Many of the German-speaking contributors are here presented to an English speaking audience for the first time. Due to historical circumstances, particularly following the Nazi era, Spinoza was a neglected philosopher in Germany. In comparison with other countries, such as France, the Anglo-saxon world and the Netherlands, Spinoza was not paid the attention his work deserved. It is one of the merits of the Spinoza Gesellschaft that, in the last two decades, this situation has slowly begun to change. As many of the essays contained in this collection show, there are now several discussions going on about many aspects of Spinoza's thought, ranging from metaphysics to ethics and social philosophy. In contrast to the German edition of this volume, where we had only a restricted amount of space, this English edition also includes new essays about the context of Spinoza's *Ethics* and its reception.

We are indebted to many people and institutions. The translation and reprint of this commentary are supported by both the ETH Zürich, and the Spinoza Gesellschaft. The translations of the German texts were done by Ursula Fröse and Alan Duncan. Debbie Bregenzer has double-checked them. We are particularly grateful to Timon Boehm who carefully edited the texts and prepared the manuscript with all the subtlety that this requires.

INTRODUCTION: SPINOZA'S *ETHICA ORDINE GEOMETRICO DEMONSTRATA*

Michael Hampe, Ursula Renz, Robert Schnepf

1. Aim and Systematic Intention

Spinoza's *Ethics* is one of the most ambitious projects ever undertaken by a philosopher. It addresses every area of philosophical inquiry, at least in its basic elements: ontology, philosophy of mind, physics, epistemology, the study of emotions, social philosophy, political philosophy, meta-ethics, moral philosophy and, finally, the consideration of 'final things' such as freedom, happiness and eternity. The affirmations Spinoza makes are meant to be categorically true. All are meant to be interlinked and presented in a fully transparent proof structure. In this book, practical wisdom and scientific rationality are not set out as two conflicting traditions. Scientific knowledge is presented as the rational foundation for a happy life. Relevant science is distinguished from irrelevant science according to how well it answers the question of what constitutes a happy life. Spinoza himself was quite aware of the boldness of his claims. When Albert Burgh, a former student (who later converted to Catholicism), asked him how he knew that his philosophy was the best one, Spinoza answered: "I do not presume that I have found the best philosophy. I know that I understand the true philosophy."[1]

The crucial question, however, is: how, exactly, are practical wisdom and science related in the *Ethics*? Five points are important to note in this regard:

1) *Ontological presupposition instead of deontological foundation.* Spinoza's *Ethics* does not propose a deontological ethics which answers the question 'What should I do?' without regard for the human psycho-physical constitution. It explains how a happy and self-determined life can be lived on the basis of the structures and

[1] Ep. 76; G 4: 319f.

laws of nature and human existence. Spinoza's *Ethics* is a theory of nature and of human existence, within which he develops a theory about what is good for human beings.

2) *Naturalism*. Spinoza defends a naturalism that denies all being which is supposed to transcend nature in any way. So, not only the anthropological resources of moral action but also the goods for which it strives are understood to be natural. The ethics envisaged by Spinoza exclude any kind of *bonum morale*. Instead, it proceeds on the premise that it is always a *bonum naturale* which—more or less reliably—makes us happy and free. It does, however, make a distinction between goods which tend to last and others which tend to lead to merely fleeting happiness.
3) *Universality*. In spite of the rejection of a genuine moral good, Spinoza believes that general statements about what can make us happy and free are possible. The *Ethics* is built upon premises of natural philosophy and anthropology: although people live under different conditions, therefore developing quite different needs and ideas about which things are good, they are nevertheless all subject to the same natural laws. In principle, therefore, the same things are beneficial or detrimental to us all. The fourth part of the *Ethics* consequently makes quite general statements about what is good and bad. Hate, for instance, is always bad (4p45); cheerfulness, on the other hand, always good (4p42).
4) *Epistemological anti-scepticism*. General statements about what is beneficial or detrimental to persons and their self-determination are possible only if people themselves can have knowledge of nature, including human nature. Spinoza's *Ethics* therefore also rests on the epistemological presupposition that people can gain insights into the ontological and natural constitution of their own species. Consequently, the *Ethics* rejects epistemological relativism and scepticism.
5) *Necessity and Systematicity*. Spinoza assumes that the insights of different philosophical disciplines are *necessarily and systematically* connected. This does not imply that everything is deducible from the definitions of the *Ethics'* first part. Spinoza does, however, consider the connections between some insights to be so binding that he is confident we will share his ethical and meta-ethical conclusions as soon as we have acquired an understanding of nature, man and man's capacity for the truth.

Spinoza does not present all of this in the usual prose. Instead, his book is modelled on Euclid's *Elements*. Hence the subtitle, "*ordine geometrico demonstrata*". As is the case in a geometrical treatise, Spinoza distinguishes between definitions, axioms, postulates, propositions and proofs. The proofs of the propositions refer back to presupposed definitions and axioms—and sometimes to preceding propositions. Every new proposition is in a certain sense also the beginning of a new line of thought. This means that the flow of the reading is constantly being interrupted. A reader who really wants to get a clear picture of what is presupposed by a passage is forced time and again to turn back the pages. Only if propositions are integrated by the reader into the preceding insights can the intended increase in knowledge take place. But, as difficult as such a text may be to read, for someone who really flips the pages back and forth it acquires a transparency that a 'normal continuous text' could never equal. Thus Spinoza forces his readers to actually make the connections between the insights of the different philosophical disciplines mentioned above.

2. Background, Conception and Publication

The posthumous publication of the *Ethics* in February 1678 caused a public scandal in Europe. This was not entirely unforeseen. Spinoza's first published work, *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy* (1663), provoked a long correspondence about the nature of evil with the wheat merchant Willem van Blyenbergh, who was deeply concerned about the religious foundations of morality. Independently of this, Spinoza had been considered a Cartesian atheist by certain theologians since the early 1660s.[2] And by the time of the publication of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* it had become obvious that Spinoza acknowledged neither a divine transcendence nor a theology of creation. Later, in the *Ethics*, Spinoza expressed this succinctly with the phrase "deus sive natura" (1p15s). He may very well have been encouraged in this regard by Franciscus van den Enden.[3] This Amsterdam physician headed a Latin school, and had gathered a philosophical discussion

[2] Lagrée/Moreau (1999: 5).
[3] Klever (1989: 318f.); Klever (1996: 18).

group around himself. Spinoza visited the school[4] and frequented the discussion group.[5] It is possible that what today is sometimes celebrated as Spinoza's naturalism might, at the time when these thoughts were being conceived, have only been understood as atheism.[6]

With the publication of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* in 1670, Spinoza became an internationally known author surrounded by scandal. Refutations were published. Leibniz read the *Tractatus* as soon as it appeared and made ambivalent notes in the margins of his copy.[7] Out of precaution, Spinoza published the book under a pseudonym and gave false information about the publisher. In it, he not only developed a critical biblical hermeneutics, which contested the right of theologians to make scientific statements about nature and man on the basis of revelation, but also proposed a political theory, the primary goal of which was to defend the *libertas philosophandi*. Although his authorship became known shortly after the book's publication, Spinoza was not persecuted in the liberal Netherlands. Nonetheless, thereafter the church authorities observed him carefully. Soon he had the reputation of being the most systematic and dangerous atheist in all of Europe and of endangering the foundations of morals and the State.[8]

Given this background, it is hardly surprising that Spinoza refrained from publishing the *Ethics* when he completed it in 1675. Two years previously, he had rejected the offer of an Ordinary Professorship in Heidelberg. The agents of the State sovereign had assured Spinoza that he would have absolute freedom to philosophise, but also that the sovereign trusted that he would not misuse this freedom to disturb the publicly recognized religion.[9] Spinoza preferred the peace of a solitary and private life to this offer of a public teaching position[10] following the motto which appeared on his seal, which was later added to the beginning of his posthumously published works: "caution" ("*caute*"). With the same circumspection, Spinoza saw to it that the manuscript of the *Ethics* was not passed on to persons he did not know well or did not trust. Included among the latter was the young Leibniz, who visited Spinoza in 1676 in Den Haag. Although Leibniz had knowledge

[4] Bartuschat (1988: 896).
[5] Nadler (1999: 103ff.).
[6] Cf. the early reception of Spinoza in Germany: Schröder (1987) and Otto (1994).
[7] Goldenbaum (1999: 61ff.); Goldenbaum (2001: 8f.).
[8] Cf. also Israel (2001: 285ff.).
[9] Ep. 47; G 4: 235.
[10] Ep. 48; G 4: 236.

of Spinoza's basic concepts and propositions at that time, he did not have the opportunity to study the *Ethics* until it appeared in February 1678 as part of the *Opera posthuma*, which he immediately procured.

The publication and the distribution of the *Ethics* was one of the most exciting and consequential events in the history of early Enlightenment publications. When Spinoza died in February 1677, both the Reformed authorities in The Hague and Amsterdam and the Catholic clergy in Rome were aware of its existence. In spite of this, several close friends of Spinoza decided to publish his various unpublished works together and, intriguingly, in Latin and Dutch simultaneously. In addition to the *Ethics*, these works include the *Tractatus logico-politicus*, in which Spinoza argued for democracy as the fundamentally superior form of government, the *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione* and the *Compendium Grammatices Linguae Hebraeae*. As Israel[11] has pointed out, this was a distinctively brazen and fearless approach, given that the works had to be translated, prepared for publication, distributed in total secrecy and all this in a race against time.

It was Spinoza's circle of friends who guaranteed the spread of the *Ethics* after his death. To what extent additions were made in the process of this distribution is one of the questions which the critical interpretation of Spinoza's writings addresses.[12]

3. Positions

The *Ethics* comprises five parts, entitled: *Of God*, *Of the Nature and Origin of the Mind*, *Of the Origin and Nature of the Affects*, *Of Human Bondage*, or *of the Powers of the Affects* and *Of the Power of the Intellect*, or *of Human Freedom*. The order of these five parts reflects the fact that the theory of God—also a theory of being[13]—forms the basis for all that follows. Particularly significant is the fact that the theory of the human mind follows the ontology, and not the other way around. Spinoza's philosophy is not based on a theory of subjectivity. The central role played by the theory of affects in the overall concept of the *Ethics* is also clearly evident from these titles. It is developed from ontological and epistemological claims, and in turn forms the basis for

[11] Israel (2001: 288).
[12] Steenbakkers (1994).
[13] Schnepf (1996: 103).

his moral philosophy, his social philosophy and his theory of human freedom. This, in turn, reveals an insight into how emotions determine our actions and our convictions, furthermore, it constitutes a starting point for the demonstration that, under certain conditions, freedom is possible. Spinoza does not oppose human freedom to nature. Free persons, too, are a part of nature.

In order to secure the foundation for this line of reasoning, Spinoza begins the first part of the *Ethics* with a refined argument for the uniqueness of substance, which he calls "God" or "Nature". "Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God." (1p15) This argument excludes all transcendence. It leaves no room for the conception of God as a creator who is not part of the world. Put positively: God is the immanent cause of the world and of things. Furthermore, it implies an amendment of the Aristotelian idea that we and the things we encounter in everyday life are substances, and of the Cartesian dualism of substance, according to which body and soul are substantially different things. The two different kinds of substance are replaced by the distinction between different attributes of God, two of which are named: extension and thinking. All individual things are considered to be modifications of these attributes. Thereby the Aristotelian substances become mere modes, i.e. things that by definition are dependent on others. Using this monism of substance as a starting point, Spinoza goes on to try to show that all things, including persons, are determined in their being and their action. Neither do they have a free will, nor can they act with absolute spontaneity.

In the first propositions of the second part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza derives a further important conclusion from his ontology. Referring back to his theory of attributes, he shows that mind and body are two aspects of the same thing. On the basis of a number of axioms, taken for the most part from his discussion with Descartes, he furthermore develops a conception of human subjectivity according to which man is a dependent being subject to empirical influences, even in his thinking. This has consequences for human self-knowledge, which, according to Spinoza, is fundamentally inadequate. The second part of the *Ethics* is interrupted by a digression which more or less repeats the Cartesian physics in a generalized form. It serves as a basis for the development of a conception of physical individuality, according to which individuals are not indivisible quantities, for instance, but rather units of motion. Geometrically complex, they nevertheless function as a dynamic unity. Spinoza thus provides a physical explanation for what

it means that individual things are to be understood as modes and not as substances. The individuality of man is essentially dependent upon the individuality of his body and his awareness of the same.

Having developed this concept of individuality, Spinoza introduces the concept of *conatus* in the third part of the *Ethics*: every individual thing tends or strives to preserve its being. Whatever furthers self-preservation leads to 'positive' affects, whatever hinders it, to 'negative' ones. Grief or joy are therefore our primary means of access to the changing states of our own bodies in the successive situations in which we find ourselves. On this basis, Spinoza develops one of the most refined theories of the human affects in the history of philosophy. Using the geometrical method, he reconstructs how individual emotions arise in various constellations. If we endeavour to learn about our emotions by this method, we distance ourselves from their immediate impact and become able to deal with them actively. In some cases, however, this requires the imaginative use of counter-emotions or the visualisation of how they were caused. We can overcome hatred if we imagine that the other person was acting out of a tendency for self-preservation and not in order to harm us. If we furthermore think of the object of our hatred as a benefactor, the hate disappears (3p43dem). Spinoza explains the inter-subjectivity of emotions with his theory of *imitatio affectuus*: if one imagines a body similar to oneself to be affected in a certain way, one feels a similar emotion (3p27). Although Spinoza treats emotions according to the geometrical method as natural things, the cultural and historical plasticity of human emotionality does not escape him. The insight, that "[d]ifferent men can be affected differently by one and the same object" (3p51), allows him to take the changing social context of emotional life seriously. So, unlike contemporary neuroscience, Spinoza avoids a naturalistic reductionism. At the same time, he gains a foundation for his philosophical critique of cultural prejudices.

The *Ethics* culminates in the presentation of a conception of human freedom. It is set off against a preceding analysis of human servitude, in which Spinoza explains the destructive and pathological mechanisms of certain emotions. Freedom, for Spinoza, is above all *freedom from*: from the emotional states and dependencies that prevent individuals from becoming active in the world according to their individual natures. Some of Spinoza's ideas seem to hint at lines of thought that one encounters later in the psychoanalytical therapy of neurotic compulsions. His thoughts concerning the therapy of individuals

include elements of social and political theory. People who have freed themselves from emotional cultural prejudices and neurotic compulsions are in a position to form and maintain more reasonable communities. Perhaps one could say that Spinoza anticipated certain social and psychological conceptions of the so-called 'Frankfurt School', in particular the idea of an "authoritarian character".[14] According to the latter, religious fanaticism and the hateful exclusion of persons with different political opinions are only possible where the majority of a society's members have not yet succeeded in freeing themselves from tormenting emotional structures. Be that as it may, Spinoza's defence of the freedom of thought and opinion in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* is grounded in these ideas of the *Ethics*.

Freedom and happiness are not facts pertaining to an original state of autonomy or a transcendental netherworld. They cannot be received as grace, but must rather be earned individually and socially—in the context of individuals' emotional lives and of the social relations within communities. They are cognitive processes, in which one learns how to modify one's own situation and one's own emotional experience. This process is accompanied by feelings of pleasure arising from one's own ability to act. The fruits of this labour are experienced as happiness, most emphatically as the intellectual love of God or of Nature. Spinoza thereby succeeds in addressing human spiritual needs in a rational theory of wisdom, at the same time opening up realistic prospects for their satisfaction. These needs were expressed by contemporary theologians in, at best, a distorted manner, seldom accompanied by indications about a viable way to satisfy them. In a theory of immanence, happiness and freedom are the result of the efforts made in the course of everyday life.

4. Reception

As everyone knows, there is a thin line between frustration and fascination—a truth that can generally be confirmed by readers of Spinoza's *Ethics*. Not only the individual propositions and arguments but also the structure, the composition and even the outer appearance of the text are far removed from the familiar, even for those acquainted with

[14] Cf. Adorno (1973); Adorno/Horkheimer (1971).

other philosophical texts and the history of philosophy. Due to this potential for frustration as well as for fascination that characterizes Spinoza's writings, their author became a constant point of reference for intellectual disputes and waves of philosophical enthusiasm in the 18th and 19th centuries. 'Spinozism' developed into a kind of 'intellectual phantom' that came to haunt the most diverse debates and figured in the background of many philosophical and literary projects.

The negative influence exerted on the reception of Spinoza's thought by the accusation of atheism, levelled against the philosopher by Pierre Bayle in his article in the *Dictionnaire historique et critique*,[15] lasted until decades after his death. Subsequently, the so-called 'Spinoza dispute' ensued in 1786. In a discussion with Moses Mendelssohn, Johann Heinrich Jacobi reported that Lessing, during a conversation about Goethe's poem *Prometheus*, had "testified" to his adherence to "Spinozism".[16] In the aftermath of this discussion, Jacobi caused a stir with his interpretation of Spinoza's philosophy as the one and only logically consistent system, the consequences of which were avoidable only by a "salto mortale" into the Christian faith.[17] The discussion with Mendelssohn, and Jacobi's book, triggered a wide reception of the *Ethics*, which peaked in an almost religious enthusiasm for nature in the case of Goethe, and in discussions about Spinoza among Goethe, Schiller, Herder and Wieland. Fichte countered Jacobi's claim that the only alternative to Spinoza's determinism was a *religious* alternative—or one that is critical of reason as such—[18] with his version of the so-called 'Critical Philosophy', which replaced the absolute substance with an absolute ego. Fichte argued that one could be a subject and therefore a full-fledged human being only by understanding oneself first and foremost as free. On the basis of this idea, the debate about Spinoza influenced the 'German Idealism' of Schelling and Hegel.[19] Hegel's dictum, that "the truth should be understood and expressed, not as substance, but equally well as subject"[20] placed Spinoza in opposition to conceptions that accepted human subjectivity and freedom as irreducible realities to be taken into account by

[15] Bayle (2003: 367–439).
[16] Jacobi (1785: 12ff.).
[17] Jacobi (1998: 20); Timm (1974); Goldenbaum (2001), but see also Sandkaulen (2000).
[18] See Sandkaulen (2000).
[19] Walther (1992); Folkers (1994); Ehrhardt (1994).
[20] Hegel (1986, Werke 3:23).

philosophical thought. In France, in the wake of Althusser, the alternative "Hegel or Spinoza" continues to mark philosophical discussion to the present day.[21]

The authors of Weimar Classicism and German Idealism had promoted Spinoza from a "dead dog" (words put into the mouth of Lessing by Jacobi)[22] to one of the most significant philosophers of all time. In the 19th century, a number of very diverse philosophical initiatives could refer to his work more impartially. Whereas German Idealism had seemed only to know the first and fifth parts of the *Ethics*, these initiatives took the other parts of Spinoza's major work into account as well: the theory of motion and the social philosophy were now also considered worthy of discussion. Not only were the physiological approaches of Gustav Theodor Fechner[23] and Johannes Müller[24] inspired by Spinoza, all the monisms of popular philosophy claimed him as their progenitor. Friedrich Nietzsche, too, with his *amor fati* recognized Spinoza as a "predecessor"[25] who, regrettably, had laden himself with an "armour"—the *mos geometricus*—that hindered the way in which his work was received.[26] In France, the historian of philosophy Victor Cousin and his school stylised Spinozist thought into a philosophical position defined by its opposition to Cartesian thought.[27] Spinoza was accused of having discarded experience, which had initially informed his philosophy, in favour of deduction.[28] Finally, a connection has been made between the thought of Sigmund Freud and Spinoza. Freud himself only saw parallels and no direct influence of Spinoza's theory of emotions on his psychoanalysis. But he did make it clear that "moral value judgements are completely foreign" to the psychoanalytical theory of the emotions in the performance of its task of scientifically examining psychosexual development.[29] Is there not perhaps a deeper connection after all between Spinoza's dictum that insight is liberating and Freud's 'talk therapy', in which insight into repressed desires and fears provides relief from the torments of the soul?

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[21] Althusser (1998: 181ff.) as well as Macherey (1990).
[22] Jacobi (1785: 32f.).
[23] More on this in Heidelberger (1993).
[24] Cf. Hagner (1992).
[25] Letter to Overbeck, 1881, Nietzsche (1955, Vol. 3: 1171).
[26] Nietzsche (1955, Vol. 2, §5: 570).
[27] Moreau (1994b: 227); Moreau (1996: 422f.).
[28] Moreau (1994: 237).
[29] Freud (1999, Vol. 14: 64).

In the 20th century, Spinoza became an important reference in the context of British Hegelianism (F.H. Bradley and J.E.M. McTaggart) and Neo-realism. John Caird wrote an introduction to Spinoza in 1888 and H.H. Joachim wrote a commentary of Spinoza in 1901, taking as his point of departure the epistemology.[30] Here, Spinoza appeared neither as a materialist nor as a naturalist but rather, first and foremost, as a thinker of unity and immanence. In *Space, Time and Deity*, the Neo-realist Samuel Alexander invoked Spinoza as a predecessor of his non-materialist and immanentist cosmology.[31] In these contexts, Spinoza seemed helpful for countering a manner of thinking that threatened to dissolve nature in an idealistic absolute. Outside philosophical circles, Spinoza attracted the attention of physicists. Einstein's rejection of chance in the dispute over quantum mechanics ("God does not play dice") and his conviction that the world can basically be made *geometrically intelligible* (cf. the general theory of relativity) was connected to Spinoza's theory of universal necessity. Like Freud, Einstein saw parallels between his own work and that of Spinoza and expressed his sympathy for the latter, yet could perceive no direct influence on his own works.[32] The fact that Spinoza was a regular point of reference for philosophers of law such as Hermann Heller, Hans Kelsen and Carl Schmitt, who either associated or dissociated themselves from his thought, is only gradually being acknowledged in recent literature.[33] As late as 1947, Carl Schmitt wrote "The most brazen humiliation ever inflicted upon God and mankind, justifying all the curses of the synagogue, is to be found in the 'sive' of the formula Deus sive Natura."[34] The story of the Spinozists among the socialists has also rarely been told.[35] The role that Spinoza played in the formative period of sociology is perhaps still reflected in his reception by Niklas Luhmann, who quotes Spinoza in the motto of his book *The Society of Society*: "Id quod per aliud non potest concipi, per se concipi debet" (1a2).

By the time Carl Gebhardt published the Latin edition—long considered the leading edition—of Spinoza's works in Heidelberg in 1926, Spinoza was already a well-established author among the cultural bourgeois in Germany, for whom his main work had a certain status

[30] Caird (1888) and Joachim (1901).
[31] Alexander (1966: 389) and Alexander (1938: 332–348 and 349–387).
[32] Cf. Paty (1986).
[33] Walther (1994); Lauermann/Heerich (1991) and Senn (1991).
[34] Schmitt (1991: 28).
[35] Cf. Lauermann (1994); Goldenbaum (2003).

as a book of edification. But after 1933, the National Socialists put an end to this reception of Spinoza in Germany, a setback from which it has not recovered to the present day. Spinoza has been the object of standard-setting historical and philological research in the Netherlands and in Italy. But in recent times, systematically ambitious interpretations of Spinoza have been undertaken primarily in France and in the context of Anglo-American analytical philosophy. In France, Spinoza was read from the late 1960s onward as an alternative to the existentialism inspired by Descartes. Important commentaries were written by Martial Gueroult, Alexandre Matheron and Gilles Deleuze. As a result of the writings of Deleuze and Althusser, Spinoza became an author who was constantly referred to by the anti-structuralists. In the analytical philosophy of England and Scandinavia, the detailed proof structure of the *Ethics* was considered exemplary. It inspired authors such as Arne Naess, Jonathan Bennett and Charles Jarrett to reconstruct the line of argument in the *Ethics*, in part—especially in the cases of Naess and Jarrett—by means of logical methods that could not have been known to Spinoza.[36] The treatment of Spinoza in both French and English philosophy has shown phases of differing intensity. Early accounts, such as Stuart Hampshire's *Spinoza* and Edmund Curley's *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, were mere overviews, yet nevertheless influential. These gave way to commentaries by authors such as Gueroult and Bennett. Finally (and, in part, concurrently), Spinoza has been perceived as a systematic discussion partner, who is to be confronted on an equal footing and whose philosophical position for many reasons seems 'revivable', e.g. in the works of Gilles Deleuze.[37] Like Einstein and Freud, Davidson also recognizes Spinoza as a predecessor of his anomalous monism, but insists that he was unaware of the connection while developing his position in the philosophy of mind and the theory of action. "It is amusing", he said in 1993 in an interview with Kathrin Glüer, "to discover that one is of one mind with someone better than oneself."[38]

[36] Naess (1975); Jarrett (1978).

[37] Cf. his book on Spinoza that appeared at the same time as his *Différence et Répétition*; also Strawson (1992: 133–142); Davidson (1982: 212); Davidson (1999); Frankfurt (1999: 42ff. and 95ff.).

[38] Glüer (1993: 162).

5. Relevance

The tracks made by the writings of Spinoza in the history of philosophy are so deep that it is imperative for anyone wanting to understand this history to visit the place where these tracks begin: the *Ethics* itself. "Mais Spinoza", Althusser rightly demands "il faut le lire, et savoir qu'il existe: qu'il existe encore aujourd'hui. Pour le reconnaître, il faut au moins le connaître un peu".[39]

Spinoza's highly original project of linking science and wisdom has played a steadily diminishing role in the history of the way in which his thoughts have been received. In fact, it is usually only after one returns to the text of the *Ethics* itself that one finds oneself asking how philosophy could satisfy not only theoretical but also therapeutic requirements.

This corresponds to the fact that philosophy became a science within the universities and, outside of academic institutions, was reduced to popular edification. In the 19th century, the idea that philosophical insights should improve the *lives* of people appears in the philosophical writings of only a few authors (typically active outside the universities), most prominently perhaps Marx and Kierkegaard, yet even here, improvement is not expected from philosophy alone. For Marx, the theoretical insights of historical materialism have to pass into political action in order for conditions to be not only interpreted but also changed. Kierkegaard, after his disappointment with the scientific nature of Hegel's system, has the philosophical therapist sit at the bedsides of the despairing only to assist them with the leap into faith. The idea that a philosophical approach should be judged, not only on the merits of its methodological well-foundedness (something that can supposedly be clarified in advance), but also according to its *relevance* for the lives of people regained prominence later, most notably in the philosophy of American pragmatism. But the latter, as is well-known, ultimately forfeited all truth claims in the conviction that testimonies to democracy are more fundamental than philosophical insight.[40] The study of philosophical treatises has since become part of a *literary* education, which, in the best of cases, acts as a substitute for the old tradition of the salons. Whether the mildly therapeutic effect of

[39] Althusser (1998: 182).
[40] Rorty (1988).

those collective talk cures can be attributed to the contact with philosophical teachings of wisdom or rather just to the civilizing effect of beautiful and cultured men and women, is hard to say. The seminars for humanities, like the salons they succeed, may very well also just be about furthering or hindering careers.[41]

The stringency of Spinoza's attempt to develop a conception of human bondage and freedom, unhappiness and happiness, by starting out from the construction of a basic system of philosophical concepts and proceeding to a theory of psychophysical phenomena and emotions in one continuous line of argumentation remains unique in modern philosophy. Its' seriousness is in stark contrast to many streams of contemporary philosophy. Spinoza's thought is likely to remain, for the foreseeable future, the standard by which any effort to reconcile theory and practice in philosophy measures itself. Reconciliations of this kind almost always involve theoretical or practical difficulties, which, as was the case with the philosophy of Spinoza, are likely to have the all makings of a scandal. Nevertheless, interest in attempts to reconcile wisdom and scientific thought is growing in the present day. After all, we remain as much in the dark as ever about where unchecked scientific progress on the one hand, and semi-religious teachings of salvation on the other, could be leading us.

[41] As Bernard Williams suspects in *Truth and Truthfulness*, Williams (2002: 3).

PART I

ETHICS: DE DEO

EXPLAINING EXPLANATION AND THE MULTIPLICITY OF ATTRIBUTES IN SPINOZA

Michael Della Rocca

I am very much drawn to Spinoza's claim that, ultimately, there is only one thing. This attraction to what may be called Spinoza's substance monism is, perhaps, ill-advised because, for the argument for monism to be seen as succeeding, one must endorse all sorts of positions extremely unpopular in philosophy nowadays. Do we any longer really have room for the notion of substance in Spinoza's sense, a sense according to which a substance is radically conceptually and causally independent of all other things? Do we really want to endorse the view that there are attributes, conceptually self-contained features of the world? And do we really want to advocate the claim that there is a multiplicity of such features all had by a single substance?

The strangeness of Spinoza's substance monism is mitigated—at least for me—when I see that the sticking points mentioned in the previous paragraph can each be obviated by invoking a claim that Spinoza endorses and himself invokes in this context, viz. the *Principle of Sufficient Reason* (hereafter: 'the PSR'). This is the principle according to which each fact has an explanation.[1] In previous work, I have examined the argument for substance monism.[2] That paper went some distance toward showing how the argument is meant to work, but it did not address what are, perhaps, the deeper worries about why we should endorse this argument. In this paper, by re-examining the argument, but this time giving greater prominence to the role of the PSR, I hope to show how we can trace the discomfort in the previous paragraph's rhetorical questions to a discomfort with the PSR. In this way, I hope to unite the opposition to Spinoza's argument. This strategy is part of a broader unite-and-conquer strategy that can be fully

[1] For Spinoza's version of the PSR, see 1p11dem2. All references to Spinoza are to the *Ethics*. Translations from Spinoza are from Curley's *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, vol. 1. Passages from Spinoza's Latin are from Gebhardt. I have adapted Curley's system of numbering passages from the *Ethics*.

[2] See my "Spinoza's Substance Monism": Della Rocca (2002).

carried out only by arguing for the PSR itself, something I will not attempt here. I will be content here to cast Spinoza's argument in the new light provided by the PSR and, by that means, to provide answers to some questions I previously left open, questions concerning especially Spinoza's notion of attribute.

To understand Spinoza's argument for substance monism, we need, of course, to understand Spinoza's notion of substance. He defines substance as that which is in itself and conceived through itself. As Spinoza understands the notion of conceiving, for a thing to be conceived through something is for the first thing to be explained by, made intelligible in terms of the second thing.[3] So in saying that substance is self-conceived, Spinoza is saying that substance is self-explanatory.

The notion of conceiving a thing is, in some sense, more fundamental than the notion of causation. For Spinoza, *x* is caused by *y* *because* *x* is conceived through *y*. That the notion of causation is less fundamental than the notion of conceiving or explaining is evident from the fact that Spinoza *derives* the claim that substance is self-caused from the claim that it is self-conceived (see 1p6c and 1p7).

Spinoza's definition of 'substance' also specifies that a substance is in itself. Spinoza's notion of 'being in itself', as well as his more general notion of 'being in something', continue to be the subject of much controversy. Though I cannot develop the point here, I believe that, for Spinoza, the notion of 'being in' is a version of the notion of inherence, according to which, for example, my shirt's property of being white inheres in or is a state of the shirt. I also believe—and this is more controversial—that the notion of 'being in' simply amounts to the notion of 'being conceived through'. So, I regard the notion of 'being in itself' as not, in the end, contributing further content to the definition of substance beyond that already provided by the notion of 'being conceived through itself'.[4] Partly for this reason, and also partly because the explication of the proof of substance monism flows more straightforwardly in terms of the notion of 'being conceived through' itself, I will focus on that notion in what follows.

Of course, it is one thing to articulate the notion of substance as that which is conceived through itself. It's quite another—or so it seems—to

[3] See, e.g., 1a5 and the discussion in Della Rocca (1996b: 3–4).

[4] See my "Rationalism Run Amok: Representation and the Reality of Emotions in Spinoza": Della Rocca (2008). For more on the 'in-relation' see Curley (1969), Curley (1988), Curley (1991), Carriero (1995), Garrett (1979), Garrett (2002).

assert that such a thing exists. Why should there be something that exhibits the radical explanatory self-sufficiency that Spinoza regards a substance as enjoying? We will return to this question shortly.

To reach Spinoza's answer to this question, we need to investigate Spinoza's notion of explanation. For Spinoza, to explain a thing is to conceive it *as* such-and-such, as having a certain feature; there is no bare conceiving of a thing, rather there is only conceiving-as. But why does Spinoza hold that to conceive a thing is to conceive it as having a certain feature? To answer this question, all we need to do is invoke the PSR. If one explains a thing but doesn't explain it *as* having a certain feature, what would make that explanation an explanation of that thing instead of an explanation of some other thing? It is the features of a thing that enable us to tie the explanation to one thing in particular; absent an appeal to such features, what makes the explanation an explanation of that thing would itself be inexplicable. So in his insistence that explanation be explanation-as, Spinoza is, in effect, applying the PSR to the notion of explanation itself: for a substance to be conceived, to be explained, it must be explained in terms of a certain feature.[5]

For Spinoza, a feature that can play the role of explaining a substance S is an attribute. Attributes, for S, are thus ways of conceiving, ways of explaining, a substance. This is evident in an important claim in 1p10s: "nothing in nature is clearer than that each being must be conceived under some attribute." The connection between attributes and ways of thinking of substance is apparent in Spinoza's definition of attribute:

> By attribute I understand what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence. (1d4)[6]

Two aspects of Spinoza's notion of attribute are particularly relevant to his regarding an attribute as an essence of substance. First, for Spinoza as for Descartes before him, an attribute of a substance is a fundamental feature in terms of which all the other features of a substance

[5] A similar worry turning on explanation can be raised about contemporary notions of direct reference: in virtue of what is my thought about an object if I do not grasp a feature that ties my thought to one object in particular?

[6] "*Per attributum intelligo id, quod intellectus de substantia percipit, tanquam ejusdem essentiam constituens.*" Spinoza invokes the notion of perception here rather than conception, but Spinoza often shifts between these terms with apparent insouciance (see, e.g., 2p38dem).

can be understood. Thus, e.g., if extension is an attribute of a substance, then all of the less fundamental features of that substance can be understood in terms of extension. To take for a moment a Cartesian example of a substance: a table is an extended substance and, for Descartes, all the more particular properties of the substance can be seen as ways of being extended: the table's being 3 feet tall and the table's being square are ways, for Descartes, of being extended, ways that presuppose the notion of extension and are conceived through extension.

Second, precisely because an attribute is *fundamental* in this way, it must be a self-contained feature of a substance, it must be a feature of a substance that is not dependent on—not conceived through—any other feature of that substance. Thus, for Spinoza, an attribute of a substance, like the substance itself, is self-conceived.

This result raises a question we will want to explore and which I explicitly left unanswered in my previous paper:[7]

1. Why must a Substance have an Attribute and, in Particular, why must it have a Feature that is Fundamental and Self-conceived (Q1)?

The answer to this question turns on the PSR. Thus let's assume, for the sake of the argument, that a given substance has no attributes. Nonetheless, it must have some features, for without features it would not be conceivable as anything at all and so it could not be explained at all. Thus the substance must have some feature or features. But if it has only one feature, then that one feature must be an attribute: for it is a feature that is self-conceived and not dependent on any other feature for the simple reason that there is no other feature. Thus, to continue on our search for a substance with no attribute, we must posit that it has more than one feature and that none of these features is self-conceived, rather each of these features must depend on some *other* feature. Thus, let's say that the substance has two features F and G, but that neither is self-conceived. Thus, perhaps, G depends on F. But what does F depend on? If F is not to be self-contained (and thus not an attribute), it must depend on some further feature of the substance. Let's call this further feature H. (F cannot depend on G

[7] "Spinoza's Substance Monism": Della Rocca (2002).

because, as we have seen G depends on F. If F depends on G which depends on F, then F would be self-conceived after all and would thus be an attribute.) So F must depend on H. So too H must depend on some further feature, I, and we are off on an infinite regress.

So far it seems to be a perfectly harmless regress. Why can't a substance have infinitely many features that depend on other features? A problem, however, arises when we ask of the whole collection of features that are dependent on other features: in virtue of what does the substance have this collection of features? The PSR demands that there be an answer here and, for an answer to be legitimate, it must appeal to a feature of the substance. But the feature of the substance cannot be a member of the collection of dependent features, otherwise that feature would ultimately explain itself and so it would not be a member of the series of dependent features after all. Thus there must be a feature of the substance that is not a member of the series of dependent features. Thus the feature of the substance must be independent, i.e. self-conceived, i.e. an attribute. We can thus see that, for Spinoza, each substance must have an attribute, a self-conceived feature, and we can see this by invoking the PSR. This is an answer to (Q1).[8]

To argue in this way that substance must have at least one attribute is not yet to argue that substance has or must have a multiplicity of attributes. But even now we can see that *if* a substance has more than one attribute, then given that each attribute is self-conceived for Spinoza, it follows that these attributes are conceptually independent of one another. This is Spinoza's famous conceptual separation between the attributes: "Each attribute of a substance must be conceived through itself" (1p10). Because the conceptual independence of each attribute with regard to every other attribute follows from the fact that each attribute is self-conceived, and because, as we have seen, the fact that each attribute is self-conceived follows from the PSR, Spinoza's claim in 1p10s that the attributes are conceptually separate also follows from the PSR. But again, so far this is only a conditional claim: if a substance has more than one attribute, then they are conceptually separate.

Spinoza does, though, in fact hold that a substance can have more than one attribute, more than one fundamental, self-conceived feature.

[8] The style of argumentation in this paragraph is, of course, analogous to that of the cosmological argument for the existence of God, an argument some version of which Spinoza seems to endorse in 1p11dem3.

Thus, if thought and extension are both attributes, a single substance can, for Spinoza, be both thinking and extended. The claim that a substance can have a multiplicity of attributes is, of course, crucial to Spinoza's argument for substance monism, to his view that, e.g., the thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same. But this claim only raises the further question:

2. How is it Possible for a Single Substance to have more than one Attribute (Q2)?

This is a real concern because it might seem that a substance's being thinking precludes it from being extended and vice versa. Certainly, Descartes would hold that one attribute precludes another attribute from belonging to the same substance. Indeed, it might seem as if the PSR itself demands that a substance have no more than one attribute. Precisely because thought and extension are conceptually independent, it follows that one can think of a substance as thinking without thereby thinking of it as extended (and vice versa). If a substance had both thought and extension as attributes, then, given this conceptual independence, what could keep them both together in the same substance? Why would they be together in the same substance instead of present in two separate substances? In the case of an attribute and a less fundamental feature that falls under that attribute, it is clear why they are in the same substance: being extended and being 5 feet long are features of the same substance precisely because there is a conceptual link between the essence of that substance (the attribute) and the less fundamental feature. But in the absence of such a link between two attributes, what could account for their presence in the same substance? As we will see, Spinoza denies the Cartesian view that a substance can have only one attribute and, intriguingly, he does this precisely by strengthening the way in which the PSR applies to the conceptual separation between the attributes. But until we see how this is so, (Q2) must remain unanswered.

The final key ontological notion at work in Spinoza's argument for substance monism is the notion of 'mode'. Although I have not previously used the term, I have touched upon this notion already: a mode is simply a dependent, less fundamental feature of substance. The modes of a substance depend on the substance itself and they do so by depending on further features of the substance and, ultimately,

on a basic feature, an attribute. Thus Spinoza defines a mode as "that which is in another through which it is also conceived" (1d5).

We now have all the tools we need to construct Spinoza's argument for substance monism.

In outline, the argument is rather simple. Spinoza argues first that no two substances can share an attribute (1p5). Second, Spinoza argues that "it pertains to the nature of a substance to exist" (1p7). On the basis of 1p7, Spinoza argues that God—defined in 1d6 as the substance with all the attributes—exists. Finally, since God exists and has all the attributes and since there can, by 1p5, be no sharing of attributes, no other substance besides God can exist (1p14). Any such substance would have to share attributes with God, and such sharing is ruled out.

I want to explain briefly each step and, in some cases, raise potential objections to which Spinoza has or could have good answers. Each of these answers turns in some way on the PSR.

Let's take 1p5 first: "In Nature there cannot be two or more substances of the same nature or attribute." To prove this proposition, Spinoza considers what is required in order to individuate two substances, i.e. what is required in order to explain their non-identity. For Spinoza, the distinctness between two distinct things must be explained by some difference between them, some difference in their properties. In the case of the individuation of substances, this amounts to the claim that they must be individuated via a difference either in their attributes or in their modes. Spinoza makes this point in 1p4:

> Two or more distinct things are distinguished from one another, either by a difference in the attributes of the substances or by a difference in their affections.[9]

In insisting on some property difference between two things, Spinoza is endorsing the *Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles* (PII). This is the principle—more often associated with Leibniz than with Spinoza—that if *a* and *b* are indiscernible, i.e. if *a* and *b* have all the same properties, then *a* is identical to *b*. One can see that this principle turns on the notion of explaining non-identity and, as such, one can see its roots in the PSR: non-identities, by the PSR, require explanation

[9] By "affections" (*affectiones*) Spinoza means modes, as his citation of 1d5 in 1p4dem makes clear.

and the way to explain non-identity is to appeal to some difference in properties. In its reliance on the PII, 1p5 thus also relies on the PSR.[10]

Thus two substances could be individuated either by a difference in their attributes or in their modes. Spinoza dismisses right away any differentiation of substances in terms of their attributes because he says we are considering whether two substances can share an attribute. Thus a case in which substances might have different attributes might seem to be irrelevant to the case at hand. (However, as we will see in a moment, this dismissal might be too hasty.) He then considers whether substances can be distinguished by their modes. Spinoza eliminates this possibility as well, offering the following argument.

Since a substance is prior to its modes (by 1p1), we are entitled to put the modes to the side when we take up the matter of individuating substances. Thus, with the modes to one side and with the attributes already eliminated as individuators, it turns out that there are no legitimate grounds for individuating substances with the same attribute, for explaining why they are distinct. Thus, since substances with the same attribute cannot legitimately be individuated, there cannot be any sharing of attributes.

Obviously this argument turns crucially on the claim that we should put the modes to one side. Spinoza appeals here to the notion of priority introduced in 1p1. What kind of priority does Spinoza have in mind? In 1p1dem, he invokes the definition of substance and mode, so it is clear that in speaking of priority, he means that substance is conceptually prior to modes: modes are conceived through the substance of which they are modes, but the substance is not conceived through the modes. Rather, the substance is conceived through its attribute or attributes.

By appealing to conceptual priority in 1p5dem, Spinoza seems to be thinking along the following lines. Let's say that we did individuate two substances, X and Y, by appealing to a difference between them with regard to modes. Thus, although substance X and substance Y have the same attribute, X has a set of modes 1 and Y has a distinct set of modes 2. In this situation, X and Y would be distinguished by

[10] Leibniz clearly—in at least one strand of his thinking on this matter—grounds the PII on the PSR. (See, e.g., his correspondence with Clarke.) Spinoza also appeals to the notion of explaining non-identities in 1p5dem where he speaks of what is required to *conceive* two things to be distinct. As we have seen, for Spinoza, the notion of conceiving is one of explaining. For a contemporary defense of the PII, see Della Rocca (2005: 480–492).

their modes. That is, in order to explain the non-identity of X and Y, in order to conceive of X as distinct from Y, we would need to conceive of X as the substance with set of modes 1 and we would need to conceive of Y as the substance with set of modes 2. But this would, in effect, be to conceive of, to explain, X and Y through their modes. This would go against the conceptual priority of substance with regard to modes, a priority that follows simply from the definitions of substance and mode.

Thus, for Spinoza, substances cannot be individuated by their modes, and since, if there were two substances that shared an attribute, they would be individuated by their modes, Spinoza concludes that there is no sharing of attributes between different substances. And, again, this conclusion derives ultimately from the PSR because it is derived from Spinoza's insistence that there be a way to explain the non-identity of distinct things which insistence is, in turn, a manifestation of the PII and the PSR.

But is this strong conclusion that no attributes are shared justified? Perhaps, even if substances that share an attribute are not individuated by their modes, such substances are individuated by attributes that they do not share. Spinoza does allow, after all, that a substance can have more than one attribute. So why can't we have the following scenario: substance X has attributes A and B only and substance Y has attributes B and C only? In this scenario, while the two substances share an attribute (viz. B) they differ with regard to other attributes and can thus be individuated in this way. So perhaps then, contrary to 1p5, there can be sharing of attributes by different substances after all. This objection was first raised by Leibniz.[11]

To see how Spinoza can rule out the Leibniz scenario, let's assume that this scenario is possible. If so, then attribute B would not enable us to conceive of one substance in particular. This is because the thought 'the substance with attribute B' would not enable us to conceive of one substance in particular since there is more than one substance with attribute B. Such a result would contradict Spinoza's view that *each* attribute constitutes the essence of substance. As Spinoza says in 1p10s, in a claim that he clearly sees as following from the definition of attribute, "each [attribute of a substance] expresses the reality, *or* being of substance." It's easy to see why this should be so for Spinoza. Let's say

[11] See his notes on Spinoza's *Ethics* in Leibniz (1976: 198f.).

that the attribute of extension did not suffice, by itself, for conceiving of an extended substance. To think of the substance as extended, let's say, one needs to appeal to some other feature besides extension. This further feature must in turn either be an attribute or be dependent on an attribute of the substance for, as we have seen, all features of a substance are or are derived from attributes. So this further feature must be conceived through an attribute other than extension, say, thought. In order, then, to conceive of the substance as extended, we would need to conceive of it also in terms of another attribute, thought. This result, however, would violate the explanatory independence of the attributes. An attribute of a substance—viz. extension—would not be self-conceived, rather it would have to be conceived through another attribute of substance and this would violate the conceptual independence that Spinoza accords to each attribute. So for Spinoza, if a substance has more than one attribute, each attribute by itself must enable us to conceive of the substance, and this can be the case only if each attribute that a substance has is unique to that substance. Thus the Leibniz scenario is ruled out by the conceptual independence of the attributes which, as we saw, stems from the PSR itself. Thus, it is ultimately the PSR which provides Spinoza with an answer to the Leibniz objection. Here again the PSR is the driving force.

But this good result only raises again the question of whether and how a substance can have more than one attribute, i.e. (Q2). We will not be in a position to answer this question until we traverse the rest of Spinoza's argument for substance monism.

The next crucial stage is 1p7: "It pertains to the nature of a substance to exist." Spinoza means by this claim that each substance is such that its existence somehow follows from its very concept or nature. Other things—i.e. limited things or modes—are *not* such that their existence follows from their very nature. For such things, their existence is at the mercy of other things. But a substance is special: its existence is beholden only to its own nature. And so the only way that the existence of a substance could be prevented would be if its essence or nature were somehow internally incoherent. Otherwise, i.e. if the nature of a substance is coherent, then that's what it is for the substance to exist.

How does Spinoza argue for 1p7? He first cites 1p6c, the claim that no substance can be caused by anything else. For Spinoza, if a substance were caused by something else, it would have to be conceived through that something else. (Here is one place where the connection

between causation and conception is at work.) But this would conflict with the self-conceived nature of substance. Since substance cannot be produced by anything else, he concludes (in 1p7dem) that substance is produced by itself. Here the PSR plays a key role: since substance is not produced by anything else, and, by the PSR, it must be produced, explained, by something, it follows that substance is produced by itself. Given Spinoza's connection between causation and conceivability, it follows that a substance's existence is simply a function of its concept or definition. That is, as Spinoza says, "it pertains to the nature of a substance to exist."

In 1p11 Spinoza applies 1p7 to the case of God. To see how Spinoza does this, we should have before us his definition of God:

> By God I understand a being absolutely infinite, i.e., a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence. (1d6)

By "an infinity of attributes" Spinoza means *all* attributes as is clear from his explanation of this definition:

> I say absolutely infinite, not infinite in its own kind; for if something is only infinite in its own kind, we can deny infinite attributes of it; but if something is absolutely infinite, whatever expresses essence and involves no negation pertains to its essence. (1d6exp)

Given that God is by definition a substance (and indeed a substance with all the attributes) and given that, as 1p7 states, existence follows from the nature of a substance, Spinoza concludes that God exists. Indeed, Spinoza states here that God exists *necessarily*, and it's easy to see why. Definitional or conceptual truths are necessarily true (e.g. squares have four sides is a definitional truth and as such it is necessary). Because existence pertains to God's nature, we can say that the statement that God exists is necessarily true.

Spinoza is here giving expression to a version of the ontological argument for the existence of God. Such arguments, in one way or another, proceed from the claim that existence is part of the concept of God to the conclusion that God exists. Spinoza's version is, perhaps, unique in the way in which it relies heavily on the PSR. Spinoza is, in effect, saying in 1p11 that God must exist by his very nature for if God did not then there would be no explanation for God's non-existence. But, this would be intolerable since, by the PSR, each fact must have an explanation. So the PSR helps us to see that God must have a definition or nature that is so rich as to generate God's very existence.

But there's a loose end: I said earlier in connection with 1p7 that the claim that existence pertains to the nature of a substance would hold only for a substance whose nature is not somehow internally incoherent. In this light, Spinoza can be said to have proved that God exists by virtue of the fact that God is defined as a substance *only if* Spinoza can show that the notion of God is internally coherent. (This is a kind of difficulty with the ontological argument that Leibniz was at particular pains to address.) But while Spinoza obviously regards the nature of God as coherent, and, in fact, Spinoza explicitly says that to see God's nature as involving a contradiction is "absurd" (1p11dem2), he nonetheless offers no direct argument for the claim that God's nature is coherent. This is troubling because one can well imagine a Cartesian, e.g., challenging that Spinoza's definition of God is incoherent precisely because it involves the claim that a substance can have more than one attribute. So again we come up against the problem of whether a single substance can have more than one attribute. Is there anything that Spinoza says that can be seen as addressing this important difficulty? We'll see that there is indeed by examining a problem with Spinoza's last step, in 1p14, in his proof of substance monism.

Here Spinoza puts it all together. Precisely because God is defined as having all the attributes, it follows that if another substance were to exist in addition to God, it would have to share attributes with God. (Each substance, for Spinoza, must have at least one attribute—1p10s.) But 1p5 prohibits attribute-sharing. So, given that God exists necessarily (by 1p11), no other substance exists or, indeed, can exist. QED.

But an immediate problem arises here.[12] Spinoza's proof of monism proceeds via the claim in 1p11 that God exists. That claim is proved on the strength of the claim that God is a substance and also the general claim that it pertains to the nature of a substance to exist. But consider what would have happened if, instead of using 1p7 to prove in 1p11dem that God exists, Spinoza had invoked 1p7 to prove that some different substance, a substance with fewer attributes exists. For example, call the substance with only the attribute of extension 'ES1'. ES1 is, let us say, by nature a substance with only that attribute. We can say, invoking 1p7, that it pertains to the nature of ES1 to exist and thus ES1 does exist and necessarily so. But now, given that ES1 exists, given 1p5—the thesis that substances cannot share attributes—

[12] This problem was first raised by Don Garrett in his important paper, "Spinoza's 'Ontological' Argument": Garrett (1979: 198–223).

and also given the fact that if God were to exist God would have all the attributes, it follows that God does not exist after all! God would have to share an attribute with ES1 which we have already proven to exist. So it seems that Spinoza was able to prove that God is the only substance only because he began 1p11 arbitrarily with the claim that God exists. What reason did he have for starting there instead of starting with the claim that, say, ES1 exists? The answer must be that somehow ES1 has an incoherent nature and God does not. But this just brings us back to the question we have already raised: Is God's nature coherent?

How would Spinoza answer this question? The PSR which Spinoza espouses has a direct bearing on this problem. First, let's assume that for each attribute there must be a substance that has that attribute—given that attributes are conceived through themselves (1p10), nothing could prevent the instantiation of a given attribute. Because there is no sharing of attributes and on the assumption that extension is an attribute, it follows that there is only one extended substance. Now consider the question: does this one extended substance have other attributes as well? In particular, does it have the attribute of thought? Well, let's say that it lacks thought. In virtue of what does it lack thought? This last question is a perfectly natural one, and, in fact, Spinoza's PSR demands that there be a reason here, that there be an answer to this question. What then could explain why the one extended substance lacks thought?

It's clear what *Descartes* would say: the fact that it is extended is the reason that the one extended substance lacks thought. Not only would Descartes say this, but it also seems the most natural and plausible way to answer the question. But notice that this approach to the question is absolutely illegitimate from Spinoza's point of view. It is ruled out by his strong understanding of the conceptual barrier between the attributes, a barrier which, as we have seen, follows from the PSR. For Spinoza, no fact about thought depends on any fact about extension. This is just a manifestation of the self-conceived nature of each attribute. As Spinoza understands this separation, this means, for example, that the fact that a substance is extended cannot explain why it has that attribute of thought and *also* cannot explain why it lacks the attribute of thought. To explain the lack of thought by appealing to extension would be to explain a fact about thought in terms of a fact about extension. And this violates the conceptual barrier for Spinoza. He makes precisely the point in 1p10s. He says immediately after articulating the conceptual independence of the attributes that:

> From these propositions it is evident that although two attributes may be conceived to be really distinct (i.e., one may be conceived without the aid of the other), we still can not infer from that that they constitute two beings, *or* two different substances.

Spinoza is saying here that the conceptual barrier shows that one attribute cannot prevent a substance from having another attribute. No other potential explanation of the one extended substance's lack of thought seems to be available. So if this substance did lack thought, that would be a brute fact and as such ruled out by the PSR. In this way, we can quickly see that every attribute not only must be instantiated but must also, on pain of violating the PSR, be instantiated by a single substance.

This understanding of the conceptual independence between the attributes is particularly strong. It uses the conceptual independence to preclude not only positive trans-attribute explanations (e.g. explanations that X is thinking because X is extended), but also negative trans-attribute explanations (e.g. explanations that X is not thinking because X is extended). Descartes obviously does not take the conceptual barrier this far: he is quite happy to say that an extended substance lacks thought *because* it is extended. However, Spinoza seems to be saying, if one has a conceptual barrier at all, there is no good reason not to extend it to preclude negative trans-attribute explanations as well as positive ones. If Spinoza is right, then he has a good reason, on his own terms, for holding that one substance has all the attributes and he has a good reason for ruling out ES1—the substance with only extension—because it has an incoherent nature. For Spinoza, there is good reason to hold that the only substance with a coherent nature is God, the substance of all attributes. For Spinoza, then, if there is a multiplicity of attributes, there is nothing incoherent in these attributes all being instantiated by a single substance. Indeed, the opposite state of affairs in which such attributes are in separate substances would be incoherent because it would involve brute facts.[13]

We have gone a long distance in explaining and defending Spinoza's argument for substance monism. At each stage, the PSR is the motivating force behind the explanation and defense. The PSR underwrites the notion that explanation is explanation-as, a notion that is essential

[13] For a fuller elaboration of the above argument, see my "Spinoza's Substance Monism": Della Rocca (2002).

to Spinoza's metaphysics in general and to his substance monism in particular. The PSR grounds the view that a substance must have at least one attribute, and the PSR dictates that attributes must be conceptually independent of one another. The PSR also grounds the PII which is expressed in Spinoza's claim that substances cannot be individuated either by their modes or by their attributes. The PSR also licenses the claim that each coherent substance exists. Finally, the PSR leads, as we have just seen, to the view that if there is a multiplicity of attributes, then they must all be instantiated in a single substance.

This last result above makes clear, however, that there is at least one major unresolved question in our defense of Spinoza's argument for substance monism:

3. Why is there a Multiplicity of Attributes (Q3)?

Can we go to the well one more time and invoke the PSR to answer this question? I believe we can. But here I must stress that we are going beyond what Spinoza explicitly says.

Let's try to imagine a scenario in which there is only one attribute. Of course, if an attribute exists, it exists necessarily and by virtue of the very concept of that attribute. It follows that if there is only one attribute, then there *must be* only one attribute and it is incoherent for any other attribute to exist. In other words, if there is only one attribute, it is a conceptual truth that there is only one attribute.

Let's call the attribute A and let's say that substance S has A. Given the no-sharing thesis, no other substance has A and thus no other substance exists. Thus all that exists in this scenario are S and A.

What is the relation between S and A? Are they identical or not? Well, if they are not identical, in virtue of what do they fail to be identical? Recall that Spinoza's PII and PSR demand that there be an answer to this question. Notice that S and A do share many properties: S, as a substance, is self-conceived. So too is A, an attribute, self-conceived. Let's say that A is extension. Thus it's true to say that S is extended. Is it also true that A is extended? I don't see why not. For Spinoza to say that S is extended is, I believe, nothing over and above saying that S is conceived through extension.[14] So, given that A is conceived through

[14] I develop this point in "Rationalism Run Amok".