UNDER THE ASPECT OF ETERNITY: THINKING FREEDOM IN SPINOZA'S *ETHICS*

Adam Arola
University of Oregon, USA
aarola@uoregon.edu

Abstract

This paper offers an interpretation of the role of freedom in Spinoza's *Ethics*. Given that Spinoza is usually thought of as a thinker of determinism (or better: necessity), I explain how his thinking of freedom only makes sense insofar as one recognizes the importance of what he describes as the three kinds of knowing, in relation to the affects. The difference between freedom and slavery lies in how one receives and interprets the affects, i.e. the force of the external world. To affirm the necessity of your disposition and thrownness is to take part in the free necessity that Spinoza describes.
Key words: freedom, Spinoza, Schelling.

Resumen

El artículo ofrece una interpretación del papel de la libertad en la *Ética* de Spinoza. Considerando que Spinoza es conocido como un pensador del determinismo (o mejor, de la necesidad), el autor explica cómo su pensamiento sobre la libertad sólo cobra sentido si se reconoce la importancia de lo que describe como los tres tipos de conocimiento, en relación a los afectos. La diferencia entre la libertad y la esclavitud descansa en cómo se reciben e interpretan estos afectos, i.e. la fuerza del mundo exterior. Afirmar la necesidad de nuestra disposición y arrojamiento es tomar parte de la libre necesidad que Spinoza describe.
Palabras clave: libertad, Spinoza, Schelling.

As Gilles Deleuze says in his *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, "The whole effort of the *Ethics* is aimed at breaking the traditional link between freedom and will —whether freedom is conceived as the ability of a will to choose or even create (freedom of indifference), or as the ability

*Received: 15-03-07. Accepted: 27-06-07.

to adjust oneself to a model and to carry the model into effect (enlightened freedom)"[1]. If we take Deleuze seriously at this point, the status of the freedom becomes extraordinarily obscure insofar as we attempt to engage it within the prevalent categories and concepts operative in enlightenment philosophy and beyond. What is freedom if it is not the freedom of the will? In light of the absolute necessity with which all things follow from the essence of substance for Spinoza does it make sense anymore to speak of the human and freedom in the same breath without a negation included? Can such a freedom, which is essentially coupled with necessity, be posited as a predicate of a subject, in this case, of the human? Or, does the very thought of freedom have to be transformed to a point where it is no longer even recognizable?

In a letter to Schuller, Spinoza writes, "I say that a thing is free if it exists and acts from the necessity of its own nature alone, and compelled if it is determined by something else to exist and produce effects in a certain and determinate way". Spinoza thus describes freedom as "free necessity"[2]. Such an assertion seems to be a contradiction, however to understand Spinoza's thinking of freedom we must understand the importance of the perspective (*sub specie*) from which any conceptual determinations are made. The status of freedom is articulated as free necessity insofar as the question is engaged under the species, or from the perspective, of eternity. However, a phenomenological engagement, thus an engagement under the species of duration, from the perspective of the human as a mode of substance, with the question of freedom may yield a more comprehensible, and complicated, manner of thinking it.

[1]Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza and Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley, (San Francisco: City Lights Press, 1988), 69.

[2]Benedict di Spinoza, *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works*, trans. and ed. Edwin Curley, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 267. This text will be cited as *SR* in the future, except when citing the *Ethics* wherein I'll use the standard manner of E then the part, then "p" for proposition, "d" for definition, "a" for axiom, which will be followed by "c" for corollary or "s" for scholia and numbers where appropriate. Ex: E4p28c – *Ethics*, Part IV, Proposition 28, Corollary.

Spinoza, in his letter to Schuller, is extremely clear about one aspect of what Schelling calls the "feeling of freedom"[3]: the sense that the human has that they are freely willing actions which are actually entirely determined by external causes due to their awareness of their appetites and their striving to fulfill them is entirely erroneous. The fact that humans are unaware of the manner in which they are determined by external causes is a sign of an intellectual *naïveté* and a lack of reason. The necessity in question for the human is thus that our actions follow from the necessity of substance, as well as the necessity of our disposition, which is "strong and constant" from "fatal necessity" (*SR*, 269). The status of the fatal necessity of our disposition and our absolute exposure to the world which acts upon us is only pushed further throughout the course of the *Ethics*, particularly in Part IV. Spinoza writes, "man is necessarily always subject to passions, [...] he follows and obeys the common order of nature, and accommodates himself to it as much as the nature of things requires" (E4p4c). We find ourselves in a world which exceeds us and is constantly acting upon us. There is no manner in which we can remove ourselves from this world, there is no manner in which we can master this exterior which exceeds us and into which we are constantly ecstatic, and accordingly it seems as though we are necessarily at the whim of whatever the world, into which we are thrown, throws at us.

In light of all this, how are we to understand Spinoza in his constant usage of the language of the "free man"? Within Part IV of the *Ethics* we see that the free human is the one who is led by reason as opposed to the slave who is led only by the affects which impinge upon the person from the outside. It is clear that being led by reason does not mean rationally choosing ends and thus gaining a mastery over the world, insofar as we take seriously the necessarily insurmountable character of the human, as Heidegger would put it, as "thrown". The turn to reason and understanding is the point at which we can begin to get a handle

[3]F. W. J Schelling, *Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit*, ed. Thomas Buchheim, (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1997), 9. Schelling's re-thinking of the relationship between freedom and necessity in the *Freedom* essay plays a central role in my reading of Spinoza, as is made clear as this essay develops. Cited as *FS* in the text in the future.

on what is at stake in Spinoza's thinking of freedom. Hearing Spinoza's thinking of freedom is thus entirely dependent upon the question of the *sub specie*, i.e., is the necessity of the place of the human in nature encountered form the perspective of superstition or is it encountered with reason and understanding, and potential in a way that exceeds rational knowledge. Let me venture an assertion: the difference between freedom and slavery fundamentally lies in how one receives and interprets the affects, i.e. the force of the external world. To affirm the necessity of your disposition and your thrownness is to take part in the free necessity that Spinoza has described.

I

The question of how one engages the world around them for Spinoza is fundamentally a question of the power of reason and intuition, the second and third kinds of knowing, and their ability to grasp the cause of that which strikes it (E2p40s2). The initial definition of freedom which Spinoza presents in the *Ethics* reads as follows: "That thing is called free which exists from the necessity of its nature alone, and is determined to act by itself alone" (E1d7). Considering the force of necessity from which all modes of Substance proceed, it is clear that at least in one respect (the question of which we still must take up with some care), only God as substance is truly free. Only God as substance is properly self-determining, and even in the case of God as substance the status of this determinacy is peculiar. God does not will himself into existence, God does not choose a particular world out of a set of possible worlds, God does not *decide* to exist at all. To speak of God as deciding, willing, or choosing is to already entirely mistake the status of the divine within Spinoza's thought. To think God as an anthropomorphic entity, or an entity at all for that matter, is to ascribe it an imperfect status. Only a being which is incomplete and imperfect needs to, or even could decide, will, and choose (E1 – Appendix). God as substance as nature exists freely insofar as the unmotivated, surging forth of existence follows from no necessity other then the necessity of the essence of the divine as such —and as such a surging forth, it has no ground outside of

itself; this is not an emanationism, there is no primordial source that sits in reserve waiting to be emptied out[4]. Understood correctly this means that God's existence *is* by absolute necessity. God, i.e. existence as such, cannot not *be*.

Insofar as humans are superstitious and driven by their imagination to posit final causes we experience the world in terms of its meaningfulness and think of God as something which makes decisions and acts for ends, but Spinoza is clear: "That eternal and infinite being we call God, or nature, acts from the same necessity from which he exists [...] The reason, therefore, *or* cause, why God, *or* nature, acts, and the reason why he exists, are one and the same. As he exists for the sake of no end, he also acts for the sake of no end" (E4 – Preface, 199). The difference between Substance and the modes of Substance is that the necessity of the existence of the infinite modes of the divine follows from a necessity which is necessarily extrinsic to their particular, singular essence insofar as they are understood under their own concept, or under the aspect of duration and not that of eternity. The question of the freedom of a particular mode, in this case that of the human, will necessitate that we arrive at an understanding of how something which exists necessarily extrinsically, i.e., is essentially caused only by something which is extrinsic and prior to it,[5] can be said to exist from the necessity of *their* nature

[4]I am borrowing the language of the "surging forth" from Merleau-Ponty's lectures on Schelling. Part of my endeavor in this paper is to show that Merleau-Ponty is mistaken when he explains the conflict between Spinoza and Schelling in the following terms: "God will not be, for [Schelling], a simple abyss, he will be it in himself. He is what exists without reason [*grundlos Existierende*], compared to the *causa sui* of Spinoza; it is a sort of pure, unmotivated surging-forth, whose motive we cannot seek in any essence even if it were infinitely infinite as in Spinoza". I hope to show that that Spinoza's thinking of freedom can show us that his understanding of God *sive* nature, is not so far off from Schelling as Merleau-Ponty thinks. See: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Nature: Course Notes from the College de France*, ed. Dominique Séglard, trans. Robert Vallier, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003), 37. Cited as *LN* in the future.

[5]This sense of priority must be thought with care; while substance may be epistemically prior, it cannot be thought of as ontologically prior, as will be show as the paper develops. Though discussing the question of temporality in Heidegger, Jeff Malpas may be helpful at this point. He explains: "While that *from which* something is derived, or *in which* it is 'founded', will itself be 'prior' or 'primary' in respect of that which is so

alone. The question thus immediately becomes that of the nature of the human as a modality of substance.

As I have just elucidated, God is the only thing which is self-determining, i.e., the only thing which follows from its own necessity without external influence. Accordingly talking about the human as something which has the potential to be its own adequate cause seems entirely contradictory. However, there are multitudinous locations in Parts IV and V of the *Ethics* wherein Spinoza pronounces the human as capable of existing as *active*. Let us look at one such instance: "virtue, insofar as it is related to man, is the very essence, or nature, of man, insofar as he has the power of bringing about certain things, which can be understood through the laws of his nature alone" (E4d8). What can humans, as modes which in at least in one sense do not even have existence[6], bring about? It is clear that the issue of activity, or the possibility of the human bringing about certain things, depends upon how the law of human nature is heard. Regardless of how the question of the laws of human nature are prefigured one thing is certain: the status of the possible activity of the human in a world where the affects (particularly the passions) reign supreme has to do with an understanding, or one might say, a matching up with the *proper place* of the human in the order of substance (E4p4). My justification for such an assertion lies in Spinoza's constant insistence upon the role self-conception in our becoming-free, *or* becoming-active. In one such instance he writes, "So if a man affected with Joy were led to such a great perfection that he conceived himself and

'derived' or 'founded', not all cases of primacy will involve derivation or foundation". Thus, in reading Spinoza, we can think of substance as prior to modes, for example, but with two points of caution that will become clearer as this paper goes on: 1) we can only think of substance as prior to mode in the first two kinds of knowing, and 2) even then, this priority ought only be seen as a priority in the order of knowing, not the order of being. See: Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 109.

[6]I say this in light of the fact that the traditional ontological distinction between substance and mode from Descartes on privilege substance as that which truly *is*. The modalities of substance have that status of existents which come into being and pass away and *are* only insofar as they are either emanations or expressions of a more primordial *subiectum* or *hypokeímenon*.

his actions adequately, he would be capable —indeed more capable— of the same actions to which he is now determined from affects which are passions" (E4p59d). This assertion is immediately followed in the same Demonstration by another, which may be even more provocative: "Therefore, to every action to which we are determined from an affect which is a passion, we can be led by reason alone, without the affect, q.e.d." Is this to say that through reaching adequate ideas we gain the capacity to act in the spontaneous sense of free will? This is clearly not the case in light of Spinoza's constant dismissals of the thought of the will as an erroneous attribution of the human mind to thought. Thus, we must establish what precisely is at stake in the difference between being led to act through causal determinacy and being led to this *same act* through reason.

Any attempt to determine how one is led to *act*, i.e. to break out of the seemingly inextricable cycle of passivity that the human is caught up in, necessitates a turn to the status of reason and hopefully intuition for Spinoza. In other words, if we are to determine how we are led to act through reason and intuition, we must determine what Spinoza has in mind when he speaks of reason. In E2p40s1, Spinoza refers to common notions as that which "are the foundations of our reasoning". What are these common notions? In light of a passage further along in the same Scholia in which Spinoza dismisses the truth, or adequacy, of universal categories (thus exposing his special brand of nominalism), he explains: "it should be noted that these notions are not formed by all in the same way, but vary from one another, in accordance with what the body has more often been affected by, and what the mind imagines or recollects more easily". Insofar as universal categories are not adequate common notions, the stakes of an adequate common notion seems to be that which is generated in all in the same way. An example of this would this be the necessary character of the interaction of one body with another. We can rationally engage those things which strike us all in the same way due to their essence. Meaning, common notions are adequate insofar as we generate them with regards to our interactions with other bodies in the world and are formed based upon the essence

of that which we encounter. It is in this manner then that we begin to generate adequate ideas which then enable us to engage the world through reason.

Contrary to this, the means by which we generate universal transcendental categories, which the realist will hold as actually existing, is by means of the imagination wherein we mistake the relationship between the causal connection of that which strikes us from the outside and why it strikes us the way it does. Imagination is what causes humans to posit teleology, intrinsic meaning, an anthropomorphic deity, and values as if they inhered in the ontological fabric of existence. Insofar as the task of reason is to encounter these same phenomenon without casting the net of human meaning and categories on top it, one can immediately see that the stake of reason versus imagination, i.e., the first kind of knowing versus the second kind of knowing, is that of how one engages that which strikes us from the outside. As Julie Klein writes, "reason and imagination are, in essence, different ways of undergoing the same experience"[7].

What is it about reason then that allows us to step beyond the bounds of the pure passivity and inadequacy of imagination's confused engagement with that which strikes us from the outside? To reiterate through the text, Spinoza defines reason as forming universal notions "from the fact that we have common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things" (E2p40s2). Having tentatively established what the common notions are that are at stake in the function of reason, what are the adequate ideas of the properties of things? The status of "properties" as a predicate of things here puts us into a strange place in attempting to elucidate this question. The only "things" which we encounter in Spinoza are modalities, but it is not with regards to modalities that we have our knowledge, insofar as knowing is always only related to Substance as the first and immanent cause of all "things" (E1a4). However, it is in a sense only *through* our encounter

[7]Julie Klein, "By Eternity I Understand: Eternity According to Spinoza," Iyyun, *The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly* 51 (July 2002): 305. Cited as EAS in the text in the future.

with modalities of Substance that we can ever come to knowledge at all. The path to the third kind of knowing, a type of intuition through which humans come into relationship with the divine, is via the path from our encounter with the affects and through reason. We can only reason insofar as we engage that which strikes from the outside and thus can only come to the point where the third kind of knowing is possible insofar as we pass through our experience with the modalities of Substance first and *foremost*.

What are these properties of things of which we must have adequate ideas in order to function with reason? Though Spinoza does not give a laundry list of such properties, he does give us an immediate insight into one key, and possibly *the* key, for us to understand how reason brings us into relation with the whole. He writes, "It is the nature of reason to regard things as necessary, not as contingent". As things are in themselves they, i.e. modes, all follow out of the necessity of Substance as the self-grounding ground of existence (E2p44). It is only through reason that we can come to such an understanding, as through imagination we will continue to posit things as accidental, contingent, arbitrary, and yet meaningful and teleological at the same time. Accordingly, it is the fault of the imagination that the human posits itself as free in the sense of having the freedom of the will as the predicate of a subject. Through reason, one will understand that he or she necessarily follows from substance and thus has no *will* at all. Via understanding achieved through reason and/or intuition, one does not all of the sudden gain the capacity to choose things which we previously happened to do by flailing in the dark. Accordingly, from the perspective of traditional concepts of freedom, as has been said, an increased comprehension of what is at stake in reason for Spinoza does nothing to quell the fear of absolute determinacy.

II

Insofar as we desire to be true to Spinoza's text and his thinking of freedom, this fear may be warranted. Spinoza never leaves behind the absolute necessity with which everything follows from the essence of

Substance. Even in Part V of the *Ethics* where he makes his strongest positive statements about the status of human freedom, this freedom is understood exclusively in terms of a knowledge of this necessity and the increase of power which accompanies it. In the very last proposition of the text Spinoza writes, "the wise man [...] is hardly troubled in spirit, but being, by certain eternal necessity, conscious of himself, and of God, and of things, he never ceases to be, but always possesses true peace of mind" (E5p42s). If we look back a few propositions we can point to a key instance in the text wherein Spinoza comes closest to defining freedom. He writes, "We clearly understand wherein our salvation, *or* blessedness, *or* freedom, consists, namely, in a constant and eternal love of God, *or* in God's love for men" (E5p36S). Our freedom is said to consist in this love of God, which is described in the first quote as following from an absolute and *eternal* necessity. The immediate response to this passage is inevitably to conceive of this knowledge of, *or* love of, God in terms which follow out of a Christian sense of an anthropomorphic God up in the heavens. For the more philosophically sophisticated, it may be to conceive of his knowledge or love of God in terms of that of which we are a part, insofar as we are an emanation from it. Both of these thoughts, the standard folk-Christian doctrine and the Neo-Platonic (I specifically have Plotinus in mind) doctrine of emanation, are mistaken in their reception of Spinoza's conception Substance and mode and our expression out of it. Both of these interpretations necessitate an essential difference between substance, attribute, and mode in Spinoza's system, even in the emanationist model where all things participate in God they are not properly God unfolding itself, there is still a difference which we must intellectually surmount to reunite ourselves with the eternal divine, as we are fundamentally fallen. Contrary to an emanationist model, where God shoots himself down to the earth and the material form encountered there plays out the divine on a material level which is necessarily distinct from the divine, Spinoza's thought of expression means, "it is now object that expresses itself, the thing itself

that explicates itself"[8]. That is to say, there is no difference, at least in one sense, between the explication of substance in attribute and mode and substance *qua* substance. Substance *is* nothing outside of its explicating itself in attribute and mode, and the implication of attribute and mode within it.

The problem to be explained is that this in no way transforms our immediate intellectual encounter with the passage about the intellectual love of God as freedom. In order to understand why the traditional Christian interpretation of this passage and the thought of it as emanation hold sway for the human, we must turn to Spinoza's conception of the *aspect*, or the *sub specie*, under which we apprehend things. In a sense, both Deleuze's thinking of Spinoza's expressionism and Leibniz's understanding of Spinoza in terms of emanation are both 'correct', they merely differ in aspect. The task is thus to elucidate why the rational Leibnizian comprehension of Spinoza's intellectual love of God as emanation is to grasp things *sub specie durationis*, under the aspect, or species, of time, whereas in order to think freedom along with Spinoza we must understand this intellectual love of god *sub specie aeternitas*, under the aspect of eternity. To understand mode as an expression of substance which has no ontological difference from substance is to understand the way in which the human as mode is implicated in the absolute freedom of substance and the way in which the latter is explicated only in the former.

Thus the kinds of knowing are still the key question. Though reason, insofar as at operates with adequate ideas of essential property of things grasps everything as occurring from necessity it is still fundamentally determined by the encounter with bodies in motion in time, i.e., it still grasps things under the aspect of duration, at least in one sense. Why is this? Even though reason is capable of grasping (in fact it necessarily grasps) all things as necessity it does so in terms of "determinations, proximate, and distant relations, parts, and propositions" (*EAS*, 307). In other words, the conception of necessity is still in terms of the causal

[8]Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin, (New York: Zone Books, 1990), 22.

order by which things follow from one another, which necessarily implicates a certain temporal sequentiality. This is of course, a gigantic advancement upon the status of imagination which grasps all things under the aspect of duration as well, but still interprets everything as completely contingent and does not understand the unity of the whole, i.e., the way all things necessarily hang together. Reason thus has a sense of the relationship of all things insofar as they hang together in the whole, but it cannot grasp the implicative and explicative character of expression. That is to say, reason does not understand that there is a fundamental identity between substance, attribute, and mode insofar as they all implicate and explicate one another even in difference. Reason does "perceive things under a certain species of eternity" (E2p44c2), insofar as it grasps the necessity of all things following from substance, but to do so it is still in the process of abstracting universals from common notions and thus does not ever come to know the "essence of any singular thing" (E2p44d2). In other words, reason understands how things hold together only insofar as they are conceived of as in relation to one another: it only understands things as a whole, which may destroy the status of the singularities which still inhere in these relationships.

There is a very subtle difference between this comprehension and the understanding that the third kind of knowing enables, which "apprehends nature's efflux, neither totalizing into an undifferentiated whole nor dividing into disconnected parts". Klein explains this by saying, "the model of intuitive apprehension enables us to describe the immanence of singular modes as expressions of God or nature or substance" (*EAS*, 310). If this is what we understand intuitive knowing, which is that which falls strictly under the aspect of eternity, not under a *certain* species, to do, how precisely does this differ from what reason does? The key lies in the fact reason cannot tell us about the character of expression and implication and explication it entails. Whereas imagination encounters nature's flux as divided disconnected parts, reason seems only to be able to conceptualize the status of nature insofar as it thinks it as an undivided whole. I say this in light of the fact that rational knowing is always going to be couched in the terms of knowing

the cause of something, which here is substance *qua* substance. When reason apprehends this via abstraction of universals from common notions it necessarily subsumes all modes into Substance as cause in such a way as to eliminate the singularity of the infinity of modes. Reason can only tell us things about classes and categories and their necessary following from, and subsumption under, Substance. What the third kind of knowing frees is the ability to move from this experience of whole in terms of abstract relationship between categories to specific knowledge of the essence of singular modes as being that which explicates Substance. To look back to Part I of the *Ethics*, here Spinoza describes the ontological relationship between God and all things in the following terms: "all things that are, are in God, and so depend on God that they can neither be nor be conceived without him" (E1p28). This is what intuition, the third kind of knowing, grasps. All singular things *are* only insofar as God participates in all things in an entirely immanent way. Thus to truly know God or substance or nature is not just to know abstract universal classes and categories which reason can generate, but to understand the manner in which God is immanent to all singularities. The necessity of the maintenance of the integrity of the particular character of singularities within the whole of nature is elucidated quite clearly in one of Spinoza's discussions of joy. He writes, "though each individual lives content with his own nature, by which he is constituted, and is glad of it, nevertheless that life with which each one is content, and that gladness, are nothing but the idea, *or* soul, of the individual" (E3p57s). There is a profound particularity to the class of human over and against the class of fish and there is just as much particularity between humans insofar as they are all disposed in different manners. Grasping the whole is not grasping particularity. The fundamental singularity in question in this essay is that of the singular human being, and at this point let us now turn to the question of singular human freedom as one of infinite singularities of which God is the immanent cause and which at the same participates in God through this immanent reciprocity in such a way as to explicate God as what it essentially is.

III

In a lecture on Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes the role that the human plays in nature. Though the human is described as the means by which "nature becomes vision" (*LN*, 47), the stakes of such a claim are not to point to the subjectivizing of the whole of nature, or the coming to fulfillment of nature in the human. Insofar as he speaks of nature's subjectivity, what is at stake is our belonging to nature in accord to our mutual without why, not in accord of our shared capacity to be willing subjects and greater and smaller scales. In other words, it is not a question of projecting consciousness onto everything, "but rather a participation of my own life in everything, and vice versa" (*LN*, 40). This sense of reciprocal participation of my life in everything and vice versa as it emerges in Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* can be very helpful in elucidating what is at stake in Spinoza's understanding of freedom as behaving in propriety with one's nature. In Schelling's organic thinking of nature we arrive at a point wherein the human alone comes to self-consciousness and thus brings the whole of nature along with it. However, to hear this as a teleological assertion about the unfolding of nature is a mistake. Rather, the thought which is already present in the *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling's early years will carry through into the *Freedom Essay* and all of the drafts of the *Ages of the World* in the form of an ethical question. The congruence of freedom and necessity for Schelling means that the freedom from which the human follows is that of the decision of their character. They act by necessity from this act/decision which occurs outside of all time. He writes,

> The act, through which his life in time is determined, does not itself belong to time, but rather to eternity: nor does its life precede time, but goes through time (never seized by it) as an eternal act in accord with its nature [. . .] thus through

> it he is outside of creation as well, free and himself eternal beginning (*FS*, 57)[9].

The ethical import emerges when we realize that the question of the human is thus how we relate to the nature to which we essentially belong. To stay within the center, to be drawn into nature thus exploding the individuality, but not necessarily the singularity of the human, is to exist within the Good. To flee the center and assert oneself as an individual over and against the organic whole of the pure unmotivated surging forth of nature is move towards evil (*FS*, 46-7). Thus the stake of the ethical lies in how we relate to that which we necessarily belong to, but are not bound to in such a way that we cannot retreat, or flee, from it. The decision which determines how we come down is the moment of freedom which ruptures temporality, or in Heidegger's language, *das Freie*, from which the particular human is freed to abide by their essence or flee from it.

How does this illuminate what is at stake in Spinoza's thinking of freedom? Henry Allison phrases the status of freedom in God and its relationship to the human in the following way: "Only God is absolutely free, because only God is completely self-determined (acts from the necessity of his nature); nevertheless, finite modes are also free to the extent that their behavior follows solely from the laws of their own nature"[10]. Taking Allison at his word, the status of the freedom of the human as a finite mode thus becomes whether or not they abide by that

[9]Schelling's emphasis upon time and eternity in this text clearly demands a much more careful reading in light of the influence which Spinoza had on him. Spinoza's influence on Schelling is evident throughout his career including his thinking of the identity and difference of theoretical and practical philosophy in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, wherein he claims both reach the same point of culmination merely from different aspects. He is clearly following out of Fichte's project of the *Wissenschaftslehre* at that point in time, but his emphasis upon the identity of that which appears different only insofar as we are engaging the question of the system or order of the whole starting from either the objective, theoretical philosophy, or from the subjective, practical philosophy, has been elucidated for me in a new light after reading Spinoza more carefully.

[10]Henry Allison, *Benedict di Spinoza: An Introduction*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 156. On the next page, Allison claims that the status of human freedom

to which they always already belong, i.e., the laws of their own nature. The extended discussion of the status of the three kinds of knowing for Spinoza is absolutely central to this question insofar as we realize that to act in accord with, or to abide by, one's own nature necessitates that one knows what this nature is. The only way to come to an understanding of this for Spinoza is through intuition which has been described as the third kind of knowing. Insofar as we attempt to understand the world via the second kind of knowing, i.e. through reason, we are not able to understand the manner in which they necessarily follow from Substance in the highest sense. Spinoza writes, "we conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them to exist in relation to a certain time and place, or insofar as we conceive them to be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature" (E5p29s). Insofar as reason grasps things we are still bound up with the world of spatio-temporal relationships which disables us from understanding things in terms of their reciprocal, multi-valent, hanging together. It is only through the third kind of knowing that we understand how things are immanent within God and *as* God.

Let us return briefly to the issue of emanation. Through reason, we are capable of understanding the necessity through which things *follow from or out of Substance*. Accordingly, even if reason operates with a sophisticated understanding of the status of substance *sive* nature *sive* God, i.e., even if reason understand that we are not talking about a bearded man in the sky but rather nature as manner of being, reason seemingly has to articulate everything as a moving away from God which occurs within a temporal structure. Necessary causal unfolding implies such a movement away from that which is the prime mover. Accordingly, even though reason does not posit an originary unity or Plotinean One from which the whole world is fallen and we humans can attempt to return to via self-abnegation and intellectual communion with God, it seems to necessitate a temporalized sequence of movements which presumably lead us away from the *die erste Natur*, to use Schelling's lan-

insofar as one understands it the way that I have taken it is "fairly predictable and not of great philosophical interest". I would quite clearly disagree.

guage as described by Merleau-Ponty (*LN*, 38). Even if, at best, reason comprehends that substance is implicated in all of these causal relationships, so that the sense of implication and explication that Deleuze wants to understand as being the foundation of Spinoza's thought is maintained, it is unclear as to whether or not the causal activity that takes places in this time frame can be more then unidirectional, i.e., there is no sense of the reciprocal inherence, the order of occurrence has a necessity. The demand of the third kind of knowing is not to grasp the mechanical and necessary order through which everything follows, and to grasp the difference we must hear the temporal character of the thought of following, from Substance, but rather to understand the belonging together of everything which occurs in this order. The necessity is more fundamentally that of belonging, not of an ordering of causal nexuses.

This radical claim can be defended by looking to certain passages from Part V of the *Ethics*, wherein Spinoza articulates that our intellectual love of God is God's love of himself. He writes,

> The mind's intellectual love of God is the very love of God by which God loves himself, not insofar as he infinite, but insofar as he can be explained by the human mind's essence, considered under a species of eternity; that is, the mind's intellectual love of God is part of the infinite love by which God loves himself (E5p36).

In order to understand the absolute immanence that is at stake in Spinoza's understanding of nature, we must understand what it means to say that substance or God or nature loves itself via the human's intellectual love of God. It ought to be clear in one sense that the stake of this is to say that the human mind *is* at least *part* of God, such that when we contemplate nature we are nature contemplating itself. If we take the thought of the absolute reciprocal and immanent inherence of all things in everything else it is clear that insofar as the human as a finite mode is part of the infinity of substance, we are as much a part of the adequate cause of all things as anything else is. The question for the human is thus how do we understand that we *are* God just as much as any other *thing*,

i.e. any other being, finite mode, or existent, is? If we take this to be a proto-Nietzschean moment wherein we realize that we must become god's ourselves because God *qua* giver of meaning is dead, I believe we are mistaken. We are not God any more than God is a tree. The fact that we are part and parcel of substance *qua* adequate cause does not give us the opportunity to become little tyrants acting as if we were little deities. In fact, it demands that we stop considering ourselves in terms of our particular causal efficacy and appreciate the manner in which we belong to a whole which is greater then and exceeds the sum of its particular parts. Instead of understanding the result of this knowledge of absolute immanence to be permission to act, we need to hear it as the moment in which we become aware of how we belong to a world and are actors in it insofar as we understand ourselves as being part of it as much as anything else.

In light of this our freedom thus lies in our coming to know "the virtues and their causes [...] and to fill [our] mind[s] with the gladness which arises from the true knowledge of them" (E5p10s). Virtue, of course, "is the very essence, or nature, of man, insofar as he has the power of bringing about certain things, which can be understood through the laws of his nature alone" (E4d8). This sense of virtue, which Spinoza explicitly correlates with power, via a *sive*, is one which one can find throughout the history of philosophy from Aristotle to Heidegger[11]. In the former, we find the *arête* of any individual is to understand their character and what follows from it, as in the *Nichomachean Ethics* very little is left "up to us". In the latter, this sense of virtue is encountered in the understanding of *Eigentlichkeit*. Antigone, as an exemplar of *Eigentlichkeit*,[12] does not choose the circumstance of her life as the

[11]For a provocative discussion of reading authenticity in *Being and Time* as a question of virtue, see: Franco Volpi, "*Being and Time*: A 'Translation' of the *Nichomachean Ethics*?", trans. John Protevi, in *Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays on his Earliest Thought*, ed. Theodore Kisiel and John van Buren, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

[12]For two slightly different discussions of Antigone as an exemplar of the uncanny character of humanity see these two texts by Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Polt and Gregory Fried, (New Haven: Yale University Press,

one she will "make her own" from a list of others, as Slavoj Žižek writes, "such a notion of freely choosing between alternative possibilities is utterly foreign to Heidegger"[13]. Instead Antigone alone encounters the situation of what it means, essentially, to be human in the Greek sense, to be thrown out into the holding sway of beings as *physis* as a mortal entity, and responds appropriately. To respond appropriately is to make the "choice of 'freely assuming' one's imposed destiny [...] a true decision/choice [...] presupposes that I assume a passive attitude of 'letting myself be chosen' " (*TS*, 18). The virtuous, and accordingly powerful and joyous, individual in Spinoza's text is thus such a person who understand, endures, affirms, and embraces the essence which they always-already are in light of their place in nature and their relation to Substance as a modality of it. This understanding, enduring, affirming, embracing *is* freedom in Spinoza's text[14]. One can hear an absolutely clear echo of this in Schelling's thinking of freedom when he writes, "this inner necessity [character or disposition] is itself freedom; the essence of man is essentially *his own deed*; necessity and freedom relate to one another as one being [*Ein Wesen*] which, only when observed from different sides, appears as one or the other; in itself it is freedom, formally it is necessity" (*FS*, 57). Jeff Bernstein writes,

> The real issue which determines human freedom, then, can be stated as follows: does one (a) take one's *affects* to be merely *effects* which are extrinsically caused, or (b) understand one's affects to be the oneness of "cause" and

2000), and *Hölderlin's Hymn "Der Ister"*, trans. William McNeill and Julia Davis, (Indianapolis and Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

[13]Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, (London and New York: Verso Press, 1999), 18. Cited in the future as *TS*.

[14]I am certainly not alone in making this connection between this laundry list of thinkers including Aristotle, Spinoza, Schelling, Nietzsche, Heidegger and possibly others. For example, Dennis Schmidt explains that what emerges in Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy* "is a sense of freedom akin to what one finds in Spinoza and Schelling; in other words, it is a sense of freedom that is to be thought in proximity to notions of affirmation and love". *Lyrical and Ethical Subjects: Essays on the Periphery of the Word, Freedom, and History*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 169.

> "effect" which intrinsically constitute one's "own" current fluid determination as mode of nature?[15]

To return to the question of the aspect, such freedom is possible only insofar as the human encounters the world via the third kind of knowing, i.e. *under a species of eternity*. As Jeff Bernstein writes, "there is no ontological distinction between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*; rather, the distinction is merely *aspectival*. In this sense, one refers to the same when one refers to God, Nature, or Substance" (*STF*, 101). In other words, the same thing can be taken under the aspect of *natura naturans* or *natura naturata*, and both such conceptions have no true ontological distinction. Both perspectives are necessary from the status of substance/God/nature, but it is only insofar as we engage this triad under the aspect of eternity, i.e., when one inquires into *natura naturans*, that he or she will be able to understand the thought of freedom for Spinoza. The confusion to be avoided here is thus the assertion of the priority, validity, truthfulness, or importance of knowing through imagination, reason, and intellectual intuition. All three of these are integral and necessary in order for the immanent whole to be what it is. It is, however, only through the third that the human can experience his or herself as active and joyous to the highest degree. However, to again follow Spinoza's insistence upon the particularity of the human, let us not forget that "there is no small difference between the gladness by which a drunk is led and the gladness a philosopher possesses" (E3p57s). Thus from a strictly human perspective the desire to evaluate these three types of knowing and privilege one over the others is obvious. This is the force of imagination. The desire to collapse them all together and to eliminate the continuum of difference of the singularities which inhere in nature is the work of reason. Herein lies the necessity of a philosophical life for freedom, as only here do the differences become clear without evaluation in terms of better and worse, merely more or less.

[15] Jeffrey Bernstein, *Spinoza's Thinking of Freedom and Its Reception in Subsequent European Philosophy*, 117. Unpublished dissertation written at Vanderbilt in 1998. Cited, with the author's permission, as *STF* in the future. Professor Bernstein has been of great assistance to me in the composition and revision of this essay.

Unless one arrives at this intuitive relationship with substance one cannot truly understand oneself as part of this causal nexus of substance. To reach such a point necessitates that we shift away from imagination, into reason, and hopefully transfer over into experiencing the world in terms of intellect. Such a shift only takes place insofar as one lives a life on the path of philosophy. But the philosopher will understand the necessity of those who live via imagination and reason as all being part of this organic whole. This path is what conforms with the essence of the human most for Spinoza, as it is here that one encounters the highest joy. "From this kind of knowledge there arises the greatest satisfaction of mind there can be, that is, joy" (E5p32d). Joy is the arrival at a greater sense of perfection, and it is an affect that belongs only to those beings which are necessarily imperfect, incomplete, and in flux. Joy is defined explicitly as a passage, one which can never be finished (E3dII-III). The fact that this joy is necessarily incomplete means that the philosophical path which brings about the highest joy is one which can never be exhausted. This follows from the necessarily moving, shifting, and changing character of nature as very much alive. Perceiving things under the aspect of eternity necessitates the movement of philosophy and it brings the highest joy to those who are predisposed to it. Coming to the awareness of the immanent inherence of my life in all things is the moment at which the human becomes free insofar as they become aware of their necessary place in the whole.