

# Nietzsche and Spinoza

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## §1. Introduction

“Recluse, is that you?”

[*Einsiedler, hab ich dich erkannt?*]

Nietzsche, “To Spinoza” (NF-1884,28[49])

**T**HIS LAST VERSE of Nietzsche’s poem might lead us to imagine a scene wherein Nietzsche encounters Spinoza on the street, at a crosswalk—with perfectly warranted surprise, given that Spinoza died more than one-hundred and fifty years before Nietzsche was born. Adding to this strange sight, let’s imagine further that, despite arriving at the same intersection, Nietzsche has nonetheless approached from the opposite direction. I suggest we keep this image in mind; it will help us in this chapter, as Nietzsche and Spinoza are otherwise not the most obvious philosophers to consider alongside one another, and we must be wary to avoid a danger that Nietzsche himself points to: “He who wants to mediate between two resolute thinkers shows that he is mediocre,” as “making things the same is the sign of weak eyes” (GS 228).

To be sure, a number of readers have interpreted Spinoza as the arch-rationalist, who accordingly takes the Principle of Sufficient Reason more seriously than any other figure in the history of philosophy, and in a manner that is decisive for his robust metaphysics (especially Della Rocca 2008, though see Garber 2015 for criticism). Meanwhile, Nietzsche barely ever references this principle, and makes critical remarks about first philosophy from early on (BVN-1868, 568); in fact, Nietzsche has even been read as a kind of anti-philosopher

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I cite Spinoza according to volume conventions, in Curley’s translation. I reference passages of Nietzsche’s works according to standard English abbreviations clarified in the bibliography, and in these cases make use of recent Cambridge translations. When citing from the *Nachlass*, I translate from the eKGWB=Digital Critical Edition by D’Iorio <[www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB](http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB)>, which is based on and improves upon the earlier edition of the original by Colli and Montinari. BVN=*Briefe von Nietzsche*; NF=*Nachgelassene Fragmente*. I am deeply grateful to Andrew Huddleston, Keith Ansell-Pearson, Stephan Schmid, Jack Stetter, David Wollenberg, and participants in a workshop at the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies in Hamburg for detailed comments on this chapter.

who denies there can be any truth of the matter (de Man 1979, but see Clark 1990). Presumably, it's at least in part for these reasons that detailed treatments of Nietzsche and Spinoza remain relatively uncommon—with only a single widely-cited monograph-length treatment, Wurzer 1975—and that a number of other discussions are suggestive but somewhat loose concerning both philosophical and philological issues, for instance Yovel 2018. While one might expect more work within the Francophone context, given the strong interest in Nietzsche and in Spinoza individually, there are to date relatively few major French-language studies of the two, although, for instance, literature on Spinoza like Deleuze 1988, Ch. 2 at least hints at several affinities with Nietzsche.

Whichever lines of interpretation one favors, there are substantial differences between Nietzsche and Spinoza, some of which I shall return to below. But we must not forget: Nietzsche himself writes in an effusive postcard to Franz Overbeck that “these [differences] are largely the result of differences in era, culture, and science” (BVN-1881, 135). According to Nietzsche, in other words, there is some fundamental kinship between his thinking and that of Spinoza, and we shouldn't allow various disparities, which are for the most part just a result of their having lived at distinct times in distinct places, to distract us from this fact. Nietzsche goes even further still in the postcard, exclaiming that Spinoza is his only precursor; “my loneliness [*Einsamkeit*], which has all too often taken my breath away and made my blood rush as if I were high in the mountains, is at least now a togetherness [*Zweisamkeit*]” (ibid.). Such enthusiasm forces the following pair of questions: What leads Nietzsche to make these claims of kinship? And are they accurate?

One straightforward answer to the former question would be philological in nature. Yovel 2018:541 claims it is “probably after reading Kuno Fischer's book on Spinoza” that Nietzsche composes this crucial note to his friend Franz Overbeck of July 30, 1881; but this assertion is, at best, imprecise. Fischer published widely, including a book carrying the title *Baruch Spinoza's Life and Character* (Fischer 1865a), and yet there is to date no evidence that Nietzsche reads this rather slim text that is based on a single lecture. Nietzsche requests from Overbeck “the volume of Fischer's, on Spinoza” in an earlier letter of July 8, 1881 (BVN-1881, 123). Scandella 2012 convincingly shows, building on Montinari 1980,

that Nietzsche engages at this time with the second part of the first volume of Fischer's wide-ranging *History of Modern Philosophy* in its second edition in particular (Fischer 1865b). This extensive work treats Spinoza over hundreds of pages. Although, as Brobjer 2008:77-82 shows, we can pinpoint other sources for Nietzsche's knowledge of Spinoza, both prior to and following Nietzsche's first study of Fischer—and although we know that Nietzsche attended lectures on Spinoza by Karl Schaarschmidt already in 1865 (Rotter 2019:App I)—we have no direct evidence that Nietzsche ever read Spinoza directly. And we have many reasons to think that Nietzsche's key note to Overbeck follows his encounter with Fischer 1865b. Passages from Spinoza transcribed by Nietzsche at this time, both in German translation and in the Latin original, can be traced directly to that work, which Nietzsche would also consult again several years later.

Nevertheless, while vital, this historical and textual answer to the first of the two questions posed above isn't fully satisfying, as it leaves open what excited Nietzsche so thoroughly about Spinoza's ideas he encountered. Additionally, our philological answer doesn't give us any clues when it comes to the second inquiry posed above, i.e. regarding whether Nietzsche's eager claims of kinship were warranted. Throughout the rest of this chapter, then, my aim is to point to some of the most pressing parallels and tensions between Nietzsche and Spinoza, while also providing an outline of a portion of the literature on the two along the way.

As I will stress again in §5, there are many issues worth considering when it comes to Nietzsche and Spinoza. Yovel 2018:541 goes so far as to say that “Nietzsche makes innumerable direct references to Spinoza.” According to the eKGWB, these explicit references number exactly eighty-one, and naturally I can only discuss some of them in this chapter. First, in §2 and §3, I consider Nietzsche's and Spinoza's views on freedom—a theme of central interest to both thinkers. In §2, I draw from Yonover forthcoming in order to provide an outline of their rejections of one conception of freedom: freedom of the will. In §3, I then consider their positive visions for a very different kind of freedom, which rather consists in self-expression. Next, in §4, I begin by pointing to a further parallel concerning Nietzsche's and Spinoza's critiques of teleological thinking. This, however, allows me to also note at least one major sense in which Nietzsche

departs from Spinoza, namely concerning the lawfulness of nature. Finally, in §5, I stress that further work on Nietzsche and Spinoza is needed, regarding both the topics discussed in this chapter and others. In particular, I point to a methodological affinity that has been overlooked.

## §2. Against freedom of the will

In his letter to Overbeck praising Spinoza, Nietzsche notes that “[t]his most abnormal and lonely thinker is closest to me on precisely *these* matters: he denies freedom of the will, ends, the ethical world order, the unegoistic, and evil” (BVN-1881, 135). The aim of this section is to consider the first in this list, or more specifically: Nietzsche’s and Spinoza’s rejections of the idea that we can produce decisions in an originary manner. Although we may distinguish with Forster 2019:375 other standard features of freedom of the will that must be considered in a broader treatment of the notion, this capacity may be considered its essential characteristic here.

As I discuss in Yonover forthcoming, we can understand Spinoza to be rejecting the idea that we may produce decisions in an originary manner on the basis of his naturalism, i.e. his view that everything plays by the same rules. And his thoroughgoing naturalism can in turn be understood as a consequence of his rationalism. Spinoza formulates his version of the Principle of Sufficient Reason as follows: “For each thing there must be assigned a cause, or reason, both for its existence and for its nonexistence” (E1p11d2; cf. also E1aa2-3). Spinoza’s adherence to this principle leads him not only to determinism (E1p16c1), here the view that everything has its efficient cause, but indeed necessitarianism (E1p33), the view that everything happens necessarily. Only God is the cause of itself (on which see Melamed’s chapter in this volume), and mere possibility is ruled out. Hence the following uncompromising result: “In the mind there is no absolute, or free, will, but the mind is determined to will this or that by a cause which is also determined by another, and this again by another, and so on to infinity” (E2p48; cited in Fischer 1865b, 480 and transcribed from here by Nietzsche in NF-1881,11[193]). One might think that nature proceeds as such—every natural

thing is, again necessarily, caused by some other natural thing that is necessarily caused by yet another, infinitely so—and yet also suppose that *human* beings have the capacity to step out of such a series. But Spinoza considers this kind of thinking to posit a “dominion within a dominion” (E3Pref | II/137), which he contends we ought to reject as incoherent and anthropocentric fantasy. In other words, Spinoza thinks that nature proceeds infinitely, or that there is nothing but nature—and so we may not boast of freedom of the will.

Nietzsche’s naturalism surely plays a major role in his rejection of freedom of the will, too. Although debate concerning the precise character of Nietzsche’s naturalism is ongoing (Janaway 2007:Ch 3 and Leiter 2013), it’s known that he is a critic of the idea that there is a transcendent world, and instead calls for us to “translate humanity back into nature” (BGE 230). I must return in §4 to questions concerning what exactly “nature” may mean for Nietzsche, but meanwhile he clearly thinks that we should rule out the kind of causation and modality which would be needed were human beings in the position to produce decisions in an originary manner. Any “person is necessary, a person is a piece of fate, a person belongs to the whole, a person only *is* in the context of the whole” (TI, “Four Great Errors,” 8; compare the earlier HAH I 106). Nietzsche’s understanding of his contemporaries’ natural scientific findings likely plays a role here; as Emden 2014 shows, Nietzsche took especial interest in the life sciences. But his intensely negative verdict on what the notion of freedom of the will *does* for us is even more crucial in his rejection of it. Among other things, this poisonous notion assists in assigning guilt (GM II 4, also TI, “Four Great Errors,” 7) and helps in acquitting God (NF-1887, 10[150] speculates about Kant’s “scandalous logic” that would get the “*ens perfectum*” off the hook). Most generally, it allows many to construe “weakness itself [...] as an *accomplishment*” (GM I 13). This and more leads Nietzsche to state with characteristic nonchalance that “the will does not do anything anymore, and so it does not explain anything anymore either—it just accompanies processes, but it can be absent as well” (TI, “Four Great Errors,” 3). In this passage, Nietzsche seems to leave open whether the will determines, but in an unimportant sense since it is itself determined, or is simply causally inert and even absent. This only stresses how confident he is that there’s no such thing as freedom of the will. Yet we do have plenty of evidence that Nietzsche



favors the latter view just described, which is epiphenomenalist in character, e.g. A 14 (Leiter 2007).

Nietzsche doesn't come to his naturalism and his practical commitments via the Principle of Sufficient Reason. It's clear that he doesn't arrive at his views by restricting self-causation to God either. Like Arthur Schopenhauer, Nietzsche rejects as wholly absurd the notion of a *causa sui*, less an idea than a "piece of nonsense" with which "humanity's excessive pride has got itself profoundly and horribly entangled," and "with a courage greater than [that of Baron] Münchhausen," i.e. the fictional hero who claimed to pull both himself and his horse out of a swamp by his own hair (BGE, "Prejudices," 21). Yet, despite taking an alternative route, Nietzsche ends up at the same street corner as Spinoza, emphatically rejecting freedom of the will.

### §3. For freedom as self-determination

Nietzsche and Spinoza can then rightly be called incompatibilists concerning freedom of the will: a faculty that would enable us to produce decisions in an ordinary manner can't be reconciled with the rules of the game as we should understand them. According to both, we are subject to strong determination and necessity that excludes what Nietzsche once calls "freedom of the will' in the superlative metaphysical sense" (ibid.). Additionally, freedom of the will seems to Nietzsche thoroughly suspect on practical grounds, which can also give us reason to reject something (ibid., 4). Yet, despite all of this, it's evident that Nietzsche and Spinoza each have a pressing interest in some kind of freedom nonetheless.

Spinoza is highly critical of freedom *of the will*, but already the seventh definition of his magnum opus pins down what it really is for a thing to be free (it "exists from the necessity of its nature alone," E1d7); and to then turn to the end of that work: its fifth, final part is explicitly dedicated to nothing less than "Human Freedom" (II/277). Still more complicated, Nietzsche clarifies his hope that, if "someone sees through the boorish naiveté of this famous concept of 'free will,'" they will then "carry their 'enlightenment' a step further and [...] rid

their mind of the reversal of this misconceived concept of ‘free will’: I mean the ‘un-free will’” (BGE, “Prejudices,” 21, translation altered; see also A 15). Among other things, in the background of this elusive passage is Nietzsche’s wish that we not wallow and resign just because we can’t produce decisions in an ordinary manner. This wish is equally evident in Nietzsche’s writing “for free spirits” (as the subtitle of HAH already indicates); his praising the “sovereign individual,” that “ripest fruit” who is a “master of the *free will*” (GM II 2); and so on. Where the case of Spinoza is more straightforward, insofar as he maintains a distinction that I have followed between freedom of the will or *libera voluntas* and freedom more broadly or *libertas*, however, things are somewhat complicated in Nietzsche—and perhaps particularly interesting for that reason. Since Nietzsche doesn’t stick to any such terminological break, commentators have proposed various ways to clarify what we can now see are merely apparent tensions between passages wherein Nietzsche speaks of “freedom of the will” dismissively or then gushingly. Gemes 2006:326 introduces a distinction between “deserts free will” and “agency free will” while noting Nietzsche’s “deliberately confusing caginess” in this context (though this is not the stronger, questionable proposal by Williams 1994:238, according to which Nietzsche’s works are “booby-trapped” for interpreters). Similarly, one might consider speaking of ‘freedom of the will in the higher sense,’ in contradistinction to what we could then call ‘freedom of the will in the pejorative sense,’ echoing a clarificatory move concerning morality made by Leiter 2002:58f. I propose, however, that it’s best to simply leave the terminology of ‘freedom of the will’ with the associations we have given it thus far, having understood it namely as a faculty that would produce decisions in an ordinary manner. We ought to instead then speak of ‘freedom’ in a way that can refer to something else. Yet what does this ‘something else’ look like, for Nietzsche and for Spinoza?

As Della Rocca 2008:187 puts it, for Spinoza “freedom is simply the absence of external determination together with [...] the presence of internal determination.” Given Spinoza’s commitment to the Principle of Sufficient Reason, determination abounds. But, we might say, not all determination is created equal. One is free and *active* when one is necessarily determined, and clearly not by one’s freedom of will, in some manner that can be considered in line with one’s nature; and one is



compelled and *passive* when determined in any other manner. Some interpreters of Nietzsche draw a comparable distinction between the active and the reactive (Deleuze 1983:61 and Richardson 1996:39-44). Commentators also emphasize the importance of maintaining a proper hierarchy of drives (Gemes 2006) and of creating values (Janaway 2006). Although Nietzsche likely departs from Spinoza concerning the latter—since for Spinoza the goal must be to express our natures, which seem given—there is thus significant harmony on several other issues, which allows Rutherford 2011 to successfully develop a detailed account of Nietzsche’s positive vision of freedom as a “philosophical ideal” that stands in a tradition prominently featuring Spinoza as well as Stoics like Epictetus (whom I set aside here). Rutherford identifies three primary elements of the kind of freedom that these figures are interested in.

The first primary element is consciousness of the power that one has in cases of active determination (ibid.:525-29). But in what manner might one accomplish this consciousness, let alone achieve this kind of determination? One may rightly wonder how to get things up and running here, and whether Nietzsche’s suggested approach can be reconciled with Spinoza’s. The ideal of freedom discussed in the *Ethics* is thoroughly intellectualist, involving even particularly a cognitive relationship to God (on which see Carlisle’s chapter in this volume); meanwhile Nietzsche is known for his disparaging claims about reason, and rejects any role for God, including also Spinoza’s pan(en)theistic account of the divine. Still, despite epistemological differences, both think in any case that we must know things about ourselves as well as the world in order to realize freedom, and knowledge thus constitutes a second major element of Nietzsche’s and Spinoza’s positive visions of freedom (Rutherford 2011:529-32). Finally, given a world characterized by necessity, a third distinct element is a significant association with affirmation and fate (ibid.:532-35). I have already mentioned that for Spinoza a thing is free when it “exists and acts from the *necessity* of its own nature”; Nietzsche meanwhile cites the example of artists, who know “only too well that precisely when they no longer do anything ‘voluntarily’ but do everything of *necessity*, their feeling of freedom, subtlety, full power, of creative placing, disposing, and forming reaches its peak” (Ep. 58 and BGE 213, respectively; emphases mine).

In short, Nietzsche and Spinoza praise a comparable kind of freedom characterized especially by the three primary elements outlined above—a kind of freedom that is thus quite different from freedom of the will, which, as we have seen in §2, each rejects. Thus far, it seems that we can answer our second question posed in the introduction, concerning whether Nietzsche was right to consider himself a kind of Spinozist, affirmatively: Nietzsche was correct that he has tendencies comparable to Spinoza’s, even if he justifies these tendencies differently or departs from Spinoza in various ways regarding these matters (Ioan 2017), and even if he is much more critical Spinoza’s views on other fronts, one of which I shall discuss in some detail within the next section.

#### §4. Teleology and “*Chaos sive Natura*”

Across the two prior sections, it has become clear that Nietzsche and Spinoza develop particular accounts of the world that may be said to have a theoretical character in order to motivate their views on what we might consider to be a practical matter: freedom. And although Nietzsche and Spinoza might understand the status of their more theoretical claims differently (and Nietzsche also thinks that the practical perspective is itself of great justificatory significance), it’s clear that both intend for their primarily theoretical accounts of things to play a role when it comes to how we think about practical matters. We must now consider aspects of these largely theoretical accounts concerning nature and the world in greater detail.

As is evident from the text cited at the beginning of §2 (and also NF-1884,26[432]), Nietzsche is well aware of an affinity with Spinoza in criticizing teleology, i.e. thinking according to which things are ‘for’ something. Nietzsche reads and excerpts from Fischer 1865b:233-7, which discusses Spinoza’s account of explanation from divine providence as taking refuge in the “asylum of ignorance [*asylum ignorantiae*],” a locution that Nietzsche references twice in notes dealing with Spinoza (NF-1881,11[194] and NF-1886,7[4]). Scholars debate how far Spinoza’s critique of teleology extends beyond his critique of divine providence (Bennett 1984:Ch 9 claims a comprehensive denial of

teleology, and commentators like Schmid 2011:Ch 4 propose a more measured critique); but it seems implausible that Spinoza wants to or even could go as far as Nietzsche.

Spinoza writes in the first appendix of the *Ethics* that at least one portion of the foremost “prejudice” to undermine is the idea that God “directs all things to some certain end” (II/78). Interestingly, as far as the text itself is concerned, this is one of three passages in E1App marked in the only extant volumes of Spinoza’s works that were held by Goethe (Yonover 2018:287n33). Nietzsche was attracted to Goethe’s natural-philosophical writings from early on (Gardner 2019). Nietzsche also conceived of Goethe as a model of freedom, for instance in TI, “Skirmishes,” 49, often mentioning him alongside Spinoza, as in HAH II 408. Further work on the three thinkers is needed; but meanwhile, the idea that Spinoza develops in the above passage from his first appendix—concerning the misguided belief that God “directs things to some certain end”—is that we must rule out divine providence insofar as we have ruled out in Part I of Spinoza’s *Ethics* any anthropocentric conception of God. According to such conceptions, God orders the world with humans in mind. Yet according to Spinoza, this kind of thinking “turns nature completely upside down,” “[f]or what is really a cause, it considers an effect, and conversely” (II/80)—ideas, and even locutions, which Nietzsche will later echo when he criticizes “confusing cause and effect” as “the genuine destruction of reason” and worse (TI, “Four Great Errors,” 1). Spinoza thinks that mathematics, “which is concerned not with ends, but only with the essences and properties of figures,” gave us a different standard of truth (likewise marked in Goethe’s copy of Spinoza’s works, and noted by Nietzsche in NF-1886,7[4]).

While there can therefore be no doubt that Spinoza rejects divine providence, Nietzsche surely goes further, once arguing that “[t]he total character of the world [...] is for all eternity chaos, not in the sense of a lack of necessity but of a lack of order, organization, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever else our aesthetic anthropomorphisms are called” (GS 109). Instead of some direction, we are left with “chance, chance, chance,” even when it comes to human action in the case of this passage (NF-1880,1[63]). Nietzsche mocks Moses Mendelssohn, “this archangel of precocity,” for trying to interpret Spinoza ‘charitably’ on matters of

teleology (NF-1881,11[137] responding to Fischer 1865b:562). This seems to indicate Nietzsche's thinking that Spinoza goes further than many in carrying out a critique of teleology. Nevertheless, Nietzsche ultimately still thinks that Spinoza doesn't go far enough, such that residues of orthodoxy remain. In brief, "the old God still lives" (NF-1885,36[15]). Nietzsche's dual naturalistic challenge is that we not only "naturalize humanity" but also "completely de-deify nature" (GS 109; emphasis removed). Arguably it's here that Nietzsche most markedly diverges from Spinoza—albeit armed with Spinoza's own commitment to a critique of anthropocentrism. According to Spinoza's naturalism, all things are "natural things, which follow the common laws of nature" (E3Pref | II/137). Curiously, Nietzsche once writes in the context of a discussion of his positive vision of freedom, perhaps a bit too eagerly, that in order to "become who we are [...] we must become the best learners and discoverers of everything that is lawful and necessary in the world: we must become physicists in order to be able to be creators in this sense" (GS 335; emphasis removed). This will easily line up with our stress in the prior section on the importance of a kind of consciousness and knowledge in attaining freedom. But Nietzsche's invocation of the "lawfulness" of the world is in tension with a number of other passages in his writings that point to nature as something much more dynamic. Perhaps Nietzsche thereby achieves something properly chaotic in his own work. His more characteristic warning earlier on in the same text reads: "Let us beware of saying that there are laws in nature. There are only necessities" (GS 109).

In any case, Nietzsche clarifies this position on the unlawfulness of nature with reference to Spinoza specifically, for instance under the splendid motto "*Chaos sive Natura*" that obviously revises Spinoza's "*Deus sive Natura*" (NF-1882,21[3] or NF-1881,11[197] and E4p4d, respectively). Given such allusions, it's plausible that Nietzsche even works out his position on these matters in dialogue with Spinoza. Nietzsche similarly claims in a later notebook entry that "the belief in *causae* [causes] falls with the belief in τέλη [ends] (contra Spinoza and his causalism)" (NF-1885,2[83]). Again, Nietzsche's idea here is that Spinoza's critique of teleology is on the right track, and yet we must advance it. For Nietzsche in these radical passages, not only does teleological thinking erroneously inject human rumor into nature, but so does thinking in terms of the

law that everything has its cause—final, efficient, or otherwise. Nietzsche seems to attribute to himself the challenging position that everything “follows a ‘necessary’ and ‘calculable’ course, although not because laws are dominant in it, but rather because laws are totally *absent*” (BGE, “Prejudices,” 22). While Nietzsche may or may not have known that Spinoza prefigures this view to some degree insofar as he issues strong criticism of any notion of God or nature anthropomorphized as a “prince” that issues commands (e.g. TTP IV 27), Nietzsche could in any case want to object that Spinoza remains committed to at least one revered prince nonetheless: the Principle of Sufficient Reason, if not also laws of nature more broadly. Of course, in departing from Spinoza here, Nietzsche departs from an aspect of Spinoza’s positive vision of freedom discussed in the previous section, too. Thus, although it’s not possible to discuss these details at present, Nietzsche seems to position himself differently albeit on the same spectrum as Spinoza in the following appeal: “No more joy in certainty, but rather in uncertainty [/] no more ‘cause and effect’ but rather the continually creative” (NF-1884,26[284]). In short, while Nietzsche can, like Spinoza, be said to have a crucial practical interest in understanding, what’s understood is clearly of another ‘nature.’

## §5. Conclusion

There are plenty of additional and equally fascinating topics one might consider in the context of Nietzsche and Spinoza, including their coinciding accounts of the categories of good and evil, morality (Wollenberg 2013), and the passions. Significant work remains to be done on Nietzsche’s and Spinoza’s commitments to political realism, too. Nietzsche’s indication that he has plans for a “*Tractatus politicus*” has largely been neglected, perhaps because this Latin is left out of some English translations of the relevant text; but it directly echoes Spinoza’s work known under the same name, which likewise went unfinished (see NF-1887,11[54] for a draft of Nietzsche’s “Preface”). Ample vicious remarks in which Nietzsche criticizes aspects of Spinoza’s thought—and person—have also gone unnoted in this chapter. One may explore, for instance, Nietzsche’s account of the geometrical order of Spinoza’s *Ethics*, i.e. the “hocus pocus of a mathematical



form used by Spinoza to arm and outfit his philosophy [...] and thus, from the very start, to strike terror into the heart of the attacker who would dare to cast a glance at the unconquerable maiden and Pallas Athena” (BGE, “Prejudices,” 5; though compare the earlier NF-1872,19[47]).

One less obvious and rather urgent point deserving of further investigation is that Nietzsche and Spinoza both dedicate a great deal of etiological attention to perspectives they consider misguided. Presumably, the most important reason this has been overlooked is that Nietzsche never explicitly writes about his metaphilosophical affinities with Spinoza here. But notably, Spinoza entirely evades one of Nietzsche’s major criticisms of much of philosophy. As Huddleston 2019:145 puts this criticism, Nietzsche is troubled by what he sees to be a “single-minded concern with the timeless truths about what really is the case,” as such dogmatic thinking “repudiates, as unworthy of truly philosophical inquiry, this whole other range of interesting truths about why people come to believe what they do on these issues.” Nietzsche thus takes a strong interest in mistaken ways of thinking—but so does Spinoza, indeed starting already in his earliest writings, and continuing into his later texts, including of course the political works (e.g., CM II 2; Ep. 58; and TTP I 30, TP I 4, respectively). As emphasized above, we have no reason to think that Nietzsche ever directly read any of these directly. But as I have discussed in Yonover forthcoming, Nietzsche’s key secondary source discussed Spinoza’s etiological tendencies (Fischer 1865b:453 and 458), and Nietzsche was definitely familiar with Spinoza’s account of the origins of our erroneous belief in freedom of the will as developed in Ep. 58, since this was mentioned by another source familiar to and, in the case of the relevant page, even annotated with excitement by Nietzsche (Brobjer 2008:159n105). Nietzsche thus often notes in a Spinozistic spirit that we aren’t just “mired in error” but are “drawn necessarily into” it. He even comparably, if coincidentally, references the example of “the movement of the sun, where our eye is a constant advocate for error” (TI, “Reason,” 5; for Spinoza on our misleading sense of sight and the sun, see e.g. E2p35s). Although Nietzsche is sometimes understood to be offering debunking arguments that would show some perspective to be impoverished on the basis of its origins—which Spinoza certainly doesn’t attempt, and which many philosophers are wary of—Queloz & Cueni 2019 powerfully



argue that this is significantly a misconception, and thus make further room for consideration of Nietzsche alongside Spinoza here. As above, Nietzsche might come to etiology for reasons that are not Spinoza's. But in any case, Nietzsche again ends up running into Spinoza insofar as he likewise labors to account for how we have gone wrong, rather than just show that we are wrong, let alone that we are wrong because our views have some unflattering origin (see e.g. TI, "Four Great Errors," 4-6 for an example of etiological analysis that isn't meant to debunk, and which should therefore be of broad philosophical interest).

This is all to say: there are strong historical and philosophical reasons to work out the relationship between Nietzsche and Spinoza as regards etiology and numerous other matters—even if they come to their interests, or the imaginary street corner with which we began, in unique ways. Furthermore, we can pursue such work without "making [different] things the same," heeding Nietzsche's warning to avoid the trap that I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

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