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LUNDS UNIVERSITET
Humanistiska och teologiska fakulteterna

A Comprehension of Spinoza's God

Through the Dichotomy of Labels

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LUNDS UNIVERSITET | CENTRUM FÖR TEOLOGI OCH RELIGIONSVETENSKAP

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Abstract:

The 17th century philosopher Spinoza is known for his concept of God as One Substance, God or Nature and therefore considered as a monist and categorized as a naturalist. He has been labeled an atheist and God-intoxicated man, as well as a determinist and pantheist, which I perceive to be dichotomies. The problem, as I see it, is that Spinoza's philosophy and concept of God has mainly been interpreted through a dualistic mind-set, traditional to philosophers and theologians of the West, but Spinoza has a monistic worldview, and this has consequences in regards to the comprehension of what Spinoza's concept of God entails and what a relationship "with" God implies. The labels panentheist and necessitarianist are discussed and the label of theologian argued. The thesis methodology is constructive because the purpose is to provide a theoretical foundation that has the potential to be applied in dialogues about God between the vast varieties of believers and non-believers alike, as well as across boundaries of contradicting worldviews and academic disciplines, and this focus on functionalism is inspired by a theory that calls for the furthering of inter-disciplinary dialogue between the subject areas philosophy of religion and theology specifically. My personal worldview is that there might well be One Substance, God or Nature, but that does not necessarily mean that there is one truth that is valid, but rather that all truth claims may be of value. The thesis therefore provides yet another lens through which one can view and relate to the attitude of there being an "Other" or "others."

Keywords: Spinoza's God, Atheist, God-intoxicated man, Pantheist, Determinist, Panentheist, Necessitarianist.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1:1 Prologue

When asked the question "do you believe in God?" I find myself answer, "I believe in Spinoza's God." The philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) has been labeled both an atheist and a *God-intoxicated man*,[1] which is a dichotomy that intrigues me. After reading *Spinoza – A Very Short Introduction,* by Roger Scruton, I realized that my intrigue was based on a resonance with Spinoza's view of God as One Substance. I think this view of God, for me, stems from the fact that I grew up in Japan, a Buddhist country; for six years I attended an International school, which was Catholic; my father had his office at the only Scandinavian meeting place in Kobe, which was the Christian Seamen's Church. While living on that side of the planet we also traveled extensively to countries that introduced me to the images and public practices of Hinduism. As a teenager I lived in, what I perceived, one of the world's most liberal thinking countries, namely the Netherlands, where I was a boarder in a Jewish family. In other words, I have been around many of the world religions since childhood without any specific indoctrination. I have learned religions through relations, so to speak, and it never occurred to me that they had different gods or rather that the one and only God did not cater to all of them. To my mind as a child it was obvious that the world believed that there was a God and I took for granted that there was one God, which all the different religions translated as to fit the sensibilities in their culture. Just as food was food and houses were houses, but they tasted and looked different in different places, so too God was one substance in an infinite amount of varied ways of extension, as Spinoza would put it in his terminology. I find it fascinating that Spinoza's God as one view, referred to as monism, can be considered to be so contradictory to the one and only God view, referred to as monotheism, so as to consider the one who holds a belief in Spinoza's God an atheist. After having studied Spinoza's concept of God, and realizing that we seemingly have the same concept of God, I have become aware that the God I believe in is not considered to be God by the Abrahamic religions. But, even though I do not adhere to any of the three monotheistic religions specifically I have never thought of myself as an atheist. My reason for studying philosophy of religion is thus, in a sense, to identify my own belief in relation to all the believers and non-believers in this world and thereby understand the God that I perceive I know and am in a constant constellation with.

[1] A quote made by the German poet Novalis (1772–1801) and used by Goethe (1749–1832) as a Spinoza label.

1:2 Problem and Purpose

For millennia, people have studied scriptures as the Word of God and as words about God, argued for the existence or non-existence of God, and philosophized on what God may or may not be. There are various religious beliefs and there are theistic, deistic and atheistic world views, but it always seems to come down to an either/or perspective. When it comes to the topic of God the duality pertains to either a transcendent and personal Being or an immanent and impersonal being.

Transcendence means "God's apartness from elevation above the world", and immanence means "the presence or indwelling of God in the world."[2] Philosophically the concept that God is separate and beyond the world can be considered a dualistic view stemming from Plato, whereas God as resident in the world can be regarded as a pantheistic view as conceived by the Stoics. Within science the concept of transcendence, as the opposite of immanence, is not used because even if it can be argued that there is a dualistic worldview that separates mind and matter, at least in the West, the natural sciences refer to the world as one cosmos, which can be argued to be a monistic worldview, meaning that there is ultimately only one thing, or only one kind of thing.[3] Within religious studies, though, transcendence and immanence are fundamental concepts,[4] and since Spinoza was accused of atheism it is therefore understandable that his concept God or Nature as One Substance was considered as monism and not monotheism, and therefore labeled as a monist.

The problem as I see it is the constant gap, or trap, of the either/or perspective, which I perceive has its foundation in this dualistic worldview, and since Spinoza's philosophy and concept of God has mainly been interpreted through this dualistic mind-set, traditional to philosophers and theologians of the West, it has provided him with labels such as atheist and monist, but also as pantheist and determinist. I argue that for these labels to correspond with Spinoza's philosophy they need to be understood through dualism, but as already stated, Spinoza has a monistic worldview, and this has consequences in regards to the comprehension of what Spinoza's concept of God entails and what a relationship "with" God implies, which in turn makes the labels in regards to Spinoza problematic.

[2] McGriffert 1940, 167.
[3] Craig 2000, 589.
[4] Gregersen 2013, 62f.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate a variety of interpretations of Spinoza's philosophy and concept of God so as to identify these understandings and to analyze the foundations, as well as the consequences of the labels. The reason being that Spinoza's philosophy has much to offer both the religious and secularized societies of the globalized, multicultural, inequality ridden and ecologically challenged world that we live in today; but, because of the labels that have been placed on him he is boxed in and most often set aside.

Through this thesis I will provide a theoretical foundation that has the potential to be constructively applied in dialogues about God between the vast varieties of believers and non-believers alike, as well as across boundaries of contradicting worldviews and academic disciplines. This focus on functionalism is inspired by a theory that there might well be One Substance, God or Nature, but that does not necessarily mean that there is one truth that is valid, but rather that all truth claims are of value, even if this entails the risk of being regarded as relativism. The thesis therefore provides yet another lens through which one can view and relate to the attitude of there being an "Other" or "others."

My inquiry thus pertains to if re-labeling Spinoza will make Spinoza's philosophy of use today. The main questions are:

- Is it possible to constructively expand the understanding of what Spinoza's concept of God means by deconstructing the labels that have been placed on him and his philosophy? And if so then:
- How is that comprehension of value for the furthering of the subject area of theology and philosophy of religion today?

The questions that need to be addressed along the way are:

a) What implications do the labels pantheist and determinist have on the understanding of Spinoza's concept of God?
b) Is that understanding altered if the labels of panentheist and necessitarianist are applied?
c) How is Spinoza understood during the 21st century?
d) How *can* Spinoza be comprehended?
e) Why is it that Spinoza can be considered both an atheist and a God-intoxicated man?

1:3 Theory and Methodology

Kevin Schilbrack, at Western Carolina University at the Department of Philosophy and Religion, has written the book *Philosophy and the Study of Religion: A Manifesto* (2014). The traditional philosophy of religion, according to Schilbrack, has predominantly entailed the study of the Christian creed and the God of the Bible, and his manifesto is concerned with a critique of the existing traditions regarding the research field philosophy of religion. In other words, Schilbrack's intention is to expand the research area's boundaries, and this need is perceived to stem from the fact that many philosophers are no longer framed by the traditions of Western thought and monotheism. Schilbrack argues that in this age of multi-cultural globalization it could be appropriate to expand and become more inter-disciplinary. He by no means alludes to that the research of the classical subjects are redundant, and he also does not imply that all researchers must expand their horizons, but rather he argues for the benefit of the research field as a whole if it became more inclusive in its methods and research area instead of obtaining an exclusive demarcation based on what can be argued to be normative judgement.

Schilbrack's aim with the book is clear; it suggests that the task of philosophy of religion should grow to include the study of the philosophical aspects of all religious traditions and since not all religions have texts, philosophy of religion should go beyond the limits of analyzing based on only written material. This would then inevitably bring philosophy of religion into the realm of lived religion, which in turn includes people and thereby both subjectivity and experiences. Since Schilbrack wants to break new ground by rearranging the boundaries, he also delineates his understanding of the difference between what is religion and what is not religion. Religion, to be studied by philosophy of religion, is, according to Schilbrack, the embodied and social expression of belief that is public and not only the private thoughts and doctrinal beliefs that have been written down.[5] In other words, he wants to bring the research area, philosophy of religion, out of the head of a few and into the world of all people. This pragmatic definition of religion then includes cultural phenomena as religious since cultural identification unifies people as a group, as well as providing a framework for the individual identity. Religion is also based on what Schilbrack calls *superempirical realities,* with which he means that which is claimed to exist independently of empirical evidence, because belief in supernatural beings or a transcendent God is a common notion as

[5] Schilbrack 2014, chapters 5,7.

a criterion for that which is considered religious. Schilbrack also argues that being religious entails so much more than the substantive-ontological aspect of belief because there are non-theistic religions and there are theistic worldviews that are not necessarily considered religious, and who decides which is which?[6]

Schilbrack's critique of the traditional philosophy of religion is not only that it is *narrow* because it only revolves around a few select religions that pertain to the monotheistic God; it is also *intellectualist* since it does not concern itself with the variety of practices within a religion, but only deals with the doctrines of a religion; and furthermore it is *insular* since it does not draw from or contribute to other areas of religious studies.[7] In this thesis I can be accused of being *narrow,* since I do not relate Spinoza's philosophy to any other religions than the three Abrahamic religions, which I have chosen to do because the focus is on understanding the difference between a monistic view of God in comparison to a monotheistic view of God so as to comprehend Spinoza's God. My method can also be accused of being *intellectualist,* even though I do not discuss the three religions varied doctrines, I do not concern myself with the variety of views expressed through the three separate religions traditional practices either. The focus is solely on Spinoza's philosophy of God in regards to the monotheistic doctrine of God that is mutual to the three Abrahamic religions, namely that God is the one and only God. I do, though, perceive that I can escape being accused of being *insular* since I have chosen a constructive method and include references to a variety of fields both within and without the traditional frame of religious studies. This thesis is thus directed towards an inter-disciplinary dialogue and not an inter-religious dialogue.

Schilbrack argues for the crossing of boundaries through the study of the embodiment of religion. My purpose is not to cross boundaries by discussing God as seen through different religious traditions or ritual practices so as to bring people into the mix. However, this study, within philosophy of religion, does meet Schilbrack's criteria for going outside the realm of the monotheistic religions, as well as dealing with a theistic worldview not considered to belong within the realm of religion. He also perceives that the rehabilitation of religious metaphysics is one of the central philosophical problems for the future of philosophy of religion. With this he questions whether metaphysical claims within different religions can be

[6] Schilbrack 2014, chapters 5,7.
[7] Shilbrack 2014, chapters 1,3,4.

considered "objects" for rational cognitive analysis. This may seem as a dichotomy but, as already mentioned, this dichotomy intrigues me, as also my B.A. thesis *Spinoza: A Rational Mystic* (2011) exemplifies. I perceive that my continued interest in Spinoza and his philosophy of God as One Substance can be of value in this process of rehabilitation that Schilbrack requests. The way I intend to include the embodiment of religion concept that Schilbrack argues philosophy of religion needs is through Spinoza's monistic immanence perspective of God or Nature. In regards to the issue of religious metaphysics I intend to argue that Spinoza's philosophy provides the possibility of cognitive analysis of metaphysical claims through the concept of God as One Substance.

As I understand Schilbrack's *Manifesto* and theory they demand change, but thereby not implying throwing the baby out with the bath water. What is at stake is what I would call the attitude of absolutes, meaning that it is not the content but the relational movement within the subject areas theology and philosophy of religion, in regards to the concept of change, that is the issue. Another word for change is process, meaning "a series of changes that happen naturally,"[8] and the position of Process Theology is that everything is constantly changing. Process Theology can also be considered as both theology and philosophy and therefore hypothetically be a common ground necessary for Schilbrack's demand for change not becoming devalued as arbitrary relativism.

Hermeneutics is the foundational method I use in regards to Spinoza's own texts. Historical context analysis is only briefly touched upon before embarking on a reception analysis of early Spinoza scholarship for the purpose of identifying the categorization and labeling of Spinoza in the 18th century. Concept analysis is then applied to deconstruct the labels and critical analysis used to argue alternative labels. A comparative method is used to highlight the discrepancy between different mind-sets, as well as to identify what contemporary Spinoza scholarship has contributed. Through discourse analysis I relate other philosophers' theories with Spinoza's philosophy so as to convey my own approach and interpretation of Spinoza's concept of God. A close reading of an understanding of Spinoza's God as understood by a famous scientist outside the official realm of philosophy of religion and theology is then undertaken. The methodology is constructive because the purpose is to provide a theoretical foundation for practical use for the furthering of inter-disciplinary

[8] Merriam-webster.com/dictionary/process (21 December 2015).

dialogue between philosophy of religion and theology. These are not methods of deductive reasoning for the sake of verification, but an inductive, or rather an abductive approach since it allows for plausibility.

Even though one of the main methods of the thesis is concept analysis I have chosen to define the terminology analyzed along the way at its different points of appropriateness instead of having a terminology section in this introduction.

1:4 Material

The main primary material is Spinoza's own work *Ethics* in the 2001 English translation by W.H. White. References to the *Ethics* (E) will be by part (I-IV), axiom (a), corollary (c), definition (d), proposition (p), and scholium (s), and appendix (app), placed in the flow of the text and not as footnotes.

The article "The Secret Religion of Germany: Christian Piety and the Pantheist Controversy", by B.A. Gerrish, provides an insight into the 18th century Spinoza scholarship. Gilles Deleuze's book *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* and Arne Naess article "Spinoza and Ecology" is the secondary material that provides the foundation of the previous Spinoza research that is relevant for the thesis. This because it is in line with the contemporary philosophers engaged in Spinoza scholarship that I choose to present, namely, Hasana Sharp with her book *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization* and Fredrika Spindler with her book *Spinoza: multitud, affekt, kraft,* which is in Swedish. Since Spindler's book *Spinoza: Multitude, Affects, Power* is only available in Swedish, the English translations presented in the running of the text are my own and the original Swedish version of the quotes used can be found in the footnotes.

All Bible references are from the King James Version published by the Cambridge University Press. Other primary material used for theoretical purposes are Sallie McFague's book *The Body of God*, Kevin Shilbrack's book *Philosophy of the Study of Religion: A Manifesto* and Jan-Olav Henriksen's book *Teologi i dag*, which is in Norwegian and the title can be translated as *Theology Today*.

Secondary material, in regards to philosophies other than Spinoza's, such as Catherine Keller's book *On the Mystery* about Process Theology and Alessandra Tanesisi's book

Wittgenstein: A Feminist Interpretation about Wittgenstein's Theory of Language and Christian Berner's article "Understanding Understanding: Schleiermacher" about Schleiermacher's Art of Understanding are used to convey the approach of the thesis. Max Jammer's book *Einstein and Religion* is also foundational to the analysis of the dichotomy of the labels atheist and God-intoxicated man placed in regards to the one and the same person.

The critical voices are heard through Alexander Douglas article "Was Spinoza a Naturalist?", Edwin Curley's article "Man and Nature in Spinoza", Donald Bloesch article "Process Theology in Reformed Perspective" and Hermann Cohen's book *Spinoza on the State and Religion, Judaism and Christianity*.

1:5 Research Overview

Spinoza scholarship had a high point during the 18th century German Idealism, which entailed the so-called Pantheism Controversy.[9] Spinoza scholarship amongst philosophers also flourished with the emergence of History of Philosophy as its own discipline in the 19th century. During the 20th century, between the World Wars, Harvard Professor of Jewish Studies, H.A Wolfson, had the audacity to introduce Spinoza scholarship undertaken through a Jewish interpretation within the frame of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement.[10] After World War II phenomenology and existentialism were the major focus of academic philosophers within European Continental Philosophy, but in the late 1960s Spinoza scholarship emerged yet again, this time in France with focus on rationalism instead of German idealism. England does not have an established school of Spinoza scholarship; the foundational English translations of Spinoza's works are by the American Professor of Philosophy Edwin Curley. Today Spinoza scholarship can be found in Europe, United States, South America, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. [11]

The two Spinoza scholars most relevant as stepping stones for the contemporary Spinoza scholarship referred to in this thesis are Arne Naess (1912-2009), here in regards to the subject of nature, and Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995), here in regards to the hypothesis that Spinoza's philosophy, although highly theoretical, is of a practical nature for human beings.

[9] For further information see Gerrish 1987, 437-455.
[10] For further information see Wolfson [1934] 1983.
[11] van Bunge 2011, 362-329.

1:5:1 Arne Naess

Arne Naess, a Norwegian philosopher, activist and founder of Deep Ecology that was part of the Green Movement of the 1980s, is one of the most famous philosophers that based his own philosophy on Spinoza's concept of God as *Deus sive Natura*, God or Nature. Naess' philosophy entails the view that nature as a whole has ecological value for its own sake and is not only of value for humans because of its productive purposes. In his article "Spinoza and Ecology" Naess writes that:

> The nature conceived by field ecologists is not the passive, dead, value-neutral nature of mechanistic science, but akin to the *Deus sive Natura* of Spinoza. All-inclusive, creative (as *natura naturans*), infinitely divers, and alive in the broad sense of panpsychism, but also manifesting a structure, the so-called laws of nature.[12]

Naess goes on to state that nature does not have goals, and neither Spinoza nor ecologists have any use for the value-dualism of body and soul or matter and mind because the development of "higher" forms of life, so to speak, does not automatically degrade "lower" forms.[13] What Naess thereby means is that the ontology for both Spinoza and ecologists is that:

> There is a network of cause-effect relations connecting everything with everything [...] every being strives to preserve and develop its specific essence or nature. Every essence is a manifestation of God or Nature. There are infinite ways in which Nature thus expresses itself. And there are infinite kinds of beings expressing God or Nature.[14]

Naess claims that no other philosopher has more to offer in articulating what he perceives to be the attitudes of ecology.[15] He explains this by stating that, even though every being has a unique essence, it is understanding the union of the whole that is of utmost benefit since virtue increases with increased perspective which, in turn, develops understanding; and since understanding expresses itself as an act, according to Naess understanding of Spinoza's

[12] Naess 1977a, 46.
[13] Naess 1977a, 47.
[14] Naess 1977a, 48. Naess' declaration is based on Spinoza's *Ethics*, part 1, proposition 36: "Nothing exists from whose nature an effect does not follow" and Ethics part VI, proposition 24: "The more we understand individual objects, the more we understand God."
[15] Naess 1977a, 54.

philosophy, it correlates with the ecologists study of the processes in nature without framing it as "behaviorism."[16]

1:5:2 Gilles Deleuze

A Spinoza scholar, that has placed Spinoza in an *ethological* frame rather than an ecological one, is the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze. Ethology pertains to the behavior of animals, and in this frame Homo sapiens are included, in other words, Deleuze rejects the ontological distinction between animal and human bodies. This, in turn, can be considered as a part of an ecological frame, but Deleuze´s understanding of Spinoza is not ecological, *per se*, but can instead be considered psychological.

Deleuze was part of the Spinoza scholarship that flourished in France during the 1960s where Spinoza was yet again re-interpreted, this time through French rationalism instead of German idealism.[17] Deleuze delineates three reasons why Spinoza's philosophy can be considered scandalous and therefore rejected. Firstly, it is the denunciation of the transcendent personal God of the monotheistic religions, as conventionally understood; secondly, it is the denunciation of the human free will, as conventionally understood, and thirdly, it is the denunciation of the higher consciousness, meaning the mind of man as a higher status than the laws of nature. Deleuze explains that Spinoza's reasoning is based on the theory that consciousness only registers effects and it will therefore satisfy its ignorance of causes by reversing the order of cause and effect. Deleuze calls this the *illusion of finality*, which implies that an individual's thinking perceives itself to be the cause of the effect. This leads to what Deleuze calls the *illusion of freedom,* which implies that an individual believes itself to have free will, which in turn results in that when consciousness cannot conceive of itself as the first cause then it invokes a God that has the ultimate power as creator, legislator and judge, and this is what Deleuze calls the *illusion of theology*.[18] So, according to Deleuze, the theoretical foundation for Spinoza´s philosophy is the theory that consciousness registers effects, but it does not know the causes.[19]

[16] Naess 1977a, 50ff. For further information see Naess 1975.
[17] van Bunge 2011, 367.
[18] Deleuze 1988, 20.
[19] Deleuze 1988, 19.

Deleuze's interpretations are based on his understanding of Spinoza's definition of desire (EIIId/Desire), and he argues that it is not the thinking, the will, or the God that is the cause of the effects, it is the affects, or in other words, one's desire to continue to exist in general and one's specific appetites in life that are the causes. Deleuze declares that what Spinoza's theories, or rather denunciations, show is that his philosophy does not deal with morality, meaning actions considered right or wrong. Instead of a philosophy of concepts Spinoza's theories can be regarded as a philosophy of life because it consists precisely in the denouncing of all that separates us from life, meaning all the transcendent values that are tied to the conditions and illusions of consciousness, free will and a personal God.[20]

Deleuze goes on to state that since "Spinoza's ethics has nothing to do with morality; he conceives it as an ethology, that is, as a composition of fast and slow speeds, of capacities for affecting and being affected on this plane of immanence."[21] Deleuze thereby declares that what Spinoza's philosophy in the *Ethics* deals with is defining things, humans and animals by the affects they are capable of being affected by, and with which he means the power of acting rather than acted upon.[22] This is because Spinoza uses the experience of the affects; joy, to exemplify the increase of power, and sorrow the decrease of power, to be able to understand the desires that a human has. The three major affects in Spinoza's philosophy are thus desire, joy and sorrow. In a sense, they can be regarded as a compass to be used on the journey of life. One could say that, according to Spinoza, everything is determined by compilations that constantly change depending on varied relationships, not a development dependent on an authoritative set of guidelines and, according to Deleuze, "ethology studies the composition of relations or capacities between different things."[23] Spinoza's philosophy then, as provided in the *Ethics,* can be referred to as an ethology and therefore be called a practical philosophy for life, since it deals with life's *assemblages.*[24]

In this thesis I will not dwell deeper into Naess and Deleuze's extensive Spinoza scholarships, *per se*, but instead present more contemporary Spinoza scholarship by two female philosophers. Firstly, Hasana Sharp who, in company with Naess, has continued to interpret

[20] Deleuze 1988, 26.
[21] Deleuze 1988, 125.
[22] Deleuze 1988, 27.
[23] Deleuze 1988, 126.
[24] Deleuze 1988, 27. Assemblages is Deleuze's term for what I refer to as compilations.

Spinoza's naturalism, but with a new perspective which she calls *renaturalization,* and secondly, Fredrika Spindler who, in company with Deleuze, has continued to critically analyze Spinoza's philosophy through the lens of its ethological usefulness, but with a new perspective that entails possible freedom and power; not because of a lack of a monotheistic God and the human free will but, by highlighting the lack of any built in morality in Spinoza's philosophy.

1:6 Disposition

In chapter 2, focus is on question a) What implications do the labels pantheist and determinist have on the understanding of Spinoza's concept of God? And b) is that understanding altered if the labels of panentheist and necessitarianist are applied? I begin with a brief description of Spinoza's context and Philosophy of God and, since the Principle of Sufficient Reason can be claimed to be foundational in Spinoza's philosophy, I also highlight the topic of *cognitio* by contrasting Spinoza's dictum *amor intellectualis Dei* with René Descartes' quote *cogito ergo sum.* An overview of some of the 18th century Spinoza interpreters responsible for providing him with the labels pantheist and determinist then follows. The variety of implications that the categorization of Spinoza as a naturalist has is then discussed and possible understandings and re-labeling of Spinoza argued.

In chapter 3, focus is on question c) How is Spinoza understood during the 21st century? In regards to the foundational Spinoza scholarship by Arne Naess and Gilles Deleuze, as conveyed in the research overview, the Spinoza interpretations by the contemporary philosophers Hasana Sharp and Fredrika Spindler is presented and discussed. Issues concerning naturalism, determinism and freedom, as well as knowledge, affects and power are compared to their predecessors.

In chapter 4, focus is on question d) How *can* Spinoza be comprehended? After having relayed the two contemporary voices of Sharp and Spindler in the previous chapter I here aim to convey my own comprehension of Spinoza's philosophy by analyzing Spinoza's theory of the *Three Kinds of Knowledge* and the significance of the affects understood through Schleiermacher's theory of the *Art of Understanding* and Wittgenstein's *Theory of Language* as interpreted through the feminist lens of Alessandra Tanesini. I then conclude the chapter by evaluating Spinoza philosophy as therapeutic.

In chapter 5, focus is on question e) Why is it that Spinoza can be considered both an atheist and a God-intoxicated man? A comprehension of Spinoza's God is presented by highlighting the aspect of biblical exegesis as foundational for Spinoza's concept of God. Then after providing an overview of a variety of concepts of God, in big brush strokes, I proceed with a comparative analysis of Einstein's philosophy of religion and Spinoza's concept of God, based on Einstein's statement *I believe in Spinoza's God*. I then discuss the subject of theology in regards to Spinoza labeled a theologian.

In chapter 6, with the awareness that the summary is structured in an unconventional way, I summarize my comprehension, as well as evaluate if it has been possible to constructively expand the understanding of Spinoza's concept of God by deconstructing the labels placed on him. I then conclude if this comprehension is of value for the expansion of the subject areas theology and philosophy of religion that Kevin Schilbrack's *Manifesto* calls for. Thereby I have then broached my two main questions.

Chapter 2: Spinoza's Labels

2:1 Introduction

The historical fact that Spinoza was excommunicated from his Jewish community in 1656, for not adhering to that tradition's view of God, can be claimed the reason he is labeled an atheist. As already stated, I do not perceive Spinoza an atheist since his work *Ethics* speaks of nothing but God, or his concept of God. His referring to God as *Deus sive Natura*, God or Nature, though, does provide the foundation for labeling him a naturalist, since it means someone who adheres to naturalism, which implies that the world is the effect of natural laws,[25] which in turn denies the Laws of God found within his Jewish heritage. It is thus clear that Spinoza did not adhere to the traditional belief in the monotheistic God of Judaism. Through history Spinoza scholars have, as I, wanted to understand Spinoza's concept of God and this consequentially has led to that the labels of pantheist and determinist have been placed on him. This because pantheism contrasts with monotheism and determinism implies that the effects of natural laws are causally determined by preceding events.[26] But, does this necessarily mean that Spinoza can be categorized as a naturalist?

The philosophy lecturer Alexander Douglas, at University of London, disputes the naturalist interpretation of Spinoza in his article "Was Spinoza a Naturalist?" He argues that "the only definition of ontological naturalism that could be legitimately applied to Spinoza's philosophy is so unrestrictive as to tell us nothing about the content of his ideas."[27] To get some clarity in regards to the categorization of Spinoza as a naturalist, which is the umbrella term under which I perceive pantheism and determinism have been used, I will here begin by placing Spinoza in his context, as well as provide a brief explanation of the main points of his philosophy. I then present some of the main voices that have argued for pantheism and determinism as being in accord with Spinoza's philosophy and summarize with a deconstructive analysis of the same.

2:2 Spinoza's Context and Philosophy

Baruch Spinoza, also known by the name Benedict, was from a Sephardic Jewish heritage, a teacher of Cartesian philosophy, a lens grinder and philosopher living in the Netherlands.

[25] Merriam-webster.com/dictionary/naturalism (21 November 2015).
[26] Merriam-webster.com/dictionary/determinism (21 November 2015).
[27] Douglas 2015, 77.

Spinoza was a contemporary with scientists like Galileo, Kepler and Newton. This Early Modern Age, which is also referred to as the Scientific Revolution, entailed the realization that "man" was not the center of the universe and that there seemed to be laws in nature that could imply that there was not a transcendent personal God, but rather an immanent energy force running the show of life. All the mechanics of life, including religion, had to now be understood through scientific reasoning. In other words, the 17th century can be recognized as a time when analytical focus was put upon organized religion and there was a rekindling of the ancient Greek philosophy of reflecting on life as a coherent whole.[28]

Spinoza's naturalism is known for its reference to God as One Substance, or rather the concept that there is only One Substance, which is God or Nature. Spinoza's definition of God is, "Being absolutely infinite, that is to say, substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence" (EId6), and he explains that attribute is, "that which the intellect perceives of substance, as belonging to its essence" (EId4). And, Spinoza's definition of substance is, "that which is in itself and is conceived through itself" (EId3). This One substance is not dependent on anything for its existence and since it is a cause of itself it is the essence of existence. Furthermore, in regards to the concept of God as One Substance, Spinoza states, "besides God no substance can be nor can be conceived" (EIp14). This can be understood to imply that everything is God and all knowledge of everything is therefore knowledge of God. Spinoza also claims that a human being can conceive of this One Substance as two of the infinite amount of attributes, called thought and extension (EIIp1-2). These two terms can be viewed as representing a kind of dualism, especially since they are often used synonymously with the terms mind and matter. Spinoza, though, does not view them as separate substances, but rather as two attributes of the One Substance.

As mentioned, Spinoza was also a teacher of René Descartes' philosophy, and even though I am not a scholar of Cartesianism, I understand that this can be perceived as a dichotomy, since Descartes' philosophy proclaims the separation between mind and body, and is therefore referred to as a dualist, whereas Spinoza's philosophy proclaims God or Nature as One Substance, which implicates him as a monist. I do not view their differences as a dichotomy, though, but rather as a discrepancy of consequences. In other words, the difference between Spinoza and Descartes' philosophy does not necessarily have to be understood as

[28] For more information about the context within which Spinoza lived see, Armstrong 2010, chapters 6-9.

contradictory, but can instead be argued to be opposites because one is seen from the theoretical perspective and the other with a practical attitude. Both Descartes and Spinoza's philosophies are obviously theoretical, since based on philosophical theories, but according to my understanding the former has to do with the "mind of man" and the latter with the "mind of God."

Descartes is known for his quote c*ogito ergo sum* from his work *Principles of Philosophy* (1644). Spinoza is known for his dictum *amor intellectualis Dei* from his work *Ethica* (1677). It can be argued that dealing with theories in regards to the mind of a human is more practical than dealing with theories pertaining to the mind of God, but as I understand Descartes claim, "I think therefore I am," it refers to thinking as the intellect of a human specifically, meaning the ability that makes a human unique, whereas Spinoza's "intellectual love of God", on the other hand, refers to what makes a human, an animal, or any thing what they are. So, then it can be argued that what makes Spinoza's philosophy a practical philosophy is its theory of the immanence of the body dependent on the mind, whereas what makes Descartes philosophy theoretical is the theory of the transcendence of the mind as independent of the immanence of the body.

Spinoza writes, "by intellect (as is known through itself) we understand not absolute thought, but only a certain mode of thinking" (EIp31). This statement, by Spinoza, can be considered to correspond with Descartes' quote in the sense that they are both stating that a human's thinking manifests the human, so to speak. But, what differs is that Spinoza can be understood to mean that thinking is the unique thought compilation of a mind and not only the unique reasoning ability of the human mind. As to be able to comprehend the difference between what can be labelled practical philosophy in contrast, or in addition, to theoretical philosophy, I have discussed the basic difference between Descartes quote and Spinoza's dictum, as I see it. Descartes' philosophy implies that the ability of the human mind is unique and therefore separates humanity from the rest of creation, implying dualism, whereas Spinoza's philosophy implies that the human mind cannot be separated from the rest of creation because each mind uniquely makes up creation, implying monism. Spinoza's "intellectual love of God" is therefore a statement of the mind as a transindividual composition of we, whereas Descartes' "I think therefore I am" is a statement of the mind endowed in the individual me.

Spinoza's insistence on the intelligibility of everything, by all, is referred to as the *Principle of Sufficient Reason.* It implies that everything is explainable, and even though it was coined by his contemporary Gottfried von Leibniz the principle can be claimed to formulate the foundation of Spinoza's philosophy.[29] Based on Spinoza's axiom "the knowledge *(cognitio)* of an effect depends upon and involves the knowledge of the cause" (EIa4), and Spinoza's first definition in the *Ethics*, "by cause of itself, I understand that, whose essence involves existence; or that, whose nature cannot be conceived unless existing" (EId1), Spinoza's principle means that to conceive of a thing is to explain it. In other words, the conceived exists to the degree of its explanation; meaning that the clearer the explanation is the more the conceived exists. This can be translated as to mean that mysteries, i.e. that which is as of yet not comprehended, is a miracle in the sense that we do not know the cause, but that does not necessarily translate into the fact that the cause is beyond knowledge, meaning supernatural.

Augustine of Hippo claimed "*Si comprehendis, non est Deus* - if you have understood, then what you have understood is not God,"[30] and Meister Eckhart stated that, "God is beyond all understanding [...] So be silent and do not chatter about God."[31] One could argue that what Spinoza provides, with the Principle of Sufficient Reason, is a metaphysical rationalism that can mean, in contrast to Augustine and Eckhart, that it is possible to understand God. This because he is a monist and therefore everything is knowledge of God. In other words, what Spinoza is saying is that if you have understood, then what you have understood is necessarily God, but that does not insinuate that what you understand is a thorough understanding of God. What Eckhart can be argued to mean, with his statement, be silent and do not chatter about God, is that it implies that what one understands is only your own understanding of God, which you know already, so then be instead silent and listen to other understandings of God because, according to Spinoza's monistic view and Principle of Sufficient Reason, you will then understand God even more. In other words, what I argue is that when Spinoza's philosophy is added as a lens to look through, then Augustine and Eckhart do not necessarily have to be understood as *via negativa,* in regards to God, but rather as expressions of an awareness of human nature in relation to God.

[29] Della Rocca 2008, 276ff.
[30] Augustine of Hippo, quoted in Keller 2008, 18, in reference to "Sermon 52, c.6, n. 16." in Johnson 1992, 105.
[31] Meister Eckhart, quoted in Keller 2008, 18, in reference to "Sermon 83: Renovamini spiritu (ep. 4.23)," in Colledge & McGinn 1981, 207.

Spinoza can be understood to mean that humans can inevitably know God because humans are capable of identify infinite ideas of God through the relationship with alternate understandings of the same. This claim, then, does not mean that any human can invariably declare to know a finite image of God, but that does not mean that all claimed understandings of God are not of God. In other words, Spinoza's God is not an eternal entity of which an image is prohibited; Spinoza's God is rather an infinite force variably knowable through the world of creation, so one finite image of God is thus not possible. This interpretation would then also correspond with the Commandment in Exodus 20:4 and Deuteronomy 5:8 where it is written that; "Thou shall not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the water beneath the earth."[32]

2:3 Interpretations of Spinoza's Philosophy of God

In the foreword of Dagobert Runes' book *Spinoza Dictionary* (1951) Einstein writes "everyone may interpret Spinoza's text in his own way,"[33] and history has shown that Spinoza has been understood in a variety of ways. After Spinoza's death in 1677 almost a century passed during which his work was neglected. The term "Spinozism" is thus not used as referring to a continued development of Spinoza's philosophy through other philosophers, but rather it refers to the philosophy attributed to Spinoza himself. In the following years after his death the only account of Spinoza's doctrine, apart from his own works, was an article by Pierre Bayle in the 1697 publication of *Bayles Dictionnaire Philosophique*, which described Spinoza's philosophy as "the most absurd and monstrous hypothesis that can be envisaged […]."[34]

With the intellectual reorientation during the Enlightenment in 18th century Germany, Spinoza's philosophy of God or Nature was re-examined and his image changed. The understanding of his monistic naturalism altered in the reframing of Spinoza's concept of God as to incorporate the concept of pantheism, which theologically is understood to reject divine transcendence but embrace divine immanence, and etymologically it means that deity and cosmos are one and the same.[35] Instead of being absurd Spinoza's philosophy started having correlations to the effect that the progression of science was having on the understanding of

[32] Jammer 1999, 75.
[33] Runes 1951, vi.
[34] Pierre Bayle, quoted in Barnard 1967, 541.
[35] Yandell 2000, 655.

theology in relation to the cosmos. Spinoza's reputation was greatly lifted by the factor that the well renowned German philosopher Gotthold Lessing saw Spinoza's philosophical system as "the most rigorous and consistent intellectual enterprise" and his claim that "the orthodox conceptions of deity were no longer satisfactory for him and that, if he were to call himself after any master, he knew of no other than Spinoza."[36]

Another German philosopher of the time, Heinrich Heine, spoke for German philosophers in general with the statement "we have in fact outgrown deism."[37] He did not mean that God was dead, but rather that the image of God had shifted from deism to pantheism. It was this so called Pantheism Controversy in Germany that brought Spinozism back into the ongoing philosophical dialogue of the Enlightenment. The controversy did not only deal with the perceived Spinozist view of God but also with the consequence of such a view. Spinoza's presumed pantheism was not only considered a positive shift from the concept of deism, but as yet another German philosopher, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, pointed out; "Spinozism leads to determinism, and any system that logically entails the denial of free will has to be mistaken, however flawlessly reasoned."[38]

The German philosopher, Johann Gottfried von Herder, also in the 18th century, summarized and tried to set the record straight by claiming that "we cannot think any longer of God as a being who acts from outside the world of other beings, nor can we represent the divine activity as arbitrary. Rather, God is precisely the luminous, rational necessity that discovers itself within nature to scientific inquiry."[39] Herder made Spinoza's God into a World Soul and thereby "nature was no longer a machine but an organism."[40] For the Neo-Spinozist, the notion of divine interference was simply impossible since the course of nature was nothing other than the necessary activity of God and what Herder meant was that empirical science will one day exclude the last vestiges of divine arbitrariness, but this by no means excludes religion.[41]

[36] Gotthold Lessing, quoted in Barnard 1967, 542.
[37] Gerrish 1987, 438.
[38] Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, quoted in Gerrish 1987, 442.
[39] Johann Gottfried von Herder, quoted in Gerrish 1987, 448.
[40] Gerrish 1987, 451.
[41] Gerrish 1987, 448.

The German philosophers of the 18th century might have interpreted Spinoza in a variety of ways but the ideas were not new, *per se*. As the Professor of Historical Theology B.A. Gerrish states, "the *anima mundi* theme had a history before the Pantheistic Controversy; it was neither wholly novel nor necessarily heretical," for example, the idea of a World Soul, or *Weltgeist* as Friedrich Schleiermacher called it, can be found as far back as in Plato's cosmology.[42] The views are not necessarily anti-religious because they can be found within, for example, Thomas Aquinas Christian theology.[43] The views are also not exclusively German, or even European, because they can be found within the religious thoughts of India and within the philosophies of East Asia.[44]

So, as I have highlighted, the labels of pantheist and determinist were placed on Spinoza by German philosophers in the 18th century and depending on how these labels are understood they also shed some light on the dichotomy of Spinoza being able to be interpreted as both a God-intoxicated man, as well as an atheist, for as Professor of Philosophy Keith Yandell states; "if atheism is the denial that anything is divine, pantheism is not atheism; if atheism is the claim that there is no Creator, Providence, transcendent Deity, or personal God, pantheism is atheistic," he then explains that:

> It is one thing to value nature so highly that one calls it a divinity, another to believe in God in any monotheistic sense [...] yet "pantheism" has served as a term of abuse, and as another term for "atheism" and "materialism" and "deism", terms bearing quite different senses.[45]

2:4 Spinoza Categorized as a Naturalist

The title of this thesis is *A Comprehension of Spinoza's God Through the Dichotomy of Labels*, so a deconstruction of the labels placed on Spinoza is essential. When it comes to the categorization of Spinoza as a naturalist, Douglas explains that there are two kinds of naturalism; one pertains to the natural sciences as the way to learn about the world, and therefore methodological, and the other is ontological since it claims that there are no supernatural entities. He also highlights that even though Spinoza claims that God exists, Spinoza's concept of God is identical to Nature and therefore not supernatural, so Spinoza can

[42] Gerrish 1987, 452.
[43] Gerrish 1987, 452, in reference to Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologiae*, 1.93.3.
[44] Gerrish 1987, 452.
[45] Yandell 2000, 655.

be considered an ontological naturalist, and since he claims that everything can be knowable through the attribute of extension, he can also be regarded as a methodological naturalist. [46]

Naturalism is often coupled with the term materialism, implying "a theory that physical matter is the only or fundamental reality and that all being and processes and phenomena can be explained as manifestations or results of matter."[47] Spinoza, though, claims that God can also be known through the attribute of thought, which, according to Douglas, complicates the categorization of Spinoza as a naturalist. As I understand Douglas this is because the materialism aspect cannot be reconciled with physicalism, which is "a thesis that the descriptive terms of scientific language are reducible to terms which refer to spatiotemporal things or events or to their properties."[48] Spinoza is considered a monist because of his claim that all there is is One Substance, God or Nature and both of the terms materialism and physicalism can be argued to convey monism, but in different ways; materialism implies a material monism, meaning that matter is the only one substance, whereas physicalism implies an ontological monism, meaning that everything is in a sense physical. This distinction is of value for an understanding of what is meant by the label of pantheist, as given to Spinoza by the German philosophers of idealism, since idealism implies "a theory that ultimate reality lies in a realm transcending phenomena and that the essential nature of reality lies in consciousness or reason."[49] This because it highlights that the concept of pantheism given to Spinoza in the 18th century implies divine immanence, which in turn then means that Spinoza is not then considered an atheist.

2:5 A Comprehension of Pre-conceptions

As stated, I also am not convinced that Spinoza was an atheist; yes, Spinoza's use of the terminology "divine nature", for example, can be understood as an expression of the considered mystery and magnificence of the natural phenomena of the world, and that the use of "he" in reference to the concept of God was probably an aftermath of the traditional view of God that Spinoza carried with him from his Jewish heritage, which in turn can be interpreted as implying that his statements regarding God only sound like references to the monotheistic God, but that they are not. This may be the case, but I also think that his use of

[46] Douglas 2015, 78ff.
[47] Merriam-webster.com/dictionary/materialism (10 December 2015).
[48] Merriam-webster.com/dictionary/physicalism (10 December 2015).
[49] Merriam-webster.com/dictionary/idealism (10 December 2015).

language in regards to his concept of God can be considered to exemplify that Spinoza's aim might not have been to eliminate the traditional one and only God view of the Abrahamic religions, *per se*, but rather to reframe that one and only God untraditionally. In other words, according to my understanding, Spinoza's concept of God is referring to the God of the monotheistic religions, but the relationship between God/Nature is different because his philosophy is not seen through the lens of any specific dualistic philosophy or dogma of religion.

The fact that Spinoza's philosophy of God can be understood in contradicting ways may have to do with the fact that his monistic philosophy is interpreted through a dualistic mind-set and it is therefore Spinoza has been labeled not only a God-intoxicated man and an atheist, but also a pantheist and determinist. I perceive that the label pantheist is a label used to circumvent the dichotomy of the labels God-intoxicated man and atheist. This because as a pantheist he can be regarded an atheist according to the theism of Judaism, but understood as a God-intoxicated man according to the theism of Christianity. In other words, I perceive that because of the primary label atheist, given to Spinoza by the Jewish community in Amsterdam in the 17th century, Spinoza has paradoxically been able to be labeled a pantheist, by German idealism philosophers because of a Christian context. This then explains how the dichotomy of the labels atheist and God-intoxicated man can be placed on the one and the same man. In other words, it does not have to do with contradictions within Spinoza's philosophy, but instead with the prejudices inherent in his interpreters. This reasoning then makes the concept God-intoxicated man understandable in regards to the label atheist.

2:6 Re-labeling Spinoza

2:6:1 Spinoza – the Pantentheist

If monism is understood as the synthesis of transcendence and immanence as one substance it is not a Spinozian novelty, for it was expressed by the Pre-Socratic philosophers, but it was during the 17th century that the philosopher John Toland first used the term pantheist designating "one who holds both that everything there is constitutes a unity and that this unity is divine."[50] The monistic synthesis of transcendence and immanence was thus understood as divine immanence. As stated, Spinoza is generally labeled an atheist because of his understanding of God as One Substance, God or Nature because it can be understood as the

[50] Quine 1995, 641.

view of God as immanent and therefore in opposition to the view of God as transcendent. Spinoza's God as One Substance is inevitably a mono-theistic view so the issue of atheism cannot be a dispute concerning the oneness of God, *per se*, but rather it seems to have to do with the issues pertaining to the understanding of what God as transcendent and personal versus immanent and impersonal entails. It is therefore also understandable that Spinoza has been labeled a pantheist, because already during the Renaissance the immanent world was being elevated to the point of pantheism, meaning that immanent nature was something through which one could experience the transcendent God.[51] Within mysticism there is also the concept of revelation through *unio mystica*. All of these concepts of synthesis, though, are based on the fundamental view of a relationship between the two, namely the transcendent God and immanent creation, in other words, viewed through the lens of dualism. Viewed through monism, the relationship between transcendence and immanence is instead the experience of the one, namely itself. Biblically, as stated in Psalm 139:7-8,[52] God is present everywhere and, as stated in Romans 11:33,[53] God knows everything, but that does not necessarily translate into God being in everything, as pantheism implies. Spinoza clearly himself states that whatever is is *in* God (EIp15), which then instead would imply panentheism, since it means all in God.

Panentheism is a constructed word based on the Greek *pan*, which means all, *en*, which means in, and *theos*, meaning God. Like pantheism panenentheism implies God's presence in the World, but the difference is that pantheism implies divine immanence, whereas panentheism proclaims the significance of that which can be considered transcendent, but non-divine. The difference in regards to pantheism and traditional theism, within both Judaism and Christianity, is therefore the identity of that which can be called God, as well as the perceived relationship to the concept of God as the World. [54]

I argue that panentheist is a more appropriate label for Spinoza because he does not refer to divine nature as implying to something supernatural and if the label of pantheist is removed it releases Spinoza out of the clutches of the dualistic mind-set of Western philosophy, as well

[51] McGriffert 1940, 168.
[52] "Wither shall I go from thy spirit? Or wither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*."
[53] "O THE depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* his judgements, and his ways past finding out!"
[54] Plato.stanford.edu/entries/panentheism (4 December 2015).

as from interpretations intoxicated by Christianity. But, if Spinoza has been excommunicated as an athiest and the label panentheism releases Spinoza from being seen through a pantheistic lens, does that mean that Spinoza's philosophy of One Substance, God or Nature only has to do with the laws of nature? And, is he therefore a determinist? I do not perceive so because even if the label panentheism removes the divine immanence concept of pantheism it at the same time provides a possibility of relating to the concept of God in other ways than those dictated by the monotheistic religions. The label of determinist is also not appropriate in regards to Spinoza's philosophy because his One Substance, God or Nature is not the laws of nature, *per se*, but the necessity of the laws of nature in itself. And, according to Spinoza, God is cause itself (EIp16c1).

2:6:2 Spinoza – the Necessitarianist

The definition of necessitarianism according to a dictionary is the theory that results follow by invariable sequence from causes.[55] Professor of Philosophy, Martin Lin, at Rutgers University refers to necessitarianism as meaning that all truths are necessarily true, and states that this view is out of favor today, because of the general contemporary view that things are not necessarily determined, because everything could have been otherwise. Lin argues that Spinoza's Principle of Sufficient Reason correlates with the theory of necessitarianism and he claims that Spinoza's rationalism implies necessitarianism because Spinoza states that "in nature there is nothing contingent, but all things, from the necessity of the divine nature, have been determined to exist and act in a certain way" (EIp29).[56]

The key word here is *contingent*, which means the depending on something else that might or might not happen, which in turn means not logically necessary and therefore determined by choice.[57] In other words, contingent implies that alternatives *were* possible, meaning other choices could have been made. Spinoza states that nothing is contingent, alternatives were therefore not possible, and he can therefore be labeled a determinist. What determines is, according to Spinoza, the divine nature and it is therefore understandable that the Idealism philosophers in 18th century Germany could have perceived that Spinoza was referring to a divine immanence and therefore labeling him a pantheist. But, Spinoza clearly states that

[55] Merriam-webster.com/dictionary/necessitarianism (27 December 2015).
[56] Lin 2012, 418f.
[57] Merriam-websters.com/dictionary/contingent (28 December 2015).

"whatever is is *in* God" (E1p15), which is contradictory to the view that God is in whatever is. But, what is it then that Spinoza refers to when using the term the divine nature?

Another key word in the statement is *necessity* because it can be understood as that which Spinoza calls divine nature and that would explain his claim that there is nothing contingent. As I understand Lin's inquiry, into what he calls Spinoza's metaphysical rationalism, he is asking if labeling Spinoza a necessitarian reflects an uncompromising rationalist attitude compatible with the label determinist. Lin's answer is no, since Spinoza God is infinite (EId6). Lin explains; "the infinite series of finite things is an infinite mode of God [...] the idea of any infinite mode follows from the idea of God's infinite and eternal nature."[58] What Lin is highlighting is that according to Spinoza, and in contrast to what Augustine and Eckhart's claim in regards to the impossibility of knowing the nature of God, "the idea with which we think about God is an adequate idea of his nature", and he thereby concludes that Spinoza's philosophy credits human mental ability as capable of going beyond that which is considered common sense.[59] In other words, it is not only the mental cognitive logic of an idea that is a factor for Spinoza, but rather the power an idea contributes to the ability to think. This in turn correlates with the fact that Spinoza regards there to be three kinds of knowledge; imagination, cognition and intuition. This, in turn, implies that Spinoza does not relate knowledge to cognition alone, but as Lin points out "what is at issue is whether or not intelligent deliberation can take place."[60]

With deliberation I understand not the accumulation of knowledge relevant in regards to the topic of discussion, *per se*, but the capacity to use knowledge to determine action and thereby infinitely alter states. And, in regards to Spinoza's use of the term divine nature I understand not divine immanence in the sense of pantheism but rather as that which Spinoza calls *amor intellectualis Dei,* because as Spinoza writes, thought and extension are attributes of God (EIIp1-2) and "the idea of God, from which infinite numbers of things follow in infinite ways, can be one only" (EIIp4). Each one of the altered states thus has its place in time and space. That which he refers to as the divine nature, is therefore necessity itself and he is thereby a necessitarianist and not a determinist. I state this because, even though necessitarianism

[58] Lin 2012, 436.
[59] Lin 2012, 438.
[60] Lin 2012, 443.

means that results follow by invariable sequence of causes, the difference between necessitarianism and determinism, as I perceive it, is that determinism implies that "future events are fixed and unaltered as the past is fixed and unalterable."[61] I agree that Spinoza would argue that the past could not have been otherwise, but it would not be from the perspective that the future is unalterable. The difference, though, is that Spinoza does not perceive alterations possible through any free will power of humankind, but instead choices are possible based on the freedom possible by the awareness of necessity.

2:6:3 The Dichotomy of Labels

The dichotomy of the labels, as well as the difficulty of reconciling the radical Principle of Sufficient Reason with Spinoza's concept of adequate knowledge, as having to do with intuition, is what makes Spinoza's philosophy so complex. This complexity has also been the grounds for paradoxically interpreting Spinoza as both absolutely absurd and at the same time as one of the foremost rational philosophers. But why is it so difficult to categorize Spinoza's concept of God once and for all? Spinoza himself clearly writes on the first page of his work *Ethics,* "By God, I understand Being absolutely infinite, that is to say, substance consisting of infinite attributes, each one of which express eternal and infinite essence" (EId6). This definition of God can be understood as implying that everything is God, which complicates the matter of pin pointing a comprehension of what Spinoza's concept of God actually is, but the fact that he himself writes Being with a capital B may also signal that it is the God of monotheism that he is referring to after all. Deleuze offers an explication to assist the relationship with this complicativeness with the explanation that:

> [...] complication often means at once the inherence of multiplicity in the One, and of the One in the Many. God is Nature taken "complicatively"; and this Nature explicates and implicates, involves and evolves God. God "complicates" everything, but all things explain and involve him.[62]

Spinoza's philosophy in the *Ethics* has not changed, but alternative understandings of Spinoza have emerged. As this chapter has shown so far, Spinoza received his labels pantheist and determinist by German Idealism philosophers of the 18th century, and these labels were

[61] Weatherford 1995, 194.
[62] Deleuze 1992, 16.

considered appropriate in understanding Spinoza's philosophy because of their context and time. Since then, in the 20th century Neass and Deleuze framed Spinoza within ecology and ethology respectively, which was appropriate for their context and time. What makes them all coherent and correspond with Spinoza's philosophy of God, even though seeming contradictions, is that they all can be placed under the umbrella term naturalism. This since, as Douglas has highlighted, the label of naturalist can be interpreted in a variety of ways.

Chapter 3: Sharp's and Spindler's Spinoza

3:1 Introduction

Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, Edwin Curley is known for his translations of all of Spinoza's works into English, but he has also specifically written on the subject of "Man and Nature in Spinoza" (1977) where he asks the question if it is justified to use Spinoza's non-anthropocentric metaphysics to argue a non-anthropocentric ethic in regards to humanity's relations to nature?[63] Human beings are part of nature and therefore inevitably dependent on nature and can thus be considered of value for an ecologically oriented worldview, as Naess has exemplified. But, Curley points out that humanity's "[...] right to make use of nature, is as extensive in Spinoza as in any of those Western thinkers who have failed to assimilate the significance of the Copernican Revolution."[64] For Spinoza writes in the *Ethics:*

> Apart from men we know no singular thing in Nature whose mind we can enjoy, and which we can join to ourselves in friendship, or some kind association. And, so, whatever there is in Nature apart from men, the principle of seeking our own advantage does not demand that we preserve it. Instead, it teaches us to preserve or destroy it according to its use, or to adapt it to our use in any way whatever (EIVapp26).

So, is Spinoza contradicting himself or are interpreters missing something in Spinoza's philosophy?

3:2 Sharp's Spinoza

Hasana Sharp is Associate Professor of philosophy at Mc Gill University, and the focus of her book *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization* (2011) deals primarily with Spinoza's concept of nature, or rather his philosophy of naturalism. In her monograph Sharp embarks on a "critical exploration of the limits and promises of an ethics and politics that are not governed by the image of man,"[65] in regards to perceptions of humanity, rights, ecology, feminism, and most prominently concepts of freedom. By referring to the philosophy of Spinoza, and specifically to his claim that humans are part of nature and not above nature, Sharp discusses the consequences of this worldview, which she calls *renaturalization*, in

[63] Curley 1977, 19.
[64] Curley 1977, 23.
[65] Sharp 2011, 8.

comparison to the common perspective of humans as denaturalized, meaning other than nature, and as described on the inside sleeve cover of the book:

> This lack of metaphysical or moral division between humanity and the rest of nature, Sharp contends, can provide the basis for an ethical and political practice free from the tendency to view ourselves as either gods or beasts.[66]

3:2:1 In Regards to Naturalism and Politics

Sharp argues that since Spinoza's naturalism denies human exceptionalism and thereby claims that humans are not above the laws of nature, but rather immersed in a system of cause and effect, then humans do not have any super-natural powers. The idea that human rationality of thought can override that which is considered to be determined by the laws of nature is a dualistic view of the separation between mind and body based on the philosophy of Descartes.[67] Sharp states that the idea philosophers today most often concur with is compatibilism, which implies the idea that the human power of freedom of will is compatible with natures determined laws. This idea is based on the view that humans are born with the ability or "supernatural" power of reason, which stems from yet another philosopher, Immanuel Kant.[68]

In *Ethics*, Spinoza's writes that "minds are equally submerged within a system of cause and effect, operating according to the same principles as bodies" (EIIp9). Sharp refers to this equality between the power of the mind and the laws of nature as Spinoza's parallelism because it implies that the mind and the body do not interact or rather, as Sharp puts it, "the mind and the body are not involved in a struggle for control."[69] A consequence of this claim is that mind is universal and thought is a natural power. There is then no "spiritual" logic that belongs only to humans and which overrides nature. Even though it is clear that Spinoza erodes human distinctiveness it is important to note that he does not thereby elevate the status of nonhuman nature as something that can be considered pure in contrast to the perceived impurities of humans. Spinoza's philosophy of naturalism can thus not be summed up as a naturalistic ideology that represents an idea of nature as an unaltered expression of human

[66] Sharp 2011, sleeve cover.
[67] Sharp 2011, 108.
[68] Sharp 2011, 2.
[69] Sharp 2011, 3.

nature.[70] And, as Sharp remarks "Spinoza is not a protoromantic philosopher who encourages humans to discover the call of the wild."[71] As I understand Sharp, the reason she uses the term renaturalization is to deflect denaturalization, which has become the norm. The aim is thus not to naturalize by elevating nature but instead to re-naturalize, meaning to balance, by bringing humans and nature back on an equal footing.

What Spinoza's philosophy highlights is the variability of the existence of humans and nature; "Nature, for Spinoza, names the necessity of ongoing mutation and the inescapability of dependence among finite beings."[72] In other words, the determined laws of nature, for Spinoza, which is often interpreted as Spinoza's determinism, can instead be understood as the necessitarianism of the infinite transformations that necessarily take place in response to encounters with other humans and nonhumans alike. Sharp states that "the relations that matter to our intellect and our corporeal well-being are far from exclusively human."[73] She also explains that Spinoza refuses to distinguish between natural and social forces because he maintains that there are infinite forces operating within and without everything.[74] It can thus be argued that this view leads to Spinoza's anti-antropocentrism, both in regards to the existence of an anthropomorphic God as the "determinator", and in regards to the elevated status of humans based on the view that humans are able to determine their actions by free will. In a sense, one could state that Spinoza's philosophy pertains to that which is immanent and impersonal, since it considers humans as part of the whole of nature.

Sharp states that "our epoch is ideologically humanist"[75] and "to be a person is to be free from nature, to have transubstantiated one's animality into humanity."[76] She is here referring to the Hegelian political theory, since it emphasizes the normative aspects of personhood, meaning that Hegelianism implies a politics based on the recognition of rational humans as persons because they are capable of being morally responsible for their actions. This means that Hegel's politics is personal because it is relational only in regards to a humanity that can override the laws of nature, which in turn makes politics concur with denaturalization. What

[70] Sharp 2011, 6.
[71] Sharp 2011, 189.
[72] Sharp 2001, 8.
[73] Sharp 2011, 10.
[74] Sharp 2011, 9.
[75] Sharp 2011, 107.
[76] Sharp 2011, 13.

Sharp argues, in relation to Spinoza, and in contrast to the philosophy of Hegel, that since renaturalization is an impersonal perspective it can contribute new political theory and practice. As she writes, "rather than a politics of rights and representation impersonal politics is a project of composition and synergy."[77] What she means by composition and synergy is that impersonal politics privileges relationships rather than particular identities or institutions. What makes these relationships impersonal is that, as she explains, "such orientation cannot simply be willed but must occur by virtue of impersonal factors in one's environment over which one cannot exercise sovereign control."[78] Spinoza is known to have been excommunicated by the synagogue in Amsterdam because he was accused of being an atheist on the grounds that he had redefined God as Nature, but what I perceive Sharp highlights with the concept of renaturalization is that Spinoza also redefined humanity.

3:2:2 In Regards to Determinism and Ethics

According to Sharp, Spinoza provides "an alternative conception of human freedom," and she argues that the importance and relevance of Spinoza's philosophy is because "as long as our understanding of humanity is opposed to nature, we are in opposition to ourselves and to conditions of our freedom."[79] What I perceive that Sharp wants to exclimate by referring to Spinoza's renaturalization of humanity, with its concept of composition and synergy, is that it highlights the collective instead of the individual aspects of relationships, which in turn includes instead of excludes. Sharp points out that according to Spinoza reason is constituted not discovered and she also argues that in contrast to Hegel's politics of recognition Spinoza does not accord priority to individual or group recognition, but rather provides tools for identifying what the desire for recognition entails so that knowledge and thereby an ability to fulfill or transform the desire can be achieved in alternative, i.e. non humanist, ways.[80] Sharp also points out that "without attention to what moves us to think and act, to our constraint and lack of freedom, we cannot modify our situation and hope to become freer" and she claims that, "Spinoza offers an examination of the life force of ideas, the way that ideas qua ideas behave and interact [...][81] meaning that Spinoza framed within renaturalization provides a way to be part of an ecosystem of thinking forces. By using the term ecosystem I understand that

[77] Sharp 2011, 13.
[78] Sharp 2011, 14.
[79] Sharp 2011, 15.
[80] Sharp 2011, 17.
[81] Sharp 2011, 59f.

Sharp implies that Spinoza perceives thoughts immanent parts of nature and can therefore be claimed to be Spinoza's materialism; Sharp explains, "ideas and minds, for Spinoza, belong to any and all existent beings, be they rocks, cars, birds, or chewing gum."[82]

The critique of the ideology of denaturalization, that Sharp has embarked on, and which, as already stated, is the most prevalent ideology today, is not a discourse analysis, *per se*, since within the framework of Spinoza's philosophy it is not restricted to only relations between humans.[83] For Spinoza writes in his *Ethics* "Nature, human and nonhuman, organic and inorganic, has its being in and as thought" (EIp15), and the reason he can make such a claim is because he perceives that bodies do not move minds and minds have no power over bodies (EId2). Spinoza's renaturalization of the human being is concerned with showing that human actions are necessarily constrained because reason is an effect,[84] which in turn would imply that there has to be a cause. Human reason is thus not an ability above or separate from nature's laws of cause and effect but rather a composition of ideas. This understanding is based on the fact that rationality is not the same for everyone everywhere, as well as on Spinoza's statement that "it is necessary to come to know both our nature's power and its lack of power so that we can determine what reason can do in moderating the effects, and what it cannot do" (EIVp17).

So, according to Sharp, "the politics of renaturalization begins with the denial of human exceptionalism,"[85] as well as "recognizing the transpersonal character of our minds."[86] In other words, paradoxically, "human freedom is won only by coming to terms with our lack of freedom,"[87] meaning that only by accepting that, and knowing how, choices are determined do humans have "free will," so to speak. For as Sharp concludes, "Spinoza's ethics involves contact, receptivity, and openness to the effects that various encounters and combinations yield,"[88] so in a sense it can be claimed that, as Sharp puts it, "man is a God to man."[89]

[82] Sharp 2011, 63.
[83] Sharp 2011, 65.
[84] Sharp 2011, 106.
[85] Sharp 2011, 121.
[86] Sharp 2011, 71.
[87] Sharp 2011, 138.
[88] Sharp 2011, 216.
[89] Sharp 2011, 217.

3:3 Spindler's Spinoza

Fredrika Spindler is Associate Professor at Soedertoern University[90] in Stockholm. In her book *Spinoza: Multitude, Affects, Power* (2009)[91] she points out that the interest for Spinoza studies today is not in regards to his presumed denial of God but rather his understanding of human beings as autonomous and therefore a collective humanity.[92] She also claims that Spinoza's radical thoughts on the subject of self-awareness and insistence on comprehensibility of the world can be considered of value for the history of philosophy, but Spinoza's philosophy can also have contemporary value because the central aspect of his philosophy is an ethical perspective that is in constant interplay with nature.[93] Since Spinoza's concept of God is God or Nature this then translates into meaning a constant interplay with God. It is thus not possible to separate the philosophical perspective of human beings as autonomous and the religious perspective of God as all-powerful. But, who or what is then the owner of free-will?

3:3:1 In Regards to Freedom and Power

Spindler highlights that the concept of freedom in Spinoza's philosophy does not entail free-will because nature is necessarily determined and free-will, as such, is therefore a fantasy. For Spinoza freedom means the ability for human liberation instead of a human capability of will power.[94] As she explains:

> Liberation, in Spinoza's meaning, is a corrective, a near optical correction of the individual's knowledge of the self and the world, in a slow but effective integration of one's own ability to take action in becoming the source of one's own ideas and the driving force of one's own life […]a person is free if the *necessity* is understood and recognized, and instead of being perceived as tragic it is a source of development and power. [95]

[90] In original language Swedish- Södertörn Högskola
[91] In original language Swedish- *Spinoza: multitud, affekt, kraft.*
[92] Spindler 2009, 18f.
[93] Spindler 2009, Introduction.
[94] Spindler 2009, 23.
[95] Spindler 2009, 24. "Befrielse, i Spinozas innebörd, ligger i ett tillrättaläggande, en närmast optisk korrigering av individens kunskap om det egna jaget och världen, i en långsam men effektiv integrering av den egna handlingskraften för att bli källan till sina egna idéer och den drivande kraften i sitt eget liv […] den människa är fri för vilken *nödvändigheten* är förstådd och bejakad, och där den istället för att upplevas som tragiskt utgör en källa till utveckling och kraft."

Spindler relates Spinoza's concept of individual liberty to the multitude that constitute a society and describes Spinoza as a "democrat in the purest sense of the word."[96] To put the discussion, of the concept of freedom, in the context of politics can be considered inevitable considering the alleged collective coexistence within Spinoza's philosophy, but the democrat label is not one that I will address because my interest in Spinoza is not related to politics. The aspect of necessity in regards to the concept of freedom is however of interest since it provides the foundation for labeling Spinoza a determinist.

The meaning of the term determinism is "that acts of the will, occurrences in nature, or social or psychological phenomena are causally determined by preceding events or natural laws."[97] According to Spinoza there is only One Substance, God or Nature, so the answer to the question of whom or what determines is necessarily the One Substance, God or Nature. As portrayed, Sharp's interpretation of Spinoza introduced the concept of renaturalization in regards to humans and nature. I perceive Spindler's interpretation of Spinoza, on the other hand, as highlighting a re-naturalization in regards to humans and God. According to Spindler, Spinoza's God is a radical transformation of the concept of God and therefore he is labeled an atheist, but she also points out that:

> The metaphysical, theological and moral implications of this is considerable: Spinoza breaks down the traditional image of a world created by a God in order to express harmony and glory, as well as demolishing the idea that the world order contains any built-in morality.[98]

But, if God is not an entity that determines, and there is no set of moral principles within the laws of nature, what is it that has the power to determine? Spindler's interpretation of Spinoza's ethics is that it entails observation and analysis of one's own power of understanding the world's interactions and thereby attaining knowledge of one's own possibilities of liberating oneself of prejudices.[99] What determines can thus be considered to be the internal and external power structures based on ignorance, in other words, it is ignorance that controls and an understanding based on adequate knowledge that increases one's power and thereby one's ability to act instead of react in relation to the determined.

[96] Spindler 2009, 22.
[97] Merriam-webster.com/dictionary/determinism (21 November 2015).
[98] Spindler 2009, 95. "De metafysiska, teologiska och moraliska konsekvenserna av detta är avsevärda: Spinoza raserar den traditionella bilden av en värld som skapats av en Gud i syfte att uttrycka harmoni och härlighet, liksom han raserar tanken att det i världsordningen skulle finnas någon inbyggd moral."
[99] Spindler 2009, 95.

Because of this focus on knowledge and understanding in Spinoza's philosophy, he can be labeled a rationalist, meaning a philosopher who was part of the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment. To say that Spinoza has replaced God with nature, and thereby also with the human being, and therefore categorizing Spinoza within humanism is to simplify Spinoza's philosophy of God. Humanism, meaning one who has an attitude focused on human interests or values stressing the individual's dignity and capacity for self-realization through reason, does fit as a label on Spinoza, but the part of the humanism definition that abides to the doctrine that people are essentially good and that claims that problems can be solved by reason and not religion, does not fit Spinoza's philosophy.[100] The reason I claim that labeling Spinoza a humanist is too simple of an interpretation of Spinoza's complex philosophy is because his definition of knowledge entails more than cognition.

Spindler explains that, according to Spinoza, the concept of understanding is not a linear process of progression, but it is rather the imagination that sees and understands things in the order they appear.[101] What Spinoza means is that the intellect can be developed through increased knowledge, but understanding is not the knowledge of a sequence of events, but rather a comprehension that changes perspectives.[102] Spindler explains that, "according to Spinoza things are defined not through the order in which they appear, but by the inherent determinations that structure them, and this cannot be achieved by temporary thinking."[103]

This, in turn, means that an interpretation's external effects are constructs that are effected by internal affections coupled to already experienced phenomena, which also is an interpretation. This then means that the world view of a human is determined by the narrative by which the interpreter is constructed.[104] Linked to the label of Spinoza as a determinist, and to the question of whom or what determines, it can be summarized that there is a "determinator," so to speak, it is the human beings own affections, not a supernatural God or supernatural human ability. But, if a human is determined by affections, and can thus be considered controlled by passions, what is it that can be considered the liberating power of freedom?

[100] Merriam-webster.com/dictionary/humanism (26 December 2015).
[101] Spindler 2009, 74ff.
[102] Spindler 2009, 80.
[103] Spindler 2009, 88. "Enligt Spinoza definieras saker inte genom den följd de framträder i, utan genom de inneboende bestämningar som strukturerar dem, och dessa kan inte nås genom ett temporärt tänkande."
[104] Spindler 2009, 90ff.

Spindler explains that, according to Spinoza, a human being is a specific degree of intensity level and a constellation of power consisting of the One Substance, God or Nature. Spindler also reminds that this constellation of power can be understood through two attributes, thought and extension. It has already been mentioned that thought and extension can be understood as implying the dualism of mind and body, but that Spinoza does not regard the attributes as separate but ontologically identical. Spindler refers to the two attributes as body and soul and argues that if the human emotions are presumed to be linked to the body and not the soul, and the body and soul are identical, then bodily emotions are inevitably also linked to the soul. Spindler explains that this is why all three kinds of knowledge, according to Spinoza, are the result of affections that are organized and transformed into knowledge.[105]
According to Spindler, Spinoza exalts reason to the highest virtue, but at the same time it is determined. A human being for Spinoza is not a subject with its own identity designed by free-will; a human is an intensity variable of force and its constellation is the determining design.[106] Spindler explains:

> It is not, in any case, a question of predestination of fate: the determining that is the issue here is undoubtedly more pragmatic, and it is shaped by a complex cause-effect relationship. A certain amount of force, that characterizes each individual, in meeting other forces, which are larger or smaller than the first, will necessarily have some consequences.[107]

A human being is therefore not determined as such, but is formed by the necessary constellation of force through which a person in a particular way relates to nature and other people. This can be interpreted as determinism, which might seem to deprive a human being of both its own rationality and own freedom, but Spinoza transforms this determinism to the very foundation of a life of freedom based on a radically new rationality and epistemology, having to do with the analysis of human passions. What Spindler highlights is that the body is of value for the sake of freedom rather than a burden, which runs counter to the traditions that

[105] Spindler 2009, 58.
[106] Spindler 2009, 143ff.
[107] Spindler 2009, 145. ”Det handlar i inget fall om någon ödesmättad förutbestämning: den determinering det är frågan om här är otvivelaktigt mer pragmatisk, och utformas i ett komplext orsak-verkan förhållande. Ett visst mått av kraft, som kännetecknar varje individ, kommer i mötet med andra krafter, som är större eller mindre än den första, att få vissa nödvändiga konsekvenser.”

consider the body an impure and corrupt impediment to rationality and reason.[108] In other words, "thinking is simply the mental mirror image of the physical body's experience."[109]

3:3:2 In Regards to Knowledge and Affects

Spinoza claims that there are three types of knowledge (EIIp40), and Spindler interprets the first kind, imagination, to be the affects, which is the impact that the world has on a human being through the body. The second kind, cognition, is the rational knowledge that we understand through intellectual reasoning of common notions, and the third kind, intuitive, the understanding of essences.[110] This third kind of knowledge can be considered that which can change perspectives, allowing for alternative points of view useful to actively act instead of passively react and thereby a human being has a power of freedom to act, even though human existence is a specific constellation that is determined. Spindler has thereby clarified that even if man is determined by affections, and can thus be considered controlled by passions, what it is that can be considered the liberating power of freedom is Spinoza's ethics, because it is about a liberation project in order to integrate power. But, how can one say that a human is determined and still have the power to act?

According to Spindler's Spinoza, existence cannot be understood as something static simply because it is determined, it is rather a movement determined by affects.[111] Awareness of this movement is a force that Spinoza reconciles with what he calls the adequate knowledge. The purpose of what Spinoza refers to as adequate knowledge can then be interpreted as the awareness of what power the affects have for you personally. This is then the force that gives you the power to raise self-awareness of the affects and thus the ability to learn to navigate them.[112] The movement does not necessarily imply a progressive development towards something "other" but a dynamic momentum of maintenance through infinite change. This kind of process, which Spinoza calls *conatus* (EIIIp12), is the self-preservation process that is the determining essence of everything. But, if a developmental process is not a linear progression towards a goal, then what is the point of this awareness of the affects? It has

[108] Spindler 2009, 147f.
[109] Spindler 2009, 152. "tankeverksamheten är helt enkelt den mentala spegelbilden av den kroppsliga erfarenheten."
[110] Spindler 2009, 43.
[111] Spindler 2009, 134.
[112] Spindler 2009, 128-140.

already been mentioned that this liberation process is not liberation from sin or a reward linked to moral principles in relation to a monotheistic God. Spindler explains:

> Liberation from the passions, however, was not about eradicating that which makes us victims of weakness of will. Spinoza opposes the biblical mind-set that dictates that one should chop off one's hand if it leads to sin: to free oneself from passion, on the contrary, he argues, is to form a clear and distinct idea of the same, which in plain language means comprehending which affect that governs us in a given situation.[113]

As already stated, according to Spinoza, it is not the thinking, the will, or the God that is the cause of the effects, it is the affects, or in other words, ones desire to continue to exist in general and one's specific appetites in life that are the causes (EIIId/Desire). Spinoza's philosophy of the concept of freedom can thus be considered a theory of human emotions.[114] It is therefore, as Spinoza states; "necessary to come to know both our nature's power and its lack of power, so that we can determine what reason can do in moderating the affects, and what it can not do." (EIVp17s) As I understand it Spinoza sees desire and appetite not as something negative that needs to be extinguished by forcing the will, but instead as something positive because it is a force that provides consciousness with knowledge of the cause, which in turn provides the power of a possible freedom in choosing ones actions. In other words, the "goal" is understanding itself by way of interpretation so as to be able to consciously move together as people.

[113] Spindler 2009, 177. "Befrielsen från passionerna skulle emellertid inte bestå av att utrota det som gör oss till offer för sådan viljesvaghet. Spinoza motsätter sig det bibliska tänkesätt som påbjuder att man ska hugga av sig handen on den leder till synd: att befria sig från passionen är tvärtom, hävdar han, att bilda sig en tydlig och distinkt uppfattning om densamma, något som i klartext betyder att begripa vilken affekt som styr oss i en bestämd situation."

[114] Spindler 2009, 175.

Chapter 4: Comprehending Spinoza

4:1 Introduction

In chapter 2, I contrasted Descartes and Spinoza as to highlight the difference between a dualistic and monistic attitude in regards to cognition and I outlined Spinoza's Principle of Sufficient Reason, which claims that everything is explainable. So as to get a clearer view of Sharp and Spindler's interpretations of Spinoza's work, a deeper comprehension of what knowledge is according to Spinoza is necessary, especially when it comes to the concept of determinism in relation to free will. Determinism risks an attitude of passiveness, which I perceive is contradictory to the activism that is foundational in Spinoza's philosophy, but with activism I do not imply the promotion of the standing on the barricades waving clenched fists fighting for a better future, but rather the act of attentiveness of what is at hand here and now by way of being aware of one's own interpretations. To provide a lens through which to view Spinoza's understanding of the necessity of awareness I will here refer to Schleiermacher's *Art of Understanding.* And, since language is necessary for the possibility of shared understandings, I will present an interpretation of Wittgenstein's *Theory of Language* relevant to my approach, and since affects are essential for knowledge, according to Spinoza, references to the *Ethics* on the topic will concur, and I will begin with an overview of Spinoza's *Three Kinds of Knowledge.*

4:2 Spinoza's Affects and Three Kinds of Knowledge

In *Ethics,* part III, Spinoza explains the psychology of human affects and points out the importance of understanding affects since they are what Spinoza considers to be that which provides the ingredients for the insight of our power of action. This power of action, according to Spinoza, is the human desire to preserve oneself, which is the human essence, called *conatus* (EIIIp6-7). The core essence of a human is to preserve the divine nature of intellectual reasoning that a human is capable of, and therefore it is important to understand human desire, meaning to value human affects, in relation to the concept of knowledge.

As stated, the reason Spinoza's philosophy can be considered scandalous and therefore difficult to embrace is because of his denunciation of the exclusiveness of consciousness, the free will, and the God of religion, since they are to him illusions. I would add that another aspect that can be at least daunting, if not scandalous, is Spinoza's audacity of claiming the intelligibility of everything, for his *Principle of Sufficient Reason* goes further than *positivism,*

because the theory can be argued to be all-inclusive instead of exclusive. My referring to Spinoza as all-inclusive should not, though, be understood as *relativism,* meaning that truths are dependent on the individual or group that have them, but rather that any knowledge is relative to the conditions of knowing.[115] What I perceive Spinoza's principle implies is that what can be considered as valuable can vary in an infinite variety of ways and precisely therefore be valid and meaningful. So, Spinoza's *amor intellectualis Dei* has to do with his devotion to God as thought itself and not with an adherence to the God exclusive to a belief-system.

In regards to the concept of knowledge, besides the Principle of Sufficient Reason, Spinoza delineates three types of knowledge. The first, imagination, is our day to day knowledge. It is formed by sense experience through the encounter with the external world, which gives us ideas but not necessarily knowledge of the essence of the things encountered. These ideas can be understood as Spinoza's first kind of knowledge, imagination, because the ideas contain a multitude of misinterpretations and misunderstandings which Spinoza would refer to as inadequate ideas. The second kind of knowledge, reason, is the knowledge based on cognitive rationality and which I regard as "scientific" knowledge. Using Spinoza's terminology it involves grasping a things causal connections, not just to other objects but, more importantly, to the attributes of God or Nature. It is reason that renders the mechanistic relations that are law like and necessary. In other words, an adequate idea shows not just that it is, but how and why it is necessary. A sense experience alone, which is Spinoza's third kind of knowledge, intuition, cannot provide an adequate idea, for it too needs to be synthesized with reason.[116] But, according to Spinoza, there seems to be something more that is necessary for the rationally and reasonably synthesized ideas and sense information to be fully understood and thereby become an adequate idea that one "knows."

In *Ethics*, Spinoza writes: "the third kind of knowledge proceeds from an adequate idea of certain attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essences of things" (EVp25). Intuition is thus the synthesis of sense stimuli and intellectual reasoning through an understanding of "God", which becomes a knowing of the essence of infinite attributes. It is not a union with a supernatural God, as is revelation, but a union of a variety of

[115] Merriam-webster.com/dictionary/relativism (7 December 2015).
[116] Nadler 2003, 244.

understandings that become a knowing of "God" as a natural phenomenon and that is why Spinoza's God is synonymous with Nature. The knowledge of adequate ideas does not provide an understanding or explanation of cause and effects that can be controlled, but instead lays bare its necessary outcome, meaning it exposes the essence, which is what I conceive to be what Spinoza means by truth. Truth is thus not something that is perfect and unchangeably applicable to all, but rather truth is *what is* when the necessity of it is understood, or at least accepted as it is with an understanding that this, too, shall pass. And, with which I mean that the meaning or considered truth of anything and everything is always of value at one time and place even if it inevitably changes. This understanding of *what is* can in theory be described as the third kind of knowledge, called intuition, but in practice it is the affects because it pertains to an understanding of the inner essence or subjective of meaning and not only the outer stimuli or objective description. I conceive that the knowing of the cognitive intellectual knowledge is something we think we know in relation to others, and the knowing of the intuition is what we know in relation to ourselves in relation to the world. Both inevitably are sparked through imagination to begin with and both have understanding as the goal. They are thus both mental, so to speak, but related to from different angles and it is this difference that I perceive explains Spinoza's terminology intellectual love of God, because, as he claims, both thought and extension are the two attributes of God's infinite attributes that human beings are capable of understanding (EIIp1-2).

4:3 Schleiermacher's Art of Understanding

The 18th century theologian and philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher, is known for referring to hermeneutics, as "the art of understanding" with the implication that human existence comes about through understanding the whole. The basic definition of hermeneutics is text interpretation, but Schleiermacher's art of understanding also contains a method of interpretation known as the hermeneutic circle, since it seeks to clarify the whole by the parts and vice versa.[117] This approach to text interpretation can be argued to coincide with Spinoza's exegesis of the Bible because the methods both incorporate the awareness and consideration of parts that make up a whole understood through a critical analysis that has the potential to shift perspectives and thereby provide shifts in understanding. Schleiermacher's art of understanding is foundational for why he refers to his philosophy as dialectical and

[117] Berner 1999, 195.

ethics; dialectical because it has to do with the linguistics of a language, and ethics because it has to do with how the language is used by the user.[118] Poignantly put, "understanding, then, requires perceiving how the universal carries the mark of the singular [...]" "as such, it establishes a relative universality in the framework of which individuals will be able to find the possibility of understanding each other."[119] Another likeness between Spinoza and Schleiermacher is the intense will to understand. The difference can be argued to be that Spinoza demands focus on the inner individual affects so as to shift perspectives, whereas Schleiermacher's focus is on the outer words as the transmission of meaning, but what I perceive that they are both ultimately dealing with is different aspects of language, be it conveyed through words or feelings.

4:4 Wittgenstein's Theory of Language through a Feminist Lens

Wittgenstein A Feminist Interpretation (2004) by Alessandra Tanesini presents the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein through what she calls a feminist lens. This alters the traditional view of Wittgenstein's concern with language, as something abstract and technical, into a concern with language as an intimate part of the effort of awareness in the search for meaning. Wittgenstein's philosophy is interpreted as a critique of modernity, which starts in Western Europe during the 17th century. Modernity implies the focus on the concept of the autonomous self, which according to Wittgenstein, manifests as individual separation and loneliness. In other words, what modernity saw as human freedom Wittgenstein saw as human isolation. His first book *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* can be seen as an effort to give a cure for the meaninglessness, which is generated by the individual fragmentation of modernity. Thus, it can be said, that Wittgenstein offers his philosophy as therapy and not as theory.[120] Spinoza was a philosopher in the 17th century and considered one of the rationalists of modernity. Spinoza's philosophy in the *Ethics* deals with the issues of freedom and I perceive that he too, like Wittgenstein, was dealing with the issues consequential to the concept of transcendence, but whereas Wittgenstein's critique was a reaction to modernity's assumption of human exclusive autonomy, Spinoza's critique included the concept of God as transcendent and therefore separate and beyond as well.

[118] Berner 1999, 196.
[119] Berner 1999, 197.
[120] Tanesini 2004, 2.

According to Tanesini, Wittgenstein shows that loneliness and meaninglessness are the results of the struggle for transcendence. In this context transcendence is understood to mean the ability to transcend the limitations of what it entails to be a finite human being, and human control seems to become the main characteristic of transcendence.[121] Transcendence, though, in regards to the monotheistic God can also be proclaimed as complete surrender. One view chooses to exclude nature whereas the other chooses to include a God. In other words, one view excludes the transcendent God of monotheistic religion so as to provide human beings an exclusive meaning based on reason and free will in relation to nature and the other includes the monotheistic God so as to provide human beings with meaning based on a reason for free will in relation to a God. Either humans control or God of religion controls.

The issue that joins the two is that they are both concerned with the quest for meaning, and as Tanesini states "the *Tractatus* primary concern is with the philosophical problem of subjectivity."[122] The mere fact of the acknowledgement of that there is a limit to understanding actually acknowledges that there is something beyond what is acknowledged by logic and language. Wittgenstein claims that "there are no truths we cannot express, no thoughts we cannot have. Nevertheless, human thought and language have boundaries."[123] So, after having implied that for there to be a limit there has to be something on the other side of the limit that we cannot grasp through the limit of logic and language, he clarifies that what he actually means is that logic and language that states that there is something that is beyond human rational ability's expression and then hints at what that something is makes that utterance nonsense.[124] Wittgenstein himself states two different motivations for the writing of the *Tractatus.* First, "the book deals with the problems of philosophy" and second, "the value of this work consists in solving how little is achieved when these problems are solved."[125] As I understand Wittgenstein's therapy it is not to mend the split by removal, but by acknowledging it. This view assists in the understanding of what Augustine and Eckhart could have meant with their statements that anything said about God is utter nonsense, as well as why Spinoza's focus is on awareness.

[121] Tanesisi 2004, 53.
[122] Tanesini 2004, 59.
[123] Tanesini 2004, 63.
[124] Tanesini 2004, 70.
[125] Tanesini 2004, 61.

The impulse to go beyond language and want to take control by means of logic is precisely what Wittgenstein means is the philosophical impulse to transcend human finitude. "Once we realize that the philosophical impulse to transcend human finite does not solve the problem of the meaning of life, but makes it irresolvable, the *Tractatus* tells us that we come to see that the world and life are one."[126] In other words, we can only know life through limited language and the limits of it do not make life less worth living. Thus, "the *Tractatus* is intended to cure us of the impulse to transcendence."[127] What Wittgenstein is offering a cure for is the belief, or rather the attitude that stems out of fear and a need for protection from meaninglessness. Our search for the meaning of life actually isolates us from the world since we "refrain from valuing anything that can be taken away from us."[128] He instead highlights that it is precisely the limits that make up life, all the limited finite beings, are the world and "the happy man is not the one who is indifferent to his fate. Rather, happiness requires that one accepts one´s vulnerability to events."[129] This I perceive assists the understanding of Spinoza's theory of the significance of an active awareness of that which makes up the necessity of the events.

4:5 Prescriptions of Therapeutic Value

Can Spinoza's theoretical philosophy of God be as therapeutic as Tanesini argues that Wittgenstein's theory of language is? A therapist is one who carries out therapeutic treatment and care for the purpose of alleviating pain. The term therapy comes from the Greek *therapeutikos*, which means "inclined to serve".[130] In contrast to a doctor who mends a specific injury or alleviates pain medically by prescription, a therapist is one who carries out treatment and care in a comprehensive manner. I perceive that Spinoza's *Ethics* can be argued to be foundational for an outlook on life that equivocated with an overall all-inclusive attitude to life, which in turn can be effective in mending the deep gash between people since that wound, so to speak, is based on our varying worldviews.

Espen Gamlund, a Norwegian Spinoza scholar and philosophy lecturer at University of Bergen, writes in his article "Living Under the Guidance of Reason: Arne Naess's Interpretation of Spinoza" (2011) that, "there is an agreement among Spinoza scholars that his thinking *is* relevant today. The challenge is to make him more accessible," and this is what

[126] Tanesini 2004, 72.
[127] Tanesini 2004, 71.
[128] Tanesini 2004, 74.
[129] Tanesini 2004, 81.
[130] Global.britannica.com/topic/therapeutics (4 December 2015).

Naess set out to do by relating his own philosophy of Deep Ecology with Spinoza's philosophy of God or Nature.[131] It is also what I perceive Deleuze attempted with his claim that Spinoza's theories can be viewed as practical philosophy. Both Sharp's and Spindler's perspectives can also be argued to be of value for the perceived need for a more all-inclusive attitude.

Gamlund points out that Naess argues for the active or, as he calls it, "thisworldly" and practical aspect of Spinoza's philosophy. Jon Wetlesen, on the other hand, yet another Norwegian Spinoza scholar and Professor of Philosophy at the University of Oslo, instead argues for an "otherworldly" and theoretical, or rather contemplative aspect of Spinoza's philosophy.[132] Gamlund points out, though, that Spinoza himself does not make any distinction between action and contemplation. He, himself refers to Spinoza's philosophy as Aristotelian virtue ethics since he perceives that the question that Spinoza is alluding to is; do we as human beings want to be right or do we want to be happy? Gamlund claims that what attracted Naess to Spinoza in the first place was the fact that Spinoza's philosophy in the *Ethics* is not based on moral concepts of right and wrong but instead highlights that virtue has to do with happiness, which is achieved through freedom, which, in turn, is achieved by attaining adequate knowledge of everything through emotions. But, what Gamlund wants to get at through analyzing Spinoza's philosophy through Naess understanding of it is; what kind of life is Spinoza promoting?[133] For as Gamlund points out, the self-proclaimed Spinozist, Naess was an activist within the Deep Ecology Green Movement, but he also spent ten years in contemplation alone in a cabin on the mountain Hallingskarvet in Norway.[134] What I would add to that dual picture is that during those ten years Naess wrote, which can be argued to be an example that activism and contemplation need not necessarily imply two different kinds of life, the activism is just pursued in different ways. The life Spinoza is promoting is a life of activism, meaning active awareness whatever the action, non-action or inter-action or non-interaction that may be. But, is too much being read into Spinoza and thereby too much expected of "him", meaning does his philosophy contain what is sought, and what is actually being sought? In my case the desire is to understand what Spinoza's God means.

[131] Gamlund 2011, 4.
[132] For further information see the article of Naess 1977b, 136-158. And, Wetlesen 1976.
[133] Gamlund 2011, 9. For further information see Gramlund 2007, 3-27.
[134] Gamlund 2011, 5.

Chapter 5: A Comprehension of Spinoza's God

5:1 Introduction

In Spinoza's *Ethics* he writes on the topic of God and the significance of affects. For an understanding of where Spinoza was coming from, in regards to the relevance of the awareness of affects, I find it important to highlight one of the aspects that he dealt with in his earlier works, namely biblical criticism in *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670). I would argue that it is foundational to his philosophy, and as Spindler also argues in regards to this work, it shows that the focus of Spinoza's philosophy was not necessarily to annul the religious authority in itself, but rather a questioning of the theological interpretation of the Bible.[135] This, however, does not call into question the Bible, but conveys Spinoza's focus on highlighting the value of doing a systematic analysis of the scriptures with an active awareness of the reader's preconceptions. This analytical approach of the text's language; what is written in the text and how it can be and has been interpreted depending on the historical, political, social and personal context, was to highlight that there is necessarily a difference between the aim of the author and the reader's interpretation and this limit of understanding effects what the Bible is considered to convey. What Spinoza was promoting was, in other words, biblical exegesis.

According to Spinoza, the miracles found in the Bible, which implied inexplicable phenomena, had either been interpreted as manifestations of God's power or as proof that the Bible was irrational and therefore nonsense. Spindler writes that Spinoza's conclusion was not that the Bible was irrational and nonsense, meaning that it is not about that which can not be known, but what he instead wanted to highlight with his Principle of Sufficient Reason was that that which can be considered nonsense is rationally graspable; the considered miraculous phenomenon was just not yet adequately comprehended.[136] Subjective perceptions must be interpreted and are therefore not considered objective knowledge but constructed knowledge, and to understand the necessity of the constructed, an awareness of what determines the constructed is required.[137] In relation to the biblical texts this correlates to Spinoza's intention of having a systematic analysis of the scriptures with an active awareness of the reader's preconceptions, thereby freeing interpretations of prejudices. In other words, the purpose is

[135] Spindler 2009, 97.
[136] Spindler 2009, 119.
[137] Spindler 2009, 158f.

not to invalidate interpretations, but instead highlight its structures in relation to affects for the purpose of understanding. As I have shown, through the example of Wittgenstein, that which is considered nonsense is nonsense because it is claimed to say something about that of which nothing can be said. But, Spinoza's Principle of Sufficient Reason claims that everything can be explained, so how can anything in the Bible or anywhere else be nonsense in itself?

Since Spinoza's God pertains to a concept of the oneness of God, I find it also relevant to point out the awareness that even if Spinoza declared that God is One Substance, the monotheistic religions have all claimed the oneness of God long before Spinoza. Some examples from the Bible are; within Judaism in Deuteronomy 6:4 with the Shema Israel; "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One"; within Christianity in 1 Corinthians 1:8; "There is no God but one"; and within Islam in Sura 112; "There is God, the One and Only."[138] The difference as I perceive it, though, is that the One within the context of monotheism refers to the "singleness" of a personal eternal entity that is transcendent and therefore "unknowable", whereas the One within the context of Spinoza's monism refers to the "everythingness" of an impersonal infinite substance that is immanent and therefore "knowable". As stated, the dispute then apparently has to do with the varied understandings of the terms transcendence and immanence, in regards to the concept of God, but it also includes the argument if God can be knowable or not.

5:2 The Destruction of the Uniqueness of God

Hermann Cohen was a German Jewish philosopher. During his career as a professor at the University of Marburg he devoted attention to attempts by German Jews to rehabilitate the philosophy of Spinoza. Cohen perceived Spinoza's philosophy as a merciless critique of Judaism and objected any veneration of his philosophy. Cohen is claimed to have stated during a lecture in 1910 that "Spinoza's philosophical blasphemies fully justified his expulsion from the Jewish community."[139] Cohen's view was that Spinoza wrote out of his grievance of having been excommunicated and that the Bible criticism was ultimately a critique of the Jewish state, since Cohen perceived Spinoza's view of Judaism as a religion founded by Moses for the purpose of preserving a Hebrew State. Cohen contends that Spinoza

[138] Jammer 1999, 57.
[139] Cohen [1915] 2014, xii.

equates religion with the considered word of God in the scriptures. Monotheistic religions are thus the faith in God based on scripture, but since the scriptures only state that God exists and does not provide a definition of God then it is not a sufficient reason for faith in God. Spinoza's understanding of faith is thus obedience to a God of which there is not sufficient knowledge.[140] Therefore Cohen claims that the aim of Spinoza was to separate knowledge and faith and thereby liberate philosophy from religion.

Robert Schine writes in the introduction to Cohen's book *Spinoza on State and Religion, Judaism and Christianity* ([1915] 2014) that, according to Cohen, "God is the paradigm of morality. The God idea is therefore unique, and thus distinct from existence itself."[141] Schine perceives that it is Spinoza's monistic idea of God, and therefore the concept of pantheism, that Cohen conceived as the demolishing factor in the destruction of the uniqueness of God because, according to Cohen, it made ethics impossible for it inevitably erased the distinction between the existence of the real and the ideal.

As I understand Spinoza, the opposite of traditional religious faith, which demands obedience, is natural faith, which does pertain to the concept of the existence of God, which in turn, according to Cohen, Spinoza agrees that the scriptures provide. Spinoza's problem with the faith in the monotheistic God is, though, that it is a belief in a concept of God, and since a concept of God necessarily demands knowledge of God, which Spinoza does not perceive that the scriptures provide, there is then no sufficient reason to proclaim faith in God through obedience. The existence of God, on the other hand, is not an issue, but what God is claimed to be and what God is claimed to demand is an issue. Focus on the hermeneutics of the Bible is therefore why I perceive that Spinoza's bible exegesis is foundational to his philosophy of God.

5:3 "God"

Where to begin an analysis on the subject of God, or rather on the concepts of God so as to more clearly comprehend Spinoza's "unique" concept of God in comparison? In huge brushstrokes it can be said that within the dimension of the monotheistic religions the hypothesis, or rather the belief, is that God is the transcendent World Creator. God is also personal because of his considered nature of being omnipotent, meaning all-powerful,

[140] Cohen [1915] 2014, 5f.
[141] Cohen [1915] 2014, xv.

omniscience, meaning all-knowing, and omnipresence, meaning all present. Omnipresence should not be confused with the concept of pantheism, though, because even if it means that God is capable of being everywhere all at once, that does not automatically imply that God is everything. When it comes to the topic of the creation of the world within the dimension of science the hypothesis is called the Big Bang Theory, which can be accredited to Edwin Hubble and based on physics and the observation that the universe is continuously expanding. Within the dimension of nature the hypothesis is called the Evolution Theory, which can be accredited to Charles Darwin and based on biology as presented in his book *On the Origin of Species* (1859). One aspect they all have in common, though, is the thought that everything ultimately stems from one source, be it the one God, the one explosion, or the one cell. The concept of oneness that is of relevance for this thesis, though, is Spinoza's radical monistic view of God as One Substance, God or Nature.

The conflict between religion and science, as I see it, is between two dimensions; one that stems from the religious belief that God created everything in the seven days to its fullest completion approximately 6,000 years ago, which is in contrast to the scientific theories of physics and biology that imply a creation that developed over a time span of millions of years and also on going. This can be seen as the polarity that dictates the necessity of choosing either a theistic or an atheistic view of life. This seemingly leaves room only for the Creationists whom literally believe in the word of the creation story of Genesis in the Bible and the Naturalists who are considered atheists.

The feminist theologian Sallie McFague consolidates the beliefs, views and research in regards to categorizations of God in five models;
First- the *deistic model* stems from the Scientific Revolution that began in the 16th century and entails the notion of God as the Creator who created the Laws of the Universe and then left it to run on its own accord without Divine control or intervention.
Second- the *dialogic model* has its roots in the Abrahamic religions with the notion of a personal relationship between God and humankind. This is an individual, I-Thou, relationship with a focus on sin and forgiveness.
Third- the *monarchial model* is where God´s relationship with the world is as its ruler and judge and where humankind is His obedient subjects, which combines the impersonalism of the deistic model and the personal individualism of the dialogic model.

Fourth- the *agential model* is where God´s plan is realized through human history, which implies that humankind is the body of God for the purpose of carrying out God´s intentions, which in turn implies ethical perspectives in regards to human conduct.
Fifth- the *organic model* is where God is actualized through world history implying that the Universe is the body of God, which in turn implies pantheism since the transcendent divine God is in the immanent organic world.[142]

As shown above there are many takes on the topic of God. So as to attempt an understanding of Spinoza's God, even though Spindler claims that the interest within Spinoza research today does not pertain to the concept of God, I anyhow choose to proceed with focus on Spinoza's God. And, even if Douglas states that "physics is not often said to recognize the existence of God's infinite and eternal essence, expressed through an infinity of attributes,"[143] as does Spinoza, I choose to attempt to understand Spinoza's concept of God by way of analyzing the seeming dichotomy of the labels God-intoxicated man and atheist through the analysis of yet another German interpretation of Spinoza's God, this time by a 20th century scientist, namely Albert Einstein.

5:4 Spinoza's God

Spinoza was the philosopher most admired by the famous physicist Einstein,[144] also known for a statement that stems from a cable correspondence with Rabbi S. Goldstein in 1928, in which he was asked the question "do you believe in God?" He answered: "I believe in Spinoza's God who reveals himself in the orderly harmony of what exists, not in a God who concerns himself with fates and actions of human beings."[145] My inquiry into Einstein's philosophy of religion in regards to Spinoza's philosophy of God is not to claim that there is a corollary between science and religion. A brief background on the relationship between the two disciplines may anyhow be useful.

5:4:1 Religion and Science- a Brief Background

It can be argued that, since Einstein was a scientist and Spinoza a philosopher the compatibility between Einstein and Spinoza is not an issue. But, even if it can be claimed that

[142] McFague 1993, 136-141.
[143] Douglas 2015, 79.
[144] Jammer 1999, 43.
[145] Jammer 1999, 49.

both Einstein's and Spinoza's philosophy concerning the concept of God falls within the frame of rational reasoning, and are therefore both representatives of "science" I view both Einstein and Spinoza also as representatives of faith (even if not in the traditional sense of the word). My line of reasoning corresponds with the physicist that originated Quantum Theory, namely Max Plank who stated that:

> Anybody who has been seriously engaged in scientific work of any kind realizes that over the gates of the temple of science are written the words: *Ye must have faith*. It is a quality which the scientist cannot dispense with[...]thus faith, in a broad generic sense, may be seen as a bond between science and theology.[146]

As already stated, the aim is not to claim corollary between science and religion. I find it appropriate though to share Avery Dulles reminder, in "Theology and the Physical Sciences," that there has not always been a demarcation between religion and science. Even if it can be argued that the Galileo affair in the 17th century exemplifies the incompatibility of religion and science it is important to point out that it was a judgement prevalent in a context and an age. On the other hand, even though the current age can be regarded as postmodern, as Dulles also points out, the existence of the creationist worldview in response to Darwinism is around today, which shows that there is still a view prevalent of considered separation between faith and reason, even if the gap has lessened through the impact of, for example, the work and attitude of Pope John Paul II.[147]

It can be claimed that the trend today referred to as postmodernism questions modernity's critique of God. According to James Byrne, Professor of Religious Studies at Saint Michael's College, this renewed interest, that allows creative thinking about the question of God, has emerged since postmodernism proclaims to have an awareness of its limitations.[148] Fellow of Wolfson College at Cambridge, Richard Mason writes in the conclusion of his book *The God of Spinoza* (1997) that Spinoza's disinterest in epistemology could make him seem postmodern in his approach but he was far from postmodern relativism. He could acknowledge different religions but not because he considered them having an equal value,

[146] Dulles 2012, 144.
[147] Dulles 2012, 135-147.
[148] Byrne 2001, 137f.

per se, but rather on the grounds that they existed and were historical activities in nature. As Mason also explains, this was not because he was a rationalist but rather because of the refusal to accept the possibility that ways of understanding could be discontinuous descriptions.[149] The point I am highlighting with this background information is that the incompatibility between religion and science is apparently not the truth but rather a truth dependent on culture, tradition, historical age, context, and world views and therefore it can be argued that continued discussions and re-evaluations of any issues relating to the two subjects will always be relevant.

5:4:2 Einstein's Philosophy of Religion

Max Jammer, in his book *Einstein and Religion* (1999), shares a story from a dinner in Berlin in 1927, where the theatre and literary critic Alfred Kerr asked Einstein:

> "Professor! I hear that you are supposed to be deeply religious?" Calmly and with great dignity, Einstein replied, "yes, you can call it that. Try and penetrate with our limited means the secrets of nature and you will find that, behind all the discernible concatenations, there remains something subtle, intangible and inexplicable. Veneration for this force beyond anything that we can comprehend is my religion. To that extent I am, in point of fact, religious."[150]

I include this quote not only to relay Einstein's answer to the question if he considers himself religious, but also because I perceive that it provides a description of what Einstein believes when stating that he believes in Spinoza's God. Einstein's definition of what it entails to be religious can be claimed to be *the veneration for this force beyond anything that we can comprehend.* If the definition of being religious, means believing in "God" then it can be conducive to compare this dinner conversation with his statement of believing in the God of Spinoza, because I perceive that it provides an insight into what the force that he venerates can be comprehended as. What Einstein meant may seem clear enough since the second half of the statement I believe in Spinoza's God describes the God he claims to believe in, namely *Spinoza's God who reveals himself in the orderly harmony of what exists, not in a God who concerns himself with fates and actions of human beings.* The fact that he includes Spinoza in his statement of belief in God shows that he is differentiating his belief in God from the traditional belief in the God of the Jewish religion, or any specific religion for that matter.

[149] Mason 1997, 258f.
[150] Jammer 1999, 40.

What is interesting, though, is not the answer, *per se*, but rather the discrepancy between the question and the answer.

I would argue that the question, put forth by the Jewish rabbi about the belief in God, implied an inquiry into if Einstein, who was also a Jew, believed in the God of the monotheistic religions, and most probably implying the image of God within the Jewish religion specifically. Einstein could therefore have answered the question with a *no* or started his answer with a *no but* I believe in Spinoza´s God, because then the answer would have been understood as pertaining to something other than the God of the monotheistic religions. There would then also be no reason for further discussion in regards to Einstein's belief in God. All could be content in labeling Einstein an atheist in company with the atheist Spinoza.

What I find intriguing is why Einstein chose to answer the way he did. Was his answer implying that the religious people adhering to the monotheistic religions were wrong in their conceived image of God or was he implying that the God of the monotheistic religions did not exist? According to Jammer, Einstein himself has stated that he is not an atheist,[151] so it can be argued that it is not the concept of God, but the traditional image of God that is at stake, and thereby it is the attitude pertaining to the relationship "with" God that is in question and untraditional.

5:4:3 Spinoza's Concept of God and Einstein's Philosophy of Religion

So, what is it about Einstein's philosophy of religion that corresponds with Spinoza's concept of God? The simple answer is that Spinoza and Einstein both have a world view that rejects the transcendent personal God of religion and that is why Einstein's philosophy of religion is compatible with Spinoza's concept of God, which in turn enables the label of atheist to them both. But, as already stated, I do not agree that that is the end of the discussion because Einstein could have put a stop to any further ado by simply answering no to the question *do you believe in God,* put to him by a Jewish rabbi, but he did not. Is this mutual exclusion of a specific God that is personal and who interferes in the lives of humans all that they have in common? Or is there an inclusion that can be claimed to be found in both of their philosophies, which reveals a common attitude to life in general, and which could be interpreted as a God-intoxication?

[151] Jammer 1999, 97.

As has been shown, Spinoza's argument is that what exists is what can be conceptualized, and since God can be conceptualized God exists (EIp11). This view implies that through conceptions reality explains itself and the only reality there is is God, so when Einstein refers to the *God who reveals himself in the orderly harmony of what exists,* he can be claimed to be referring to Spinoza´s concept of God as One Substance, which is immanent in the world through the laws of nature.

Spinoza claims that "the more we understand individual objects, the more we understand God (EVp24)," and since Spinoza's concept of God is God or Nature then scientific inquiry of literally "everything" pertains to a search for knowledge of God. The force that Einstein venerates can thus be argued to be the laws of nature. This can seem obvious since Einstein is a scientist and science deals with methodological naturalism or empiricism, which the knowledge of the laws of nature can be considered to be. As already mentioned I perceive that both Spinoza and Einstein are presenting an untraditional attitude towards traditional understandings of what religiosity entails, but according to this argument it also applies to what empiricism entails; and this is where the concept of faith comes into the picture. Einstein wrote in his essay, "What I Believe", that:

> The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious […] a knowledge of the existence of something we cannot penetrate […] it is this knowledge and this emotion that constitute true religiosity; in this sense, and in this alone, I am a deeply religious man.[152]

But, if Einstein's philosophy of religion is that religiosity is a knowledge of the existence of something we cannot penetrate then does that not imply the belief in the existence of something transcendent, and is not Spinoza's God understood as immanent? How then can Einstein claim that he believes in Spinoza's God?

The author Friedrich Durrenmatt wrote in his book *Albert Einstein* (1979) "the quest for spiritual truth preoccupied Albert Einstein – so much that it has been said 'one might suspect he was a disguised theologian'."[153] If by theologian one means someone who studies God I would agree, but then again I am cautious of the implication of the term spiritual, meaning

[152] Jammer 1999, 73, in reference to Einstein 1930, 193-194.
[153] Jammer 1999, 7, in reference to Durrenmatt 1979, 12.

relating to a person's spirit or to sacred matters or religion.[154] As I perceive, Einstein was on a quest for truths pertaining to *the orderly harmony of what exists,* and what exists is according to Spinoza One Substance, which in turn means God or Nature. It can therefore be argued that Einstein's quest cannot be claimed to be spiritual, meaning supernatural, in the traditional and religious sense of the word. But, then again, since Spinoza states that what exists is what can be conceptualized, and even dualistic and religious spiritual truths are in a sense conceptualizations, then even if a truth is provided by, for example, religious revelation or rational philosophy and not empirical science, the aim of religion, philosophy and science can all be claimed to deal with the search for knowledge of Nature and/or God, respectively. It can then be argued that there is no difference between a religious spiritual truth and a truth according to the criteria of either philosophy or science, and therefore can be regarded as "spiritual" enterprises, or not.

As stated, the most basic argument and reason for Einstein's statement *I believe in Spinoza´s God* is then because Spinoza's concept of God equivalents God "with" Nature. Traditionally God has not been considered empirically accessible and in regards to the claim that God is discernible, the theology Professor Dan R. Stiver points out that it can be argued to be a risk for what religions would call idolatry.[155] Within the context of religion it is a valid issue, but I find it sufficient to point out that the second part of Einstein's statement, *not in a God who concerns himself with fates and actions of human beings,* shows that it is not the concept of the personal God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as within the monotheistic religions that is being referred to, so the risk of idolatry is not necessarily a relevant part of the discussion.

There is of course a risk of being trapped in the loop of relativism, but the way I understand Spinoza and interpret Einstein's definition of religion, it does not have to do with the theory of relativism but with faith; meaning a trust in the existence of a subtle force. This faith in a force can be interpreted as a faith in the seemingly intangible, inexplicable and that which is beyond comprehension. But, the fact that Einstein uses the word subtle can be argued to signal that the intangible, inexplicable, and non-comprehensive is not a statement of Truth. It can instead be interpreted as a description of the whereabouts in the relationship of human knowledge and the laws of nature. This then corresponds to Spinoza's definition of the One

[154] Merriam-webster.com/dictionary/spiritual (7 December 2015).
[155] Stiver 1996, 41.

Substance God or Nature, since he states that "besides God no substance can be nor can be conceived" (EIp14).

The concept of faith in an intangible inexplicable force beyond comprehension can traditionally be argued to fall within the framework of religion with its faith in a transcendent God. It can therefore be argued that science, which is traditionally considered to pertain to that which can be known, needs "religious" faith in a *subtle, intangible and inexplicable force of nature beyond anything that we can comprehend* as an inspirational fuel and tool. This because, for science to be able to move from the inexplicable to the explicable it can be argued that research necessarily needs faith in that there is something tangible in regards to the yet considered intangible. The comparison of Spinoza's concept of God or Nature and Einstein's philosophy of religion as a veneration of this force can thus provide an understanding of the theory that it is possible for anything unknown to be known. This attitude to life that can be claimed to be found in both of their philosophies can be considered inclusive and the reason that I regard both Einstein and Spinoza as representatives of both reason and faith, which in turn is what I interpret as God-intoxication.

If the definition of adhering to religion is having faith in the transcendent personal God that is the world's creator and judge, as both Spinoza and Einstein seem to categorize the God of the monotheistic religions, then what Spinoza is contemplating in regards to the concept of God and Einstein in regards to the concept of being religious does not belong within the framework of religion, and I presume that some would argue not even relevant within the subject area of theology. But, if being religious entails the belief in "something" beyond full comprehension, and which is considered the force or power of creation, then they can both be considered as religious, even though neither one concurs to any set beliefs or dogma of any specific religion. I perceive that what both, 17th century Spinoza and 20th century Einstein, exemplify is that being religious does not necessarily mean identifying with any specific religion. This is not a novel viewpoint for as already mentioned 18th century Neo-Spinozist Herder stated that empirical science would one day exclude the last vestiges of divine arbitrariness, but this did not necessarily exclude religion. This view is often argued to be a contemporary phenomenon that has emerged in line with the separation between religion and state in secularized societies, but even if the traditional view of positivism during the Enlightenment can be considered to have diminished, it is still now in the secularized post-

modern age often claimed that religion will eventually disappear. Belief, though, is still going strong in a variety of ways within all societies, even if not as much in a traditionally organized way within a synagogue, church, or mosque.

What I hope to have highlighted through the interpretation of Einstein's veneration of the force of the cosmos and Spinoza's intellectual love of God is that they may actually have the same meaning and that religiosity does not only pertain to phenomena dependent on the specific outer social circumstances of an age, framed by the dogma of a religion, or vice versa. It has to do with an inner personal attitude to life, regardless of religion. In a sense it has to do with what one considers as superstition in contrast to what is considered as knowledge, which in turn ultimately deals with the attitude of what is regarded as the "right" truth versus an "arbitrary" truth. This in turn then explains that one can be considered an atheist and at the same time be a God-intoxicated man.

5:5 Spinoza- the Theologian

Theology ultimately stems from and deals with the God as portrayed in the scriptures of the monotheistic religions, if not solely of the God as perceived within the frame of Christianity. The term theology comes from the Greek *theos* meaning God and *logia* meaning the study of. In the book, *Teologi i dag (2007),* Jan-Olav Henriksen highlights and argues that the theology of today, which is situated in a world of science, religion, secularism and pluralism, needs to have an active relationship, and embrace an open communication, with alternative ways of thinking. Like Schilbrack, in regards to philosophy of religion, Henriksen questions what place and significance theology has today when God no longer is taken for granted as the foundation of human existence and proposes that the purpose of theology is not to motivate a belief but to reflect as to make beliefs more understandable, both for believers and non-believers.[156]

Referring to the postliberal theologian George Lindbeck, who suggests that there is a difference between the religious experience of God and the theological reflection on God, Henriksen points out that the study of God can be approached either as a study of people's experience of God or as a study of the source of God in scripture. The relationship to God within religion and theology is thus not equivalent to each other. So whereas religion is not a

[156] Henriksen 2007, prolog/prologue.

science, theology can be, if the scientific criteria is applied as the formula for the study of God as a hypothesis as any other. The study of God within theology does not have to do with proving the existence of God, but rather understanding the foundations for the claimed existence of a God, as well as the consequences of the belief in a God.[157] And as stated, Spinoza claims the existence of God and speaks of nothing other than God in his work *Ethics*, but it does not contain proof of God, so how can he be anything other than a theologian?

Just as it can be argued that Einstein could have answered no to the question do you believe in God so too could it be argued that Spinoza's philosophy could have claimed that God does not exist, but he did/could not. Faith in Spinoza's God is therefore an aspect that both have in common. The fact that they can both be considered atheists but that I propose that they both have faith begs the question of what this faith implies. According to a dictionary faith means the belief in the traditional doctrines of a religion and the belief in God, but it also means the trust in something or someone.[158] In Hebrews 11:1 it is stated: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Inspired by Anselm of Canterbury, who defined theology as "the quest of faith seeking understanding, not faith that already understands", the theologian Catherine Keller claims in her book *On the Mystery* (2008) that "theology is a truth-process, a relational reflection on beliefs, not a set of truths."[159] Keller presents the hypothesis of process theology in where she explains that a theology of process is not the process of learning about God, it is an open-ended, on-the-ground interaction of discerning what one may call God. In her own words she states:

> No theology has earlier or better embraced the truth of our radically relational interdependence than has the movement called process theology and to say that theology is in process is to say that theology itself unfolds in relationship and in touch.[160] [...] The context touches content, and content reciprocally affects context. For good *and* ill. From the interaction comes change. Because we are beings in relation we are always becoming. Change is inevitable but not necessarily for the better: process in interpretation, as in life, may or may not mean progress. And so we embark on the path of a *theology in process,* a process whose ends are many and open, a way no less purposeful than that which moves toward some fixed goal. The ends of this way does not yet exist: [...] they signify possibilities, not actualities. Theology is not ever

[157] Henriksen 2007, chapters 3-4.
[158] Merriam-webster.com/dictionary/faith (4 January 2016).
[159] Keller 2008, 17.
[160] Keller 2008, 22.

> identical with faith or with belief- but, rather, motivated by faith, it takes all our beliefs into the evolving perspective of its interactive process.[161]

As I understand the function of the theology that Keller calls Process Theology it is not to once and for all describe God, but rather to respectfully question all descriptions of God. In other words, theology can be said to be the search for valid arguments in relation to the hypothesis of God.

Professor of Theology, Donald Bloesch, at the University of Dubuque writes that "the tragedy of the well-meaning attempts of process theologians to defend the faith lies in their having first emptied the faith of its biblical content and having concocted a God other than the one worshiped by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."[162] Bloesch instead claims that the "father" of process theology is Schleiermacher since his hermeneutics of the scriptures is through the lens of secular culture. On the other hand, the systematic theologian Ruth Page writes that "process philosophy and process theology have made a valuable contribution to theological thought, particularly in their description of the immanence of God as one pole of the divine being, thus emphasizing the proximity of God without surrendering ineffable transcendence."[163] The process thought is thus an endless ever changing array of individualized possibilities in a relationship to a universal support system or force instead of a set process towards a universal ontological goal or source defined by dogmatic religious beliefs and rituals. In Page's words, "God relates to all according to their kind."[164] Focus here, though, is on how Spinoza scholarship has related to Spinoza's God.

[161] Keller 2008, 10.
[162] Bloesch 1979, 24.
[163] Page 2007, 349.
[164] Page 2007, 356.

Chapter 6: The Comprehension of Spinoza's God at this Time

6.1 Introduction

My inquiry was if re-labeling Spinoza could make Spinoza's philosophy useful today. The main questions were:

- Is it possible to constructively expand the understanding of what Spinoza's concept of God means by deconstructing the labels that have been placed on him and his philosophy? And if so then:
- How is that comprehension of value for the furthering of the subject area of theology and philosophy of religion today?

6:2 A Summarizing Compilation

6:2:1 Naess and Sharp, Deleuze and Spindler

So, what can contemporary Spinoza scholarship such as that of Sharp and Spindler contribute to Spinoza research that is different compared to their predecessors Naess and Deleuze? As stated, Naess used Spinoza as an icon for Deep Ecology for the purpose of uplifting the value of nature for its own sake so as to promote a change of human attitude towards nature. Deleuze, on the other hand, framed Spinoza within ethology with the focus on human beings as part of nature so as to promote awareness of human affects. Both, in different ways, categorize Spinoza as a naturalist and both, ultimately, deal with how the human being is capable of behaving dependent on attitude and affects. In other words, they are both interpreting Spinoza's philosophy as ethics. But, as Curley highlighted, in Spinoza's own work titled *Ethics* he promotes a principle of seeking one's own advantage, which entails preserving, destroying or adapting in any way whatever. What kind of ethics is that?

What Sharp highlights with renaturalization is that ethics is not governed by human beings, implying that humans have no free will and therefore compatibilism is false. Instead of elevating the value of nature for its own sake, like Naess, Sharp takes human beings down a notch so as to bring human beings into nature and thereby into equal balance. Like Deleuze, humans are placed as part of nature, which implies parallelism. The difference is that, according to Deleuze, the concept of free will is denounced because of the narcissistic attitude of human reasoning, whereas Sharp argues that free will is an illusion because it is necessarily

constrained by affects. Even though Deleuze also refers to affects he perceives the cause as assemblages of ideas, whereas Sharp perceives the cause as a force of ideas.

What Spindler contributes is that the scandalous issue, in regards to the claim that there is no free will, is not necessarily the consequential denunciation of the transcendent God of the monotheistic religions, as Deleuze claims, but rather the denunciation of any built in morality in the laws of nature. Spindler highlights that what is of interest today, when it comes to Spinoza research, is not the issue of Spinoza's concept of God, *per se*, but rather Spinoza's concept of human beings as God or Nature. It can thus be concluded that Sharp deals with the Nature aspect of Spinoza's philosophy of One Substance, God or Nature, whereas Spindler deals with the God aspect of Spinoza's One Substance, God or Nature. But, then again, since Spinoza is a monist and not a dualist they are basically dealing with the "same", but from different angles. What has been highlighted is that what can be challenging for interpreters of Spinoza is that it has to do with parallelism and not compatibilism, and this because of the Western dualistic mind-set. Sharp's renaturalization, argued in contrast to denaturalization, sheds light on the fact that Spinoza was a monist and Spindler's discussions clarify that Spinoza was not a humanist, because he did not imply that people were "good" and the "bad" could therefore be solved by human reason instead of a God of religion. This ultimately implies that there are no intrinsic moral values, which is hard to swallow because it seemingly spins human relationships, with everything, out of control. How is it possible then to make any practical sense of Spinoza's theoretical philosophy?

By understanding Spinoza through these interpreters it highlights that Spinoza was not necessarily a pantheist because Spinoza's monistic God or Nature does not have to mean that the monotheistic God determines through nature by being in it. But, Spinoza is also not necessarily a determinist because the laws of nature, even though cause in itself and therefore determined, the laws of nature are not what determine as such, but rather when it comes to Homo sapiens it is the necessity of the affects that determine, because everything is in God. Spinoza can thus be argued to be able to be labeled as a necessitarianist and panentheist, which are all-inclusive labels, instead of as determinist and pantheist, which are either/or labels.

6:2:2 Schleiermacher, Wittgenstein and Einstein

Wittgenstein referred to transcendence as the human striving to transcend the limits of human finitude, which correlates with Sharp's description of denaturalization. Spinoza was labeled an atheist because he was interpreted as implying that human reason could transcend the transcendent God of religion. The elevation of human ability can thus be interpreted as the de-evaluation of the monotheistic God. Both views can be regarded as negative if human hubris and the non-existence of the monotheistic God are evaluated as non-conducive. What I perceive that Sharp's theory of renaturalization contributes is that both perspectives are necessary if an even keel is desired. But, what then is in control and what does anything mean?

The referral to Schleiermacher's Art of Understanding and Tanesini's interpretation of Wittgenstein's Theory of Language was to assist in an understanding of Spinoza's Philosophy of God. This because I perceive that Schleiermacher's hermeneutic circle corresponds to Spinoza's Three Kinds of Knowledge, in regards to his *amor intellectualis Dei.* The correspondence is that they are both circular and thereby all-inclusive. In other words, the hermeneutical circle demands understanding of the parts as to know the whole, which in turn provides a different perspective of the parts, which then yet again provides yet another understanding of the whole and around it goes as a never ending story of finite words, but with infinite possible understandings, meanings and therefore truths. Spinoza's imagination, cognition and intuition are circular in the same manner because they are what make up Spinoza's hermeneutical circle where the parts of the imagination are interpreted by the cognition so as to get a whole picture that is understood by the intuition, which in turn sparks re-imagination that will re-new the whole and be re-understood yet again in an infinite motion. The difference between them, as I see it at this point in time, is that Schleiermacher's theory of the hermeneutical circle is so as to understand perspectives to promote understanding between people and Spinoza's theory of, what I would call, the circle of three kinds of knowledge is to highlight perspectives so as to shift attitudes pertaining to the concept of God. But, both of their theories have to do with the practical relationship of God or Nature and not with any sort of individual control of nature, be it by human beings or a God.

These key issues correlate with Wittgenstein's theory of the limits of language because it aids in the understanding of what I perceive Spinoza's concept of God entails. The non-

transcendence claim of the monotheistic God, which first provided him with the atheist label and then the pantheist label, does not pertain to that God, *per se*, but it has to do with the human ability of knowing that God. Wittgenstein highlights, with his theory of the acknowledgement that there is a limit to understanding, that it is that acknowledgement which actually logically proves that there is "something" beyond, just as Augustine said, if one thinks one understands God what one understands is not God. But, through the analysis of Einstein's belief in Spinoza's God I provided an understanding that this beyond is what can be perceived to be Spinoza's concept of God, so in a sense it can be argued to coincide with Augustine claim that what one understands is not God, but what I propose that Spinoza instead means is that everything that is understood by everything and everyone is necessarily God. The difference as I see it is the attitude towards that which is understood. In other words, the attitude of thinking that one has thoroughly understood what God is is nonsense since God is infinite and a thorough understanding of God is therefore not possible, but that does not mean that all understandings of God are not of God.

This "God" is not immanent as the divine immanence of pantheism implies and also not transcendent as monotheistic religions imply, but Spinoza's God is transcendent because Spinoza's God is that which is transcendent, meaning on the other side of limits, as well as immanent since all knowledge of *what is* is knowledge of God. For as Wittgenstein explains, there are no truths that can not be expressed, but that does not necessarily mean that there are no more possible expressions beyond what we know.

According to Tanesini this awareness of limits and problem of subjectivity is Wittgenstein's therapeutic contribution for it promotes surrender. I agree that it is an essential awareness because it provides a release, or rather provides the option of unattachment, and therefore a kind of freedom from the impulse to transcend. This thought can be interpreted as a stagnant or passive stance since it can be understood as a kind of resignation, but if Spinoza's Principle of Sufficient Reason is added to the equation the problem of subjectivity can be resolved; Spinoza's therapeutic contribution can be claimed to be the active awareness of affects, which in turn, can be considered to provide the freedom of a possible respons-ability. This because all subjectivity is included, not because it has relative value but because, according to Spinoza, affects is a language that is vulnerable to events and therefore not individualized and

therefore unknowable as a whole, but always situated and therefore always explainable in relation to never ending parts.

This then correlates with my hypothesis that Spinoza's *amor intellectualis Dei* was not trying to remove the monotheistic God out of the picture but rather what he promotes is the necessity of analyzing the picture as it is by understanding affects in relation to it, which I highlighted by referring to Spinoza's foundational focus of biblical exegesis. Spinoza is not denouncing the traditional transcendent personal God of the monotheistic religions, *per se*, but rather he is providing a manner of having an untraditional relationship with the same and this can be claimed to be Spinoza's therapeutic agenda. If Wittgenstein highlighted the importance of the awareness of the limits of language so as to stop, Spinoza highlights the awareness of affects as language so as to move along.

The common factor that makes both Wittgenstein's and Spinoza's theoretical philosophies practical philosophies and thereby therapeutic is the theorizing of human desire for the purpose of understanding. Spinoza, though, goes further than Wittgenstein with the claim that the desire to know is the human essence because everything that can be known is necessarily knowledge of "God." That Spinoza's view of biblical exegesis as a means of identifying prejudices of the reader by active awareness of the affects, because it effects interpretation, is therefore important to keep in mind since it highlights what any concept of God is based on. Even if Cohen interprets Spinoza's "dabbling" with what can be referred to as biblical exegesis as an act of prejudice of Judaism in itself, as well as a tool for the destruction of the uniqueness of God, I do not agree that Spinoza's aim was to separate knowledge and faith so as to liberate philosophy from religion. Like Cohen I do agree that the omnipresence of God does not equal pantheism, because even if it means God is everywhere it does not mean that God is in everything. It seems clear that Spinoza and the monotheistic religions agree upon the concept of God as One, but which one is the logical following question for a dualistic mind-set, which ultimately cements the notion of otherness. This then paradoxically nullifies the whole concept of oneness, which is exemplified, not only by the fact that the monotheistic religions have three different relationships with the one and only God but, also by McFague's five separate models of God. Under what model then does Spinoza's concept of God belong, which model fits a man labeled both atheist and God-intoxicated man? As the analysis of Einstein's philosophy of religion compared to Spinoza's concept of God showed it is

apparently possible to not believe in the dogma of a religion and still believe in the truthfulness of the concept of God. Does this then demand or provide a sixth model of God that can be added to McFague's list?

The fact that Spinoza's God can be argued to have been conceived during the Scientific Revolution and that Spinoza's God is referred to as God or Nature can be understood as nature taking the place of the monotheistic God, which can lead to determinism. As has been shown Spinoza's God or Nature can also be interpreted as the monotheistic God governing through the laws of nature, which instead implies pantheism. It can also be interpreted to mean that God created the laws of nature and then left creation to run itself, which implies deism. As previously highlighted, Spinoza uses the term "divine nature" in the *Ethics*, so it is understandable that the label pantheist can be argued to be appropriate and since Spinoza's concept of God is impersonal it is understandable that the first *deist model* can be argued to fit. But, the fact that Spinoza's impersonal God is not regarded as transcendent, in the traditional view of the monotheistic religions, means that the second *dialogical model*, does not fit, which then means that the atheist label is most appropriate. But, because Spinoza has also been understood as a God-intoxicated man, because of his intellectual love of God, the dichotomy of the labels becomes a problem.

The third *monarchial model* is where God's relationship with the world is as its ruler and judge and humankind his obedient subjects. If Spinoza's God is framed as divine immanence then the model fits, because Spinoza's God can then be argued to be the "determinator" using nature as its tool of reward and punishment. As, for example, the Bible stories of the Crossing of the Red Sea in Exodus 13-14 and Noah's Flood in Genesis 6-9, can be argued to show respectively. This model saves Spinoza from the label atheist by re-labeling him a pantheist, which can be considered appropriate since Spinoza claims that God necessarily exists. But, yet again Spinoza's God is impersonal so why would Spinoza's God reward or punish? The fourth *agential model*, where God's plan is realized through human history, which implies that humankind is the body of God, can be argued to correlate with Spinoza's claim that everything is *in* God. This then makes the label panentheist more appropriate than pantheist, but the agential model still does not fit because even if Spinoza's God is necessity itself, it does not have a plan, meaning a goal. The consequence of this necessitarianism can be the argument that the past has no purpose and therefore no meaning, which can be interpreted as

the destabilizing factor of Spinoza's philosophy, since it seemingly, disqualifies ethics. But, Spinoza's major work, in regards to his concept of God, is titled *Ethics,* what it does not contain, though, is moral prescriptions.

Spinoza's definition of God found on the first page of the *Ethics,* is "[...] Being absolutely infinite [...] which is in itself and conceived through itself [...] By cause of itself means whose essence involves existence" (EId6,3,1). I understand this to be also a definition of what he means by necessity; that the essence of everything that exists is necessarily God and therefore God necessarily exists. But this does, yet again, not necessarily mean that God is in everything implying divine immanence or pantheism, but rather it can be understood to imply that everything is in God, which Spinoza himself also states and which then implies panentheism. This can then corresponds with the fifth *organic model*, where God is actualized through everything in the Universe, but this would mean that everything is God, which brings it back full circle to the dual demand of labeling Spinoza either an atheist or pantheist.

So, the demand for a sixth model, so as to be able to define Spinoza's God seems apparent. A suggestion for this sixth model can be called the *curiosity model,* because it implies that God is that which the world as of yet does not know but desires to understand. The unique aspect of Spinoza's monistic concept of God is that his concept of faith has to do with his Principle of Sufficient Reason. This inclusive attitude then is in contrast to the dualistic mind-set that separates and thereby excludes. Spinoza's radical monism of God as One Substance, God or Nature implies that any relationship with anything is inevitably two sided, but that does not necessarily mean that they are separate. The "Other", meaning the aspects of God still not known or "others", meaning all known concepts of God, is all God, which makes the relationship with God a never ending story because the human essence is the desire to know, and since Spinoza is a monist all knowledge pertains to that which he calls God. God talk is therefore not nonsense.

6:3 Conclusion

So, it has apparently been possible to constructively expand the understanding of what Spinoza's concept of God means by deconstructing the labels that have been placed on him and his philosophy. But how is this comprehension of Spinoza's philosophy of God of value for the furthering of the subject area of philosophy of religion and theology today?

Schilbrack perceives that the rehabilitation of religious metaphysics is one of the central philosophical problems for the future of philosophy of religion. With this he questions whether metaphysical claims within different religions can be considered "objects" for rational cognitive analysis. He also argues for the crossing of boundaries through the study of the embodiment of religion. My purpose was not to cross boundaries by discussing "God" as seen through different religious traditions or ritual practices so as to bring people into the mix. Even if in this case I only relate to the monotheistic concept of God, which is the fundamental aspect shared by the Abrahamic religions, without any focus on the differences of the inter and intra understandings and traditions of what that concept implies for each of the three respective religions, this study within philosophy of religion does though meet Schilbrack's criteria for going outside the box, since it deals with a theistic worldview not considered to belong within the realm of religion. I therefore perceive that my analysis of Spinoza's philosophy of God as One Substance, God or Nature is of value in this process of rehabilitation that Schilbrack requests because the issue of religious metaphysics can be viewed through Spinoza's monistic lens and his Principle of Sufficient Reason makes it possible to cognitively analyze metaphysical claims.

As I understand Schilbrack's *Manifesto* it demands change, and what he is challenging is the attitude of absolutes, meaning that it is not the content, *per se*, but the relational movement within the subject areas theology and philosophy of religion that is the issue. Another word for change is process, which implies that changes happen naturally, and the position of Process Theology is that everything is constantly changing. Process Theology can therefore be considered as both theology and philosophy and therefore hypothetically be a common ground necessary for Schilbrack's demand for change. Since I have argued for the re-labeling of Spinoza as a process theologian this then shows that Spinoza's philosophy can be regarded as useful for the rehabilitation of the subject area philosophy of religion and theology.

Similar to Schilbrack's focus on the need for renewal within philosophy of religion, Henriksen has highlighted that theology has not sufficiently changed with the times. Yesterday's theology, so to speak, was situated in a world where the existence of God was taken for granted and therefore religious and scientific thought went hand in hand. And, even though theology, as it is today, is able to relate to the importance of theology in regards to all religions and as a subject that has relevance within the walls of a university, and not only

within the church, it still needs to realize that theology is not only an enterprise in reference to the one and only God of monotheism, but also a hermeneutic principle dealing with the exegesis of all texts that contain the subject of God. In a sense it has to do with identifying the difference of attitude towards the meaning of the concept of God. If a theologian's job is not to find the truth for the purpose of conversion or defining definite meaning, but rather to seek an understanding of what can be considered the nature of religious truth and its consequences then it is possible to continue to label Spinoza an atheist and also keep the new label of process theologian.

This perspective is useful because it shows that systematic theology, which is the act of theology practiced within academia, can be beneficial for establishing a relationship between religious communities and secular society. It is the tool that does the work for the promotion of understanding between the two, meaning, in this case, that even if religion provides the grammar for theological language it is important to remember that many languages are used to speak of God. A theologian can thus be said to be an interpreter or bridge between scientific and a religions understanding of reality. Theology, the study of God, then becomes relevant for people in general because it actualizes people's relationship with the concept of a God and thereby, in a sense, says just as much about people as it does about God, since it is inevitably people who do the interpreting.

The thesis constructive purpose was to provide yet another lens through which one can view and relate to the attitude of there being an "Other" or "others." As stated in the beginning of the thesis there are various religious beliefs and there are theistic, deistic and atheistic world views, but it always seems to come down to an either/or perspective, in other words, there is always the dualistic mind-set of there being an other with which one chooses to have a relationship or not. When it comes to the study of God, theology; that relationship can be regarded as being with an "Other", meaning a transcendent Being. When it comes to the study of the concept of God, philosophy of religion; that relationship can be regarded as being with "others", meaning with a variation of immanent ideas of being. What I hope has come to light through this exploration of Spinoza's concept of God as One Substance is that any relationship is ultimately with God or the "Other" through the relationship with the God concepts of "others" and therefore an all-inclusive attitude to any thing other is conducive when undertaking an enterprise based on curiosity, and therefore theology and philosophy of

religion can be related to as different disciplines according to their kind, but can not in actuality be separated. The constructive conclusion, or what I perceive to be the therapeutic benefit according to my comprehension of Spinoza's concept of God, is thus not that Spinoza has the correct philosophy of God but that it provides some food for thought that has a potential to change attitudes. The attitude that both Naess and Sharp, in regards to nature, and Deleuze and Spindler, in regards to humans specifically, point out is that what Spinoza denounces is human hubris based on the concept of the exclusivity of human free-will, and when this affect is identified and acknowledged, as well as understood, then a shift to an all-inclusive attitude may be potentially conceived of as beneficial instead of threatening.

What I perceive coincides with both Schilbrack's and Henriksen's view of what philosophy of religion and theology imply today is that theology is relative, but that does not mean that it is arbitrary relativism. The valuable aspect of theology is not to delineate the boundaries so as to categorize, control and conclude once and for all, but rather to lay a strong foundation as a stage for the acts of critical reflection, with respect and openness to a variety of perspective plays. And, within all theology God is that foundation. As explained, I perceive that the foundation of Spinoza's philosophy is his focus on the significance of biblical exegesis and, as also already mentioned several times, Spinoza himself speaks of nothing other than God in his work *Ethics,* so how can he be anything other than a theologian, and according to Keller's view of theology today Spinoza can not be labeled anything other than a process theologian.

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