

## IS THE BODY EVERLASTING? AN EXTENSION OF SPINOZA'S THEORY OF IMMORTALITY

Rocco A. Astore BA, MA

### Abstract

*This piece will first explicate Spinoza's understanding of God, his/her attributes, and his/her modes. I will then state his views concerning God as an immaterial substance who alone possesses thought, as well as a corporeal one who alone possesses the attribute of extension. Next, there will be an explanation of Spinoza's beliefs concerning the nature of the mind and body. Afterward, I will convey his views concerning the eternal aspect of the mind, as well as the inexactness of the body's duration. Lastly, I will argue that one can still be a consistent Spinozist even if one ascribes to the view that the body, like the mind, is, in certain ways, forever.*

### Introduction

In his Magnus Opus, the *Ethics*, Spinoza explicitly states that the mind is eternal whereas the body is not.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, he claims that Nature has determined the mind and body to be coherent, and thus, whatever happens to the mind there must be an effect of equal magnitude on the body.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Spinoza states that through God's attribute of thought the body is the mind, and through his/her attribute of extension the mind is the body.<sup>3</sup> One question arising from this, is how can one regard Spinoza as being consistent when he claims that the mind is eternal and the body indefinite, while also adhering to the view that both are in sync, and ultimately one

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<sup>1</sup>B.D. Spinoza. E. Curley, ed., *Ethics* (Princeton: Penguin Books, 1996)., 32, 52-53, & 178-179.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 39-40

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 40.

and the same? Finally, is it possible to successfully resolve this problem by claiming that the body is in some ways eternal, or would this interpretation defy Spinoza's system?

### **Spinoza on the Nature of God, Attributes, and Modes**

In Spinoza's eyes, there can only be one substance in the natural order.<sup>4</sup> That substance, he refers to as God or Nature.<sup>5</sup> To him, God is the one substance since only he/she is the cause of himself/herself.<sup>6</sup> In other words, God is the only being that exist by himself/herself, since one cannot rationally define him/her as needing a greater being or concept for his/her existence or conceivability. Furthermore, Spinoza defines a substance as that which exists independently, since it comes to be through itself without the need of another conceiver or engenderer.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, since one cannot conceive God as requiring an external cause or superior idea for his/her being, it is the case that only he/she is that which exists self-sufficiently, and hence, only he/she is a substance.<sup>8</sup>

Another reason why Spinoza believes that God is the only substance is due to the irrational conclusions that would arise if he/she were not.<sup>9</sup> That is, if there were another substance aside from God, it would be the case that the natural order would be unable to present itself as a unified system since that which is the cause of itself is unique and incompatible with what is not of its nature. In other words, if more than one substance existed, Nature would appear jumbled, because a cause of itself exists distinctly, which, in turn, would bar it from interacting with another uniquely self-caused being. Accordingly, because the natural order is coherent, and since that can only be the case if one cause-of-itself exists, it not only follows that God is that only

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 1-4.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 1-2, 9-10.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 3-5, 9-10.

substance, it is also the case that nothing is in the same ontological category as him/her.<sup>10</sup> Lastly, though God is existentially distinct, it follows that all that derives from him/her are his/her attributes and modes, and by being emanations of him/her, they express aspects of him/her through them.<sup>11</sup>

As understood by Spinoza, due to nothing being in the same tier of existence as God, nothing has the power to limit him/her, rendering only him/her to be infinite.<sup>12</sup> That is, by God being the only cause of himself/herself, or the only being who exists without the need of another, nothing can curb his/her nature, which leaves him/her to be necessarily limitless. As an infinite substance, it follows that God expresses himself/herself without restraint and because what he/she exudes derives from his/her unlimited nature, it follows that his/her attributes are infinite as well.<sup>13</sup>

Per Spinoza, God's attributes are infinite in number and nature, and they each eternally express just one aspect of him/her.<sup>14</sup> In other words, God's attributes are innumerable because like him/her they are infinite, and accordingly, nothing can limit them. Also, God's attributes cannot mix since it would be impossible for them to continue to be limitless if they were not unities but instead piecemeals.<sup>15</sup> That is if any attributes fused they would stop one another from being infinite since it would indicate that they are compositions that consist of either finite or infinite part and not pure singularities that express only one eternal aspect of God.

To Spinoza, something finite cannot make up something infinite since the nature of finitude is incompatible with the nature of infinity.<sup>16</sup> In other words, because that which is finite is not of

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 3-5, 9-10, & 16.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 1-3, 4, 9-11, & 16.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 1-2, 4.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 4-6.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 3.

the same classification of existence as that which is infinite, it follows that something limited cannot affect something limitless, let alone compose it. At the same time, Spinoza believes that it is also impossible for infinite parts to compose any attribute of God, further indicating that his/her attributes are unmixable and limitless.<sup>17</sup> One reason why Spinoza ascribes to the view that two infinities cannot coexist is that if there were a multiplicity of them, they would defy how one understands the concept of infinity.<sup>18</sup> That is, for something to be truly infinite it must be singular since if there were two infinities in nature, one would be unable to distinguish between them since they would necessarily bear the same infinite qualities. Consequently, since one would be unable to perceive or conceive them as being different, it follows that they can only be one and the same.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, because two infinities cannot truly exist, it follows that two infinite parts cannot either, and since two infinite parts cannot be, it is the case that each of God's attributes is a unity and not an amalgamation.<sup>20</sup> Finally, because an attribute of God is not a collection of fragments, it is the case that it cannot mix with another attribute since it is void of parts, and thus, each is only a singular expression of God.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, Spinoza addresses the nature of what he refers to as the affections, or expressions of God, which he calls modes, and he claims that they ultimately derive from God, come to be through his/her attributes, and are unable to exist outside of him/her.<sup>22</sup> First, due to God being limitless, as well as the only self-caused substance, it follows that nothing can precede him/her, and hence, one may claim that all things reside in him/her.<sup>23</sup> That is, modes of God necessarily exist after God, and for them to exist after him/her, it must be the case that he/she houses them,

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 3, 6-7.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 3, 9-10.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 1, 3, & 9-10.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 2-3.

since nothing can limit, or be outside of him/her. Consequently, since nothing can exist exterior to God, it follows that every mode ultimately derives from him/her or comes to be through his/her attributes, and hence, no mode is exempt from following the laws of his/her existence.<sup>24</sup>

To Spinoza, modes are determinate, or it is the case that they are unfree to determine their natures since by only being able to exist in God, they can only operate according to his/her laws, or the nature of him/her and his/her attributes.<sup>25</sup> Another reason why modes of God cannot decide to follow different laws is that as the totality of life, nothing escapes the confines of God, and thus all laws, or attributes of him/her, are part of his/her inescapable existence.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, modes are unfree to choose which attributes of God they follow, and one may also claim that it is impossible for them to express those attributes of God that are not innate to them. Finally, Spinoza continues to address God's attributes, or laws of nature, that modes convey.<sup>27</sup>

### **Understanding God's Attribute of Thought**

According to Spinoza, God alone possesses the attribute of thought which his/her modes express by thinking.<sup>28</sup> That is, thought is necessarily an attribute of God, since like it, he/she is infinite, and since nothing else qualifies as being limitless, thought can only be of his/her nature. Consequently, it would be correct for one to infer that to Spinoza modes cannot possess thought since they are not infinite, and rather it is more precise to claim that modes express thought through ideating.<sup>29</sup> In other words, the power that thinking modes, like people, have, to form ideas, or conceptualize, or conceive, is an expression of God's ceaseless actuality, or law, or attribute of thought. Lastly, because people can only express thought, due to their lack of power,

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 1-3, 13-15.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 33.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 32-33.

or actuality to match the nature of that attribute, it is the case that all thinking things rely on God's ceaseless actuality, or law of thought for their power to form ideas and to be conceivable.<sup>30</sup>

Through the lens of Spinoza's philosophy, the power that people have to be conceivable and to ideate relies on the ceaseless activity of God as understood through his/her attribute of thought.<sup>31</sup>

That is, God, insofar as he/she is the only substance that possesses thought, maintains the continuity of the immaterial aspects of the natural order. One reason why Spinoza ascribes to this view is due to God necessarily having to be in constant activity since he/she is limitless, and hence, only his/her powers of thought equate to the endless bustle of the intellectual cosmos.<sup>32</sup> Accordingly, to Spinoza, without God, the immaterial features of the natural order would cease, and thus, all things would be unable to conceive or be conceivable. Finally, Spinoza continues his *Ethics* by describing the other attribute of God, or law of Nature, which modes, such as people, express.<sup>33</sup>

### **Comprehending God's Attribute of Extension**

Another attribute that Spinoza believes God alone possesses is the attribute of extension.<sup>34</sup> One reason why Spinoza believes this to be so is due to God being equivalent to the natural order.<sup>35</sup>

In other words, because only one substance can exist, and since it is the case that modes exist in God, as well as extend in him/her, it follows that he/she is just as much corporeal as he/she is immaterial. Accordingly, since people can conceive God as a material substance that provides space for all his/her derivatives to extend, it follows that extension can only be his/her attribute

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 10, 32-33.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 24-25, 32-33.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 33.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 10, 16, & 33.

since nothing can extend past him/her.<sup>36</sup> That is because nothing can exceed the bounds of Nature, it follows that only God, when understood as a corporeal being, can handle the attribute of extension since his/her physicality alone equates to the extendedness of the natural order.

Also, it is important to note that all extended beings rely on God for their existence.<sup>37</sup> That is, since bodies are subject to limitations, or negations to their beings, it follows that they cannot set the nature of their movements, and rather it is ultimately God and his/her attribute of extension that directs motion in the universe. Consequently, since all bodies follow the laws of God's attribute of extension, it is the case that without God, when understood as he/she who is the totality of the physical cosmos, everything corporeal would cease since nothing material would have space or room to exist.<sup>38</sup>

### **Spinoza On the Essence of the Mind**

To Spinoza, the mind, like the attribute of God that it derives from, is a singular apparatus and not a mix of independent faculties.<sup>39</sup> That is, Spinoza views the mind as a unified whole, since it derives from the unity of God's law or attribute of thought, and thus, it is incorrect to claim that it is an amalgamation, and rather it is a single apparatus that has active and passive facets. To Spinoza, the mind must have an active side, because people can actively conceive ideas, and understand them as coming immediately from themselves.<sup>40</sup> Likewise, there must also exist a passive hue of the mind since people can take in perceptions that impress upon them, which they in turn house as memories.<sup>41</sup> Consequently, since the nature of conceiving is different than that

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 1-2, 4-6, & 33.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 10, 33.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 38-39.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 32, 38-39.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

of perception, it follows that the types of ideas the mind can have, range from degrees of passivity to activity.<sup>42</sup>

The first type of idea that is in the power of the mind to possess begins with inadequate ideas or those passive perceptions that affect the mind externally.<sup>43</sup> In other words, Spinoza believes that inadequate ideas are those ideas that the external world or the ideational aspects of the nature order presents to people, and since those ideas do not immediately come to be from the nature of people's minds alone, it follows that they are not clearly understandable. Moreover, Spinoza claims that the mind can have adequate ideas, or those notions that people can clearly understand as immediately deriving from their active abilities to conceptualize, yet they do not always match their objects.<sup>44</sup> That is, adequate ideas are true insofar as they concern the concept or essence of a thing, but not its physical being at all times. Finally, the last type of idea that the mind can have, Spinoza calls true ideas or those notions that seamlessly match the reality of their objects, and thus, their epistemic worth reflects the highest activity.

Also, it is important to note that through the lens of Spinoza, there is an order that ideas follow and it ultimately reflects the conceptual and perceptual unfolding or flow of God's essence.<sup>45</sup> That is, he believes since all things operate according to God's laws, due to nothing having the power to exist outside of him/her, and because the mind can conceive and perceive God, or Nature, it follows that it can only have ideas in a sequential way. That order, Spinoza believes, ultimately derives and reflects God's attribute of thought, and it is of the human mind to express that attribute insofar as it can as a thinking mode of God.<sup>46</sup> In other words, the mind, as a

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 32, 53-57, & 111-113.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 53-57.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 16, 25-32, 33, & 38-39.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 1, 20-21, & 33.

modification of God and his/her attribute of thought, expresses itself according to the parameters set by him/her, and thus, in the end, its ideas cannot go against his/her flow. Consequently, one may claim that the ideas of the mind follow an order that the mind does not fix, and since it would cease to think or be conceivable without God and the law of thought, it is the case that he/she is necessary for the continuity of minds, and thus, ideas.<sup>47</sup>

### **Spinoza on the Existence of Bodies**

In regards to bodies, Spinoza believes that they move in agreement with God, or only corporeal substance, or Nature.<sup>48</sup> That is, as the totality of the natural order, God's existence and attribute of extension sets the paradigm for bodies and their motions, and thus, one may understand them to exist in a negated way. First, one may claim that bodies exist limitedly, since the natural order is of a greater magnitude than any of them, or it is the case that the greatest of bodies, or Nature, is infinitely more massive, and thus, more powerful than any one of its physical modes.<sup>49</sup> Consequently, since Nature has the power to restrain, or negate everything other than itself, it follows that nothing physical can move in a greater way than it.<sup>50</sup> From this, it follows that one would be correct to infer that because nothing can supersede, or outdo the movements of Nature, it is also the case that bodies rely on the natural order since they cannot exist outside, or move past it.<sup>51</sup> Finally, one may believe that bodies move in a negated fashion since by being unable to move past Nature, they do not determine their natures, and rather it is God's, or Nature's attribute of extension that they depend on for the ways in which they can move.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 1, 19, & 32-35.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 33, 41-42.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 1, 3, & 41-43.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 1, 4-6, & 41-43.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 18-19, 41-43.

To Spinoza, God and his/her attribute of extension sets the conditions for bodily motion.<sup>53</sup> In other words, God, when understood to be Nature, emits motion through his/her attribute of extension, or law of mechanics, and since he/she and his/her attribute are uniquely limitless, it follows that all other bodies must follow the structure they determined. Also, since people can witness, or perceive the motive aspects of the natural order as being superior to their motional abilities, it follows that bodies are insignificant in comparison to the might of the universe.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, if bodies are powerless in contrast to the awesomeness of the natural order, it is the case that people can extend, or move, limitedly.<sup>55</sup>

Furthermore, it is of the nature of bodies to concur in their motions.<sup>56</sup> One reason why Spinoza believes this to be so is that a body is a composition of smaller bodies or particles that must move in agreement since it is of their nature to succumb to the movement of the greater body that they make up.<sup>57</sup> That is because in Nature a greater body can limit or direct the motion of a lesser body, and thus, atoms, or the lesser bodies that compose a greater body, are powerless to move in an alternate direction than the more formidable body in which they reside. Lastly, Spinoza goes on to explain why is it that bodies do not affect, or cause Nature to rift, even when they undergo changes themselves.<sup>58</sup>

To Spinoza, since all bodies aside from God feature negations, they are not of the same existential type as him/her, and thus, it follows that when they undergo change, it does not cause the entirety of God, or the natural order to alter.<sup>59</sup> That is, no bodies exist in the same way as

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 40-41.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 41-43.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 41.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 3, 4-7, 10-13, & 41.

does God, or Nature, and consequently, they are not only incomparable, but also incompatible, or unable to affect one another. At the same time, because Nature's existence is necessary for the continuity of the universe, it is the case that if he/she ceased, all existence would collapse, or change. Therefore, one would be correct to claim that an alteration in Nature would cause bodies to alter, but it is not the case that changes in bodies would cause it to change. In other words, if Nature, or that corporeal being required for everything's continuity, changed, all bodies would as well, but all other bodies, by depending on Nature for their corporeality, can neither affect, nor match Nature's might.<sup>60</sup>

Also, Spinoza claims that there exist an order and connection that bodies follow, and their determinate cause is God and his/her attribute of extension.<sup>61</sup> In other words, Spinoza believes that all bodies can only move according to the parameters fixed by the laws of the physical universe, or God's attribute of extension, as well as God himself/herself. Furthermore, the actions of the body follow an order and connection since their negated existences block them from moving in ways that are against the motions of the natural order.<sup>62</sup> Consequently, because bodies are unable to move in ways that are unnatural, it is justifiable to claim that Nature influences, or compels the body to fall in line with the movements of the series of causes that have led it to be. Finally, because a physical mode is a specific expression of Nature, it is the case that it emits motions that derive from the laws of the universe, and since it relies on the continuity of those principles, it necessarily operates according to their flow.<sup>63</sup>

### **Spinoza on the Coherency of the Mind and Body**

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 41-44.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

As understood by Spinoza, the mind and body form a union, or it is the case that whatever happens in one's mind there is a matching physical effect on one's body, and whatever affects one's body there is a corresponding effect on one's mind.<sup>64</sup> One reason why Spinoza ascribes to this view is that the natural order is coherent since God as an immaterial substance perfectly matches with himself/herself as a corporeal substance, or Nature.<sup>65</sup> Consequently, because God or Nature is a unison, it is the case that minds and bodies are as well, since they express God through their natures, due to them being his/her determinate modes.<sup>66</sup>

Another reason why Spinoza believes that the mind and body are in sync, is that God or Nature causes the mind to necessarily follow, or match the order of the body, and the body to follow the order of the mind.<sup>67</sup> In other words, the order and connection of ideas trek the same path as the order and connection of things, since God, as a thinking substance, ultimately engendered all minds, while as Nature all bodies, and hence, the emanation of his/her agreeable existence people necessarily express. Consequently, one would be correct to claim that in Spinoza's view God's essence equates to his/her existence, and people, as his/her modes, are unfree to have mismatching minds and bodies.<sup>68</sup>

It is also important to note that according to Spinoza if the mind existed through the attribute of extension it would be the body, and if the body came to be through the attribute of thought, it would be the mind.<sup>69</sup> One reason why Spinoza believes this is that when one perceives God, one is witnessing Nature, and when one conceives of Nature, one is contemplating the essence of

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 1, 3, 16-18, & 35.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 19, 32-33, & 35.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 40-41, 48-49.

God.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, since one may claim that God or Nature is ultimately one and the same substance and because minds and bodies, as modes, must follow the order and connection of God's being, it follows that the mind and body are, in the end, one and the same mode.<sup>71</sup> Lastly, Spinoza goes on to address the indefinite existence of the body, and the eternity of the mind.

### **Spinoza on the Duration of the Mind and Body**

According to Spinoza, the active facet of the mind is eternal.<sup>72</sup> That is, Spinoza believes that the mind's power to ideate reflects the ceaseless activity of God, from which it derives, and thus, one may understand it as being an emanation of his/her intellect, or the one limitless substance as understood through its attribute of thought. Accordingly, since it is the case that nothing can escape the bounds of God since only he/she is free of needing a greater concept for his/her essence, it follows that the active mind, as an essential ray of God, exists forever in him/her.<sup>73</sup> That is, God houses all ideas, since nothing can be before, or outside of him/her, and thus, it is the case that the active mind not only exists eternally in him/her, it also follows that, as a thinking mode, it innately continues to express itself. Finally, by this inherent persistence to exude itself, one should not believe that the active eternal aspect of the mind harbors any human reasons, emotions, sensations, or intuitions, rather it is wholly impersonal.<sup>74</sup>

One may infer that to Spinoza; the active mind is eternal in an unanthropomorphic way since it is people's passive minds that harbor their bodily memories and sensory impressions, and thus their identities wash away upon their deaths.<sup>75</sup> Another reason why one may claim that the active hue

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 16-18, 40-41, & 48-49.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 172-173.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 169, 172-173.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

of the mind is endless in a non-human way is due to it deriving from an everlasting source.<sup>76</sup> That is because only things of the same type are compatible, it is necessarily the case that the active mind is eternal in a way which is void of human characteristics since it derives from God's essence which is unanthropomorphic, timeless, endlessly active, and without limits.

It is also possible to infer that the active mind is everlasting since it is not the case that there exists a superior idea to that which is limitless, and thus nothing conceptual can stop it from continuing.<sup>77</sup> That is because one's active mind shares in God's eternity since it derives from him/her, it follows that one cannot claim that a greater idea than limitless existence is real, and thus, no concept can stop the emanation of the active mind. Accordingly, due to the active mind's fixity to eternally exude God's infinite activity, it follows that as long as God endures in ceaseless actuality, it will follow suit.<sup>78</sup> Finally, since God is necessarily always active, and thus cannot choose to cease, or go against that which must be of his/her nature, it follows that the active aspect of the mind must also be forever, since it can never be in inactivity.<sup>79</sup>

According to Spinoza, the body exists indefinitely, and thus it is not eternal.<sup>80</sup> By non-eternal, Spinoza believes it to be the case that the body cannot exist forever in the same form as it does in one's present life.<sup>81</sup> Accordingly, he claims that the body exists indefinitely, or in a way that one cannot understand fully since it is of a different nature than one's mind.<sup>82</sup> That is, the body, by lacking awareness, cannot communicate anything to the mind, since they are not of the same ontological type, rendering it impossible for them to interact. Thus, since the body does not,

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 1, 18-19, 169, & 172-173.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 1-3, 10, 18-19, 24, 169, & 172-173.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 171-173.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

cannot, and could never convey knowledge of the moment of its death to the mind, and because it is of an alternative nature than the mind, it follows that it exists in an indefinite, or inexact way.<sup>83</sup>

Moreover, Spinoza ascribes to the view that the perceptual, or passive aspect of the mind, like the body, is finite, and thus it is the case that it cannot exist limitlessly.<sup>84</sup> One reason why Spinoza believes this to be the case is that the passive aspect of the mind does not reflect God's self-reliance, or infinity, since it depends on external perceptions to store memories and to imagine.<sup>85</sup> Consequently, one may claim that the passive aspect of the mind helps to form one's identity, and it is this aspect that ends upon one's demise.<sup>86</sup> That is, since the passive shade of the mind, which stores the ideational aspects of the natural order, retains one's understanding of one's self during life, it follows that it must change, or cease to be after death. Accordingly, because nothing truly loses its existence due to nothing being able to escape or be outside the bounds of Nature, it follows that the passive aspect of the mind cannot truly die, but rather it must transform.<sup>87</sup> Finally, it is my belief that that transformation ends one's identity, or the product of one's passive mind, but not one's existence, and thus the body is in some ways everlasting.

### **The Eternality of the Body as Being Consistent with Spinoza's Understanding of Immortality**

It is my belief that the body, like the mind, is everlasting, and consequently, one can still be a Spinozist while adhering to the belief that that which is corporeal is also eternal. One reason why

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 171-173.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 24, 44-47, 55-58, & 168.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

I believe that the body is eternal is due to Spinoza clearly stating that nothing can exist outside of God, or Nature, and thus, there is no way that the body can escape Nature's confines.<sup>88</sup> That is since the body is a mode, or derivative, of God, or Nature, and thus exists in that system as a limited and determinate entity; it is the case that it cannot exceed Nature's power.<sup>89</sup> Consequently, because people's bodies are determinate, and powerless in comparison to Nature, it follows that they cannot choose to disregard following the directions of the universe and its attributes.<sup>90</sup> Accordingly, since Nature sets the rules for the existence of bodily modes, and compels them to follow it, one may also claim that the body can never truly die since its particles cannot truly diminish, or fade out of Nature.<sup>91</sup>

Another reason why it is the case that one can understand the body as being eternal is due to the fact the body's particles can never truly fade from existence.<sup>92</sup> That is, there is always a smaller particle that fuses to make a greater composite body, and since all bodies are composites of that nature, it follows that when they supposedly die, it must be the case that those atoms remain.<sup>93</sup> In other words, the body can never genuinely fade out of existence because it is divisible in infinitely many ways.<sup>94</sup> Consequently, atoms always remain in Nature since their reducibility is endless, and thus, one may claim that because there is always a smaller body that results from the division of a larger body, all bodies never really fade from being.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 1, 6-7, & 10.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 1, 6-7, 9-10, 17-19, 41-45, 172-173, & 174.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

Also, one may claim that the body is eternal since God or Nature set the body to be coherent with the mind.<sup>96</sup> That is, Spinoza believes that the life of the mind reflects the life of the body, and vice-versa, and if it is the case that the active mind is eternal, it also must be the case that the body is as well, since it was set to parallel the mind.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, just as the life of the mind changes after death, the body must alter as well if they are to be truly concurrent. It is of my opinion that one can understand the body's transformation postmortem as its particles becoming part of other living things, just as the active mind lives on as an essence in God.<sup>98</sup> Lastly, one may claim that by the body being the mind through the attribute of extension, and the mind, the body, through the attribute of thought, is another reason why one can be a consistent Spinozist while believing that the body is evermore.

One may continue to claim that the body is everlasting, while still being in tune with Spinoza's beliefs since it is the case that the body is the mind when conceived through the attribute of thought.<sup>99</sup> Likewise, because the mind is the body when perceived through the attribute of extension, it follows that the order and connection of ideas and bodies follow the same, since the mind and body are seamless, or one and the same.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, since the next step for the mind, after death, is to continue everlastingly, it follows that the body by being equivalent to the mind must last on in some form or another as well, but never out of being.<sup>101</sup> Finally, since nothing can reside outside of nature; and due to nothing being reducible to non-existence; and because the

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<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 1-2, 6-7, 9-10, 16-19, 25,35, 40, 41-45, 48-49, 172-173, & 174.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

body and mind are ultimately one and the same thing, it is possible for one to be an adherent of Spinoza, while at the same time believing that the body is eternal.<sup>102</sup>

## Conclusion

The purpose of this piece was to introduce key concepts of Spinoza's philosophy such as his views regarding God, or Nature, God's attributes of thought and extension, as well as the nature and duration of the mind and body. Next, by arguing that the body can, in some ways, be eternal, while still being consistent with Spinoza's principles, I have hoped to carve a path in his system that makes room for those who believe the body is everlasting. Finally, I hope that this piece helps to cast a new light on Spinoza's philosophy, and from it new perspectives on the importance of the natural order and the body's existence in his *Ethics*.

## Bibliography

1. Spinoza, Benedict De. Edwin Curley, ed., *Ethics* (Princeton: Penguin Books, 1996). 1-186.

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<sup>102</sup>Ibid.