



IMMANENCE AND DIFFERENTIATION IN SPINOZA

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that ontological immanence involves but is not reducible to substance monism. Attending to immanence in Spinoza's ontology, I provide a creative exegesis of the defining features of Spinoza's immanent ontology, arguing that it recasts the concept of substance itself, from a term of transcendence and totalization to one of immanence and differentiation. In critical conversation with Deleuze's influential reading, I identify five interconnected features which, taken together, elaborate Spinoza's ontology of immanence: substance monism, univocity of attributes, immanent causality, the identification between God and Nature, and the status of finite modes as explications of substance rather than its extrinsic effects. I argue that, taken together, these features refashion the concept of substance, such that substance becomes not a term of totalization but rather one of ongoing production of diversity. Attending to the role of finite modes in this ontology, I emphasize the ways in which immanence can lend force to vital reconfigurations of ethical and political life: by defining beings and systems in terms of their capacities, which are augmented, diminished, or maintained depending on how they converge in relation.

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INTRODUCTION

Immanence saturates contemporary inquiries into the force and generativity proper to matter itself.² As indicated in the introduction to this special issue on *Matters*, immanence—as an ontology of becoming that does not rely on any transcendent term—is often thought together with monism: inscribing vital animacy into the one terrain of materiality.³ Yet as I will argue, a claim about substance monism is not identical with ontological immanence, nor does it exhaust its possibilities. Rather, a multifaceted conception of immanence better supports present attempts to rethink epochal questions of materiality and persistence that confront us at a planetary scale.

I enter this claim through a reading of Baruch Spinoza’s unique and thoroughgoing conception of immanence, especially as articulated in his *Ethics*. For Spinoza, all that exists is one field of self-elaborating G-d-or-Nature, considered here from the perspective of its self-caused infinity (G-d), there from the perspective of its finite determinations (Nature).⁴ It is this sweeping, dazzling, and somewhat dizzying vision of immanence that leads Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to anoint Spinoza the “prince of philosophers,” the one who “knew full well that immanence was only immanent to itself and therefore that it was a plane traversed by movements of the infinite, filled with intensive ordinates” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 48). It is what inspires Jorge Luis Borges to depict Spinoza as “Free of metaphor and myth, he grinds/a stubborn crystal: the infinite/map of the One who is all His stars [*Libre de la metáfora y del mito/labra un arduo cristal: el infinito/mapa de Aquel que es todas Sus estrellas*]” (Borges 1981, 285). While

² For an influential and representative collection of essays, see Coole and Frost 2010.

³ In their influential edited volume, Dolphijn and van der Tuin in fact seem to conflate monism and immanence, noting that the so-called new materialism “has a renewed interest in philosophical monism or in the philosophy of immanence” (Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012, 85).

⁴ Spinoza refers to “G-d, or Nature” (*Deus, sive Natura* in the Latin) in the preface to Part IV of the *Ethics*, as well as in the proof to IVp4. The “sive Natura” part of the phrase was redacted from the Dutch edition of the *Ethics*. I hyphenate “G-d” in accordance with Jewish practice, which in this context also has the advantage of inviting a disjuncture and reorientation regarding the signification of the term. Throughout this work I deploy the compound term “G-d-or-Nature” to emphasize the immanent horizon of Spinoza’s claims about the one substance.

these tributes evoke the “stubborn crystal,” the infinite constellation, of Spinozistic immanence, the task still remains to elucidate its central characteristics concisely and schematically.

With an eye to the interfolding of ontology and ethics opened up by immanence, I identify its central features and clarify how they yield an ethically fecund model that defines beings and systems in terms of their capacities, which are augmented, diminished, or maintained depending on how they converge in relation. While it has been argued that Spinoza’s monism is the primary provocative component of his philosophy (Viljanen 2009, 78), I suggest that substance monism is but one element in Spinozist immanence. Considering immanence more fully, in my view, better attends to the concerns animating many contemporary feminist and neo-materialist inquiries into “matter” at this juncture: how immanent ontologies may lend force to vital reconfigurations of ethical and political life.

Accordingly, I identify five interconnected nodes of “the infinite map” of immanence in Spinoza’s thought. These nodes are: 1) substance monism, or the claim that there is only one substance; 2) univocity of the attributes, or the claim that the attributes expressing the essence of substance are common both to substance and its modes; 3) immanent causality, or the claim that G-d produces everything such that all modes inhere in G-d; 4) the identification between G-d and Nature, or the claim that G-d is both infinite *Natura naturans* (“Nature naturing”) and finite *Natura naturata* (“Nature natured”); and 5) the status of finite modes as modifications of substance’s attributes, or the claim that modes are explications of substance rather than its extrinsic effects.

Taken together, these points map immanence as the relation between substance and its modes that constitutes all-that-is as one fabric of reality with no transcendent term. There is just infinite substance expressing itself under infinite attributes in an infinite number of modes, each mode in turn expressing that substance’s essence in a particular way, each finite mode individuated by its interactive striving to persist in its being. To say that modes express the essence of substance is to say that they are its differentiated manifestations (rather than its emanations or creations). Everything exists within G-d-or-Nature, which remains involved in its finite expressions as their immanent cause.

1. SUBSTANCE MONISM

Spinozist immanence pivots on a claim about substance monism. Elaborating an ontology in which there is only immanence, in which there is no tiered

cosmological order but rather “nothing except substance and its modes” (Spinoza 1996, Ip28s), Spinoza ultimately describes a cosmos in which everything differentially expresses the infinitely-faceted essence of one unique substance. This substance is identified with G-d, with whom in turn all of Nature is identified, as we will see later on.

Before delving into Spinoza’s own claims about the nature of substance, it should be acknowledged that talk of substance may sound strange to some contemporary ears. Is this not a concept irrevocably tied to metaphysics which prioritize fixity, identity, and presence over mutation, difference, and becoming? Isn’t substance a recalcitrant philosophical iteration of the eminence of transcendent being over and above the sensuous world of finite things? While it is beyond the scope of the present work to lay these concerns to rest conclusively, I want to recognize them now—precisely because the reading of Spinoza I advance radically refashions the inherited concept of substance. No small measure of the strange force of Spinoza’s philosophy lies in its re-tailoring of the very concept of substance itself, such that substance becomes a concept denoting the hanging together of all things in the infinite elaboration of diversity.⁵

Let us enter into the question of substance as a way of getting at this ongoing generativity and interrelation. Spinoza begins by positing substance as that which exists in itself, requiring no other conceptual bolsters for its positing (Id3), existing necessarily and *causa sui* (Ip7). Substance is “what is in itself and is conceived through itself, that is, whose concept does not require the concept of another thing, from which it must be formed” (Id3).

Substance is “in itself” in that it is not dependent on anything besides itself; it is not causally produced by anything outside itself, nor is it predicated of anything. As Yitzhak Melamed has shown, this aspect of Spinoza’s definition of substance has both Aristotelian and Cartesian antecedents. For Aristotle, substance as ὑποκείμενον (*hypokeimenon*) underlies any predication, but does not itself refer to or modify anything besides itself; it is a subject, not a predicate (Aristotle 2002, 1028b36). Spinoza inherits Aristotle’s understanding of the ontological independence of substance (Melamed 2013b, 2). From Descartes, Spinoza takes up the causal independence of substance: as Descartes outlines in his *Principles of Philosophy*, substance, unlike created things, does not depend on anything external to produce or cause its existence (Descartes 1985, 210).⁶ Substance is thus “in itself” in these two

⁵ For a succinct summation of this point, see the introduction to Montag and Stolze 1997.

⁶ cf. Descartes 1985, 210. While Spinoza famously departs from the Cartesian doctrine of numerically distinct substances in his radical reworking of the concept of substance,

senses: 1) it does not express or modify anything other than itself; in the grammatical logic of metaphysics, it is a subject, not a predicate, and 2) it is self-caused and therefore causally independent.

Noting that substance is conceived through itself, Spinoza establishes that all the features of substance can be derived from substance itself without reference to any external term (Hampshire 2005, 40). Ultimately it is this second part of Spinoza's definition of substance that founds his claim about the unicity of substance, or substance monism. Hence Spinoza famously posits that "in Nature there is only one substance, and that it is absolutely infinite" (Ip14c1).

This ontological monism is secured, for Spinoza, by a couple of interlocking claims about the nature of qualitative and numerical distinction respectively as they pertain to substance. The opening proposition of the *Ethics* establishes that substance is "by nature prior" to its affections, or modes. For Spinoza this is evident on the basis of the definition of substance as self-caused and modes, by contrast, as being *in* substance and only being conceivable through it (Id5). If there were more than one substance, these substances would have to be distinguished from one another on the basis of either their attributes or the affections (read: modes) of these attributes—which is impossible, on Spinoza's account, since "in Nature there cannot be two or more substances of the same nature or attribute" (Ip5). Spinoza's radical claim that substances cannot share attributes is the first step in ruling out the existence of multiple substances.

Furthermore, because substance is infinite, the very notion of numerical distinction is inapplicable to it (Ip8s). Substance is infinite because there is nothing of its own kind—that is, nothing with a shared attribute and therefore a shared essence or nature—by which it can be limited. Spinoza argues that the essential definition of anything—including substance—does not involve the existence of any particular number of that thing. This is because this definition of essence pertains only to "the nature of the thing defined," and, furthermore, "no definition involves or expresses any certain number of individuals" (Ip8s2).

In other words, enumerability, in the sense of plurality, pertains to extrinsic determination rather than essence, and is thus only applicable to modes, which are not self-caused. Since substance by definition exists (Ip7), and is therefore self-caused (Id1), "its existence must be inferred from its

he nevertheless takes up Descartes' point that substance is causally independent, while its finite modifications are not.

definition alone,” as Spinoza put it at Ip8s2. And this definition, for the reasons given above, does not involve or express any particular number. Therefore, Ip8s2 demonstrates the impossibility of two or more substances sharing the same attribute, because substance is definitionally unique, there cannot be multiple substances, and “there exists only one of the same nature” (Ip8s2).

So, the claims that 1) substances cannot be distinguished via their attributes (Ip5) and that 2) numericity does not pertain to the nature of infinite substance (Ip8s2) come together to yield the view that substances cannot share attributes. But Spinoza goes even further, arguing that the whole infinite slew of attributes pertain to only one substance (Ip10s). Substance necessarily exists by virtue of its status as *causa sui*, and therefore has a great power of existing with a correspondingly great number of attributes (Ip9); since substance is absolutely infinite (Id6), it has infinite attributes expressing this infinite essence.

While the human intellect can make distinctions between these attributes—for example, we can presumably conceive of the attribute of thought without invoking the attribute of extension—these attributes nonetheless belong to the same substance since “each expresses the reality, or being of substance” (Ip10s). The whole infinite bunch of attributes express the reality of the same unique, infinite substance. As we will see momentarily, Spinoza bears out this point about the unicity of substance at Ip14. For now, let it suffice to note with Ip10 that there is only one substance for all the attributes; while attributes are conceptually distinct, this does not mean there are as many substances as attributes.⁷

The proof for the necessary existence of this singular substance, identified with G-d, comes at Ip11. Having already argued that existence pertains to the essence of substance (Ip7), here Spinoza extends those claims to support the necessary existence of a substance with infinite attributes—that is, G-d. In the first proof to Ip11, Spinoza argues that since substance is a) self-caused and ergo necessarily existing and b) expresses itself necessarily through infinite actual attributes, G-d or infinite substance necessarily exists.

⁷ Deleuze explores this point extensively in the first chapter of *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (1992), entitled “Numerical and Real Distinction.” Here Deleuze argues that attributes are really distinct—that is, one attribute can be conceived of independently of another—but not numerically distinct, since numerical distinction involves divisibility and is thus therefore applicable only to modes. Cf. Deleuze 1992, 27–39.

However, it is a secondary alternate proof that arguably contributes greater constructive creativity to Spinoza's definition of substance. This secondary proof to Ip11 rests on the claim that "to be able not to exist is to lack power, and conversely, to be able to exist is to have power." To exist is an exercise of *potentia*, power identified with the activity flowing from a being's essence. If finite beings existed but G-d did not, Spinoza continues, that would lead to the absurd conclusion that finite beings are more powerful than an absolutely infinite being. From this Spinoza concludes that, as he puts it, "either nothing exists or an absolutely infinite Being also exists." It is not a question for Spinoza that things exist, and it is axiomatic that whatever exists either exists in itself or in another (Ip1). This means whatever exists but does not exist in itself must exist in something else that exists necessarily. Since finite beings are ontologically and causally dependent on things outside themselves, they must exist in a necessarily-existing substance.

Spinoza identifies this unique, absolutely infinite, necessarily-existing substance with G-d. In the scholium, he further clarifies that because G-d is absolutely infinite, with infinite attributes, G-d has a correspondingly infinite power of existing. This is because existence is identified with power: "since being able to exist is power, it follows that the more reality belongs to the nature of a thing, the more powers [forces] it has, of itself, to exist."

One might pause at Spinoza's apparently quick identification between this necessarily existing singular substance and G-d. Yet this is a crucial component of Spinoza's unique substance monism; by reworking the concept of substance, Spinoza simultaneously recasts our understanding of G-d—thereby outlining a philosophy of immanence. As a metaphysical term, substance traditionally does the work of describing the fundamental structural make-up of reality; Spinoza's substance monism insists that reality is composed of only one substance, and that this unique substance is divinity itself (Ip14).

Thus Spinoza affirms a cosmos composed of only one substance, which is G-d—and simultaneously avers the clear existence of elements of and actors in this cosmos that are not self-caused, are not ontologically, causally, or conceptually independent. How do these things, which the human intellect comprehends under the attributes of thought and extension, fit into this vision of a monistic cosmos?

Since they cannot of course be discrete substances, Spinoza answers that extended, thinking things are either attributes of G-d, or affections (modes) of these attributes. Attributes constitute the essence of substance; they explicate the essence of G-d. Attributes are not descriptive *propria* of

substance, properties that can be predicated of G-d but not of particular finite things (modes)—rather, they constitute the divine essence and so contain the essence of modes.

On the nature of this “containing,” consider Spinoza’s claim at IIp8 that “the formal essences of the singular things, or modes, or contained [*continentur*] in G-d’s attributes.” I suggest that the language of attributes “containing” modes is part of the architecture of Spinozist immanence. Modes, in their apparently infinite variety, are necessarily contained in the actual infinity of substance’s infinite attributes. Modes modify, express, and develop the attributive facets of substance in divergent ways, all of which are enfolded in the attributes. This is not the airtight containment of a closed system, but rather the infinite production of diversity in the open-ended (because nonteleological) yet necessary (because always actualizing) play of *causa sui* substance. It is, I think, what Elizabeth Grosz invokes in her recent writing on Spinoza where she makes the bold claim that Spinoza’s analysis is “perhaps interested less in thinking the operations of substance than in the concept of ‘in,’” seeking as it does “an immanence in which the world is immanent to or in itself, immanent in G-d, or, equally, G-d is immanent in the world, nature, in which there is only world, one order, one substance, but a world and substance that is infinite, ordered, and capable of being understood by us, however imperfectly” (Grosz 2017, 54).

Since attributes are the ways in which substance is expressed, modes are “contained” in these attributes as particular framings or affections of substance. Recall that a mode is, by Id5, “the affections of a substance, or that which is in another through which it is also conceived.” It may be significant that “affections” here is plural: a mode is simultaneously many affections or modifications of substance depending on the attribute under which it is conceived, in the sense for instance that the Atlantic Ocean exists under the attribute of extension as a body, under the attribute of thought as an idea, etc.⁸ Particular, finite things differ from G-d both in terms of their essence and existence, but they nevertheless participate in the same attributes that constitute G-d’s essence.

Because the cosmos is composed of only one substance, which is G-d, with infinite attributes, everything that exists inheres in this one substance: all things are ontologically and conceptually dependent on this one *causa sui* substance. Everything that exists inheres in G-d. The radicality of Spinoza’s metaphysical position, though, lies not in the relatively uncontroversial

⁸ On this point, Melamed’s discussion of a mode existing under all attributes simultaneously, and under the particular attribute by which it is conceived, is especially instructive. See Melamed 2013a, 83.

claim that modes inhere in substance but rather in his conviction that all things are modes of the same attributes that constitute the divine essence. Hence, even corporeal, extended things participate in and express the divine nature.

Spinoza argues this point in the extensive scholium to Ip15. This proposition asserts that everything exists in and is conceived through G-d (the unique, absolutely infinite, self-caused substance); there is only substance and its modes. The scholia bear out the consequences of the strong immanent sense in which Spinoza stakes this claim, arguing that even extended things are aspects of substance, that extension is an attribute of substance that is in turn explicated by extended things.⁹ Spinoza's argument warrants some attention here because of the way it folds even finite extended things into one expressive web of immanence.

To defend his claim that extension expresses the divine essence as much as any other attribute, Spinoza takes on the opposing view: that extension cannot pertain to the divine nature because extension implies divisibility, and divisibility is completely inapplicable to G-d who is by definition unique, indivisible, and infinite. On this view, extension is only applicable to finite quantities; since substance is indivisible, it cannot be extended. Furthermore, corporeal stuff is divisible and so able to be acted upon, while G-d is perfect and cannot be acted upon.

Spinoza argues against these two points in favor of the view that corporeal matter participates in and expresses the divine nature. Without rehearsing the entirety of his argument here, Spinoza debunks the notion that extension implies divisibility. Since substance is infinite, unique, and indivisible, "corporeal substance, insofar as it is a substance, cannot be divided" (Ip15s).

Since there is only one substance, conceived under infinite attributes, what does it mean to speak of "corporeal substance"? It is nothing other than substance, expressed via the attribute of extension and explicated in extended things, or modes, of this attribute. "Except for substance and its modes there is nothing" (Ip15). Insofar as extended substance is considered from the perspective of its being substance—that is, eternal, infinite, and indivisible—rather than its modified status as a finite mode, it is part of the divine nature.

⁹ For more on the concept of attributes as aspects of substance, and modes of attributes as aspects of infinite modes of G-d, cf. Melamed 2013a, 83–86.

This interpretation is supported by Spinoza's somewhat gnomic assertion at Ip15s that "matter is everywhere the same, and that parts are distinguished in it only insofar as we conceive matter to be affected in different ways, so that its parts are distinguished only modally, but not really." Spinoza illustrates this point with reference to water: insofar as water is considered as the modal entity "water," it can be divided up; insofar as it is substance, neither divisibility nor finitude pertains to it. "Water, insofar as it is water, is generated and corrupted," Spinoza notes, "but insofar as it is substance, it is neither generated nor corrupted." The imagination, that perceptual faculty of knowledge that "perceives things from the common order of nature" (IIP29c), grasps water as a discrete part of finite *Natura naturata*, subject to generation and decay.¹⁰ However, in a glimpse at how the intellectual love of G-d (*amor intellectualis dei*) yields more accurate, complete, and intuitive knowledge of things *sub specie aeternitatis* (that is, as they exist under the aspect of eternity, in their essence), Spinoza suggests that the intellect can comprehend water "insofar as it is substance": that is, insofar as it expresses or participates in the eternal and infinite divine nature. Thus substance monism allows for the actual existence of particular things, while affirming the fundamental unity of all that is within only one cosmos, Nature, G-d: that is, within immanence.

2. UNIVOCAL ATTRIBUTES

The passage from infinite substance into its modes occurs via the attributes. Within boundless of G-d-or-Nature, there is nevertheless differentiation and multiplicity at the level of modal being. Infinitely diverse things follow from the endlessly productive power that is G-d's essence. Everything that exists follows necessarily from the divine nature; G-d is the efficient cause of all things.

In characteristic fashion, however, Spinoza takes the orthodox conceptual language of philosophy in heterodox directions. G-d produces both the essence and existence of things (Ip25), but not in a radically distinct way from the way in which G-d produces or expresses their self so to speak. Indeed, Spinoza insists, "G-d must be called the cause of all things in the same sense in which he [sic] is called the cause of himself [sic]" (Ip25s).

¹⁰ Genevieve Lloyd explains that while the intellect comprehends matter as infinite corporeal substance, for the imagination it consists of "the divisible world of finite parts." Lloyd 1996, 40. Spinoza himself undertakes a concise and fascinating discussion of this point in the *Short Treatise*, I.2.

This is a remarkable proposition. Substance is by definition *causa sui*—its essence implies existence—while the essences of modes do not necessarily involve existence (Ip24). Modes' existence is not caused by their own essence, but rather by the unique absolutely infinite substance: G-d. How then can the unique divine substance be the cause of all things in the same sense in which it causes itself? The answer lies in the attributes.

G-d's infinite essence is expressed via an infinite number of attributes. Attributes are what the human intellect perceives as constituting the essence of substance (Id4). This does not mean that attributes are subjective human perspectives on divine essence, but rather that attributes are fundamentally expressive and so some of them can be captured or perceived by human intellects.¹¹ While G-d's unlimited essence unfolds through innumerable attributes, the human intellect is only capable of perceiving the two attributes that pertain to our own constitution: thought and extension (cf. Ila2, a4).

Reality presents itself under infinite attributes, two of which are sensible to human intellect: thought and extension.¹² These attributes are not properties G-d possesses, but rather ways in which G-d's essence expresses itself, what G-d/substance does in explicating itself.¹³ Regardless of which attribute is expressing substance from a given vantage point, and no matter what particular mode is produced under an attribute, the attribute applies to modes in the same sense as it does to substance in itself.

Just as G-d's essence is constituted by the attributes, so too is the essence and existence of everything else; the modes that are in and conceived through substance are just modifications of the same attributes that make up the divine nature. At Ip25c, Spinoza describes all particular things as

¹¹ See Deleuze 1988, 51. In a related vein, Valtteri Viljanen has argued convincingly against a subjectivist interpretation of attributes. "On the whole," Viljanen notes, "attributes certainly are depicted as something very objective, real, or actual—hardly something whose existence would depend on a perceiving subject—and certain passages are especially difficult to reconcile with any kind of subjectivist interpretation of attributes" (Viljanen, 2009, 74).

¹² On humans only being cognizant of two of the infinite divine attributes, cf. part II of the *Ethics*, and part I.2 of the *Short Treatise*—where Spinoza explicitly states that thought and extension are the attributes through which humans come to know G-d's nature.

¹³ While attributes disclose the fundamental nature of G-d's essence, properties can only describe features of these attributes; they do not get at the heart of G-d's essence itself. As Deleuze notes in his commentary on Spinoza, properties are like adjectives that modify the attributes, while attributes can be understood as verbs expressing how substance manifests its essence. So, for example, the attribute of thought expresses that aspect of G-d's essence that pertains to intellection; a property like "infinite" would only modify this attribute of thought. Cf. Deleuze 1992, 50.

modes of G-d's attributes, modifications of those innumerable attributive aspects or facets of G-d's infinite essence. Attributes express the essence of substance, and modes are the particular determinate expressions, in turn, of these attributive angles on substance.

A mode's essence is its particular degree of power to exist; this is fundamentally distinct from the eternal and infinite essence of substance.¹⁴ While modes differ in essence from substance, they are nevertheless instantiations of the very same attributes that constitute the essence of substance—just insofar as this attribute of substance expresses itself in a finite modification, with a corresponding degree of power. Particular thinking things, for example, express and participate in G-d's attribute of thought: “when we say that the human mind perceives this or that,” Spinoza insists, “we are saying nothing but that G-d, not insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he is explained through the nature of the human mind, *or* insofar as he constitutes the essence of the human mind, has this or that idea” (IIp11c). The same attributes constitute the essence of substance and contain its modes.

The attributes are therefore univocal: they are common to and apply equally to substance as well as its modes. While substance and modes differ in essence, substance is constituted by the same attributes which modes determinately express. The univocity of the attributes knits together the monistic fabric of immanence. It is all G-d-or-Nature: here (in the case of G-d) substance constituted by infinite attributes, there (in the case of Nature) modes involving these same attributes under particular determinations.

This is the novelty of Spinoza's claim that particular things are just modifications of G-d's attributes: because all of reality partakes of the same attributes, G-d is not a transcendent term of an entirely different order. Rather, all things explicate G-d as modifications of the attributes they share in common, and G-d remains implicated or present in each and every attributive expression. This is the mesh of immanence. For Spinoza, as Deleuze notes, “Nature at once comprises and contains everything, while being explicated and implicated in each thing. Attributes involve and explicate substance, which in turn comprises all attributes. Modes involve and explicate the attribute on which they depend, while the attribute in turn contains the essences of all its modes” (Deleuze 1992, 17).

¹⁴ Recall, after all, that G-d's essence is identical with G-d's self-causing, all-producing power; this is the power “by which [G-d] and all things are and act,” not the modified, determinate degrees of that power that constitute modal essence (Ip34). As Spinoza argues in the scholium to IIp10c, essence denotes not just that which is necessary for a thing to be or be conceived, but also that which cannot be or be conceived without the thing.

Deleuze's reading here is instructive for its distillation of the immanent implications of Spinoza's univocity of attributes. G-d-or-Nature is univocal, even as it is differentiated at the level of modal existence. This is a clear and sharp departure from Scholastic theological models by which G-d only has anything in common with its creations by analogy, or where G-d eminently possesses qualities that creatures receive in a derivative, donative, and fundamentally incommensurable fashion.¹⁵

For Spinoza, there are not two distinct orders of being, divine and modal, separated by an abyss that can only be bridged via equivocity or analogy. Rather, there is only one order of being, G-d-or-Nature: substance expresses its essence via infinite attributes, and modes express these attributes under particular modifications or determinations. Hence Deleuze asserts that "*immanence* signifies first of all the *univocity of the attributes*: the same attributes are affirmed of the substance they compose and of the modes they contain" (Deleuze 1988, 52). The attributes are common to both substance and its modes because these are not discrete orders of being but rather differentiated aspects of the same unitary reality: G-d-or-Nature.

In a recent critique of Deleuze's interpretation of Spinoza, Landon Frim and Harrison Fluss raise compelling concerns about the role of univocity in this account. Their reading takes particular issue with Deleuze's claim that G-d causally determines all modes in the same sense as G-d causes G-dself (Deleuze 1992, 164). Of course, this is also Spinoza's claim at Ip25s, where Spinoza himself writes that, "in a word, G-d must be called the cause of all things in the same sense in which he is called the cause of himself." Nevertheless, the critical contention is that, for Deleuze, the univocity of the attributes signals the attributive plurality of substance reissues in its modes such that, "G-d necessarily produces the multiplicity of individual things within himself [sic], as literal parts of his [sic] own essence" (Frim and Fluss 2018, 206). The problem with this, on their view, is that this evacuates causal determinations at the modal level, leading to a troubling occasionalism. I will address this concern with occasionalism in more detail in the following section.

For now, I want to take this criticism as an affirmative opportunity to clarify briefly Deleuze's claim about the relationship between modes and substance engendered by the univocity of attributes, by pivoting back to the actual Spinozist claims from which he builds. For, on my view, Deleuze's interpretation of the role of the attributes in Spinoza's ontology accomplishes

¹⁵ For more on this, cf. Deleuze 1994; Ramey 2012; and Smith's essay "Univocity," in Smith 2012.

much in thinking the immanence I propound here, and does not entail the pitfall of evacuating modal power. Indeed, one strength of Spinoza's immanent ontology—which I will foreground in the remaining sections of the present essay—is its resolute emphasis on the interactive, causal relations between modes in titrating their respective and often shared powers of acting.

Deleuze's inquiry into univocity unfolds Spinoza's claim that the very same attributes constitute the essence of substance (Id4) as necessarily yield "infinitely many things in infinite modes" (Ip16). This conceptual figuration of univocal attributes, in my view, simply foregrounds how substantive unity engenders modal multiplicity; that is, how modal diversity participates in the unicity of absolutely infinite substance. "Particular things," as Spinoza notes at 1p25c, "are nothing but affections of G-d's attributes, *or* modes by which G-d's attributes are expressed in a certain and determinate way." Modes are not affections of attributes that pertain to some other order of being than G-d; they are determinate modifications of the very same attributes.

This take on the univocity of the attributes also provides a clue to the sticky question of how Spinoza's system accounts for the derivation of the finite from infinite.¹⁶ I alight on this problem here to suggest that it is the commonality or univocity of attributes between substance and its modes that produces modal diversity as such. Consider Ip17s, where Spinoza avers that "from G-d's supreme power, *or* infinite nature, infinitely many things in infinitely many modes, that is, all things, have necessarily flowed, or always follow, by the same necessity and in the same way as from the nature of a triangle it follows, from eternity and to eternity, that its three angles are equal to two right angles." The attributes express the infinite nature of G-d (Ip19), from which necessarily flow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes. Common to both substance and its modes, these infinite attributes refract the infinite indivisible nature of G-d into its infinitely diverse modes.¹⁷ "For all things," as Spinoza writes in the proof to Ip33, "have necessarily followed from G-d's given nature (by P16), and have been determined from the necessity of G-d's nature to exist and produce an effect in a certain way (by P29)." The infinity of attributes constituting the active, *causa*

¹⁶ While a robust treatment of this question is beyond the scope of the present work, I refer interested readers to Yitzhak Melamed and Steve Nadler's essays, respectively, in the edited collection *Spinoza on Monism* (Goff 2012). Joel Friedman also provides a systemic treatment of "How the Finite Follows from the Infinite in Spinoza's Metaphysical System" in his article of the same name (Friedman 1986).

¹⁷ I thank Yitzhak Melamed for his crystalline terminology of "refraction," which I first encountered in his essay "Why Spinoza is Not an Eleatic Monist (Or Why Diversity Exists)," by which much of this discussion is influenced (Melamed 2012, 210).

sui divine essence necessarily produces infinitely diverse modal expressions of those same attributes.

3. IMMANENT CAUSALITY

The univocity of the attributes means that everything that exists is a modification of G-d's infinite attributes; this provides for individuation and differentiation within the monistic horizon of immanence. At Ip16, Spinoza offers an explanation of how G-d's infinite attributes yield an infinite number of modes. In the proof of this proposition, Spinoza states that the intellect can infer a thing's properties from its essence, since properties follow necessarily from a thing's essence. "The intellect infers from the given definition of any thing a number of properties that really do follow from it [...]. Since the divine nature has absolutely infinite attributes (by d6), each of which also expresses an essence infinite in its own kind," he writes, "from its necessity there must follow infinitely many things in infinite modes (i.e., everything which can fall under an infinite intellect), qed." As evidenced above, attributes cannot properly be said to be properties, since they *constitute* G-d's essence, rather than elaborating or modifying its characteristics. It seems that the "properties" that follow from the attributes constituting G-d's essence refer to existent things that follow necessarily from the infinite divine essence.

Just as properties follow from the definition or essence of a thing, so do modes follow from the infinite attributes that constitute and manifest the divine essence. The more reality or power of existence a given essence possesses, the more effects it produces as the necessary expression of that essence. This refers to the production of modes: affections of substance that inhere in and are both causally and conceptually dependent upon it (Id5). So G-d is the source or efficient cause of all things (Ip16c2), not as a separate transcendent creator but as the infinitely productive unique substance whose essence is explicated in the modes that inhere in it. Every thing that exists is a determinate explication of this divine essence.

As we saw above, infinite things follow from the infinite attributes constituting the divine nature. The implications of this for an ontology of immanence unfold through the theory of causation it inaugurates. Hence at Ip25s, Spinoza insists that "G-d must be called the cause of all things in the same sense in which he [sic] is called the cause of himself," linking this claim directly to its antecedent at Ip16. Because the existence and essence of all things follow necessarily from the infinite attributes making up the divine nature (the basic claim of Ip16), it follows that G-d is the cause of all things

in the same sense that G-d is self-caused—because G-d expresses itself via the same attributes that contain determinate modes. Antonio Negri puts this beautifully, writing in *The Savage Anomaly* that, “G-d expresses itself as cause; that is, the infinite propagates itself. The order of this divine infinity is filtered across the flux of the attributes” (Negri 1991, 53). Propagating itself through the attributes, G-d-or-Nature causes the essence and existence of everything that is.

As the proof to Ip25 indicates, the essence and existence of all things are necessarily inferred from the divine nature; they are produced as expressions of the divine essence composed and manifested by the attributes. G-d is self-caused, so to speak, via the attributes that express and constitute G-d’s essence. G-d is the cause of all things via these same attributes of which these determinate modes are modifications or affections (Ip25c). In this way, the univocity of the attributes opens up a heterodox perspective on the relation between infinite *causa sui* substance and the dependent modes that have their existence in and through it. Substance does not transcend its modes in some separate order of being, but rather unfolds itself as modes via these univocal attributes.

Indeed, Spinoza is adamant that substance as cause is not remote from its modal effects. A relation of immanence pertains at the level of causality as well: not only is substance explicated through its attributes and their modes, but the modes remain “in” substance. This is a mutual immanence: what expresses itself (substance) remains in its expressions (attributes); these attributes and their modifications (modes) remain in substance (Deleuze 1988, 92). Substance is manifest in its modal expressions, and these modes only exist within substance: “all things that are, are in G-d, and so depend on G-d that they can neither be nor be conceived without him [sic]” (Ip28s). There is only one common cosmos, one order of being, one shared horizon: G-d-or-Nature. G-d-or-Nature as substance is the immanent cause of all of its modes.

As Spinoza explains it in the *Short Treatise*, G-d is the immanent cause of all that exists because “outside G-d there is nothing at all”; “all that he [sic] produces is within himself [sic], and not outside him, because there is nothing outside him” (Spinoza 2002, 45; 50). Here G-d emerges as the all-inclusive, infinitely productive being within whom all things exist. Nothing is “outside” G-d because everything is causally dependent on G-d, and also inheres in it. Hence in Ip18 of the *Ethics*, Spinoza describes G-d as the immanent, rather than the transitive, cause of all things. Since everything inheres in and is causally dependent on G-d (Ip15), and G-d is the efficient cause of all things (Ip16c), G-d does not produce things in some separate realm or

order from which it is distinct. G-d does not produce things outside G-d, so to speak, since all things that G-d produces are modes of the one substance constituting all-that-is. To return to the refrain on immanence in the *Short Treatise*, everything that G-d produces is within G-d, because outside G-d there is nothing at all.

There is nothing outside G-d because everything that exists is a dependent mode inhering in substance. Modes by definition cannot exist independently of substance. This is the relation of inherence marked by the definition of modes at Id5 as existing in and conceived through the substance of which they are affections, and reinforced at Ip15 with the claim that whatever exists does so within G-d. Immanent causation folds this relation of inherence together with a form of causality where the effect remains within its cause (Melamed 2013a, 66). Modes are both ontologically dependent on substance *and* effects of substance that subsist within it. As an immanent cause, substance produces all modes within itself, as its affections.

This means that even as finite modes determine, affect, and even produce one another through webs of causation (Ip28), substance is still ultimately the efficient cause of all modes (recall Ip25). How? On Spinoza's picture, G-d is the efficient cause of all things. Nevertheless, finite modes are not produced by the absolutely infinite attributes that make up G-d's nature, because infinite attributes can only produce equally eternal and infinite modes (Ip21). Instead, finite modes come about through determinate modifications of these infinite modes (Ip28s). Finite modes, in turn, produce and affect one another, in an endless causal chain. Yet they remain, as Spinoza puts it, "conjoined" with substance as immanent cause, since "all things that are, are in G-d" (Ip28s).

So the claim of Ip28 is that while finite modes are in causal relationships with each other, they nevertheless retain a relation of both causal dependence and inherence within substance. G-d-or-Nature remains conjoined with its finite modes, as the immanent cause in which they inhere. The scholium to Ip28 clarifies that G-d is not really a remote cause of finite things; G-d can only be called the remote cause of finite modes figuratively speaking, as a convenient way of distinguishing these finite modes from the infinite modes—the laws of nature—that follow immediately from the unmodified infinite attributes. In reality, G-d remains involved with its finite modes, which are ineluctably dependent on G-d in turn (Ip28s).

Deleuze's commentary on Spinoza is instructive here for its precise evocation of how this immanent causality effects a truly immanent cosmos. Deleuze emphasizes that the relation of immanence denoted by this model

of causation makes all things both expressive of and directly dependent upon G-d. With immanent causality, there is nothing outside of G-d. Just as everything inheres in G-d, so is G-d explicated in all things. Invoking the striking metaphorical language of Nicolas de Cusa, Deleuze writes that, “[T]he world is the expression, the explication, of a G-d-being or a One who is. The world is carried into G-d in such a way that it loses its limits or finitude, and participates directly in divine infinity. The metaphor of a circle whose center is everywhere and circumference is nowhere applies to the world itself” (Deleuze 1992, 176). G-d-or-Nature as substance contains the natural world within itself, and this world in turn explicates the many modes through which G-d-or-Nature expresses its infinite nature. Since there is nothing outside of G-d, modal nature itself is an aspect or expression of G-d.

It is this strong articulation of immanent causality that, for some, raises the specter of occasionalism. The apparent problem here would be that if G-d-or-Nature produces all modal essences immanently and directly, rather than remotely (by Ip28s), finite modes are evacuated of all causal power. This is clearly not Spinoza’s claim. However, concerned with the emphasis on immanence in Deleuze’s interpretation of Spinoza, Fluss and Frim charge that on Deleuze’s view, “Ordinary, worldly interactions can have no part in the intelligible individuation of things, nor the determination of their natures” (Frim and Fluss 2018, 203). Yet Deleuze is plain that while immanent causality unites substance’s efficient causality and its *causa sui* status, this does not entail emptying modes themselves of all activity, agency, and causal efficacy.

On the contrary, as indicated in the foregoing analysis, immanent causality grounds modal power as necessary by virtue of modes’ determinate explications of the endless power of G-d-or-Nature. Deleuze’s own reading avows this, illustrating that, “above all, the very idea of the mode is in no sense a way of taking from creatures any power of their own”:

rather is it, according to Spinoza, the only way of showing how things ‘participate’ in G-d’s power, that is, how they are parts of divine power, but singular parts, intensive quantities or irreducible degrees. As Spinoza says, man’s power is a ‘part’ of the power or essence of G-d, but this only insofar as G-d’s essence *explicates itself* through the essence of man (IVp4) (Deleuze 1992, 227).

This is in line with Spinoza’s own commitment to understanding the power of finite modes as enfolded in and unfurling “G-d’s power, by which he [sic] and all things are and act” (Ip34). Hence, in my view, the strong interpretation of immanent causality does not imperil inter-modal agency; on

the contrary, it develops the implications of this agency in a cosmos where “all things that are, are in G-d” (Ip28s). As we will see in the remaining two sections, it is through Spinoza’s identification of G-d and Nature and theorization of finite modal power, respectively, that this commitment to finite power in immanence is fully borne out.

4. G-D-OR-NATURE: *NATURA NATURANS* AND *NATURA NATURATA*

Spinoza articulates this mutual immanence of substance and its modes—the way in which modes inhere in substance, which unfurls or expresses itself in these determinate modes—by appropriating the Scholastic language of *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*. In the scholium to Ip29, a proposition devoted to demonstrating that everything that exists is a determined effect of the expressive power of G-d-or-Nature, Spinoza introduces his version of the distinction between *Natura naturans* (“Nature naturing”) and *Natura naturata* (“Nature natured”). In the traditional language of Scholastic philosophy, the distinction referred to an ontological difference between the divine Creator and created nature: the existent things making up the totality of the natural world.

For Spinoza, however, there is no such distinction between G-d as transcendent creator and a created realm of nature subsisting separately and apart from G-d. All things are in G-d, he maintains at Ip15s. As the same scholium demonstrates, extended, material nature pertains to and expresses the divine essence: there is nothing outside of G-d, and this includes corporeal, modal nature.¹⁸ Hence at Ip29s, Spinoza establishes that *Natura naturans* refers to substance and its attributes insofar as those attributes express G-d’s eternal and infinite nature. *Natura naturans*, in other words, refers to “G-d, insofar as he [sic] is considered a free cause.” *Natura naturans*—the productive, proliferating “Nature naturing”—is G-d considered as free cause, that is (by Id7), as the unique self-caused substance that exists only from the necessity of its own nature. *Natura naturata*, by contrast, denotes all things that follow from the necessity of this nature: that is, all the modes that are determined expressions of the divine essence. Modes are not free causes, like *Natura naturans* is, but rather things that inhere in and are caused by G-d as free cause. *Natura naturata* is simply the “infinitely many

¹⁸ The claim that everything expresses the divine essence of substance is meant to mark the relation of immanence that obtains between substance and its modes. Modes are specific ways in which substance makes itself manifest through the attributes. They are not created products subsisting apart from substance, but rather particular, determinate unfurlings of its creative power.

things in infinitely many modes” (Ip16) that necessarily follow from the divine nature as *Natura naturans*. The modal universe of *Natura naturata* is the determinate explication of *Natura naturans*.

At first glance, it could appear that Spinoza is simply recasting the dichotomy between creator G-d and created nature. However, the broader context of his ontology disproves this. Spinoza’s system consistently bears out an identification between G-d and *both* these aspects of Nature: *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*. Taken as infinite self-caused substance, G-d-or-Nature is *Natura naturans*; considered as the universe of finite determinate things, G-d-or-Nature is *Natura naturata*. As we saw in the proof to Ip28, finite modes are produced either by G-d or an attribute of G-d “insofar as it [G-d, or the attribute] is modified by a modification which is finite and has a determinate existence.” This means that G-d can be considered not only as free cause (as when seen from the aspect of *Natura naturans*), but also as modified by a finite modification: as the infinitely many things following from the nature of G-d as free cause—that is, as *Natura naturata*.

The one unique substance G-d-or-Nature can be considered from two aspects: as absolutely infinite, *causa sui* substance that is in itself (*Natura naturans*) or as the infinitely many modes that follow from this unlimited essence (*Natura naturata*.) G-d-or-Nature is the one and only reality; there is not one order of being for G-d as *Natura naturans* over here, and another for finite nature or *Natura naturata* over there. Certainly *Natura naturata* is the effect of *Natura naturans*—but due to the immanent causality that obtains between them, they do not constitute ontologically distinct realms of being. *Natura naturata* inheres in *Natura naturans*, and *Natura naturans* finds its necessary expression or explication in *Natura naturata*, which it produces as the necessary expression of its infinite essence (Hampshire 2005, 52).

The univocity of the attributes secures this monistic conception of G-d-or-Nature. *Natura naturans* is made up of “such attributes of substance as express an eternal and infinite essence” (Ip29s), and *Natura naturata* is nothing other than the modal expression of these very same attributes (Deleuze 1992, 100). Thus both *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* refer to G-d: *Natura naturans* at the level of substance and the attributes that constitute its essence, and *Natura naturata* at the level of the modal affections of these attributes. In a similar way to which the attributes of thought and extension refer to “one and the same substance” (IIP7) such that the same mode of substance can be considered from the point of view of either attribute, G-d-or-Nature can be considered from the perspective of either *Natura*

naturans or *Natura naturata*. As infinite substance expressing itself via attributes which in turn unfold through modes, G-d is both *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*.

5. MODAL POWER

Within this monistic ontology, the modes that make up *Natura naturata* explicate the power of *Natura naturans* in infinitely diverse ways. As modifications of the same attributes that constitute the divine essence of *Natura naturans*, modes participate in and unfold the power of G-d-or-Nature in particular, determinate ways. This is because G-d's essence is identical with G-d's power "by which he [sic] and all things are and act" (Ip34), and modes by definition are just specific expressions of the attributes that constitute this essence (Ip25). Singular things are just determinate expressions of this divine power.¹⁹ Immanence entails that even singular things—finite modes—participate in and explicate the endless power of G-d.

This power is modified by modes' particular characteristics and encounters. This point is explicitly borne out in the proof to IVp4. This proposition states that humans, as part of the inter-modal causal network of *Natura naturata*, are constantly affected and transformed by causes that exceed them. Accordingly we experience passions—shifts in the active powers of our bodies and so our minds—which do not stem from our own essences but are spurred in us by our encounters with ambient forces. "It is impossible that a man [sic] should not be a part of Nature," Spinoza writes, "and that he should be able to undergo no changes except those which can be understood through his own nature, and of which he is the adequate cause." While this proposition builds on the preceding propositions' claims that humans are parts of Nature that cannot be conceived apart from everything else (IVp2), beings whose power to persevere in existing is limited and surpassed by other powers in Nature (IVp3), its real novel force comes out in the proof. Here, Spinoza demonstrates that the finite singular modes' power of existence is the power of G-d-or-Nature itself, not insofar as it is infinite (i.e., not at the level of *Natura naturans*) but insofar as it is modified and expressed through the modes themselves. This is because, by Ip24c, modes' essences do not involve existence; rather, since only G-d necessarily exists, modal existence is caused and sustained by G-d. So modes' power of existence is nothing other than the power of G-d-or-Nature expressing itself at

¹⁹ This comes out succinctly in the proof to IIIp6: "For singular things are modes by which G-d's attributes are expressed in a certain and determinate way (by Ip25c), that is (by Ip34), things that express, in a certain and determinate way, G-d's power, by which G-d is and acts."

the level of *Natura naturata*. As G-d's infinite power is identical with G-d's essence (Ip34), this implies that modes are particular expressions of both G-d's power *and* essence.

Yet the essence of modes clearly differs from that of substance: substance is in itself and conceived through itself, and modes are by definition in and conceived through substance. Modal essence is not identical with the infinite power that constitutes G-d's essence, but rather with the portion of "power, or striving [*potentia, sive conatus*], by which it strives to persevere in its being" (IIIp7). A mode's essence is its *conatus*, the particular quantum of power by which it exists. G-d's essence, by contrast, is infinite and eternal power (Id6, Ip34). So how can it be that modes participate in and express G-d's power, equated with G-d's essence, given that they have distinct essences?

The specific degree of power characterizing a mode's essence explicates the power and essence of G-d via the attributes they share in common. "If the power or essence of G-d can be 'explicated' by a finite essence," as Deleuze explains, "this is because attributes are forms common to G-d whose essence they constitute, and finite things whose essences they contain." Because infinite attributes constitute the power and essence of G-d, and modes are determinate modifications of these attributes, modes are particular expressions of G-d's divine power and essence. Hence, Deleuze, concludes, "Finite things are part of the divine power because they are modes of G-d's attributes" (Deleuze 1992, 92).

That the conative power of finite modes is, in the language of IVp4, "part of G-d or Nature's infinite power" is a crucial feature of this immanent ontology. It ascribes *potentia* to finite, singular things as individual beings; even though they are in and conceived through something (substance) outside of themselves, modes nevertheless have the power to affect and be affected, to strive to persist in their being. They have real existence and power even as they are ontologically dependent on substance as their immanent cause.

Being modes of the infinite substance that is G-d-or-Nature, in other words, does not mean modes have no power of their own. Modes have their own power of existence, titrated to their particular capacity to affect and be affected by things outside themselves. Modes are differentiated by the affects—fluctuations in bodily power and the registering of these shifts (Id3)—they induce and undergo. Modes are thus defined by their relational capacities: how a mode's defining *conatus* is enhanced or hindered by its constitutive encounters. Modal networks of relations determine whether

and how beings can persist, act in ways that express and enhance their definitional essences, and flourish—or the opposite (Stephano 2017).

Within immanence, a mode's *conatus* (individuated and characteristic striving to persist) is relational and determined by webs of affective interactions—or, better, what Karen Barad names “intra-action,” whereby individuals' agential powers do not pre-exist but rather are constituted through their interactions (Barad 2007). At the same time, however, this individual modal power is nothing other than a particular finite modification of the infinite power of G-d-or-Nature. The power by which each singular thing persists in its being, this power that is nothing other than its singular essence or *conatus* (IIIp7), is a determinate, finite expression of G-d's infinite power. Modes' powers are “part of G-d or Nature's infinite power” in the sense that they participate in and express this infinite power as finite modifications of the univocal attributes that constitute it. The endlessly productive power of Nature is expressed and developed along the differentiated paths of modal being. Modes participate in this infinite power, and they explicate it in diverse, determinate ways. They participate in the power of substance via the attributes common to both substance and its modes. Substance explicates its infinite power through each of its infinite attributes (each one of which, recall, “expresses an eternal and infinite essence,” Id6) which are in turn explicated by modes. Hence finite modes have their own unique power of existence—their own specific and shifting ratio of their capacity to affect and be affected by external forces—by virtue of participating in and explicating the boundless *potentia* of G-d-or-Nature.

CONCLUSION

The potency of Spinozist immanence thus involves but is irreducible to claims about substance monism. Instead, this immanent ontology establishes a metaphysics of relational becoming via 1) substance monism *alongside* 2) the commonality of attributes between substance and its modes, 3) immanent causality, 4) the identification between and hence radical reconfiguring of both G-d and Nature, and 5) situating modes as finite expressions or explications of substance. With Spinoza, substance thus becomes a term of differentiation and emergent, relational capacities via its finite determinations at the level of modal existence. In my view, Spinoza's vision of immanence is powerful precisely for this transformation of substance into a site of relational becoming. What may animate some contemporary alliances

with immanence, in turn, is not allegiance to monism per se but rather a fidelity to its configuration of the world in terms of its differential potentialities for becoming.

As enacted in the *Ethics*, Spinozist immanence intrinsically takes up the ethical and the political, defining modes in terms of the affects they are capable of eliciting and undergoing in relation. These differential powers to affect and be affected are titrated by relational encounters that either enhance, maintain, or diminish conative flourishing. Configurations of ethical and political life determine the possibilities of individual and collective persistence; the ontological and the ethical are here intertwined. Ethical criteria, furthermore, are immanently derived, rather than moralistically imposed (Stephano 2019).

To reduce Spinozist immanence to only a matter of the one and the many is thus to miss much of its creative power. By inscribing an index of differentiation and flourishing into existence itself, immanence constellates a field of more-than-human powers (in which human power is enfolded) defined by their shifting, relational capacities to persist. In so doing, the immanent ontology I've outlined here simultaneously invites a nuanced ethical attention to the intertwining of persistence and transformation, calling for accountability to life as we know it so that unforeseen becomings might unfold.

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