

A Vindication of Spinoza's Strict Necessitarianism:

The Necessity of the Finite Modes

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“Mein Zutrauen auf Spinoza ruhte auf der friedlichen Wirkung, die er in mir hervorbrachte.” Goethe.

“Fate, show thy force, ourselves we do not owe, / What is decree’d must be, and be this so.” Shakespeare – Twelfth Night.

“Wenn man anfängt zu philosophieren, so muß man zuerst Spinozist sein. Die Seele muß sich baden in diesem Äther der einen Substanz, in der alles, was man für wahr gehalten hat, untergegangen ist.”

G.W.F. Hegel – Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie

Abstract

This thesis tackles several difficulties surrounding Spinoza's strict necessitarianism, the view that the actual world is the only possible world and thus wholly necessary. The discussion in recent Spinoza scholarship has often been about the question of whether Spinoza's views do indeed amount to strict necessitarianism. The current thesis presupposes that the majority view that he was a strict necessitarian is correct and looks into the difficulties which such a strict form of necessitarianism meets from within Spinoza's own system, that is the difficulties for Spinoza's strict necessitarianism which are immanent to his own metaphysics. The research question it answers is therefore: does Spinoza's metaphysics succeed in accounting for his strict necessitarianism? The aim of the thesis is to demonstrate first that there are several challenges which Spinoza's strict necessitarianism encounters from within his general metaphysics, most notably that of explaining how the finite modes spring necessarily from God, and second that these challenges can be met by a certain interpretation of how the necessity of the finite modes is to be accounted for, based on the eternity of these finite modes. That interpretation also helps solving the other challenges the thesis sees with regard to Spinoza's strict necessitarianism, such as the challenges of the apparent contingency of singular things and of the distinction between two forms of necessity.

Key words: Spinoza, Necessitarianism, Metaphysics, Finite Modes, Causation, Necessity, Conditional and Unconditional Necessity, Substance and Mode, Inherence, Causal Dependence, Eternity, Finitude.

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Introduction

When Henry Oldenburg, as a correspondent of Benedictus de Spinoza, became acquainted with Spinoza's views on necessity, he immediately suspected that these views were likely to be troubling to Spinoza's readers and could even cause considerable upheaval amidst their contemporaries.¹ He shared his concern with Spinoza, who replied by insisting that his position in this regard, namely to maintain that everything is determined by an unconquerable necessity, is at the core of his philosophical thought in the *Ethics*, something which he intended to explain to Henry Oldenburg:

*Quia id ipsum praecipuum [i.e. the necessity of all things] est
fundamentum eorum omnium, quae in Tractatu [i.e. the Ethics],
quem edere destinaveram, habentur, volo hîc paucis explicare,
quâ ratione ego fatalem omnium rerum, & actionum
necessitatem statuam.*²

For Spinoza the necessity of all things, both in their being and in their actions, is the foundation of his *Ethics*, which is to say that this view has not merely a metaphysical but also an ethical part to play here, e.g. when Spinoza argues that acknowledging the necessity of all things gives our mind more power over the affects and prevents them from disturbing us (EVP6):

*Quatenus mens res omnes ut necessarias intelligit, eatenus
majorem in affectus potentiam habet seu minus ab iisdem
patitur.*³

The necessity involved here is one which stems from the divine nature, i.e. Spinoza holds that all things are necessary in the sense that they are determined by the divine necessity to be and to act in a certain manner, which means that their actions are as necessary as their existence is:

*Omnia ex necessitate divinae naturae determinata sunt, non
tantum ad existendum, sed etiam ad certo modo existendum, &
operandum, nullumque datur contingens.*⁴

That the divine necessity determines the being and actions of everything excludes contingency – *nullumque datur contingens*. It is this necessity, and the assertion that nothing is contingent, which Henry Oldenburg found troubling and which Spinoza himself considered to be the foundation of his *Ethics*, something which is underlined by several of its key propositions.⁵

¹ Henry Oldenburg, "Epistola LXXIV: To Spinoza: 16 – 12 - 1675," in *Spinoza: Opera: IV*, edited by Carl Gebhardt (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1925), IV309/310.

² Benedictus de Spinoza, "Epistola LXXV: To Oldenburg: c. 1 January 1676", IV311.

³ Benedictus de Spinoza, "Ethica: in ordine geometrico demonstrata," in *Spinoza: Opera: II*, edited by Carl Gebhardt (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1925), II284.

⁴ Ibidem, EIP29D, II71.

⁵ Ibidem, EIP29 – EIP36, II70 - II73.

However, Spinoza scholars are not in full agreement regarding the reach of this necessity in Spinoza's system. Some maintain that Spinoza's position amounts to so-called strict necessitarianism, whereas others are of the opinion that his position is somewhat weaker and should instead be called moderate necessitarianism. The difference between these two views hinges on the issue of whether the actual world is the only possible world. Those who understand Spinoza to be a strict necessitarian hold that his belief in necessity is ultimately the view that the actual world is the only possible world and that therefore 'absolutely nothing could be otherwise'⁶. Scholars, on the contrary, who read Spinoza as a moderate necessitarian and not a strict one claim that Spinoza's adherence to necessity is not as far-reaching as it may sometimes appear: his rejection of contingency should hence not be read as meaning that the actual world is indeed the only possible world.

Edwin Curley and Gregory Walski, who defend that view, argue 'that Spinoza is committed to allowing for the existence of a plurality of possible worlds, that his necessitarianism is merely moderate, not strict enough to exclude the possibility of other worlds'⁷. Another author who has recently argued in favour of that view is Christopher Martin, according to whom Spinoza's moderate necessitarianism should be understood as meaning the following:

*Moderate necessitarianism [...] holds that the state of the world at any moment is necessary given the past and the laws of nature, and that the laws of nature could not have been otherwise (distinguishing it from ordinary determinism), but that the series of events that actually unfold is not the only possible series.*⁸

There is thus an ongoing debate on the nature of Spinoza's views on necessity and the extent of his necessitarianism. It must be acknowledged that in this debate the scholars who see Spinoza's thought in the light of moderate necessitarianism represent a minority. An explanation for this is to be found in the fact that many of the doctrines espoused by Spinoza in the first part of the *Ethics* do not seem to allow for the moderate kind of necessitarianism that Curley, Walski and Martin want to ascribe to Spinoza. When Spinoza says that all things are determined to work and act in a certain manner by the divine necessity, it seems unlikely that there could be other, in Martin's terms, series of events unfolding than the one which has in point of fact been determined by the divine necessity to unfold.

⁶ Charles Huenemann, "But why was Spinoza a Necessitarian?," in *The Oxford Handbook of Spinoza*, edited by Michael Della Rocca (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2018), 115.

⁷ Edwin Curley and Gregory Walski, "Spinoza's Necessitarianism Reconsidered," in *New Essays on the Rationalists*, edited by Charles Huenemann (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 1999), 242.

⁸ Christopher Martin, "A New Challenge to the Necessitarian Reading of Spinoza," in *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy: Volume V* (2010), 26.

As a consequence, the contribution which this thesis will make to the scholarly debate on Spinoza's necessitarianism does not consist of asking whether Spinoza subscribed to either strict or moderate necessitarianism and, in accordance with that, of trying to find an answer to this question. Instead, the presupposition with which the enquiry begins is the assumption that Spinoza's views do indeed amount to strict necessitarianism, given the strong evidence his works and letters provide for that interpretation⁹ and given that the case for this reading of Spinoza has been made quite often ever since Samuel Clarke defended it in 1705.¹⁰ Consequently, the aim of the thesis is rather to demonstrate that the pressing problem for Spinoza's system where necessity is concerned is the problem of whether his metaphysics, as developed primarily in part one of the *Ethics* but also in several of his other works, including the early works and his letters, can deal with the inherent difficulties that beset his strict necessitarianism.

The value of such an enquiry for the ongoing debate on Spinoza's necessitarianism and its contribution to Spinoza scholarship in general is twofold. First of all, the value lies in demonstrating that Spinoza's strict necessitarianism faces several problems from within his own metaphysics, which are not easy to solve at all. Secondly, to propose solutions to these issues which are able to resolve the difficulties with which Spinoza sees himself confronted in these quarters. The central solution is a solution to the difficulty which we, and others, consider most pressing for Spinoza's strict necessitarianism. Elements of this solution have been suggested before, e.g. by H.H. Joachim¹¹, and we shall explain how our solution relates to and is indebted to others. That solution itself pertains to a difficulty with which Spinoza scholars have been struggling throughout the centuries and are still struggling today, namely the way in which the finite modes come to exist. The issue of these finite modes is ultimately the issue of 'whether they can follow from the infinite substance'¹², i.e. whether they can follow from God. If Spinoza's strict necessitarianism works, then these finite modes must follow from God necessarily, given that God is, for Spinoza, the immanent cause of all things: "Deum esse omnium rerum causam."¹³ The necessity of all that is finite has, in Spinoza's metaphysics, to be guaranteed by the causality of God: all the finite modes must spring from God necessarily and that necessity must be such that these finite modes are the only possible ones.

⁹ Olli Koistinen, "Spinoza's Proof of Necessitarianism," in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 67, No. 2 (2003), 283.

¹⁰ Samuel Clarke, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God: Most Particularly in Answer to Mr. Hobbs, Spinoza, and their Followers*, facsimile of the edition of 1705 (Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann Verlag, 1964), 50 – 57.

¹¹ H.H. Joachim, *A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza: Ethica Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), 76.

¹² Noa Shein, "Not Wholly Finite: The Dual Aspect of Finite Modes in Spinoza," in *Philosophia*, Volume 46 (2018), 434.

¹³ Benedictus de Spinoza, "Cogitata Metaphysica," in *Spinoza: Opera I*, edited by Gebhardt (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1925), Part One, Chapter II, I238.

The threat to this idea Spinoza faces from within his own system is that of accounting for the possibility of a necessary causal relation between the infinite and the finite, between God and the finite modes. The difficulty is whether Spinoza can justify the manner in which the finite modes are to be necessitated. Harry Austryn Wolfson explains that for Spinoza causes must be like their effects and that accordingly God, namely the infinite, is seemingly unable to stand in a necessary causal relation to the finite modes:

Spinoza insisted upon strict adherence to the principle of necessary causality, namely, that the effect must be like the cause, so that cause and effect are mutually implicative concepts and one can be known by the other. How then on the basis of this principle can Spinoza assert that finite things follow from the infinite God?¹⁴

In order to understand this problem it is important to know that Spinoza argues that modes are necessary through their causes and not, as God himself is according to Spinoza, through their essences. The necessity of God's modes, including obviously the finite modes, is dependent upon a causal order, that is, upon causes external to them. These causes stem from God and are hence described by Spinoza as being a "divine decree":

Respectu causae dicuntur res, e.g. materiales, esse impossibiles aut necessariae: nam si tantum ad earum essentiam respicimus, illam concipere possumus clarè, & distinctè sine existentiâ, quâpropter nunquam existere possunt vi, & necessitate essentiae: sed tantum vi causae, Dei nempe omnium verum creatoris. Si itaque in decreto divino est, ut res aliqua existat, necessariò existet; sin minùs impossibile erit, ut existat.¹⁵

Only the causality of God can ground the necessity of all the modes: if the divine decree causes things to be, then they must be and if the divine decree does not cause them to be, then it is impossible for them to come into being. The problem is that God is infinite and that the modes he produces cannot all be deemed infinite modes. God must therefore also be the cause of finite things, which is troubling because for Spinoza cause and effect must be similar, something which the infinite and the finite are not. Things which have nothing in common cannot stand in a relation of cause and effect:

Quòd rerum, quae nihil commune habent inter se, una alterius causa esse non potest. Nam cum nihil sit in effectu commune cum causâ, totum, quod haberet, haberet à nihilo.¹⁶

¹⁴ Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza: Unfolding the latent processes of his reasoning*, two volumes bound as one, Volume 1 (Cambridge, Harvard UP, 1983), 388.

¹⁵ Spinoza, "Cogitata Metaphysica", Part One, Chapter Two, I240.

¹⁶ Spinoza, "Epistola IV: To Oldenburg: October 1661", IV14.

Spinoza's own application of this principle is to be found in the *Ethics*, where he argues that finite modes can only be caused to exist and to act by other finite modes. No infinite mode is thus for Spinoza a cause of a finite mode:

*Quodcunque singulare sive quaevis res, quae finita est et determinatam habet existentiam, non potest existere nec ad operandum determinari, nisi ad existendum et operandum determinetur ab alia causa, quae etiam finita est et determinatam habet existentiam.*¹⁷

This has implications for the manner in which God necessitates the finite modes. Spinoza's view is that all modes are caused by the divine attributes, but that everything which follows directly from these attributes, i.e. which stems from the absolute nature of the attributes of God, must be eternal and infinite, similar to God and accordingly similar to his divine attributes:

*Omnia, quae ex absoluta natura alicujus attributi Dei sequuntur, semper et infinita existere debuerunt, sive per idem attributum aeterna et infinita sunt.*¹⁸

As a result the finite modes, viz. those entities which have a finite and limited existence, cannot be produced directly by the absolute nature of God's attributes and must consequently be caused by God in a different way:

*Quod finitum est et determinatam habet existentiam, ab absoluta natura alicujus Dei attributi produci non potuit; quicquid enim ex absoluta natura alicujus Dei attributi sequitur, id infinitum et aeternum est.*¹⁹

However, the finite modes are to be necessitated by God. And we have now seen that Spinoza argues explicitly that these finite modes do not follow from the absolute nature of the divine attributes, from God directly. Don Garrett explains why that is a problem for Spinoza's strict necessitarianism:

*If [...] we interpret the "absolute nature of an attribute" to be its true or complete nature, then it will be difficult to see how finite modes could be rendered fully necessary without following from an attribute's "absolute" nature, for the attributes constitute the essence of God, who is the only independently necessary being.*²⁰

Spinoza's insistence that the finite modes do not follow from God's attributes absolutely or directly seems to threaten his commitment to their necessity.

¹⁷ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP28, II69.

¹⁸ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP21, II65.

¹⁹ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP28D, II69.

²⁰ Don Garrett, "Spinoza's Necessitarianism," in *God and Nature: Spinoza's Metaphysics: Papers Presented at The First Jerusalem Conference (Ethica I)*, edited by Yirmiyahu Yovel (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 194.

It now becomes a riddle how Spinoza can account for the necessity by means of which the finite modes are said to spring from God. Edwin Curley provides us with a proper sketch of the nature of this problem of the finite and its relation to God or to the substance in Spinoza's philosophy:

Many interpreters of Spinoza have felt that, if all things do follow from God in this way [i.e. necessarily from his nature], then it ought to be possible, in principle, to deduce the existence of particular finite beings [modes] from the existence of the Infinite Being [God].²¹

Such a deduction is obstructed by Spinoza's claim that the finite modes are not caused directly by the divine attributes and that particular finite modes must have others finite modes as the cause of their existence. The necessity of these finite modes, which ought to result from the causality of God, thus becomes rather mysterious: whence do the finite modes derive their necessity if Spinoza cannot account for them being necessarily caused by God? It is this difficulty of the necessity of the finite modes and of whether Spinoza's metaphysics is capable of accounting for this necessity that will be at the heart of the current investigation. The problem of Spinoza's strict necessitarianism here coincides with the age-old problem of how the infinite and the finite, particularly God, the one substance, and the finite modes Spinoza ascribes to God, are connected in Spinoza's philosophical thought.

However, the scope of this enquiry is somewhat broader, that is to say that we will as well consider several closely related challenges with which Spinoza's strict necessitarianism is confronted. The first of these is a condition for speaking of the necessity of finite modes, namely the general problem of how substance and modes are at all connected in Spinoza. Two influential interpretations of this connection, namely the inherence interpretation, such as advocated by e.g. Yitzhak Y. Melamed²² and John Carriero²³, and the causal dependence interpretation, whose most prominent advocate is Edwin Curley²⁴, will be considered. Moreover, we will speak of the distinction in Spinoza between two kinds of necessity, which is related to another challenge, namely that of the alleged contingency of singular things, as defended by Spinoza in part two of the *Ethics*. On the whole, all of these other challenges are connected to the central issue of the necessity of the finite modes. Meeting the challenge of the necessity of the finite modes, i.e. accounting for their necessity, thus entails meeting the other challenges.

²¹ Edwin Curley, *Spinoza's Metaphysics: An Essay in Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1969), 46.

²² Yitzhak Y. Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics: Substance and Thought* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013).

²³ John Carriero, "On The Relationship between Mode and Substance in Spinoza's Metaphysics," in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Volume 33, No.2 (1995), 245 – 273.

²⁴ Edwin Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method: A Reading of Spinoza's Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988).

So whereas the problem of how finite modes can be necessitated by an infinite God takes centre stage in this enquiry, this is thus not the only problem which we shall endeavour to resolve. Hence the research question with which we are occupied in this enquiry is of a more general nature:

Does Spinoza's metaphysics succeed in accounting for his strict necessitarianism?

Our answer shall be that although Spinoza encounters several challenges to his strict necessitarianism from within his own system, his metaphysics is ultimately capable of accounting for his strict necessitarianism, given that he has established, albeit perhaps too implicitly, a sufficient link between the infinite, i.e. God, and the finite, as a result of which he can argue that the finite modes are necessary and that the collection of finite modes is both necessary and eternal. This will at the same time turn out to contribute to solving the other aforementioned challenges to his strict necessitarianism.

Chapter I: Spinoza's Necessitarianism: The Causality of God

In order to enable us to answer the research question we shall follow three steps. The first of these steps is to be found in chapter one, in which we provide an answer to the question: why is Spinoza committed to strict necessitarianism? This chapter has the goal of providing an insight into the reasons which Spinoza has to embrace strict necessitarianism and thereby to show which of his key doctrines ground that necessitarianism. The importance of this chapter is, first of all, that it shows the central role of strict necessitarianism in Spinoza's thought and thus the relevance of asking whether he can account for it; secondly, that it is concerned with the general features of Spinoza's metaphysics which have a bearing on the issue of whether that metaphysics can account for his necessitarianism, such as God's causality, attributes and modes, including of course the finite modes and their relation to God, two kinds of necessity and the laws of nature.

Chapter II: Challenges to Spinoza's Necessitarianism: The Necessity of the Finite Modes

In the second chapter all the challenges to Spinoza's strict necessitarianism, which we shortly mentioned before, will be properly explained and initially defended. The question shall be raised as to whether Spinoza's metaphysics succeeds in accounting for his strict necessitarianism and that question will here be answered in the negative, arguing that the connection Spinoza needs for his necessitarianism between the infinite and finite falls short of what we may expect of him, that, furthermore, his distinction between unconditional and conditional necessity is highly problematic and that his idea of the contingency of singular things, when considered from the perspective of their essences, leads to a dualism in his conception of necessity which cannot be sustained. Our aim is to show that these difficulties may prove fatal to his necessitarianism, most notably with regard to the necessity of finite modes.

Chapter III: Spinoza's Necessitarianism Vindicated: Meeting the Challenges

That these challenges are not at all fatal is the central tenet of the last chapter, in which we shall answer the question as to whether Spinoza's metaphysics succeeds in accounting for his strict necessitarianism in the affirmative, viz. that Spinoza's metaphysics can fully account for his necessitarianism. However, before we provide our interpretation of Spinoza, several other interpretations are to be considered, e.g. those of Curley, Melamed, Wolfson, Huenemann, Koistinen and Garrett. Each of these will, it will turn out, have some features in it which we are willing to retain and shall help us, in the final part of the chapter, to defend an interpretation of Spinoza based on the idea that the finite in Spinoza is not so finite after all and that the necessity of the finite modes as a whole can be guaranteed by understanding Spinoza's idea of the eternity of the modes, which means that the finite modes spring eternally from God in the same way. Their springing eternally from God in the same way and their being infinite will mean that they constitute, when taken together, an infinite mode, in which we follow several other scholars and which will be explained in the third chapter.

It should be noted that the outcome of the thesis is not merely evidence for the claim that Spinoza can account for his strict necessitarianism. The outcome as well consists of an interpretation of the connection between the infinite and the finite in Spinoza. Necessity in Spinoza and finitude in Spinoza will in this thesis be shown ultimately to cohere. Both problems, namely the problem of necessity and the problem of finitude, are addressed by speaking of the issue of the necessity of the finite modes and how this necessity can be the result of the causality of God. The subject of Spinoza's strict necessitarianism and whether he can account for it, especially with regard to the necessity of the finite modes, leads us to develop ideas concerning the problem of the finite in Spinoza and the manner in which infinite and finite relate, most notably in a causal sense but also in the more general sense of how the infinite God is connected to the finite modes which he is said to produce and for whose complete necessity he must account. H.H. Joachim explains that 'though all things [according to Spinoza] follow with the same inevitable necessity from God's nature'²⁵, they are of a different 'kind'²⁶, i.e. God produces things which are infinite, and thus similar to him, and things which are finite and thus different from him. It is that difference, particularly between the infinite cause and the finite effect, which causes Spinoza's strict necessitarianism trouble and for which this thesis' interpretation of Spinoza's thought hopes to provide a solution. Our task is, in Charles Huenemann's words, 'to see if there is some link [...] connecting the eternal, changeless, indivisible attributes of God with the motley particulars [finite modes] populating our familiar world'²⁷.

²⁵ Joachim, *A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza*, 73.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ Huenemann, "But why was Spinoza a Necessitarian?", 117.

Introduction: Clarifying the Key Concepts

In order to fulfil that task it is necessary to explain how we want the central concepts of this enquiry to be understood. To begin with the concept of necessity itself. Spinoza's definition of necessity in the *Ethics* is concerned not with what necessity is but with how things can be necessary: "Res aliqua necessaria dicitur vel ratione suae essentiae, vel ratione causae. Rei enim alicujus existentia vel ex ipsius essentia et definitione, vel ex data causa efficiente necessario sequitur."²⁸ A thing can be necessary through its essence or through its cause. What necessity itself means is not explicitly described in this definition. However, a clue here is that when Spinoza declares everything to be necessary, he often adds that this entails that nothing could have been produced by God in a different way: "Res nullo alio modo, neque alio ordine a Deo produci potuerunt, quam productae sunt."²⁹ The necessity of entities, for example the necessity of the finite modes, therefore entails that they could not have been different: what is necessary is consequently for Spinoza that which must have been how it in fact (now) is.

The second concept we need to clarify is that of "accounting for". When we ask how Spinoza's metaphysics can account for his strict necessitarianism, and thus for the necessity of the finite modes, what then is meant by accounting for? The answer is that "accounting for" here has the meaning of explaining how for example the finite modes can with full necessity stem from God and hence be in the grip of complete necessity. The issue of "accounting for" is that of whether Spinoza's metaphysics can ground his commitment to strict necessitarianism and especially to the idea that God can and does necessitate the finite modes, both in their existence and in their actions. This leads us to another central concept for which an explanation is needed, namely that of Spinoza's "metaphysics". Which meaning do we attach to Spinoza's "metaphysics" when we speak of his metaphysics succeeding in accounting for his strict necessitarianism?

Metaphysics in this context is contrasted with physics, psychology and epistemology. The issue is not whether Spinoza can account for his strict necessitarianism by means of a certain physics. Neither are we enquiring into the question of whether he can epistemologically or psychologically explain why all things must be necessary, the latter of which would amount to asking whether he can deny freedom by psychological arguments. We are rather raising the question of whether the metaphysics Spinoza develops in the first part of the *Ethics* but also elsewhere can account for his strict necessitarianism. These metaphysical propositions should support his strict necessitarianism and enable him to account for it. After all, Spinoza himself wrote in a letter that the subject of necessity belongs to metaphysics.³⁰

²⁸ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP33S, II74.

²⁹ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP33, II73.

³⁰ Spinoza, "Epistola XXVII: To Van Blijenbergh: 3.6.1665", IV161.

In raising the question of whether Spinoza's metaphysics can account for his strict necessitarianism, it is, moreover, important to explain that Spinoza's strict necessitarianism applies to things, rather than propositions, truths or events. The notion of necessity in Spinoza is connected to the notion of a thing (Latin: *res*). We saw that in his definition of necessity, Spinoza speaks of a *res* existing necessarily through its essence or through its cause. Some scholars have, however, approached necessity in Spinoza not from the perspective of things but rather of propositions or truths. For example, Jonathan Bennett's chapter on necessity in his *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics* is devoted to the question of whether Spinoza can at all allow for contingent truths.³¹ And Edwin Curley has argued that Spinoza's insistence that things are necessary need not prevent us from approaching necessity in Spinoza from the perspective of truth.³² This thesis, on the contrary, follows Richard Mason in taking the view that necessity for Spinoza is always *de re* and not *de dicto*.³³ Mason writes: "Not only does Spinoza omit to express his views in the *de dicto* terms of standard modal logic, his claims are uniformly and relentlessly *de re*."³⁴ This means that things 'are given modal values'³⁵ in Spinoza and consequently neither propositions nor truths.

So Spinoza speaks of the necessity of things, both in their existence and in their actions. Therefore he repeatedly uses, when speaking of the necessity of things, the phrase '*existendum et operandum*'³⁶: the necessity is said to pertain to the existence and the actions or workings of a thing. We are here therefore not speaking of the necessity of a proposition or the necessity of a certain event, e.g. a sea-battle, such as Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*. Richard Mason calls this an 'ontological approach' and argues: "For him [i.e. Spinoza], the *must* of necessity is not *must be true*, but *must be caused or explained*. To be necessary is to be necessitated, and to be necessitated is to have a cause or explanation which necessitates."³⁷ And this *must be caused* pertains to things. The trouble is that Spinoza does not give a definition of a thing. He uses the notion abundantly – e.g. in EIP33 and EIP36 – but what it is to be a thing is not further explained. But he does define finite things: "Ea res dicitur in suo genere finita, quae alia ejusdem naturae terminari potest."³⁸ A finite thing is a thing which can be limited by another thing of the same kind. One could here think of 'human beings, mountains, giraffes, and tables'³⁹, that is the finite modes whose necessity we are investigating.

³¹ Jonathan Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1984), 111 – 124.

³² Curley, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 88.

³³ Richard Mason, "Spinoza on Modality," in *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol.36, No.144 (1986), 318.

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP33D, II73.

³⁷ Mason, "Spinoza on Modality", 328.

³⁸ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIDef2, II45.

³⁹ Melamed, "The Building Blocks of Spinoza's Metaphysics," in *The Oxford Handbook*, 105.

Chapter I: Spinoza's Strict Necessitarianism: The Causality of God

1.1: Introduction

Now that the concepts have been explained and the task before us has been conveyed in words, we can begin with the first step of our enquiry, namely to look into Spinoza's strict necessitarianism. When a person explores Spinoza's works and correspondence for the first time, that person will undoubtedly notice that Spinoza quite often declares all things to be necessary. In one of his last letters, written to Henry Oldenburg, Spinoza for instance insists that each and every thing follows from the divine nature with complete necessity, meaning that its following from God is inevitable:

*Omnia inevitabili necessitate ex Dei naturâ sequi concipio
eodem modo, ac omnes concipiunt, ex ipsius Dei natura sequi,
ut Deus se ipsum intelligat.*⁴⁰

Thus things follow (*sequi*) from God with an unconquerable necessity, implying that there is no possibility of things stemming from God in a different manner. Hence the aforementioned EIP33 says that nothing could have been produced differently by God than it has been produced: “Res nullo alio modo, neque alio ordine a Deo produci potuerunt, quam productae sunt.”⁴¹ Propositions such as these point at Spinoza's strict necessitarianism and evoke the central question of the chapter: why is Spinoza committed to strict necessitarianism? We shall answer that question by considering the key elements of Spinoza's metaphysics, as they are mainly developed in the first part of the *Ethics*, and some of which are elaborated by him elsewhere, e.g. in his early works. Several other passages from these early works are also relevant in trying to understand those features of Spinoza's system which lead him to commit himself to strict necessitarianism. This enquiry has to begin with God and his status as *causa sui*, because, as e.g. Piet Steenbakkers explains, “[Spinoza's] concept of God serves as the foundation for the subsequent deductive construction of the entire philosophical system”⁴². Moreover, it is God from whose nature the necessity of all things springs, i.e. by means of whose eternal decrees all things are, in a perfect manner, necessitated: “Deum [...] revera ex solius suae naturae, & perfectionis necessitate agere, & omnia dirigere, & ejus denique decreta, & volitiones aeternas esse veritates, semperque necessitatem involvere.”⁴³

⁴⁰ Spinoza, “Epistola LXXV”, IV311/312.

⁴¹ Spinoza, “Ethica”, EIP33, II73.

⁴² Piet Steenbakkers, “The Geometrical Order in the Ethics,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza's Ethics*, edited by Olli Koistinen (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), 52.

⁴³ Benedictus de Spinoza, “Tractatus Theologico-Politicus,” in *Opera: III*, edited by Carl Gebhardt (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1925), Chapter IV, §37, III65.

1.2: The Necessary Existence of God: God as *Causa Sui*

Spinoza begins the first part of his *Ethics*, which is devoted to God, with the notion of *causa sui*, i.e. of something which is the cause of itself and must therefore of necessity exist: the necessary existence stems from the essence of the thing. Spinoza's definition of such a thing is consequently: "Per causam sui intelligo id, cujus essentia involvit existentia, sive id, cujus natura non potest concipi, nisi existens."⁴⁴ The thing, and the only thing, whose existence stems necessarily from its essence is, according to Spinoza's philosophy, God. It is impossible to think of the essence of God without existence. That view is already expressed in the *Cogitata Metaphysica*, an early work, where Spinoza maintains: "Respectu essentiae Deum necessario existere novimus: nam ejus essentia non potest concipi sine existentia."⁴⁵

The existence of God is necessary as a consequence of his essence. God must be understood as existing. It is important to notice that there is no difference for Spinoza between saying that God exists through his essence and saying that God exists necessarily through his essence. Existence, when pertaining to God, is always necessary for Spinoza. What is this God which exists necessarily? God must be understood, according to Spinoza's definition, as a being which is absolutely infinite and has consequently infinitely many attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite being:

*Per Deum intelligo ens absolute infinitum, hoc est substantiam constantem infinitis attributis, quorum unumquodque aeternam et infinitam essentiam exprimit.*⁴⁶

The necessary existence of this substance consisting of infinitely many attributes, namely the necessary existence of God, is expressed in EIP11:

*Deus, sive substantia constans infinitis attributis, quorum unumquodque aeternam, & infinitam essentiam exprimit, necessario existit.*⁴⁷

God is the only thing which is in possession of necessary existence through his essence. He is also the only substance. There can be no substance other than God and there can be nothing *causa sui* other than God. Hence the content of EIP14 is that no other substance can exist: "Praeter Deum nulla dari neque concipi potest substantia."⁴⁸ This has the consequence that the existence of the one substance is necessary: there can be no other substances, meaning that the actual substance, or world, is the only possible substance and that thus strict necessitarianism applies to it.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIDef1, II45.

⁴⁵ Spinoza, "Cogitata Metaphysica", Part One, Chapter III, I241.

⁴⁶ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIDef6, II45.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, II52.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, II56.

⁴⁹ Garrett, "Spinoza's Necessitarianism", 192.

This brings us to some of the proofs Spinoza provides in favour of the necessary existence of this substance, of God, and some of the principles he applies in these proofs. It is e.g. Spinoza's conviction that everything which exists must have a cause which makes it exist. Existence without a causal ground for that existence is for Spinoza impossible. Spinoza sometimes, e.g. in a letter to Hudde, speaks of a positive cause which makes a thing exist: "Uniuscujusque rei existentis causam positivam, per quam existit, necessariò dari debere."⁵⁰ To exist presupposes having a cause and ergo not to exist presupposes a cause which prevents existence: "Cujuscunque rei assignari debet causa seu ratio, tam cur existit quam cur non existit."⁵¹

Given now that no cause can prevent God from existing, he must exist: a cause for his non-existence is impossible. The causal principle upon which this proof rests is applied in Spinoza's denial of the possibility of contingency. In his *Short Treatise* Spinoza asserts that a contingent thing is devoid of a cause and cannot therefore exist: "If something has no cause of its existence, it is impossible for it to exist. Something that is contingent has no cause. Therefore [there are no contingent things]."⁵² And if a 'contingent' thing were to have a determinate cause, then it is not contingent, because Spinoza maintains that determinate causes are always necessary.⁵³

Hence Spinoza here develops two important principles regarding causation:

1. Every existent thing must have a cause for its existence and hence every non-existing thing a cause for its non-existence;
2. All causation is necessary: if something has a determinate and certain cause for its existence, then it must of necessity exist.⁵⁴

Causation is thus a matter of necessity. Spinoza's view is that 'there is no such thing [...] as chance, or absolute contingency. There must be an assignable cause or reason for the present existence or non-existence of everything'⁵⁵. And, in accordance with that, every cause must bring about its effect: "Ex data causa determinata necessario sequitur effectus, et contra, si nulla detur determinata causa, impossibile est, ut effectus sequatur."⁵⁶ From a certain determinate cause, the effects must spring with complete necessity. This means that in Spinoza two components of causality are necessary: the cause itself, i.e. the coming about of the cause, is necessary, and the effects which spring from this necessary cause are in possession of necessity.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ Spinoza, "Epistola XXXIV: To Hudde: 7.1.1666", IV179.

⁵¹ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP11D, II52.

⁵² Benedictus de Spinoza, "Short Treatise," in *The Collected Works of Spinoza: Vol.I*, edited and translated by Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986), Part One, Chapter VI, 85.

⁵³ Ibidem.

⁵⁴ Ibidem, Part Two, Chapter Nine, II74, 114.

⁵⁵ Joachim, *A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza*, 47.

⁵⁶ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIA3, II46.

⁵⁷ Martin Lin, "The Principle of Sufficient Reason in Spinoza," in *The Oxford Handbook of Spinoza*, edited by Della Rocca (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2018), 137.

Another element in Spinoza's proofs for the existence of God which has its bearing upon our enquiry is that of the perfection of God. Given that God is perfect, he must exist, because Spinoza holds that the power to exist is a strength and the power not to exist a weakness: "Posse non existere impotentia est, & contra posse existere potentia est."⁵⁸ This perfection of God belongs to himself and cannot be derived from causes external to him:

*Quicquid substantia perfectionis habet, nulli causae externae debetur; quare ejus etiam existentia ex sola ejus natura sequi debet, quae proinde nihil aliud est, quam ejus essentia.*⁵⁹

That the perfection of God leads logically to his existence and that this perfection is internal to him means also that the things which God does must be necessary, i.e. that God cannot refrain from doing what he does:

*When we conclude that God could not have omitted doing what he has done, we derive this from his perfection, because in God it would be an imperfection to be able to omit what he does.*⁶⁰

Spinoza thus conceives of a strong connection between the perfection and the necessity of God, both with regard to his existence and regarding his actions. Evidence for this is as well found in another letter of Spinoza to Hudde, where it is said that a thing which exists necessarily, in and by itself, must be free from imperfection and in possession of complete perfection:

*Id omne, quod necessariam includit existentiam, nullam in se habere posse imperfectionem; sed meram debere exprimere perfectionem.*⁶¹

The only being of course of which that is true is God: he has supreme perfection and is in possession of necessary existence, which Spinoza explained in the same letter to Johannes Hudde where it is said: "Nihil extra Deum; sed solus Deus est, qui necessariam involvit existentiam."⁶² There is nothing outside God, which points at Spinoza's monism, and God is the only thing which exists necessarily through its essence; and that necessary existence has to do with the perfection of God: perfection implies existence. We can therefore not think of God as non-existing: he exists necessarily:

*Wir können ihn [Gott] nicht als nicht existierend denken, den alles, was causa sui ist, was bloß seines eigenen Wesens bedarf, um da zu sein, muß notwendig sein.*⁶³

⁵⁸ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP11D, II53.

⁵⁹ Ibidem, EIP11S, II54.

⁶⁰ Spinoza, "Short Treatise", Part One, Chapter IV, §1, I36, 81.

⁶¹ Spinoza, "Epistola XXXV: To Hudde: 10.4.1666", IV182.

⁶² Ibidem.

⁶³ Jakob Freudenthal, *Spinoza. Leben und Lehre*, edited by Carl Gebhardt, based on the second edition (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1927), 118.

That God exists necessarily has also to do with the fact that he is the substance, something which has its bearing upon Spinoza's strict necessitarianism. A thing which is a substance must of necessity exist. According to Martial Gueroult's account of Spinoza's thought this is Spinoza's primary proof for the existence or the necessary existence of God:

La première démonstration [...] se fonde sur la substantialité: il est absurde de dire que Dieu n'existe pas, parce qu'il est absurde d'affirmer [...], qu'une substance n'enveloppe pas son existence.⁶⁴

It is absurd to suppose, as far as Spinoza is concerned, that substance does not exist. Since God is the only substance, he must of necessity exist. The substance is *causa sui* and it is contradictory to claim that a thing which has that ontological status is devoid of existence. Olli Koistinen gives an explanation for this which says that 'according to Spinoza, substances have to exist by necessity because they are independent [*causa sui*]. Their existence cannot be caused by anything external to them, nor can anything prevent them from existing'⁶⁵. If God is the substance – and that is of course the case for Spinoza – then he must exist, because something which is a substance, which is *causa sui* cannot be said to be without existence – and that existence is necessary existence: God's existence is not a coincidence.

The necessary existence of the substance, of God, is therefore complete necessity, which means that strict necessitarianism applies to God, to the substance: no other substance is possible and thus the proofs for the existence of God lead to the necessitarian conclusion that the substance which is, is wholly necessary. Because in all these proofs for the existence of God necessity and existence ultimately coincide: if God, the substance exists, then he does so necessarily, being *causa sui*, i.e. existing as a result of his essence alone. Proving the existence of God is for Spinoza ultimately proving his necessary existence. These proofs naturally also include Spinoza's monism: no other substances are possible and the one which exists must do so necessarily. When we acknowledge that 'God or substance consisting of infinite attributes, is not one among many but beside it no substance can be or be conceived'⁶⁶, then we acknowledge the necessity of the one substance which is. The proofs for the necessary existence of God, this single substance which has existence, thereby also imply Spinoza's monism and the necessity of the substance which exists. That God is and that he is the substance, the only thing which is *causa sui*, has the necessitarian implication that nothing else could have existed, is possible.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Martial Gueroult, *Spinoza: Dieu: Ethique I* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1968), 181.

⁶⁵ Koistinen, "Spinoza's Proof of Necessitarianism", 285.

⁶⁶ H.F. Hallett, *Benedict de Spinoza: The Elements of his Philosophy* (London: The Athlone Press, University of London, 1957), 21.

⁶⁷ Melamed, "The Building Blocks of Spinoza's Metaphysics", 89.

1.3: Attributes and Modes

From the substance it is a small step to the issue of the necessity of this substance's modes and how these modes are said to relate to God. Before we can say something about modes, and finite modes in particular, we must consider the attributes, which have a role to play, as the introduction already revealed, in causing the modes, particularly the infinite modes. It has become clear so far that God has infinitely many attributes, something which Spinoza already wrote in one of the first of his surviving letters to Henry Oldenburg in 1661, where he defined God as an 'ens, constans infinitis attributis, quorum unumquodque est infinitum, sive summè perfectum in suo genere'⁶⁸. So God consists of infinitely many attributes, each of which is infinite, meaning that it possesses the highest perfection.

What now is an attribute? Spinoza answers: "Per attributum intelligo id, quod intellectus de substantia percipit, tanquam ejusdem essentiam constituens."⁶⁹ The intellect perceives the substance by means of an attribute. It is Spinoza's conviction that the more reality a thing has – and God is the supreme reality, the substance – the more attributes it possesses: "Quo plus realitatis, aut esse unaquaeque res habet, eo plura attributa ipsi competent."⁷⁰ Therefore God must have infinitely many attributes. All these attributes constitute his essence. Consequently nothing is more evident, according to Spinoza, than that God should be defined as an absolutely infinite being with infinitely many attributes, which express his essence:

*Nihil etiam clarius, quam quod ens absolute infinitum
necessario sit definiendum [...] ens, quod constat infinitis
attributis, quorum unumquodque aeternam, & infinitam certam
essentiam exprimit.*⁷¹

This infinity of the attributes is not to be confused with a plurality, in the sense of diminishing Spinoza's monism. Alan Donagan has stressed that 'the union of attributes in Spinoza's God is absolutely necessary'⁷². The attributes are not independent entities. They can be conceived by us independently from each other, but, as Edwin Curley explains, 'the existence of each one of the attributes implies the existence of all the others'⁷³. The independence is something which belongs solely to our conception of the attributes, i.e. to the intellect which conceives attributes. That God has infinitely many attributes is consequently not meant by Spinoza to introduce a plurality in God, or to do damage in any way to the monism he defends.

⁶⁸ Spinoza, "Epistola II: To Oldenburg: September 1661", IV7.

⁶⁹ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIDef4, II45.

⁷⁰ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP9, II51.

⁷¹ Ibidem.

⁷² Alan Donagan, "Essence and the Distinction of Attributes," in *Spinoza: Critical Assessments: Volume II, The Ethics*, ed. Genevieve Lloyd (London: Routledge, 2001), 59.

⁷³ Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method*, 30.

These attributes bring us to the manner in which Spinoza conceives of modes. Spinoza asserts in the *Ethics* that particular things, or finite modes, are nothing other than so-called affections of the substance which express the divine attributes in a particular and circumscribed manner: “Res particulares nihil sunt, nisi Dei attributorum affectiones, sive modi, quibus Dei attributa certo, & determinato modo exprimuntur.”⁷⁴ That these modes – not only the finite modes, the particular things, but also, as the introduction showed, the infinite modes – are expressions of the attributes ensures, as Jonathan Bennett points out, that all the modes spring from God and hence that Spinoza’s belief in the unity of the one substance is not impaired by the plurality of the modes.⁷⁵ As to the modes themselves and particularly the finite modes, Spinoza’s position is ‘that things in the universe other than God – including rocks, trees, ideas, and minds – are modes of God’⁷⁶. These modes – whether finite or infinite – are an affection of the substance, which means that they can neither exist nor be understood apart from something else, viz. the substance of which they are an affection. Spinoza thus gives the following definition of what a mode is: “Per modum intelligo substantiae affectiones, sive id, quod in alio est, per quod etiam concipitur.”⁷⁷

Yitzhak Y. Melamed explains what this definition means for Spinoza:

*A mode is an affection [...], which depends on its substance both for its existence (it is ‘in another’) and for its conceivability (it is ‘conceived through another’).*⁷⁸

As Spinoza himself wrote to his friend Lodewijk Meyer concerning modes:

*Substantiae verò Affectiones Modos voco, quorum definitio, quatenus non est ipsa Substantiae definitio, nullam existentiam involvere potest. Quapropter, quamvis existant, eos ut non existentes concipere possumus: ex quo porrò sequitur, nos, ubi ad solam modorum essentiam; non verò ad ordinem totius Naturae attendimus, non posse concludere ex eo, quòd jam existant, ipsos postea exstitorios, aut non exstitorios, vel antea exstitisse, aut non exstitisse.*⁷⁹

A mode is something which does not by itself exist, but depends upon the substance – the *causa sui*, the necessary being – of which it is a mode.

⁷⁴ Spinoza, “Ethica”, EIP25C, II68.

⁷⁵ Jonathan Bennett, “Spinoza’s Metaphysics,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, edited by Don Garrett (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 88.

⁷⁶ Carriero, “On The Relationship between Mode and Substance in Spinoza’s Metaphysics”, 245.

⁷⁷ Spinoza, “Ethica”, EId5, II45.

⁷⁸ Yitzhak Y. Melamed, “The Building Blocks of Spinoza’s Metaphysics,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Spinoza*, edited by Della Rocca (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2018), 103.

⁷⁹ Spinoza, “Epistola XII: To Meyer: 26 July 1663”, IV54.

That a mode is nothing more than an affection of the substance which cannot exist nor be understood through itself includes the idea that the essence of the modes does not entail existence, as Spinoza writes to Meyer. The existence of the modes is a dependent existence, namely an existence which cannot obtain without the substance of which they are affections. This close relation between the substance and its modes does not mean that they are ontologically in any way whatsoever similar. On the contrary, Spinoza is keen to insist that the modes are ontologically wholly different from the substance. He uses the phrase ‘toto genere’ when referring to the ontological difference between substance and modes, which means that for him we conceive of and must conceive of the existence of the substance, of God, as entirely different from the existence of the modes: “Nos existentiam Substantiae toto genere à Modorum existentia diversam concipere.”⁸⁰

This distinction between the substance and its modes has by some been traced back to Aristotle, for example by Jakob Freudenthal in his influential article on the role of scholasticism in Spinoza’s philosophical thought:

*Die Unterscheidung von substantia und modus [...] fällt fast ganz mit der Aristotelisch-scholastischen von οὐσία und συμβεβηκός zusammen, wie denn auch die Definitionen fast identisch sind.*⁸¹

Whether substance and mode must indeed be understood in such an Aristotelian manner will be discussed later, given that this has its bearing on the way in which we understand the manner in which the finite modes are necessitated. It is important, nevertheless, that Spinoza prefers the term ‘modus’ over the traditional Aristotelian ‘accidens’, as Henri Krop writes:

*The Latin noun modus [...] acquired its fully Spinozistic meaning only in Spinoza’s mature work, the Ethics, by replacing the traditional accidens as the opposite of substantia.*⁸²

Spinoza follows Descartes’ *Principia Philosophiae* in this regard. In Descartes’ *Principia Philosophiae* it is said that we speak of a mode when we are concerned with the affections, or the modifications, a substance undergoes: “Cum consideramus substantiam ab illis affici, vel variari, vocamus modos.”⁸³ Whenever we consider the affections of the substance, we are in point of fact considering its modes for Descartes, and also for Spinoza.

⁸⁰ Spinoza, “Epistola XII”, IV54.

⁸¹ Jakob Freudenthal, “Spinoza und die Scholastik,” in *Philosophische Aufsätze: Eduard Zeller Gewidmet*, unveränderter Nachdruck der Originalausgabe von 1887 (Leipzig: Zentral-Antiquariat der DDR, 1962), 122.

⁸² Henri Krop, “Modus,” in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Spinoza*, edited by Wiep van Bunge, Henri Krop, Piet Steenbakkens, Jeroen van de Ven (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 260.

⁸³ René Descartes, *Principia Philosophiae*, edited by Christian Wohlers (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2005), 60.

That Spinoza follows Descartes concerning the modes is corroborated by a passage in the *Cogitata Metaphysics*, where Spinoza explicitly admits that he does so.⁸⁴ Still, Spinoza did, in one of his earliest letters, use the term ‘accidents’ when referring to the modes and when insisting that there is nothing outside the substance and its accidents, or the substance and its modes: “Quòd praeter Substantias, & Accidentia nihil detur realiter, sive extra intellectum.”⁸⁵ Nonetheless, from the *Cogitata Metaphysica* onwards the notion of modes becomes for Spinoza the predominant one, which shows that he rejected the traditional usage of accidents quite early. Whereas Spinoza thus goes along with Descartes here, his conception of the modes also contains a difference with Descartes, namely that Spinoza comes up with a distinction which is not to be found in Descartes, viz. that of the infinite modes – a concept not present in Descartes – and the finite modes.⁸⁶

Spinoza’s view is that the number of modes, including the infinite and the finite modes, is itself infinite. From the necessity of God infinitely many things must spring, as much as God has infinitely many attributes: “Ex necessitate divinae naturae, infinita infinitis modis [...] sequi debent.”⁸⁷ All these infinitely many modes or things are said to be in God, given that all that is, is in God: “Quicquid est, in Deo est, & nihil sine Deo esse, neque concipi potest.”⁸⁸ The infinite modes and the finite modes are similar in the sense that they follow from the necessity of the divine nature and that they are in God. The difference between the two, however, from the perspective of God is that the first, i.e. the infinite modes, spring from the absolute nature of God’s attributes, whereas that cannot pertain to the finite modes (EIP23):

*Omnis modus, qui & necessario, & infinitus existit, necessario sequi debuit, vel ex absoluta natura alicujus attribute Dei, vel ex aliquot attributo modificato modification, quae & necessario, & infinita existit.*⁸⁹

This proposition reveals that there are two kinds of infinite modes: those which stem directly from the absolute nature of the attributes and those which do so via a modification of that attribute. The infinite mode follows either immediately or mediately from the divine attributes. That is the distinction which Spinoza scholarship labels that between immediate and mediate infinite modes.⁹⁰ The mediate infinite mode is, it should be emphasised, in no way less infinite or less necessary than the immediate.

⁸⁴ Spinoza, “Cogitata Metaphysica”, Part One, Chapter I, I236.

⁸⁵ Spinoza, “Epistola IV”, IV14.

⁸⁶ Melamed, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics: Substance*, 113.

⁸⁷ Spinoza, “Ethica”, EIP16, II60.

⁸⁸ Spinoza, “Ethica”, EIP15, II56.

⁸⁹ Ibidem.

⁹⁰ Tad M. Schmaltz, “Spinoza’s Mediate Infinite Mode,” in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol.35, No.3 (1997), 199 – 235.

And both the immediate and mediate are closely related to the attributes, although the immediate in a stricter sense than the mediate, which is a modification of substance. Things are different where the finite modes are concerned. Whereas it is true that ‘Spinoza speaks of his modes as things which follow from God’⁹¹, it is equally true that the finite modes do not spring from God directly, i.e. are not directly related to God’s attributes. Harry Austryn Wolfson connects this to Spinoza’s idea that God is somehow the remote cause of the finite modes, given that these finite modes are not directly caused by God’s attributes.⁹² Spinoza after all says that the finite modes cannot be derived directly from the attributes, as the infinite modes:

*Id, quod finitum est et determinatam habet existentiam, ab absoluta natura alicujus Dei attributi produci non potuit; quicquid enim ex absoluta natura alicujus Dei attributi sequitur, id infinitum et aeternum est.*⁹³

A possible explanation for this is to be found in Genevieve Lloyd’s study of the *Ethics*, in which the steps by which Spinoza proceeds are explained thus:

*All dependent things – or ‘modes’ – follow necessarily from the eternal attributes of God. But there are two ways in which this happens. There are, on the one hand, modes which, though dependent on God, are themselves infinite. Such modes follow from the ‘absolute nature’ of one of God’s attributes.*⁹⁴

The latter are the immediate and the mediate infinite modes. The difference with the finite modes is not that they do not follow from God’s attributes:

*On the other hand, there are finite modes which, although they follow from the eternal attributes, are not themselves eternal. Each finite mode is limited by other finite modes.*⁹⁵

That Spinoza is committed to strict necessitarianism is here indicated by the fact that the whole collection of modes must spring from the divine attributes, albeit in a different manner. The infinite modes, following immediately or mediately from the absolute nature of God’s attributes, are closer to God – to the supremely necessary being – than the finite modes, of which it is said that they cannot spring from the absolute nature of attributes. The differences between the modes are hence not differences in terms of necessity, which means that Spinoza is committed to strict necessitarianism. The finite modes must follow from the divine attributes as necessarily as the infinite modes and still be considered as finite modes.

⁹¹ Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, Volume I, Page 376.

⁹² Ibidem, Volume I, 244.

⁹³ Spinoza, “Ethica”, EIP28D, II69.

⁹⁴ Genevieve Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Ethics: Routledge Philosophy Guidebook* (London: Routledge, 1996), 42.

⁹⁵ Ibidem.

The difference consists rather in the relation of the finite modes to the attributes of the substance. Edwin Curley gives an explanation of this:

The finite modes do not follow from the absolute nature of the attributes [...], i.e., they do not follow unconditionally from the attributes, as the infinite modes do. That is why the finite modes are not infinite and eternal, why they are particular things, which have a finite and determinate existence [...], i.e., which come into being and pass away.⁹⁶

That this is not meant to undermine but rather to support Spinoza's strict necessitarianism – and that, as we argued, the whole collection of modes must be entirely necessary for Spinoza – is underlined by Michael Della Rocca, who asserts that Spinoza wants to say that no mode, whether infinite or finite, can be other than it is – and thus that all modes are necessary in the sense in which a strict necessitarian wants them to be:

For Spinoza, not only do modes depend on God by being mere states of God, their dependence is so complete that it is absolutely impossible for any mode – and thus for the entire series of modes – to be different in any respect from the way it actually is.⁹⁷

That there is nothing other than these modes, and of course their substance, entails that the world we inhabit is the only possible world, is a necessary one. Nothing in it could conceivably have been otherwise. It is therefore true that for Spinoza 'all modes follow from attributes in such a way that no attribute could possibly have given rise to a *different* set of modes'⁹⁸. What unites the modes, apart from them being modifications of the substance, is that they could not have been different. Spinoza does acknowledge a difference as to how the modes spring from the attributes, but not with regard to the necessity of the modes. The differences between the modes do not, as far as Spinoza is concerned, consist of differences in necessity: these differences have to do rather with the infinite or finite character of the modes and how they stem from God. This is connected to Spinoza's monism: there is only one substance, being the cause of itself and existing necessarily, i.e. God, and that one substance must of necessity have one single collection of modes, the actual ones. These modes may hence differ with regard to their relation to the divine attributes – whether they spring from these attributes directly or indirectly, or through infinite or finite modifications – and with regard to their infinite or finite character, but they are all necessary in the same sense, given that they depend upon the one substance, on God.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method*, 47.

⁹⁷ Michael Della Rocca, *Spinoza* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 69/70.

⁹⁸ Garrett, "Spinoza's Necessitarianism", 212.

⁹⁹ Koistinen, "Spinoza's Proof of Necessitarianism", 283 – 309.

1.4: The Immanent Causation of God and Strict Necessitarianism

What all these modes, whether they be immediate or mediate infinite modes or finite modes, also, apart from their necessity, have in common is that they are caused by God. Spinoza repeatedly declares that God is the immanent cause of all things which have existence, for example in EIP18: “Deus est omnium rerum causa immanens, non vero transiens.”¹⁰⁰ And in one of his last letters to Henry Oldenburg: “Deum enim rerum omnium causam immanentem, ut ajunt, non verò transeuntem statuo.”¹⁰¹ God is the immanent and not the transcendent or transient cause of all things. Olli Koistinen calls this ‘God’s omnicausality’¹⁰²: that God is the immanent cause of everything means that he is causally in all things, omnipresent. God has a causal omnipotence, i.e. all causality ultimately springs from him.

Spinoza conceives of this immanent causation as a form of permanent actuality, meaning that in Spinoza’s view God must always be actual. The perfection of God necessitates him to never be in a state of potentiality. That God is the immanent cause of all things and that causality is always necessary for Spinoza means that God is always actual. The omnipotence of God is at all times actual and eternally the same, which means that there is no unfulfilled potentiality in God: all his potentiality is *actu*, Spinoza holds: “Quare Dei omnipotentia actu ab aeterno fuit, & in aeternum in eadem actualitate manebit.”¹⁰³ That this permanent actuality of God extends to the modes as well has to do with the fact that he is their cause and they are in him: “Omnia, quae sunt, in Deo sunt, & per Deum concipi debent [...], adeoque [...] Deus rerum, quae in ipso sunt, est causa, quod est primum.”¹⁰⁴

Hence ‘God [...] is, above all, the ultimate and general efficient cause of all things, the active agent whose power explains their coming into being’¹⁰⁵. This causal role of God would not entail strict necessitarianism, had we not seen that Spinoza sees all causation as necessary. The causation of God is naturally no exception to that rule. Hence Spinoza asserts that God is the efficient cause through the necessity of his nature: “Deus ex necessitate suae naturae est cause efficiens.”¹⁰⁶ This, in conjunction with the permanent actuality of God, and therefore of all that God produces, namely his modes, means that Spinoza cannot but subscribe to strict necessitarianism. When Spinoza speaks of the immanent causality of God, he always means the causality of God through the necessity of his divine nature (EIP29).

¹⁰⁰ Spinoza, “Ethica”, II63.

¹⁰¹ Spinoza, “Epistola LXXIII: To Oldenburg: c. 1.12.1675”, IV307.

¹⁰² Olli Koistinen, “Causation in Spinoza,” in *Spinoza: Metaphysical Themes*, edited by John Biro and Olli Koistinen (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), 63.

¹⁰³ Spinoza, “Ethica”, EIP17S1, II62.

¹⁰⁴ Ibidem, EIP18D, II64.

¹⁰⁵ Steven Nadler, ““Whatever is, is in God”: substance and things in Spinoza’s metaphysics,” in *Interpreting Spinoza: Critical Essays*, edited by Huenemann (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), 60/61.

¹⁰⁶ Spinoza, “Ethica”, EIP25S, II68.

That this must be conceived of as implying strict necessitarianism is supported by Spinoza's staunch adherence to the idea that nothing which has been determined or caused by God to act in a particular manner can undo that divine action: the necessity of God cannot be undone by any of the modes. The first step in Spinoza's reasoning here is saying that everything which is determined to work and act must be determined by God (EIP26): "Res, quae ad aliquid operandum determinata est, a Deo necessario sic fuit determinata; et, quae a Deo non est determinata, non potest se ipsam ad operandum determinare."¹⁰⁷ And the second step is that a thing which has been so determined by God cannot undo that divine action (EIP27): "Res, quae a Deo ad aliquid operandum determinata est, se ipsam indeterminatam reddere non potest."¹⁰⁸ Nothing can act contrary to the decrees of God.

So all things have been determined by God - *Quicquid determinatum est ad existendum, & operandum, a Deo sic determinatum est.*¹⁰⁹ – and none of these things can undo the causal working of God. That this entails a strict or strong form of necessitarianism is explained by Alan Donagan:

*Everything is declared to be necessary as immanently caused by the absolutely infinite being, not merely as transiently caused by it as modified by some finite modification [...]. Nor is that all. It is also declared that, in immanently causing what it does, the absolutely infinite being can do no other.*¹¹⁰

The manner in which God has determined the modes is the only possible one. And the things God determines have not been given a power by means of which they can resist God's causation. Hence the finite modes cannot resist the divine necessity. Martial Gueroult speaks of 'l'impossibilité pour toute chose singulière d'avoir une puissance d'agir indépendante de Dieu'¹¹¹. Revolting against God's necessity is not in our hands, or the hands of finite modes generally. That Spinoza does not consider it a possibility that any of the things produced by God has the power to undo God is because all power which these things possess is bestowed on them by God's necessity. Consequently, the immanent causation of God could rightly be deemed immanent necessitation: God immanently necessitates all things. There is no difference in Spinoza, ultimately, between immanent causation and immanent necessitation: they are one and the same, which entails the complete necessity of all that God produces, viz. strict necessitarianism. The causality of God carries with it the necessity of all that God produces, including the finite modes. And the divine perfection, to which Spinoza attached so great a role in his proofs for the existence of God, prevents God from producing anything else: this is the world he must have caused.

¹⁰⁷ Spinoza, "Ethica", II68.

¹⁰⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁹ Ibidem, EIP28D, II69.

¹¹⁰ Alan Donagan, *Spinoza* (Hempstead: Harvester, 1988), 113.

¹¹¹ Gueroult, *Spinoza: Dieu: Ethique I*, 337.

1.5: Spinoza's Distinction Between Two Kinds of Necessity

The immanent causation of God has thus to be immanent necessitation: things are immanently caused by God and thereby necessitated. How does this occur? The idea is that the causality of God is a transfer from the necessity by which God himself exists and acts to the things he causes:

*God acts with the same necessity as that by which he exists.
His action, however, is his production of things. Thus, since
everything follows from God with the same necessity as that by
which he exists, they exist with the same necessity as that by
which he exists.¹¹²*

However, the necessity of things is not quite the same as the necessity of God himself in the sense that the divine necessity stems from God's essence, whereas the necessity of the modes stem from their causes. Spinoza therefore argues, e.g. in his *Cogitata Metaphysica*, that things can be necessary in two respects, viz. essentially and through their causes: "Duobus modis res dicitur necessaria, & impossibilis, vel respectu suae essentiae, vel respectu causae."¹¹³ This distinction is meant to support rather than to undermine Spinoza's necessitarianism. The necessity of all that is a mode is guaranteed by the necessity of God. Or more accurately: the causality of God, which causes all things to be and exist. The special feature of this causality of God is that it not only comes about necessarily but also transfers necessity to things. That is necessity by means of causes:

*Res aliqua necessaria dicitur, vel ratione suae essentiae, vel
ratione causae. Rei enim alicujus existentia vel ex ipsius
essentia, & definitione, vel ex data causa efficiente necessario
sequitur.¹¹⁴*

So Spinoza 'makes a distinction between the different senses in which a thing may be necessary and does not think that all things are necessary in the same sense'¹¹⁵. But the causal form of necessity is ensured by God. This means that the two forms of necessity cooperate in order to sustain the necessity of all that has existence. Dominik Perler calls this the distinction between essential and causal necessity, in which essential necessity is the necessity of God, i.e. the necessity by means of his essence through which God himself has existence, and causal necessity the necessity of all the causes between finite modes, which are also said to spring from God.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Charlet Jarrett, "Spinoza on Necessity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza's Ethics*, edited by Olli Koistinen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 130.

¹¹³ Spinoza, "Cogitata Metaphysica", Part One, Chapter III, I240.

¹¹⁴ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP33S1, II74.

¹¹⁵ Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method: A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, 50.

¹¹⁶ Dominik Perler, "The Problem of Necessitarianism," in *Spinoza's Ethics: A Collective Commentary*, edited by Michael Hampe, Ursula Renz and Robert Schnepf (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 69.

We ought hence to remember that Spinoza's use of this distinction does not affect the unity of God's causality: there are not two causal orders here.¹¹⁷ The two kinds of necessity imply each other: the necessary existence of God, through his essence, and the causal necessity of all that God produces. The distinction between essential and causal necessity is consequently not intended to undermine Spinoza's monism or create two causal orders. On the contrary, it is necessary to sustain his monism and his view of God's immanent causality. And it is through the combination of these two forms of necessity that Spinoza is able to say, famously in EIP29, that no contingency at all exists and that all things are wholly determined by the divine nature:

*In rerum natura nullum datur contingens, sed omnia ex necessitate divinae naturae determinate sunt ad certo modo existendum, & operandum.*¹¹⁸

This is a proposition of which Martial Gueroult says that it embraces absolute determinism and is a total rejection of contingency: "Excluant la contingence et instituent le déterminisme absolu et total."¹¹⁹ Spinoza's determinism is absolute, according to Gueroult, i.e. Spinoza embraces the strict form of necessitarianism. This is revealed by Spinoza's own contention that he has shown that *nihil absolute in rebus dari, propter quod contingentes dicantur*¹²⁰, i.e. that there is no contingency in things. The divine causality must be a necessary causality and that excludes all contingency, both in the existence and in the actions of the modes, which are necessary effects of God. As Spinoza infamously states in part two of the *Ethics*: "Omnia ab aeterno Dei decreto eadem necessitate sequuntur ac ex essentia trianguli sequitur, quod tres ejus anguli sunt aequales duobus rectis."¹²¹

Spinoza makes no bones about the fact that this applies to all the modes: they must have resulted with full necessity from the divine nature:

*Modi deinde divinae naturae ex eadem etiam necessario, non vero contingenter secuti sunt [...] idque vel quatenus divina natura absolute [...], vel quatenus certo modo ad agendum determinata consideratur.*¹²²

It must be noted that this entails that the modes are necessary in their flowing from God and that they are necessary in their causally determined actions. The causal necessity of the modes applies to their being and actions, both of which stem ultimately from the divine necessity for Spinoza: the modes are caused by God and they cause or necessitate each other (EIP28).

¹¹⁷ Donagan, *Spinoza*, 114.

¹¹⁸ Spinoza, "Ethica", II70.

¹¹⁹ Gueroult, *Spinoza: Dieu: Ethique I*, 346.

¹²⁰ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP33S1, II74.

¹²¹ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIIP49S, II136.

¹²² Ibidem, EIP29D, II70.

So Spinoza's strict necessitarianism requires that the so-called causal necessity of the modes is as strong as the essential necessity by means of which God himself exists. Steven Nadler describes this requirement:

Spinoza is [...] explaining that there are two ways in which something becomes necessitated – either “internally,” because of its essence (and this is the way in which God or substance and its attributes are necessary); or “externally,” because of its antecedent conditions (the way in which everything else is necessary). The necessity itself in each case is the same, and it is absolute.¹²³

That it is Spinoza's intention for both kinds of necessity to be absolute is proven by a passage, to which Nadler refers, in the *Cogitata Metaphysica*, in which Spinoza says that were humans to have a clear insight in the order of nature, they would acknowledge that all that takes place within that realm of nature, within the world that is immanently caused by God, does so with mathematical necessity, i.e. with the same necessity we find in mathematics:

Si homines clarè totum ordinem naturae intelligerent, omnia aequè necessaria reperirent, ac omnia illa, quae in Mathesi tractantur; sed quia hoc supra humanam cognitionem est, ideò à nobis quaedam possibile, non verò necessaria judicantur.¹²⁴

Spinoza gives a biblical example to substantiate this. The prophet Josiah burned the bones of certain priests on an illegitimate altar of King Jeroboam (2 Kings 23). It may seem to us, Spinoza says, that the action of Josiah could both have happened and not have happened. In this regard human actions seem to differ from mathematical examples. However, were we to have complete knowledge of all the causes, we would understand that the necessity of Josiah's actions is as strong as the necessity we encounter in mathematics. Thus the second kind of necessity is strictly necessitarian.

Spinoza's adherence to strict necessitarianism is unaffected, consequently, by the distinction. We may nonetheless, as Spinoza admits, still feel that the world could have been different and that necessitarianism is not true. There is an argument by Spinoza which attempts to refute this. Spinoza considers the possibility of the world having been different and argues that, had this been possible, God need to have been different, if we admit that God is the only substance. God should then have had a different nature: “Si itaque res alterius naturae potuissent esse vel alio modo ad operandum determinari, ut naturae ordo alius esset, ergo Dei etiam natura alia posset esse, quam jam est.”¹²⁵ This Spinoza considers impossible on the ground that God is perfect: if he were to have another essence altogether, he would no longer be so.

¹²³ Steven Nadler, *Spinoza's Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 87.

¹²⁴ Spinoza, “*Cogitata Metaphysica*”, Part One, Chapter IX, I266.

¹²⁵ Spinoza, “*Ethica*”, EIP33D, II73.

Another possibility Spinoza addresses is that, if strict necessitarianism is not true, there should have been a plurality of Gods, which is for Spinoza naturally unacceptable: there is only one substance and thus one God. It is inconceivable on the basis of Spinoza's monism that there should be a second, third or fourth God, or a second, third or fourth substance for that matter. The God which is, is perfect and has produced things in the only possible way: "Res summa perfectione a Deo fuisse productas: quandoquidem ex data perfectissima natura necessario secutae sunt."¹²⁶ God is the only substance, and from his perfection it follows that what he produces, all the modes, must be necessary and perfect. This implies that contingency, if such a thing were possible, would mean imperfection. That God cannot have caused the world contingently is a view Spinoza expresses e.g. in a letter to Hugo Boxel, where he insists that the world must have been the necessary product of the divine nature, which comes down of course to denying that the world could be the product of chance. The world God produces is a necessary world for Spinoza and not a contingent one:

*Quòd, sicuti certum est Fortuitum & Necessarium duo esse
contraria, ità manifestum etiam est eum, qui mundum
necessarium divinae Naturae effectum affirmat, omninò etiam
mundum casu factum esse negare.*¹²⁷

We may thus conclude that Spinoza would presumably oppose the famous conclusion drawn by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*: "Alles, was wir sehen, könnte auch anders sein."¹²⁸ Nothing we see could be different and accordingly Spinoza maintains that all conceptions of contingency are merely manifestations of a deficiency of our mind: "Res aliqua nulla alia de causa contingens dicitur, nisi respectu defectus nostra cognitionis."¹²⁹ Contingency is nothing other than a deficiency of the human mind and the inability of human beings to understand the necessity of all that is.¹³⁰ This points to an important distinction in Spinoza: whereas necessity is always concerned primarily with how things are – and not with us or with our concepts – contingency rather has to do with us. Contingency is something which *we* attach to things; necessity, on the contrary, is something which adheres to the substance and not to the human beings belonging to that substance. As Sir Frederick Pollock pointed out a century ago: for Spinoza in the end 'the existent universe [...] must include every possible consequence of infinite being [i.e. God] and there is no real distinction between the actual and the possible'¹³¹.

¹²⁶ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP33S2, II74.

¹²⁷ Spinoza, "Epistola LIV: To Boxel: October 1674", IV251.

¹²⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (Amsterdam: Athenaeum, 1998), 5.634, Page 118.

¹²⁹ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP22S1, II74.

¹³⁰ Spinoza, "Tractatus de intellectus emendatione", §13, II8.

¹³¹ Sir Frederick Pollock, *Spinoza: His Life and Philosophy*, second edition (London: Duckworth, 1899), 155.

1.6: The Power of God and the Laws of Nature as Divine Decrees

That may seem the conclusion of this chapter, were it not for the fact that one key element in Spinoza's endorsement of strict necessitarianism has not received sufficient attention so far, namely his insistence that the power of God is disclosed in the necessity of all things. Everything which exists is necessary and is as such, for Spinoza, an expression of God's power:

“Quicquid existit, Dei naturam, sive essentiam certo, & determinate modo exprimit [...], hoc est [...] quicquid existit, Dei potentiam, quae omnium rerum cause est, certo, & determinate modo exprimit.”¹³² The divine power reveals itself in the necessity of all things and the order of nature. Steven Nadler explains this connection between God's power and necessity: “For Spinoza, there can be no greater manifestation of God's (Nature's) power than the [...] necessary course of nature itself.”¹³³ The necessity of all that is should be considered an expression of the divine power, as EIP35 reveals. This is why Spinoza, in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, describes the laws of nature as divine decrees. The laws which govern all that occurs in nature are nothing but the decrees of God, which cannot be altered and stem necessarily from God: “Leges naturae universales mera esse decreta Dei, quae ex necessitate & perfectione naturae divinae sequuntur.”¹³⁴

Spinoza's idea is that the power and perfection of God do not mean that God can do something contrary to the order of nature, but rather that everything which happens, happens in accordance with that order. So when Spinoza considers miracles, e.g. in his letters to Hugo Boxel or in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, he denies that the possibility of miracles should be admitted because of the supreme power and perfection of God. If anything were to happen in nature contrary to the laws of nature, then it would happen contrary to the divine nature, which cannot be. In that case God would act, absurdly for Spinoza, in opposition to his own essence:

*Si quid igitur in natura contingeret, quod ejus universalibus legibus repugnaret, id decreto, & intellectui, & naturae divinae necessario etiam repugnaret; aut si quis statueret, Deum aliquid contra leges naturae agere, is simul etiam cogeretur statuere, Deum contra suam naturam agere, quo nihil absurdius.*¹³⁵

The absurdity of this means that the power of God implies necessity: “Quicquid concipimus in Deo potestate esse, id necessario est.”¹³⁶ This power is expressed in the laws of nature, which are uniform, reign everywhere and lead to the necessity of all things which have existence.

¹³² Spinoza, “Ethica”, EIP36D, II77.

¹³³ Nadler, *Spinoza's Ethics*, 112.

¹³⁴ Spinoza, “Tractatus Theologico-Politicus”, Chapter VI, §9, III83.

¹³⁵ Ibidem.

¹³⁶ Spinoza, “Ethica”, EIP35, II77.

1.7: Conclusion

This chapter has collected the reasons Spinoza has for embracing a strict version of necessitarianism. First of all, vital in his proofs in support of the necessary existence of God is both the perfection of God and the principle that everything which exists or which does not exist must have a cause through which it exists or which prevents it from existing. The perfection of God means that all that is produced by God – and all things are produced by God – could not have been different in any manner whatsoever. God cannot refrain from doing what he does and producing things as he does produce them. In order for things to have been different, we should presuppose there to be a second God, or a second nature for God, neither of which is a genuine possibility for Spinoza. Secondly, the principle that all things must have a cause is tantamount to denying the possibility of contingency as the absence of causes. In conjunction with that denial, Spinoza denies both the possibility of contingent causation and the possibility of chance causes.

Causation for Spinoza is necessary, implying that the causality by means of which God causes all things is a necessary causation. Given that God cannot alter, the things he brings about cannot alter either. The necessity of God is transferred to his modes, although these modes are not necessary in the same manner entirely: they are necessary through their causes, whereas God's necessity pertains to his essence. So the combination of Spinoza's conception of causation and the causal relation between God and his modes entails strict necessitarianism. That is, however, a rather sophisticated ground Spinoza has for adhering to this view. A more mundane and straightforward reason is his monism itself: that there can be only one substance means that there can be no more than one set of modes, namely the actual modes of this substance. The necessity of the modes is forced upon Spinoza by his monism. If no other substance is possible, then no other modes are.

Moreover, Spinoza is convinced that the perfection of God also consists in him being almighty, i.e. omnipotent. The necessity of all things is an expression, for Spinoza, of the supreme power God possesses. The argument that God's power should mean that he could have produced another world is refuted by Spinoza on the ground that the idea of a different world does not support but undermine God's power. The true expression of the divine power is through necessity and especially the necessity of the laws of nature. God expresses his power in the laws of nature, which cannot be altered and which determine things to act and exist, including the finite modes, as a result of which nothing can undo the way God has determined it. The power of God thus leads to Spinoza's endorsement of strict necessitarianism. Now that we have seen the reasons Spinoza has for holding such an opinion, we come to the following stage of our enquiry, namely to see whether Spinoza can account for his strict necessitarianism. There is naturally a difference between declaring that all things are necessary, and being able to fully account for that claim by means of a certain metaphysics, or a system.

Chapter II: Challenges to Spinoza's Necessitarianism: The Necessity of the Finite Modes

2.1: Introduction

Ideally, Spinoza's strict necessitarianism, as we have encountered it in the first chapter, would be accounted for by his own metaphysics. It has become clear by now that Spinoza has several arguments which must lead to his endorsing strict necessitarianism, e.g. concerning the perfection and power of God, concerning God's necessary existence, the laws of nature, the relation between the infinite and the finite modes and so forth. The question this chapter will raise is: does Spinoza's metaphysics succeed in accounting for his strict necessitarianism? In this chapter, that question shall be answered in the negative. The main argument in support of this answer pertains to the aforementioned difficulty of grasping how finite modes are necessitated by springing from God. R.J. Delahunty sketches the problem:

With the derivation of the modes, whether finite or infinite, from the attributes of God, Spinoza has involved himself in consequences whose nature and import he scarcely begins to fathom [...]. He seems to want to assert that the modes follow from the attributes with strict, deductive necessity; but he havers on the question whether the logical necessity which attaches to God and the attributes does, or does not, attach derivatively to the modes.¹³⁷

So Delahunty thinks that the problem Spinoza meets with here is even broader than we have supposed, i.e. applies also to the derivation of the infinite modes. That is not something with which we agree: the infinite modes derive their infinity and necessity from the divine attributes (EIP23). The trouble is rather that Spinoza cannot fully account for the necessity of the collection of finite modes, or so it seems. That this is the core of the problem is what we will try to defend. In conjunction with this issue that is to be central in this chapter, we shall also consider some other related difficulties which Spinoza's strict necessitarianism encounters. There are three issues considered here which deserve attention, since they affect the connection between Spinoza's metaphysics and his strict necessitarianism:

1. The manner in which the modes relate to the substance;
2. The apparent 'contingency' of singular things;
3. The distinction between conditional and unconditional necessity.

After we have examined these troubles and argued that they prevent Spinoza's system from accounting for his strict necessitarianism, we will come to the central issue of the causal relation between God and the finite modes, i.e. the issue of the latter's necessarily stemming from God's nature.

¹³⁷ R.J. Delahunty, *Spinoza* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 164.

2.2: Substance and Modes: Inherence or Causal Dependence

The first of these puzzles is a preliminary to the issue of the necessary relation between God and his modes. Whether Spinoza can account for the necessity of the finite modes depends in part on how he conceives of the substance and its modes. That is a subject of much controversy among scholars. The central issue regarding the relation between substance and mode is that of whether these modes inhere in the substance, in the traditional Aristotelian sense, or whether they must be causally dependent upon the substance. This has its bearing upon Spinoza's strict necessitarianism, because it affects the manner in which the substance and the modes are necessarily connected. The question how things, such as human beings, can at all be modes of God influences the necessary manner in which the finite modes are said to spring from God: whether they inhere in God or are causally dependent upon him has consequences for the way in which Spinoza is able to account for the necessity of the finite modes.

Let us begin by looking into the inherence reading. John Carriero is of the opinion 'that Spinoza's conception of modal dependence is fundamentally the same as the traditional conception of inherence'¹³⁸, which means that Spinoza's application of the concepts of substance and mode is essentially indebted to Aristotelian philosophy.¹³⁹ The idea is that 'for Spinoza things are in God or substance in the sense of being properties or states or qualities of God. They inhere in God as in a subject or substratum'¹⁴⁰. Modes inhere in God and as a result everything which exists, is said to be in God. Martial Gueroult reads Spinoza in a quite similar vein: "Les choses sont immanentes à Dieu, leur immanence étant déduite comme une propriété nécessaire de l'essence de Dieu."¹⁴¹ The things are inhering in God, which in John Carriero's interpretation of Spinoza implies 'that when Spinoza claims that things other than God are modes of God he means roughly the same thing as a medieval Aristotelian would have meant by the thought that everything besides God is an accident of God'¹⁴². According to this inherence reading of Spinoza, the mere fact that Spinoza abandoned the traditional usage of the notion of an accident and preferred that of a mode is not to be read as a rejection of the Aristotelian notion of inherence. Spinoza might have changed the terms and have decided to follow Descartes in choosing mode instead of accident, but ultimately his application of the concept of a mode coincides with the Aristotelian use of accidents and must be understood as inherence.

¹³⁸ Carriero, "On The Relationship between Mode and Substance in Spinoza's Metaphysics" 252.

¹³⁹ Ibidem, 258.

¹⁴⁰ Nadler, "'Whatever is, is in God'", 54.

¹⁴¹ Gueroult, *Spinoza: Dieu: Ethique I*, 222.

¹⁴² Carriero, "On The Relationship between Mode and Substance in Spinoza's Metaphysics", 273.

And it is indeed quite visible that there are similarities between Spinoza's conception of substance and mode and the Aristotelian manner of conceiving of that relation. Valterri Viljanen's description for instance of the Aristotelian conception reveals these similarities:

In the Aristotelian tradition, an accident is an entity that cannot exist on its own but needs something (ultimately a substance) to serve as a subject in which it exists; accidents are thus said to inhere in subjects.¹⁴³

Recall that Spinoza sees a mode as an affection of substance which has no independent existence, which is devoid of existence through its essence, something which applies to the substance, to God only: the mode is dependent upon God for its existence, which is precisely what the Aristotelian tradition says with regard to the role of accidents. Consequently, Viljanen is of the opinion that Spinoza's conception does amount to an Aristotelian one and should thus be understood as one of inherence:

When Spinoza says that substances are in themselves whereas modes are in another, he is thus respecting the traditional way of conceiving things and their properties: there are those things, namely substances, that do not exist in anything else but are ontologically self-supporting; and there are those things, namely modes or modifications – Spinoza's gloss for accidents – that exist in, or inhere in, something, namely substances.¹⁴⁴

Yitzhak Melamed reaches the same conclusion that the modes inhere in the substance¹⁴⁵, which means for Melamed that modes are properties of God, which can be predicated of him.¹⁴⁶ Modes are thus said to be in God, something which Spinoza himself wrote to Oldenburg in Epistola LXIII. Several major difficulties which this interpretation of Spinoza encountered were first noted by Pierre Bayle and return in Edwin Curley's objections to the inherence reading. If the modes inhere in God, then God must be all these modes, which entails that God could be a murderer, a drunkard, a lunatic. And it also entails that God, contrary to what Spinoza wants to maintain, can be mutable, instead of the immutability which is said to pertain to God.¹⁴⁷ So the closeness which the inherence reading envisages between God and God's modes seemingly leads to the modes not being entirely – 'toto genere' – different from God: God now is all of his modes.

¹⁴³ Valterri Viljanen, "Spinoza's Ontology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, edited by Don Garrett (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 57.

¹⁴⁴ Viljanen, "Spinoza's Ontology", 59.

¹⁴⁵ Yitzhak Y. Melamed, "Spinoza's Metaphysics of Substance: The Substance-Mode Relation as a Relation of Inherence and Predication," in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol.78, No.1 (2009), 65.

¹⁴⁶ Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics: Substance*, 57.

¹⁴⁷ Curley, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 12 – 13.

It is therefore doubtful whether Melamed and others who propose an inherence reading can avoid that God becomes like his modes, e.g. like the drunkard or, to use John Carriero's example, like Mount Rushmore.¹⁴⁸ That implication has, among other things, led Edwin Curley to reject such an inherence reading and to endorse a reading of Spinoza which says 'that substance, for Spinoza, is what is causally self-sufficient and that the relation of mode to substance is one of causal dependence, not one of inherence in a subject'¹⁴⁹. Inherence means, according to Curley, that the substance becomes too much like its modes, which is a plausible objection given that it is important for Spinoza to stress the considerable ontological difference between substance and mode: substance and mode are not the same things. The modes may be affections of the substance, but that does not entail ontological similarity: the ontological difference must be retained.

The inherence reading does suggest a level of intimacy between substance and modes which is at odds with Spinoza's repeated insistence that the finite modes do not stem directly from God and that God is in a sense the remote cause of these modes. Jonathan Bennett e.g. understands the relation of inherence as implying that a mode depends on the substance like a blush depends on the human face.¹⁵⁰ The closeness this suggest between substance and modes is something Spinoza does not want to ascribe to the finite modes: only infinite modes spring directly from the divine attributes and are close to God. It is not without reason that Spinoza says that a finite mode does not stem directly from the attributes. There must be some distance between God and finite modes, a distance which, or to it appears, is absent if the mode inheres in the substance as the blush does in the face.

Another problem for the inherence reading is that Spinoza's doubt with regard to the notion of accidents, to which we alluded in the introduction of this chapter, might be less easy to refute than those subscribing to the inherence reading of the relationship between the substance and the modes are inclined to think. Spinoza explains in his *Cogitata Metaphysica* why he divides entities into substance and mode, not into substance and accident: "Ens dividi in Substantiam, & Modum; non verò in Substantiam, & Accidens: nam Accidens nihil est praeter modum cogitandi."¹⁵¹ He considers accidents to be nothing more than a 'modum cogitandi', whereas the modes are more than simply ways of thinking. The Aristotelian notion of an accident did not suffice for Spinoza and that threatens the correctness of the inherence reading. Because if Spinoza wanted his modes to be understood in the traditional Aristotelian way, then why not also speak of accidents?

¹⁴⁸ Carriero, "On The Relationship between Mode and Substance", 245.

¹⁴⁹ Edwin Curley, "On Bennett's Interpretation of Spinoza's Monism," in *God and Nature: Spinoza's Metaphysics: Papers presented at The First Jerusalem Conference (Ethica I)*, edited by Yirmiyahu Yovel (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 37.

¹⁵⁰ Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, 61.

¹⁵¹ Spinoza, "Cogitata Metaphysica", Part One, Chapter I, I236.

These objections drive us into the arms of Edwin Curley's influential causal dependence reading of the relation between substance and modes,¹⁵² which says that 'when Spinoza wants to characterize the relation between substance and mode [...] he says that God is the cause of the things that are in him, that he has produced them or determined them, or that they *follow* from him'¹⁵³. This causal dependence reading need not in itself affect Spinoza's strict necessitarianism: Spinoza again and again says that God causes all things and that their necessity derives from this source. Curley's emphasis on God's causality is not a problem: "Deum enim rerum omnium causam immanentem, ut ajunt, non verò transeuntem statuo. Omnia, inquam, in Deo esse, & in Deo moveri."¹⁵⁴ All things are caused by God and in that way Spinoza may want us to understand that things are in God.

It is, moreover, perfectly sound to say that the causal relation between God and the modes is of central importance to Spinoza's thought. Henri Krop too ascertains that the dependence of modes on their substance is to a considerable extent causal: God is the necessitating cause of the essence and existence of all his modes, as a result of which they are necessary.¹⁵⁵ But Curley holds that the inherence reading of Spinoza cannot account for the strong causal relation between God and the modes, and asks: "How can the relation of inherence which a property has to its subject be anything like the relation an effect has to its cause?"¹⁵⁶ Inherence and causality seem mutually exclusive: if a thing inheres in God, how then can God also be its cause? God seemingly cannot be the cause of something he already is, viz. of his properties. The notion of inherence is, or so it appears, at odds with Spinoza's repeated insistence that things are and must be caused by God.

So it looks as if God primarily has a causal role to fulfil, rather than the role of some kind of substratum in which the modes inhere. The advantage of this reading is that it is indeed true that Spinoza conceives of God as the cause of all things. Why should this then represent a challenge to Spinoza's strict necessitarianism? Modes are causally dependent upon God and, one could say, thus necessitated by him. The problem involved is that the causal dependence reading sees the finite modes as not stemming absolutely from God's attributes but only conditionally, i.e. not entirely necessarily, which opens up the possibility of there being other collections of finite modes.¹⁵⁷ Curley admits the necessity of the infinite modes, but emphasises that 'the finite modes follow from God's attributes [...], but do not follow from God's nature absolutely, only conditionally'¹⁵⁸ and thus not with full necessity.

¹⁵² Curley, *Spinoza's Metaphysics: An Essay in Interpretation*, 40.

¹⁵³ *Ibidem*, 45.

¹⁵⁴ Spinoza, "Epistola LXXIII", IV307.

¹⁵⁵ Krop, "Modus," in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Spinoza*, 261.

¹⁵⁶ Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method*, 36.

¹⁵⁷ Curley and Walski, "Spinoza's Necessitarianism Reconsidered," 241.

¹⁵⁸ Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method*, 48.

Accepting the causal dependence reading rather than the inherence reading thus means that we must accept that Spinoza has difficulty accounting for his strict necessitarianism, because the dependence of the finite modes on the substance is only conditional: they do not follow directly from God's attributes. One element of Spinoza's difficulties here, nonetheless, has not been sufficiently stressed. Curley insists that we should not only understand the connection between substance and mode differently than the inherence reading does, but also that 'Spinoza's well-known identification of God with Nature should be read as an identification of God with *natura naturans*, i.e., as an identification of substance with its attributes'¹⁵⁹. Remember that for Spinoza *natura naturans* means active nature, i.e. God and his attributes, and that *natura naturata* means passive nature, i.e. the infinite and the finite modes.¹⁶⁰ That God is not nature as a whole but only *natura naturans* entails for Curley that the strict necessity which applies to God does not apply to his finite modes, i.e. to the finite parts of *natura naturata*.

The challenge Spinoza's strict necessitarianism now faces is: how to ensure that modes are causally dependent upon God, which they must be, given that Spinoza never refrains from asserting that God is the immanent cause of all things, and at the same time prevent the unwelcome consequence of Curley's reading, namely that these finite modes are not fully necessary? God is now, in Curley's interpretation, not all the modes, but merely the order which is in the modes, namely the order ensured by, as we saw in section 1.6, the laws of nature: "He [i.e. Spinoza] identified God with Nature, not conceived as the totality of things, but conceived as the most general principles of order exemplified by things."¹⁶¹ The finite modes themselves have thereby lost their complete necessity and even their inherence in God. That means trouble for Spinoza's strict necessitarianism, because that position requires that the actual finite modes are the only possible ones.

The challenge is hence that the causal dependence interpretation strips the whole collection of finite modes of its full necessity. In this reading only God himself and his attributes are wholly necessary; the finite modes could have been different, contrary to strict necessitarianism. It is important to emphasise that Curley's reading does retain the necessity of the infinite modes. So the problem envisaged by Delahunty, viz. that which considered the whole necessary derivation of the modes to be a problem, is not embraced by Curley's causal dependence reading. This causal dependence reading does acknowledge the full necessity of the laws of nature and the necessity of the infinite modes. This also explains what it means to say that the finite modes are not the only possible ones: the laws of nature can bring about particular finite modes but can also bring about others. The necessity of the laws of nature does not entail the necessity of one set of finite modes.

¹⁵⁹ Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method*, 37.

¹⁶⁰ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP29S, II71.

¹⁶¹ Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method*, 42.

2.3: The Apparent Contingency of Singular Things

And there is more trouble ahead for Spinoza's necessitarianism from within his own system. A difficulty which is connected to that which follows from the causal dependence reading is that of the apparent contingency of singular things. Spinoza is adamant that finite modes, singular things have no existence through their essence. This means that, contrary to what we saw in chapter one, we could hold that their existence is not as necessary as the existence of God. Whereas it is impossible for God not to exist given his essence, it is possible for singular things, finite modes not to exist on the basis of their respective essences. That is not in and by itself worrisome, were it not for the fact that Spinoza explicitly uses the word 'contingent' when referring to these singular things, thereby implying that their being is not as strictly necessary as his strong necessitarianism would seem to imply: "Res singulares voco contingentes, quatenus, dum ad earum solam essentiam attendimus, nihil invenimus, quod earum existentiam necessario ponat, vel quod ipsam necessario secludat."¹⁶²

Spinoza separates those things that are necessary as a result of their essence from those that are not. The gap between these things seems to disappear when we consider that the necessity of singular things is said to depend upon the causality of God. But does that suffice for the strong necessity Spinoza wants to ascribe to singular things? Spinoza himself, apart from using the word 'contingent' to refer to them, uses the word 'possible', when describing these entities: "Quod ens dividendum sit in ens, quod suâ naturâ necessariô existit, sive cujus essentia involvit existentiam [i.e. Deus], & in ens, cujus essentia non involvit existentiam, nisi possibilem."¹⁶³

The subtle difference here, and the difference which makes room for some genuine contingency – other than the contingency Spinoza describes as a weakness of the human mind – is that whereas the necessity of God means that he cannot not exist, the necessity of the finite modes is of a weaker kind, allowing for the non-existence of certain singular things. Spinoza e.g. applies this to the existence of humans: "Hominis essentia non involvit necessariam existentiam, hoc est, ex naturae ordine, tam fieri potest, ut hic, & ille homo existat, quam ut non existat."¹⁶⁴ The absolute necessity Spinoza wanted to transfer to all the modes now becomes something which is not strictly transmitted to them. The order of nature does not necessitate the existence of a human being, i.e. it seems 'that the existence of particular men is not necessary'¹⁶⁵. Note that this is even stronger than saying that the essence of humans does not include existence: neither does the order of nature do so. That order apparently allows for the modes to be different.

¹⁶² Spinoza, "Ethica", EIIDef3, II209.

¹⁶³ Spinoza, "Cogitata Metaphysica", Part One, Chapter One, I236.

¹⁶⁴ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIIAI, II85.

¹⁶⁵ Garrett, "Spinoza's Necessitarianism", 199.

Thus the necessity of the finite modes suddenly becomes questionable. At least, when we consider that the necessity of God is of a much stronger kind than the necessity of the finite modes. This is corroborated by a distinction Spinoza makes in the *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione* between the notions of the impossible, the necessary and the possible. He writes:

*Rem impossibilem voco, cujus natura implicat contradictionem, ut ea existat; necessariam, cujus natura implicat contradictionem, ut ea non existat; possibilem, cujus quidem existentia, ipsa sua natura, non implicat contradictionem, ut existat aut non existat.*¹⁶⁶

So Spinoza develops a certain ontological hierarchy, in which the necessity of God himself is said to amount to something which is one degree stronger than the causal necessity of the modes. God's existence is necessary due to his essence, which cannot be said of the modes. H.H. Joachim explains:

*A thing is necessary, if it is self-contradictory to conceive it as non-existent. God, e.g., is a necessary thing, since non-existence is incompatible with His essence, i.e. by His very nature He must exist.*¹⁶⁷

Things are, however, possible if their essence does not involve existence and their existence is hence, where their essence is concerned, contingent. That seemingly entails a different, and perhaps weaker, sort of necessity:

*A thing is possible, if its essence, considered alone and as such, neither necessarily involves, nor necessarily excludes, its existence. A possible thing, therefore, is such, that so far as its own essential nature is considered, each and all of the incidents, in which the thing's existence is [...] unrolled are purely contingent.*¹⁶⁸

It seems that the lower orders in this ontological hierarchy, namely the modes which do not exist through their essences, are not as necessary as God himself. Yirmiyahu Yovel asserts that 'to conceive of an actual particular as non-existing is perfectly compatible with the thing's own essence'¹⁶⁹, which for Yovel means that the modes have contingency in the sense that their existence – and necessity – is a dependent existence and necessity. This dependent existence is less necessary, because it does not entail that a particular mode must exist: it is equally possible for such a mode not to be.

¹⁶⁶ Spinoza, "Tractatus de intellectus emendatione," in *Opera II*, §53, II19/20.

¹⁶⁷ H.H. Joachim, *Spinoza's Tractatus de intellectus emendatione: A Commentary*, edited by Sir David Ross and Elizabeth Joachim (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 115.

¹⁶⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁶⁹ Yirmiyahu Yovel, "The Infinite Mode and Natural Laws in Spinoza," in *God and Nature: Spinoza's Metaphysics: Papers presented at The First Jerusalem Conference (Ethica I)*, edited by Yirmiyahu Yovel (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 86.

It is consequently difficult for Spinoza to insist that the necessity by which God exists, i.e. the necessity which stems from his essence, is similar to the mere dependent necessity by which the finite modes are said to exist. Can the strong, absolute necessity Spinoza ascribes to God be transferred to all his modes? When Spinoza describes the necessity of the modes, he speaks, at least in the *Cogitata Metaphysica*, of this necessity coming about through the divine decree.¹⁷⁰ Thereby he means the laws of nature. As we saw, he himself seemingly allows that these laws of nature do not cause one possible world but that it is, from the perspective of the laws, possible for a human being to exist and not to exist. One is hence entitled to ask: do things in fact follow with the same strong necessity from the divine decree, the order of nature as God himself exists necessarily through his essence?

Edwin Curley has denied this and argued that it is Spinoza's own position that the necessity of the finite modes is not as strong as that of God, in spite of the insistence of Spinoza in many of his works and letters that all is necessary and must be so. Curley holds that particular features of the universe are not necessary: "Considered in themselves, apart from the causes which determine them to be what they are, these particular features of the universe are contingent, could have been otherwise."¹⁷¹ For Curley 'Spinoza certainly takes a kind of contingency to be axiomatic'¹⁷². It seems that Spinoza wants to acknowledge that there are some things whose necessity means that it is impossible for them not to exist and that there are some things – the finite modes – of which the necessity is not of such a kind that it is impossible for these things not to exist: the order of nature allows for them to be and not to be, as is the case with the existence of humans.

So it is difficult to perceive how the causes which bring about the existence of e.g. members of the human species are as strictly necessary as something that is *causa sui* is. Spinoza on the one hand wants to maintain that all things which come into existence through external causes are as necessary as God and on the other hand wants to hold that nothing other than God can be necessary on the basis of its essence. There seems, as a result, to be contingency when we consider the finite modes, e.g. members of the human species. It looks as if Spinoza admits that 'the existence of this or that human being is contingent'¹⁷³. There could, theoretically, be other modes than the ones which do in point of fact exist, although these finite modes have necessary causes. However, there is not one collection of finite modes which has in itself an essential necessity on the basis of which one cannot conceive of it as non-existing. The world can be inhabited by humans and giraffes, but God could also comprise other finite modes than these modes, as a result of which they have a measure of contingency.

¹⁷⁰ Spinoza, "Cogitata Metaphysica", Part One, Chapter III, I240.

¹⁷¹ Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method*, 49.

¹⁷² *Ibidem*.

¹⁷³ Perler, "Problem of Necessitarianism", 59.

2.4: Conditional and Unconditional or Absolute and Relative Necessity

This difficulty ties in, or is closely related to, that of the distinction between conditional and unconditional necessity. We may recall that Spinoza thinks that a thing can be necessary in two different ways, namely either through its essence or through causes, the first being the necessity of God, the second being the necessity of modes.¹⁷⁴ In the first chapter, it seemed that this does not affect Spinoza's strict necessitarianism. However, Edwin Curley and Gregory Walski are of the opinion that the necessity of the modes, that is the conditional necessity of the modes, is and must be weaker than the absolute necessity of God, the necessity through his essence or nature:

Whatever follows unconditionally from something which is absolutely necessary (i.e. necessary by reason of its essence) is itself absolutely necessary; but if something follows only conditionally from something which is absolutely necessary, then it is not itself absolute necessary but only conditionally necessary (i.e. necessary by reason of its cause).¹⁷⁵

Curley and Walski are opposed to the idea that the absolute necessity of God could be transferred to his modes. The conditional necessity of these modes, i.e. the necessity by virtue of their causes, cannot be as strong as the necessity of God himself. Note that this depends upon the causal dependence reading: if we embrace that reading and thus admit that God is only *natura naturans*, then the relation between God and his modes is much less intimate – God is not his modes – and thus the necessity of these modes is not such that they are the only possible modes, which Spinoza's strict necessitarianism suggests. Spinoza is now unable to explain why the finite modes, which are merely causally dependent upon God, are as necessary as God. The relation of causal dependence does not suffice to guarantee the absolute necessity of the modes, but only their conditional necessity.

This conditional necessity is the necessity as expressed in EIP28: each finite mode is determined by another finite mode to be and to act. To that degree the finite modes are necessary. But the whole collection of finite modes could, given that they are only conditionally necessary, have been different. Spinoza does not, as Bennett states, address the issue of their collective necessity.¹⁷⁶ Thus the conditional necessity appears to be unable to account for the strict necessitarianism which pertains to the finite modes. When Spinoza distinguishes the necessity of *natura naturans* – God and the attributes – from the necessity of *natura naturata*, the modes, and says that the latter are only, as he does according to Curley, causally dependent upon the substance, he does thereby acknowledge that these modes, most notably the finite modes, are not as absolutely necessary as God and his attributes.

¹⁷⁴ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP33S1, II74.

¹⁷⁵ Curley and Walski, "Spinoza's Necessitarianism Reconsidered", 246.

¹⁷⁶ Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, 117/118.

Curley thus insists that ‘to say that the reason [or cause] of a thing lies outside its nature [...] is equivalent to saying that the proposition asserting its existence is not absolutely, but only relatively necessary’¹⁷⁷. Dependent necessity, it could be argued, must of necessity be of a weaker kind than independent necessity. If the necessity of the modes, namely the conditional or relative necessity, has the same strength and force as the absolute necessity of God, then that might be deemed as affecting the plausibility of the distinction all together. None of the modes can apparently reach the necessity by means of which God exists. It is important to stress that the issue for us is not whether Spinoza wants these two kinds of necessity to be equally strong, because it seems quite evident that for Spinoza, as Michael V. Griffin e.g. asserts, these forms of necessity must be equally strong.¹⁷⁸ The issue is rather whether he could in point of fact account for that view.

Essential in this regard is the assertion, mentioned in 1.5, in the *Cogitata Metaphysica* that when we see that all things are necessary we will understand that their necessity is of a mathematical kind.¹⁷⁹ And that is something which Spinoza may wish to say but perhaps cannot fully corroborate. The second kind of necessity does not seem to amount to the mathematical necessity which Spinoza wants it to amount to. Charles Huenemann writes that the necessity of God, the substance is absolute – i.e. is based on its essence and hence independent – and that the necessity of all the modes is merely relative: none of the modes has by itself any necessity, given that their existence is dependent on God and in a different sense also, as EIP28 reveals, dependent upon other equally contingent modes.¹⁸⁰

But can such dependent existence be as necessary as independent existence? The necessity Spinoza attaches to God is quite equal to the necessity of mathematical propositions, such as $2+2=4$. The necessity of all that springs from God is of a different kind. Whereas we cannot hold that God does not exist or that the aforementioned mathematical proposition is untrue, we can hold that human beings need not have existed, if we consider the definition of a person or its essence alone. The first kind of necessity is a necessity in which something is considered impossible: it is impossible for God not to exist and therefore we conclude that he exists. The second kind of necessity is not one in which things are impossible to that extent: things come about necessarily through causes, but it is not true that their not being is equally impossible as God’s non-existence: the non-existence of a particular mode is perfectly possible. So the two kinds of necessity are not equally strong, as Spinoza’s strict necessitarianism certainly requires.

¹⁷⁷ Curley, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics*, 92.

¹⁷⁸ Michael V. Griffin, “Necessitarianism in Spinoza and Leibniz,” in *Leibniz, God and Necessity* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012), 90.

¹⁷⁹ Spinoza, “*Cogitata Metaphysica*”, Part Two, Chapter IX, I266.

¹⁸⁰ Charles Huenemann, “The Necessity of Finite Modes and Geometrical Containment in Spinoza’s *Metaphysics*,” in *New Essays on the Rationalists*, edited by Charles Huenemann (New York: Oxford UP USA, 1999), 226.

2.5: Finite Modes Require Finite Causes Ad Infinitum

However difficult a challenge that is for Spinoza, the greatest danger to Spinoza's necessitarianism is, as the introduction already argued, the causal relation between the finite modes and God, which has to ground his strict necessitarianism. Spinoza adheres to the view that the finite can only be caused by the finite, i.e. that finite modes require other finite modes as their causes, as EIP28 reveals¹⁸¹ and as Spinoza repeats in EIIP31D¹⁸². That finite modes are caused by each other and not directly by God gives way to the question of whether there could be other finite modes, given that the finite causes the finite and that God is not their cause absolutely. Don Garrett explains that this could entail a different set of finite modes than the one which currently exists.¹⁸³ Finite modes appear to be only necessary with respect to each other and not with respect to the divine cause, which is needed to ensure their absolute necessity and hence Spinoza's strict necessitarianism. Each finite mode is caused and necessitated by another finite mode, but the collection of modes seems not to be necessitated by God.

After all, the ontological status of these finite modes differs from that of the infinite modes, which stem directly from the divine attributes. These divine attributes can, Spinoza maintains, only cause infinite things: "Quod finitum est et determinatam habet existentiam, ab absoluta natura alicujus Dei attributi produci non potuit; quicquid enim ex absoluta natura alicujus Dei attributi sequitur, id infinitum et aeternum est."¹⁸⁴ The finite modes must be the result of a finite modification of God or the attributes, rather than of the attributes themselves: "Debit [...] sequi vel ad existendum et operandum determinari a Deo vel aliquo ejus attributo, quatenus modificatum est modificatione, quae finita est et determinatam habet existentiam."¹⁸⁵ That such a finite modification is required contradicts Genevieve Lloyd's solution that 'the relation of dependence between finite modes and substance is mediated through the infinite modes'¹⁸⁶. The infinite modes cannot mediate between God and his finite modes, something which Spinoza did suggest in his *Short Treatise*.¹⁸⁷ The finite must be caused by the finite – which as Charles Huenemann writes, 'places each finite mode at an infinite distance [...] from God's nature'¹⁸⁸ – and at the same time be dependent upon the infinite God. That turns the relation between infinite and finite in Spinoza into some kind of a muddle. How can the finite modes follow necessarily from the nature of God, as they must do? And in what manner can, in Spinoza's thought, God have finite modes at all and have them necessarily?

¹⁸¹ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP28, II69.

¹⁸² Spinoza, "Ethica", EIIP31D, II115.

¹⁸³ Garrett, "Spinoza's Necessitarianism", 192.

¹⁸⁴ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP28D.

¹⁸⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁸⁶ Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Ethics*, 42.

¹⁸⁷ Spinoza, *Short Treatise*, Second Part, Chapter V, §5, I62, 105.

¹⁸⁸ Huenemann, "Necessity of Finite Modes", 225.

It seems that the finite modes must have other finite modes as their causes, meaning also that their necessity is different from the necessity of the infinite modes, and at the same time they must be caused by the infinite substance. That Spinoza wants to conceive of finite causation as being free from direct interference of e.g. infinite modes is corroborated by E2P9 where Spinoza invokes the view that an idea of finite or particular things has God as cause through another idea of certain finite things:

*Idea rei singularis actu existentis Deum pro causa habet, non quatenus infinitus est, sed quatenus alia rei singularis actu existentis idea affectus consideratur, cujus etiam Deus est causa, quatenus alia tertia affectus est, et sic in infinitum.*¹⁸⁹

So the finite, for Spinoza, can be causally related only to the finite: this is true of finite modes and equally of ideas of finite modes, or so it seems. This is related to Spinoza's principle of causal similarity (EIP3), viz. that things which have nothing in common cannot be cause and effect of each other, implying cause and effect must have similarities so as to be cause and effect:

*Quae res nihil commune inter se habent, earum una alterius causa esse non potest.*¹⁹⁰

How now can the infinite, i.e. God, be the cause of these finite modes and thus transfer his necessity to these modes? The finite modes themselves could of course be necessary through other finite modes (EIP28). That is the causal necessity which they possess. However, it is God who has to ensure that the whole series of finite modes is necessary. That this collection of finite modes is the only possible collection has to do with him.¹⁹¹ The divine perfection entails, for Spinoza, that God could not have produced or created a different world. But is it not possible for there to have been different finite modes if the finite modes are distant from God and not even directly caused by him? We may recall that Spinoza himself deems God the remote cause of the finite modes or singular things, whereas he is the direct cause of the infinite modes.¹⁹² This leads to trouble, because 'if anything is clear in Spinoza it is that the one substance is supposed to be the cause of all of its modes, both finite and infinite'¹⁹³. God seems now to be removed from his finite modes to such an extent that he cannot guarantee their necessary existence. The link between the infinite and the finite is apparently not strong enough to be able to carry the weight of Spinoza's strict necessitarianism. The finite must be necessitated by God, and it is uncertain, we have learned, whether Spinoza can explain how it is that the substance has finite modes and that they are entirely necessitated by it.

¹⁸⁹ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIIP8, II91/II92

¹⁹⁰ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP3, II47.

¹⁹¹ Garrett, "Spinoza's Necessitarianism", 197.

¹⁹² Spinoza, "Short Treatise", Part One, Chapter IV, §1, 81.

¹⁹³ Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method*, 36.

Emilia Giancotti justly remarks that ‘a great problem in Spinozism [by which she means: Spinoza’s system] seems to be the lack of the “deduction” of the finite from the infinite’¹⁹⁴. It becomes doubtful whether the finite can at all stem from the infinite and be necessitated by it. Michael V. Griffin points out that ‘in Spinoza’s system none of the things that he explicitly recognises as absolutely necessary – God, God’s attributes or God’s infinite modes – by themselves seem to entail the existence of any finite mode’¹⁹⁵. The existence of the finite – and hence the necessity of the finite modes – seems not to be necessitated by the main features of Spinoza’s metaphysics: the substance, the attributes and the infinite modes. Steven Nadler has provided a lucid description of the problem involved, which is that, given the infinity and eternity of the divine attributes, all things that God, i.e. his attributes, causes must also be infinite and eternal, as a result of which nothing finite can come to exist and the necessity of the finite modes is a riddle.¹⁹⁶

Yitzhak Y. Melamed gives a sketch of this difficulty based on three propositions. To summarise: EIP21 says that all the modes stemming directly from God’s attributes have an infinite character; EIP22 insists that only infinite modes can stem from infinite modes, and EIP28 demonstrates that finite modes are to be caused by other finite modes.¹⁹⁷ So how does God’s necessitating the finite modes takes place? This difficulty is increased by Spinoza’s insistence, for example in the *Short Treatise*,¹⁹⁸ that God is only the remote cause of the finite modes and not the direct cause. The direct causal connection between the infinite God and the finite modes seems to be missing. All things which are caused by God in such a manner must have the infinity which God himself has, i.e. must be as infinite as their cause.

However, Spinoza says in the *Ethics* that God cannot be the remote cause of finite modes if we understand remote cause to mean a cause which is not at all connected to its effects: “Per causam remotam talem intelligimus, quae cum effectu nullo modo conjuncta est.”¹⁹⁹ Nonetheless, if we understand the notion of a remote cause somewhat less strictly, then Spinoza’s view that the finite modes do not stem directly from God attaches some remoteness to God’s causality. The manner in which the infinite modes are caused by God seems wholly different from the manner in which the finite modes are caused, as a result of which the finite modes are to such an extent isolated from their alleged cause, God, that Spinoza has difficulty in accounting for their necessity. Spinoza wants the finite modes to spring from God and do so necessarily, but he also wants, in a sense, God to be remote from them.

¹⁹⁴ Emilia Giancotti, “On the Problem of Infinite Modes,” in *God and Nature: Spinoza’s Metaphysics: Papers presented at The First Jerusalem Conference (Ethica I)*, 97.

¹⁹⁵ Griffin, “Necessitarianism in Spinoza and Leibniz”, 85

¹⁹⁶ Nadler, *Spinoza’s Ethics*, 102.

¹⁹⁷ Melamed, “Spinoza’s Metaphysics of Substance”, 33.

¹⁹⁸ Spinoza, “Short Treatise”, Part One, Second Dialogue, I31.

¹⁹⁹ Spinoza, “Ethica”, EIP28S, II70.

This remoteness is underlined by Christopher Martin, who states that ‘finite modes [...] are features of substance that follow only from other finite modes; they follow from the divine nature only in the sense that the finite modes that they follow from are themselves expressions of the divine nature’²⁰⁰. For Christopher Martin, this breaks the necessary causal chain between God and his finite modes. According to Martin ‘God is the cause of finite modes only in the sense that the finite modes that cause other finite modes are themselves expressions of God’s nature’²⁰¹. This seemingly turns it into a mystery how these finite modes could at all come about. Hence we are left with a pressing question: where is the connection between finite and infinite to be found – the connection which should ground Spinoza’s necessitarianism with regard to finite modes? What is at stake here is Spinoza’s principle of the transfer of necessity²⁰² from God to all that he produces, to all his modes, not only the infinite modes but also the finite.

It could be argued that finite modes are necessary simply by means of their being God’s modes. If we presuppose the existence of the finite modes, then we could easily say: they are necessary because they are modes of God. And that is precisely the problem: if Spinoza’s metaphysics is to account for the necessity of the finite modes, he must be able to account for that existence. It does not suffice to say that the finite modes simply are. As a result, the question remains: how is the finite able to spring necessarily from the infinite? How come that we humans, as finite beings, walk here, perceive the beauty of the earth, if God as substance, i.e. as the cause of our essence and existence, is infinite and cannot, directly, produce any finitude? The principle of necessary causation, as Spinoza envisages it, collides with his principle of causal likeness or causal similarity, i.e. that cause and effect must be alike and not different if they are to be cause and effect at all.

It should be admitted that there is one letter in which Spinoza says that singular things differ from their causes, thereby making a causal connection between the infinite, e.g. God’s infinite modes, and the finite possible again: “Omnia singularia, praeter illa, quae à suis similibus producuntur, differant à suis causis, tam essentiâ, quàm existentiâ.”²⁰³ Even if this represented his true stance – which seems unlikely when we consider the emphatic assertion in the *Ethics* that the finite is caused by the finite and that finite modes do not stem directly from God’s attributes – the problem remains of accounting for the connection between God and finite modes collectively. This difficult question is therefore not as yet resolved: “How might Spinoza intelligibly maintain that the totality of finite modes follows from the absolute nature of God's attributes whereas the individual members of that totality do not?”²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ Martin, “A New Challenge to the Necessitarian Reading of Spinoza”, 27.

²⁰¹ Ibidem, 51.

²⁰² Yovel, “The Infinite Mode and Natural Laws in Spinoza”, 86/87.

²⁰³ Spinoza, “Epistola LXIV: To Schuller: 29.7.1675”, IV278.

²⁰⁴ Huenemann, “The Necessity of Finite Modes”, 230.

2.6: Conclusion

The question we endeavoured to answer was whether Spinoza's metaphysics succeeds in accounting for his strict necessitarianism. We have seen that Spinoza faces several difficulties in this regard, beginning with the relation between the modes and the substance. If we endorse Curley's causal dependence reading – and the difficulties related to the inherence reading did force us to do so in this chapter – then Spinoza's strict necessitarianism is in danger. We do not want to say that God is himself the modes – the ontological difference between God and his modes prevents us from doing so – and thus we embrace a causal dependence reading which entails a considerable gap between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, thereby threatening the necessity of the finite modes. The difficulties concerning the inherence reading condemned us to this causal dependence reading.

Matters get even worse when we consider Spinoza's view that from the point of their essence finite modes are not necessary but contingent. This seems to affect his understanding of the notion of necessity and especially his insistence that the modes must be as necessary as the substance. They apparently cannot have that necessity. Whereas it is impossible to consider God as non-existing, it is possible to consider human beings in such a manner, which points at a difference in necessity between the substance and its modes. This becomes even more poignant with regard to the distinction Spinoza envisages between absolute or unconditional and relative or conditional necessity. The first kind of necessity amount to impossibility, whereas the second kind of necessity, or so it seems, does not. That these two sorts of necessity are of equal strength, which strict necessitarianism requires, is not at all evident and can with some justification be doubted.

This also means that we can question Spinoza's comparison of the second kind of necessity, i.e. causal necessity, to the necessity we find in mathematics: the causal necessity of the prophet Josiah's action is said to be as necessary as mathematical propositions can be, but it is questionable whether he can maintain that, granted that such necessity only pertains to God, who exists through his own essence and cannot not exist. Even more troubling is that this chapter has left us with the question of how the finite modes can at all stem from the divine nature, which they must in order to sustain Spinoza's monism, and in conjunction with his monism his strict necessitarianism. If the finite modes stem only indirectly from the divine attributes, and moreover can only be caused by other finites, then the causal relation between God and the finite modes becomes rather mysterious. It seems that Spinoza, on the one hand, wants these modes to follow with strong necessity from the divine nature, and on the other hand is keen to insist that the finite is not a direct expression of the divine attributes. In what manner the necessity of the finite modes can be guaranteed by the way in which Spinoza conceives of the relation between them and God is unclear. The finite and its necessity have hence become quite a mystery in Spinoza.

Chapter 3: Spinoza's Strict Necessitarianism Vindicated: Meeting the Challenges

3.1: Introduction

Resolving that mystery and the other difficulties that Spinoza's strict necessitarianism meets from within his own metaphysics is the aim of the current chapter. Here our goal is to answer the research question, namely whether Spinoza's metaphysics succeeds in accounting for his strict necessitarianism, in the affirmative, i.e. by saying that Spinoza's metaphysics can account for this strict necessitarianism. A key role in this regard, something for which we are indebted to Edwin Curley, is attached to Spinoza's conception of laws of nature; laws which are said to guarantee the eternal order of the world of finite things, of which humans form a part:

*Natura non legibus humanae rationis, quae non nisi hominum verum utile et conservationem intendunt, continetur, sed infinitis aliis, quae totius naturae, cujus homo particula est, aeternum ordinem respiciunt, ex cujus sola necessitate omnia individua certo modo determinantur ad existendum et operandum.*²⁰⁵

The finite modes are part of an eternal order, and this idea will help us, later in this chapter, to understand how the necessity of the finite modes is established. Another idea which will be central to our interpretation has already been acknowledged by e.g. H.H. Joachim: this is the idea that the finite modes may not be as utterly finite as we are inclined to think:

*In a sense particular things are infinite and eternal – i.e. ‘vi causae cui inhaerent’. As modes their reality is dependent upon the Substance of which they are the ‘affectiones’, or which sustains them. Their reality in that dependence is timelessly actual.*²⁰⁶

Before we, however, come to speak of meeting the various challenges, primarily that of the necessity of the finite modes, we will consider several other solutions which have been suggested, e.g. the influential accounts of Curley, Wolfson, Melamed, Huenemann, Koistinen and Garrett. These accounts are involved in the argument which this chapter sets forth and finally defends. The chapter has not the character of an exposition but is devoted to arguing in favour of a certain interpretation of the necessity of the finite modes. The readings of other scholars are used to construe an understanding of Spinoza which solves the difficulties and enables us to say that Spinoza's metaphysics can account for his strict necessitarianism.

²⁰⁵ Spinoza, “Tractatus Politicus,” in *Spinoza: Opera III*, Chapter Two, §8, III279.

²⁰⁶ Joachim, *A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza*, 76.

3.2: The Laws of Nature and the Connection between Infinite and Finite

The first solution to the difficulty of how God, as infinite being, can necessarily cause finite things can be derived from Edwin Curley, although it is connected to the causal dependence reading: a connection which we shall assess at the end of this paragraph. But bear in mind that Curley's solution for the problem of the necessary causal relation between the finite and the infinite may be perfectly sound, even if we ultimately reject his causal dependence reading. That said, Curley thinks that we should understand the causal connection between God and his finite modes, which is to account for the necessity of these modes of course, via the laws of nature, which for Spinoza, as we saw in chapter one, are infinite and thus connected to God:

*The finite modes follow from, are deducible from, finite series of infinite causes, the laws of nature, taken in conjunction with an infinite series of finite causes, the other, prior finite modes.*²⁰⁷

This interpretation does justice to EIP28, which has it that the finite must be caused by the infinite, and to the idea of God's causality, i.e. to the idea that God causes all the modes, the finite modes included, albeit in a different manner. The finite follows from infinite causes, God's laws, and from other finite modes, and that cooperation of infinite and finite enables Spinoza to say that the finite does spring from God and can be necessitated by him:

*What I propose is that we understand Spinoza as maintaining that finite things depend upon God both insofar as he is modified by finite modifications and insofar as he is modified by infinite modifications.*²⁰⁸

Curley maintains that Spinoza's insistence that the finite modes stem from the divine nature and belong to the substance means that the laws of nature, i.e. infinite things, determine their existence.²⁰⁹ One important reason why Curley wants the finite modes to be both dependent upon the infinite and upon other finite modes is that 'the order of events in nature must depend, in some way, on God's essence, that is, on the attributes, and not simply on God as modified in finite modes'²¹⁰. For Curley, it cannot be true that there is no proper connection between the infinite and the finite in Spinoza's philosophy: the finite modes must also depend on the attributes of God. This dependence on the attributes is guaranteed by the laws of nature, through which the finite modes can be caused both by other finite modes and by the infinite. The existence of the finite modes in Spinoza thus requires both the involvement of infinite and of other finite modes.²¹¹

²⁰⁷ Curley, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 48.

²⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, 66.

²⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, 49.

²¹⁰ *Ibidem*, 64.

²¹¹ *Ibidem*, 66.

This interpretation has one major consequence to which objections could and perhaps should be raised, and that is the following:

The things not produced immediately by God, particular or finite things, are not eternal; they do come into being and pass away. For God is their adequate cause, not insofar as he is infinite, but only insofar as he is modified both by finite and infinite modifications. Finite modes require, as their partial cause, other finite modes and hence do not share the eternal nature of their cause.²¹²

The problem we see with this reading is that the finite modes as a whole must somehow, in order to spring necessarily from God, be eternal, i.e. the current finite modes must be the only possible ones, not merely in the present but also in the future. If Spinoza is able to account for his strict necessitarianism, he must be able to explain how the necessity of the finite modes is such that no other finite modes are possible and thus that they do share in a certain sense in their eternal cause. The eternity and the necessity of the finite modes go hand in hand. Although particular finite modes perish – Spinoza does not deny the mortality of human beings – the collection of finite modes as a whole must survive and be eternal to ground his strict necessitarianism. That is something for which Curley cannot account.

The infinity and eternity apply, as far as Curley is concerned, solely to the laws of nature which determine the finite modes to exist and work. These finite modes themselves are neither infinite nor eternal. It is important to remember that Curley does not identify the infinite modes with the laws of nature. Curley argues that the fundamental or primary laws of nature are in the divine attributes, meaning that God is the order of nature, and that these fundamental laws bring about a lower order of laws, which is expressed in the finite modes.²¹³ The basic laws of nature, however, are prior to the infinite modes and constitute the attributes, which ensures that these laws of nature could not have been different. So Curley does not envisage the possibility of different laws of nature.²¹⁴ A strict form of necessitarianism applies to the laws which govern nature, but not to the collection of finite modes, Curley holds, which is governed by these laws. The laws of nature do not necessitate one collection of finite modes in the sense that this collection is the only possible one. There is something to be said for this: that the laws of nature according to which for instance human beings come to exist cannot alter, does not arguably necessitate the existence of a certain human being. One may envisage a world in which the laws of nature are entirely necessary, without the implication that this world is the only possible world and that no other world could have existed, as strict necessitarianism holds.

²¹² Curley, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 74.

²¹³ Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method*, 42.

²¹⁴ *Ibidem*, 45.

Whereas that is the downside of Curley's reading, its strength is that the laws of nature are a plausible link between the infinite and the finite and therefore to account for Spinoza's strict necessitarianism. That these laws cannot be altered and that they are capable of determining finite modes is plausible. Moreover, Curley is correct in maintaining that the laws of nature, though not prominent in his *Ethics*, are yet far from absent from it, and are in fact central to Spinoza's views, which, for Curley, this passage shows:

*Nihil in natura fit, quod ipsius vitio possit tribui; est namque natura semper eadem et ubique una eademque ejus virtus et agendi potentia, hoc est, naturae leges et regulae, secundum quas omnia fiunt et ex unis formis in alias mutantur, sunt ubique et semper eadem, atque adeo una eademque etiam debet esse ratio rerum qualiumcunque naturam intelligendi, nempe per leges et regulas naturae universales.*²¹⁵

Nature is ordered, Spinoza maintains, in accordance with certain divine rules, which are the laws of nature. These are the divine decrees of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. The idea that the laws of nature can somehow solve the issue of the infinite and the finite in Spinoza is thus, given the textual evidence, a strong one, were it not for the fact that Curley, as said, is unable to account for the partly eternal nature of the finite modes as a whole and that Curley's interpretation is ultimately based upon the idea that God is only *natura naturans* and that the finite modes are merely conditionally necessary as a result of their dependence on God. That the laws of nature do not in Spinoza, according to Curley, lead to strict necessitarianism cannot be defended on the basis of what we learned in the first chapter: the laws of nature, expressing God's power, necessitate the actual world of finite modes.

And this makes us return to Curley's causal dependence reading, for which finite things, after all, are only conditionally necessary. Although we have provisionally embraced such a causal dependence reading of Spinoza in chapter two, there are also plausible reasons for rejecting it altogether. When Spinoza speaks of things being in God, he also speaks of things being necessitated or caused by God. Take for instance this passage from the *Ethics*: "Omnia [...] in Deo sunt, & omnia, quae fiunt, per solas leges infinitae Dei naturae fiunt, & ex necessitate ejus essentiae [...] sequuntur."²¹⁶ Causality and inherence here go hand in hand, instead of excluding each other, which Curley thought necessary. So although Curley's claim that the finite modes are caused partially by something finite, i.e. another finite mode (EIP28) and partly by the infinite, by God, namely through the laws of nature, is viable, we cannot hold on to the causal dependence reading. Everything which exists, is in God. It is difficult to see how such expressions of Spinoza could be understood as causal dependence and not inherence.

²¹⁵ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIIIPref, II138.

²¹⁶ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP15S, II60.

Even more troublesome for Curley's causal dependence reading, as Melamed points out²¹⁷, is that we possess a letter by Spinoza in which he says that there are infinite things which are infinite through inherence in their causes, referring to the infinite modes. In Spinoza's Epistola XII to Lodewijk Meyer, also known as the Letter on Infinity, Spinoza distinguishes things which are infinite through their own nature, by which he presumably means God, and things which are instead infinite solely as a result of their cause:

*Ex omnibus jam dictis clarè videre est, quaedam suâ naturâ esse infinita, nec ullo modo finita concipi posse; quaedam verò vi causae, cui inhaerent, quae tamen, ubi abstractè concipiuntur, in partes possunt dividi, & ut finita spectari.*²¹⁸

If modes are infinite through inhering in God, how could Curley then reject the inherence reading and instead subscribe to a causal dependence reading? And it is not only this letter by Spinoza which causes trouble for Curley's interpretation. Spinoza says in the *Ethics* that everything which is, is either in itself or in something: "Omnia, quae sunt, vel in se, vel in alio sunt."²¹⁹ The modes are then in the substance. And by means of being in the substance, Melamed argues, the infinite modes can be infinite. The infinity of the infinite modes thus comes from the cause in which these modes inhere, i.e. from God, and is therefore not a feature of the mode itself: the infinite borrows its infinity from the infinite God, who makes them exist.²²⁰

This has implications for the finite modes as well. If the infinity of certain modes is to be explained by means of the cause in which they inhere, then it is unlikely that the finite modes are causally dependent on God whereas the infinite modes inhere. Note that Curley relies upon the distinction between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, the first of which Spinoza defines as that which is in itself and needs to be conceived in and by itself, namely the substance and attributes, which express God's eternal and infinite essence and on which the modes are, according to Curley, said to causally depend. The second, namely *natura naturata*, which includes all the modes, is said to be dependent upon the first and is defined by Spinoza in this manner:

*Per [Naturam] naturatam autem intelligo id omne, quod ex necessitate Dei naturae sive uniuscujusque Dei attributorum sequitur, hoc est omnes Dei attributorum modos, quatenus considerantur ut res, quae in Deo sunt et quae sine Deo nec esse nec concipi possunt.*²²¹

The words *quae in Deo sunt* are quite revealing: the modes are thus in God.

²¹⁷ Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics: Substance*, 23 – 25.

²¹⁸ Spinoza, "Epistola XII", IV60/61.

²¹⁹ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIAI, II46.

²²⁰ Melamed, "Spinoza's Metaphysics of Substance", 39.

²²¹ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP29S, II71.

3.3: The Inherence Reading and the Finite Modes as an Infinite Mode

Therefore we have to return to an inherence reading of the relation between substance and mode. Before we can do so we have to speak of the two problems which made us provisionally reject such a reading in chapter two, namely that it turned things into properties of God – God is a drunkard or a delinquent – and that it does not seem to account for Spinoza’s rejection of the Aristotelian notion of accidents. To begin with the first: an inherence reading need not imply that things are properties which can be predicated of God. Inherence does not of necessity mean that. In some readings, e.g. Melamed’s, it does, but we consider it to be a convincing objection that it would for Spinoza be peculiar to argue that the things inhering in God are his properties, also because God then becomes the cause of his own properties, which is somewhat absurd. So this downside of the inherence reading can be avoided if inherence is defended without the property part.

The other objection had to do with Spinoza’s decision to use the term ‘modes’ rather than ‘accidents’. Why should Spinoza reject the traditional understanding of accidents and nonetheless retain a conception of the relation between substance and modes which is similar to the Aristotelian idea of the relation between substance and accidents? For Spinoza the accidents have become modes of thinking and are thus ontologically different from the modes. That Spinoza uses the term accidents in a different meaning than the Aristotelian tradition is not to say that his understanding of the relation of substance and mode could not amount to inherence in that Aristotelian sense. John Carriero gives a description of how Aristotelians conceive of accidents and that description is, as Carriero stresses, close to Spinoza’s description of how things or modes are said to be in God:

All accidents ultimately inhere in substances, as color, for example, ultimately inheres in body. Moreover, since accidents depend for their existence on the substances in which they ultimately inhere, whereas substances do not depend on their accidents, substances are prior "in being," or ontologically prior, to accidents.²²²

The modes in Spinoza are, as affections of God, inherent in quite a similar manner as the accidents are inherent in the substance in the Aristotelian tradition. One must, however, acknowledge that Spinoza is quite careful in distinguishing the substance from its modes and that e.g. Bennett’s comparison, viz. that the mode is in the substance as a blush is in the human body, suggests an ontological closeness which is not congenial to Spinoza. But Spinoza’s decision to use modes rather than accidents does not prevent him from conceiving of the relation between substance and mode in a way that recalls the traditional conception of inherence.

²²² Carriero, “Mode and Substance in Spinoza”, 247.

How could one succeed in developing an inherence reading which accounts for the necessity of the finite modes? Yitzhak Y. Melamed – who, it must be stressed, does conceive of the modes as properties predicated of God – has attempted to do so. Melamed admits that, as Curley maintains, causality is of great importance for Spinoza where the relation between substance and modes is concerned.²²³ Causation – which of course, when we speak of God’s causation, has to ground the necessity of the finite modes – must be accounted for by the inherence reading. Melamed develops the idea that ‘the claim that God is the immanent cause of all things means that all things are within God’²²⁴. And in that way causation and inherence overlap.

However, the inherence element means, for Melamed, that God, apart from being the cause of the finite modes, is in point of fact these finite modes:

Since finite modes can follow only from finite modes, God has to be the finite modes ("God insofar as it is modified by modification which is finite") if he is to be the cause of all things, including finite modes.²²⁵

The finite modes are nevertheless, in this interpretation, not autonomous in the sense that they do not connect with the infinite. On the contrary, Melamed argues that ‘once we realize that finite modes are part of infinite modes, we make significant progress in explaining the derivation of the finite modes: they follow from God’s essence as parts of the infinite modes’²²⁶. So all the modes are inherent in God, and both the existence and the necessity of the finite modes is guaranteed by their being part of the infinite modes. The infinite modes and the finite modes do not represent two distinct realms between which no connection is possible, but both inhere in the substance and are related through the finite modes being part of the infinite modes, which ensures the causal relation between God and the finite. The necessity of the finite modes is in this case ensured by the transfer of necessity from God to the infinite modes. The infinite modes have derived their necessity from God, as EIP22 reveals when it says that things following from a necessary and infinite modification of God’s attributes must themselves be necessary and infinite.²²⁷ The necessity and infinity is transferred from the divine attributes to the infinite modes, and that derived necessity allows these infinite modes to transfer necessity to the finite modes as a whole, which are in this reading a part of infinite modes, through which the transfer occurs, i.e. which allows them to receive necessity from these infinite modes.

²²³ Melamed, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics: Substance and Thought*, 4.

²²⁴ *Ibidem*, 26.

²²⁵ Melamed, “Spinoza’s Metaphysics of Substance”, 34.

²²⁶ Melamed, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics: Substance*, 131.

²²⁷ Spinoza, “Ethica”, EIP22, II66.

This could mean that ‘the total infinite series of finite modes is an infinite mode having finite modes as parts’²²⁸. If the finite modes are part of infinite modes, then one possibility is that this occurs because these finite modes themselves make up an infinite mode. This infinite mode is in that case the connection between the infinite and the finite which can account for Spinoza’s belief in the necessity of the finite modes. It is important that, as Melamed argues, the plurality of the finite modes is not affected by their constituting an infinite mode: the infinite modes as such can be divided into infinitely many finite modes.²²⁹ Consequently, when Spinoza says that infinitely many modes follow from God, then he is also alluding to the infinity of the finite modes as a whole. The finite modes which spring from God form, in conjunction, an infinity. So each individual finite mode is connected to an infinite whole, which stems directly from God. Michael Della Rocca states that ‘the inevitable conclusion is that a finite mode cannot be produced by God’s nature except as part of a package of infinitely many other finite modes’²³⁰. The finite is finite individually, i.e. all individual modes are finite, but not generally, i.e. as a whole. Every finite mode is part of the infinite collection of finite modes, which is directly necessitated by God.

This reading can be supported by a certain understanding of EIP28. According to Melamed, Spinoza’s insistence that a finite mode can only be caused by another finite mode should not be seen as opposing the connection between the infinite and the finite. The purpose of Spinoza here is nothing but to show that the finite modes can be caused by each other, Melamed maintains.²³¹ A finite mode in and by itself cannot be caused by one single infinite mode. That is not to say that the whole conglomerate of finite modes cannot itself be an infinite mode or be caused by an infinite mode, i.e. both inhere in an infinite mode and be caused by it. So what Spinoza means when he argues that the finite must be caused by the finite is that no infinite modes interfere directly in the causation of the finite modes: finite modes can cause each other without the interference of infinite modes.

Hence there is a twofold conception of the causal relation between infinite and finite involved here. The finite modes cause each other and are thus not directly caused by the infinite modes or God himself, but they make up an infinite mode, which does spring from God. And that idea of the finite modes being an infinite mode accounts for the necessary causal relation between God and his finite modes. The finite modes now do spring directly from his attributes, which means that Spinoza can account for their existence and necessity, without losing their causal interdependence. EIP28 remains true, i.e. the finite modes proceed determining each other, but the necessity of the whole collection of finite modes is ensured by their being an infinite mode.

²²⁸ Garrett, “Spinoza’s Necessitarianism”, 198.

²²⁹ Melamed, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics: Substance*, 35.

²³⁰ Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, 71.

²³¹ Melamed, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics: Substance*, 116.

That the finite modes, taken together, are an infinite mode is not the same as Genevieve Lloyd's contention that infinite modes mediate between God and the substance. There is no mediation here. That the finite modes are an infinite mode implies rather that they are parts of the infinite modes as a whole. That this is in accordance with the drift of Spinoza's thought is corroborated by Spinoza's repeated insistence that, whereas the substance is only in itself, the modes are always in something else – including perhaps other modes, such as the infinite modes:

*Per substantiam intelligenter id, quod in se est et per se concipitur, hoc est id, cujus cognitio non indiget cognitione alterius rei. Per modificationes autem id, quod in alio est et quarum conceptus a conceptu rei, in qua sunt, formatur.*²³²

However, that modes can be in each other and in God is different from saying that they could be a part of each other or of God, as Melamed does. Melamed explicitly says that the finite modes are parts of the infinite modes. That is, in Spinoza, a notion that we ought to handle cautiously. The whole notion of parts is – as Melamed admits – not congenial to Spinoza from the perspective of his monism. When he speaks of modes as affections of substance, he does not mean that the modes are parts of the substance, as if the substance were something with parts. Equally, the finite modes may well be an infinite mode, but it is unlikely that they are parts of these modes, unless we take part of to mean that they are among the collection of infinite modes. In that much more innocent reading of the notion of parts there would be no problem. But it must be noted that for Spinoza 'being in' means something different from 'being part of', or even from being a property of. Spinoza holds that a mode is in God and in nothing else – *in solo Deo est*²³³ – which means that the mode is included in God, but not that it is part of God.

So if we want to conceive of the finite modes as making up an infinite mode, then we had better use another notion than that of 'part of'. In a more general sense: the meaning of 'being in God' in Spinoza should be in harmony with Spinoza's tenet that there is only one substance, in the unity of things. The modes are not parts of the substance in which they inhere, as Melamed acknowledges. It is not as if the substance has parts in the manner in which the human body can be said to have certain parts: as if the modes, whether they be the infinite or the finite modes, are the arms and legs of the substance. In accordance with that, these infinite or finite modes could not be parts of each other. We should thus use the notion of parts neither to understand the relation between finite and infinite modes nor to understand the relation between the substance and its modes in general. We may well therefore prefer to state that all the modes are included in God and could, if the finite modes are together an infinite mode, comprised in infinite modes.

²³² Spinoza, "Ethica", II50.

²³³ Ibidem.

3.4: Containment and The Problem of the Finite

One notion which could save the inherence reading and prevent us from having to argue that finite modes are parts of infinite modes is the notion of containment. Inherence could mean that the modes are contained in God, which implies that modes could be contained in each other, e.g. the finite as a whole in the infinite modes. Using this notion of containment has been suggested by Harry Austryn Wolfson in his proposal for a solution to the problem of how the finite modes spring from God and are thus necessitated. Wolfson begins his account of containment by stating the conditions that must be met by any solution to the problem of the existence and necessity of the finite modes. Basically, the requirements are two:

1. To do justice to Spinoza's insistence that finite modes are caused by other finite modes and thus do not directly stem from God, or the infinite cause;
2. To explain how all the modes do, in some way or another, follow from God, i.e. how God can be the immanent cause of all existing things.²³⁴

Wolfson thinks that his solution meets these requirements. The first step in that solution is to assert that 'when Spinoza [...] describes the modes as following (*sequi*) from God or as being produced (*produc*) by God, or when he speaks of God as acting (*agit*) or as a cause, all these expressions mean nothing but that the modes are contained in the substance as the conclusion of a syllogism is contained in its premises'²³⁵. This idea of the modes' containment in the substance enables Spinoza to, in a certain sense, avoid the problem of the finite, based on the unity of all the modes in God: if all the modes are contained in the substance, then there is, according to Wolfson, no such thing as the finite modes having to flow from the substance: they are already contained in it and are not distinct from it.²³⁶

All the modes are contained in God, and this notion of containment leads to the following account of how the finite modes come to be and are caused:

*Infinite substance by its very nature contains within itself immediate infinite modes, and the immediate infinite modes contain within themselves mediate infinite modes, and the mediate infinite modes contain within themselves the infinite number of the finite modes, which last are arranged as a series of causes and effects.*²³⁷

So the modes are not merely contained in the substance as such, but also in each other: the immediate infinite contains the mediate infinite and so forth.

²³⁴ Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza: Volume 1*, 392.

²³⁵ Ibidem, 397/398.

²³⁶ Ibidem, 398.

²³⁷ Ibidem.

But Wolfson's notion of containment generally relies upon the unity of all things, i.e. upon Spinoza's monism. That there is merely one substance and that this substance is the cause of itself entails that all things are contained in it, including the finite modes, albeit through the infinite modes:

Substance is causa sui, and its nature is such that it involves within itself three orders of modes – immediate infinite, mediate infinite, and finite. The question as to how things come into existence can logically appear only within the finite modes, and the answer to this, as given by Spinoza, is that each finite mode comes into existence by another finite mode, and so on to infinity, but the entire infinite series is ultimately contained in God, who is causa sui, through the mediate and immediate infinite modes.²³⁸

So the finite modes, as a series or a collection, are contained in the infinite modes. That notion of containment is better than the notion of being part of, because it can do without the unwelcome notion of parts. Moreover, it does involve maintaining that the finite modes as a series are among, or are contained in, the infinite modes, through which they relate, and do so necessarily, to the substance, to God. Wolfson conceives of a sort of pyramid, with the finite things being at the bottom and God himself at the top. The finite things follow from the infinite modes, first from the mediate and then from the immediate, and in that manner they can spring directly from God:

Finite things follow directly from finite causes. These finite causes are infinite in number and form an infinite series of causes and effects. This infinite series of finite causes follows from the mediate infinite mode. This mediate infinite mode follows from the immediate infinite modes, which, in their turn, follow directly from God.²³⁹

The objection one could have to this reading is that it does not turn the finite modes as such necessarily into an infinite mode, which is likely to be correct, given that the finite modes are for Spinoza infinite in number. The infinity of the substance is expressed also in the infinity of the finite modes as a whole, given that EIP16 says that infinitely many modes spring from the divine nature.²⁴⁰ This applies to the finite as well as to the infinite modes. The infinity of the substance itself finds its expression in the finite modes as a whole, and therefore it is plausible that these finite modes are an infinite mode. And that is not necessarily what Wolfson says. We could hence decide to keep Wolfson's notion of containment but side with Melamed, Garrett and Della Rocca with regard to the finite modes being as such an infinite mode.

²³⁸ Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza: Volume I*, 398.

²³⁹ *Ibidem*, 390.

²⁴⁰ Spinoza, "Ethica", II60.

3.5: The Necessity of the Finite Modes and Formal Essences

A possible way of conceiving of the finite modes as collectively amounting to an infinite mode is through Spinoza's notion of formal essences. Charles Huenemann for instance argues that the necessity of the finite modes is ensured on the strength of the view that the collection of formal essences of the finite modes, being an infinite mode, is contained in the divine attributes.²⁴¹ There is, however, as Huenemann admits, some obscurity concerning Spinoza's conception of what it is to be a formal essence.²⁴² Huenemann follows Wolfson in thinking that it is the 'potential being'²⁴³ of a finite mode, which means, as Don Garrett explains, that it grounds the possible existence of a finite mode.²⁴⁴ The formal essences are the eternal essences of finite modes that are in the divine attributes and that are a condition for the existence – and necessity – of these modes.²⁴⁵ These formal essences differ from the actual essences of finite modes, which for Spinoza simply are the *conatus* of things, i.e. their desire to continue existing.²⁴⁶

This difference between the formal essence on the one hand and the actual essence on the other hand points to the way in which Huenemann explains the necessity of the finite modes, namely through saying that finite modes are understood in two different ways, one of these being from the perspective of their formal and the other from the perspective of their actual essence. He argues that the finite modes as a whole are necessitated through their formal essences and that individual finite modes become necessary through their causes and their environment.²⁴⁷ If we imagine a certain individual, then the necessary existence of that individual is guaranteed at once by the formal essence of it and by the causes which act on it.²⁴⁸ This means that formal essences do not remain in a state of potentiality: all the formal essences become actual, which, as Don Garrett stresses, is needed for Spinoza's necessitarianism, in which what is potential and what is actual must coincide.²⁴⁹ The formal essences, nonetheless, are not sufficient for the existence and necessity of the finite modes: it is, according to Huenemann, only by the conjunction of the formal essences with the finite causes of the finite modes, as expressed in EIP28, and with other external factors, that the finite modes are to be accounted for as wholly necessary.²⁵⁰

²⁴¹ Huenemann, "The Necessity of Finite Modes", 237.

²⁴² Ibidem, 232.

²⁴³ Ibidem.

²⁴⁴ Don Garrett, "Spinoza on the Essence of the Human Body and the Part of the Mind That is Eternal," in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza's Ethics*, edited by Olli Koistinen (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2009), 286.

²⁴⁵ Ibidem, 290.

²⁴⁶ Ibidem, 286/287.

²⁴⁷ Huenemann, "The Necessity of Finite Modes", 236/237.

²⁴⁸ Ibidem, 235.

²⁴⁹ Garrett, "Spinoza on the Essence of the Human Body", 291.

²⁵⁰ Huenemann, "The Necessity of Finite Modes", 238.

The strength of this interpretation is that it allows Huenemann to assert both that the finite modes are somehow directly in God's attributes – their formal essences are like an infinite mode – and that finite modes are partly caused by each other, without the direct involvement of God, of his attributes. Moreover, that these formal essences of the finite modes are in the attributes of God means that there is no other collection of finite modes possible than the one of which the essences are in God's attributes. The formal essences of finite modes support Spinoza's strict necessitarianism.²⁵¹ However, James G. Lennox has rightly pointed out, in response to a similar reading of Spinoza, that this separates the finite modes from their essences.²⁵² It now seems as if these essences are somehow contained in God and the finite modes as such, including their actual essences, are not. The whole collection of finite modes is in this account only, or so it seems, in potentiality in the divine attributes, separated from the actual finite modes.

Furthermore, Don Garrett, whose account of the formal essences is quite akin to that of Huenemann, has insisted that the formal essence, when becoming actual and thus contributing to the coming into existence of a finite mode, brings about the actual essence of the thing.²⁵³ So ultimately the formal essence – although Garrett does not want to grant that – of a finite mode is simply the actual essence in potentiality, as part of the divine attributes. If these formal essences are the only features of finite modes which are in the divine attributes, then nothing finite is in the divine attributes apart from the *conatus* of the modes, albeit in potentiality. In order for Spinoza to guarantee the necessity of the finite modes, in the sense of these finite modes being in the divine attributes, the finite modes must be in the divine attributes in a stronger way than merely in so far as their formal essences are. The necessity of the collection of modes as a whole must be accounted for; not only the necessity of their particular essences.

The degree to which Huenemann's reading is capable of accounting for the necessity of the finite modes depends consequently upon the manner in which we understand these formal essences. Huenemann thinks that the formal essences can explain why the same finite modes keep returning and why there is, as a result, no more than one collection of finite modes which God brings about. But if these formal essences are the actual essences in potentiality, i.e. the *conatus* of finite modes, then that leaves the necessity of the finite modes as a collective unexplained, or at least partly unexplained. As Henri Krop notes: the essences of for example human beings, as finite modes, are nothing other than their *conatus*.²⁵⁴ It seems then that formal essences can only account for a small part of the necessity of finite modes.

²⁵¹ Huenemann, "The Necessity of Finite Modes", 238.

²⁵² James G. Lennox, "The Causality of Finite Modes in Spinoza's 'Ethics'," in *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol.6, No.3 (1976), 490.

²⁵³ Garrett, "Spinoza on the Essence of the Human Body", 286/287.

²⁵⁴ Krop, "Essentia," in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Spinoza*, 211.

Moreover, these formal essences, when understood as Wolfson and Garrett understand them, seem to obtain a degree of autonomy from the actual finite modes which does damage, contrary to what Don Garrett holds, to Spinoza's insistence that everything potential must be actual. This is underlined by Steven Nadler's suggestion that there are in point of fact two kinds of finite modes: the essences of finite modes, i.e. eternal finite modes, and the actual finite modes, i.e. durational finite modes.²⁵⁵ So now there is a gap between the finite modes as we encounter them in the world and the finite modes as they are, through their formal essences, in the divine attributes. Instead of establishing a link between the finite modes and God, this interpretation separates the actual finite modes from the essences of these modes, which are said to be in the attributes of God. We now have two kinds of finite modes, rather than a connection between God and the finite modes.

Therefore we feel justified in rejecting Huenemann's understanding of formal essences and following Henk Keizer's account in this regard. According to Keizer, the idea of an opposition between the formal and the actual essence of a thing is false.²⁵⁶ Formal essences are, Keizer maintains, not autonomous entities which exist eternally in the divine attributes, separated from the actual finite modes of which they are the essences.²⁵⁷ The essence of a thing cannot exist independently from the thing itself, in Keizer's understanding of Spinoza.²⁵⁸ This means that one cannot account for the necessity of the finite modes by referring to the formal essences of the things, which are said to exist directly in the divine attributes, contrary to the finite modes themselves and their actual essences. The formal essences are hence not a proper link between God and the finite modes which God necessitates.

Henk Keizer provides a considerable amount of textual evidence for this understanding which cannot all be included in this thesis. However, one passage to which Keizer refers in his article deserves special attention. This is Spinoza's definition of the essence of a thing.²⁵⁹ That definition consists of the following: "Ad essentiam alicujus rei id pertinere dico, quo dato res necessario ponitur et quo sublato res necessario tollitur; vel id, sine quo res et vice versa quod sine re nec esse nec concipi potest."²⁶⁰ The last sentence is of particular importance: the essence of a thing is something without which a thing cannot exist, nor be understood. Keizer rightly stresses: if it is impossible for a thing to exist without its essence, how could the formal essences then exist as an infinite mode in the divine attributes, independently of the things of which they are said to be the essences? The existence and the essence of a thing must coincide, Keizer argues.

²⁵⁵ Nadler, *Spinoza's Ethics*, 98.

²⁵⁶ Henk Keizer, "Spinoza: Zijn Essenties van Particuliere Dingen Eeuwig?," in *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, Vol. 79 (2017), 77.

²⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, 82.

²⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, 83.

²⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, 82.

²⁶⁰ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIID2, II84.

As a consequence, the formal essences of particular things do not make up a separate infinite mode, being directly in the attributes.²⁶¹ It is necessary for Huenemann's interpretation that the formal essences can, separate from actual finite modes, be an infinite mode. This possibility is undermined if the formal essences cannot be autonomous eternal modes. And that is precisely what Henk Keizer demonstrates. One may, in defence of Huenemann, object to Keizer by saying that if these formal essences are the actual essences of things, then Spinoza seemingly has no need for the notion of formal essences at all. However, Keizer shows that the term 'formal' is in Spinoza not, as Huenemann and Garrett must presuppose, opposed to or different from the term 'actual', but rather that Spinoza conceives of an opposition between 'formal' and 'objective'.²⁶² The formal essences are therefore not used in contrast with the actual essences; instead they can be said to coincide.

One advantage, nonetheless, of Huenemann's interpretation deserves consideration. If we refrain from relying upon the formal essences to ensure the necessity of the finite modes, then we may feel inclined to use an argument in which not metaphysics but experience plays a role. Steven Nadler e.g. thinks that our experience of finite modes may prove the existence of the modes.²⁶³ Following that line of reasoning, this existence could then be a ground for their necessity: if finite modes exist, which experience corroborates, then they must be necessary. Their necessity is implied by their existence as modes of the substance. There is in that case no further ground needed for accounting for the necessity of these finite modes: they exist as modes of God and must accordingly be in possession of necessity. However, Olli Koistinen has pointed out, and we follow him here, that Spinoza's strict necessitarianism is something which he endorsed without relying upon experience.²⁶⁴ When Spinoza declares all things to be necessary, he does so on the basis of the metaphysics of the *Ethics*.

And therefore an argument based on experience is weaker than the approach of Huenemann, in which Spinoza is in possession of a metaphysical explanation, grounded upon the formal essences of the finite modes. One other and final argument against Huenemann's reading may therefore be considered. Spinoza says in EIIP45S that particular things derive their power to exist from God: "Nam, etsi unaquaeque ab alia re singulari determinetur ad certo modo existendum, vis tamen, qua unaquaeque in existendo perseverat, ex aeterna necessitate naturae Dei sequitur."²⁶⁵ Not the formal essences are in the eternal nature of God, but, in accordance with Keizer's reading, the existence and power of the finite modes themselves. Hence the formal essences of finite modes do not constitute a separate infinite mode.

²⁶¹ Keizer, "Spinoza: Zijn Essenties van Particuliere Dingen Eeuwig?", 82.

²⁶² Ibidem, 77.

²⁶³ Nadler, *Spinoza's Ethics*, 103.

²⁶⁴ Koistinen, "Spinoza's Proof for Necessitarianism", 306.

²⁶⁵ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIIP45S, II127.

3.6: The Necessity of Finite Modes: Other Solutions and Problems

This is not to say that we feel obliged to abandon the idea that the finite modes together form an infinite mode. However, if we want to retain that view we must also consider another difficulty than the one confronting Huenemann's account of formal essences. Edwin Curley and Gregory Walski have, in opposition to the interpretation of the finite modes as an infinite mode, such as defended by Melamed, Della Rocca and Garrett, argued that it is peculiar for Spinoza to say that no finite modes could follow from God individually but that all these finite modes do stem from God in a collective manner.²⁶⁶ This objection was one of Charles Huenemann's reasons for endorsing an account based on the formal essences of finite modes rather than on the finite modes as such being an infinite mode.²⁶⁷ It seems strange to say that God and the finite are not directly related, i.e. that the absolute nature of God's attributes does not cause finite modes, but that they are so collectively, viz. that they are in the divine attributes as an infinite mode.

A related difficulty which ought to be considered is that one may be inclined to think that God can be the cause and even the necessitating cause of the finite modes without these modes being somehow directly in his attributes. Something of this sort has been suggested by Olli Koistinen.²⁶⁸ If God has finite modes at all, then their necessity must also be granted, provided we accept that there is only one substance and that this substance has modes. The necessity then does not require further justification or corroboration, e.g. by means of an explanation of how the attributes of God are directly involved in the necessity of the finite modes. We could simply accept that the finite modes express God attributes *certo & determinato modo* and do so with complete necessity: the necessity is included in their being God's modes.

Note that this differs from Curley's reading, because he holds that the fact that the finite modes do not spring from God directly entails that they are not fully necessary, i.e. unconditionally. That the finite modes do not follow directly from the divine attributes implies for him that they are not unconditionally necessary and that another collection of finite modes could come into existence. It may, on the contrary, equally mean that things which are not caused by the absolute nature of God's attributes can be as necessary as things which are so caused, which means that being caused by the divine attributes absolutely or directly is not a condition for being necessitated by God. That there is no bridge between God's attributes in the absolute sense and the finite modes – "Keine Brücke führt von der Unendlichkeit in das Gebiet der endlichen Dinge."²⁶⁹ – does not prevent these finite modes from being necessary and being the only possible ones.

²⁶⁶ Curley and Walski, "Spinoza's Necessitarianism Reconsidered", 254.

²⁶⁷ Huenemann, "The Necessity of Finite Modes", 230.

²⁶⁸ Koistinen, "Causation in Spinoza", 68.

²⁶⁹ Freudenthal, *Spinoza: Sein Leben und Lehre: Zweiter Teil*, 134.

So we have now met with two objections to the idea that finite modes form an infinite mode. First of all, why should, as Curley and Walski argued, the finite modes as a whole be directly in the divine attributes, if no finite mode is individually? And secondly, could the finite modes not simply be necessary without being in the divine attributes absolutely or directly? As to the first objection: Curley and Walski's own contention that the finite modes do not make up an infinite mode leads them, in conjunction with other considerations, to reject the view that Spinoza did subscribe to strict necessitarianism.²⁷⁰ The necessity of the finite modes is then, as Don Garrett noted²⁷¹, in danger, provided we accept that the finite modes must somehow also be directly or absolutely connected to the divine attributes. That leads us to the second objection, viz. the objection that these finite modes could be necessary without in any way being in the divine attributes absolutely or directly, which they certainly cannot be individually (EIP21).²⁷²

This objection is connected to the argument, defended by Olli Koistinen²⁷³, that Spinoza's monism is sufficient, in Koistinen's terms, proof for his strict form of necessitarianism: if there is nothing but the one substance, including finite modes, which are indirectly related to the attributes of this substance, then these modes must be necessary and must be considered the only possible finite modes. However, we may here remind ourselves of the fact, as highlighted e.g. by Wolfson, that these finite modes must be directly related to God. If no direct relation can to be established between the source of the finite modes' necessity and these modes, then Spinoza makes room for the possibility of other finite modes. It is not necessarily so that a monist can allow for only one collection of finite modes, as is highlighted by Curley's insistence that the laws of nature could cause other finite modes.

Hence in order for the finite modes to have the necessity which strict necessitarianism requires, a link must be established between God and the finite modes. And in that regard the best option, following Melamed, Garrett and Della Rocca, is the idea that the finite modes constitute an infinite mode and are as such close to the divine attributes. Garrett adds one argument to this, viz. that the finite modes are not only together an infinite mode, but also the most perfect collection of finite modes.²⁷⁴ Olli Koistinen has criticised this view by arguing that in Spinoza necessity precedes perfection: that all things are necessary is what entails that all things are perfect.²⁷⁵ However, that need not be true. Much more troubling for Garrett is that the alleged perfection of the finite modes does not itself necessitate the finite modes: it does not forge a necessary link between God and these modes.

²⁷⁰ Curley and Walski, "Spinoza's Necessitarianism Reconsidered", 252/253.

²⁷¹ Garrett, "Spinoza's Necessitarianism", 192.

²⁷² Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, 70.

²⁷³ Koistinen, "Spinoza's Proof for Necessitarianism", 305.

²⁷⁴ Garrett, "Spinoza's Necessitarianism", 198.

²⁷⁵ Koistinen, "Spinoza's Proof for Necessitarianism", 295.

We do, nonetheless, want to preserve the idea that the finite modes are an infinite mode. Before we can wholeheartedly embrace that idea, one other related explanation deserves consideration. This is one which can be derived from Yirmiyahu Yovel. According to Yovel, in line with Huenemann's interpretation, the finite modes have eternal essences and are in that sense eternally and necessarily dependent upon God.²⁷⁶ However, this dependence need not mean that there is an infinite mode consisting of finite modes or an infinite mode consisting of formal essences of finite modes: it is instead a dependence mediated through the laws of nature.²⁷⁷ What if we accept that the finite modes do not form an infinite mode but that God, having finite modifications, necessitates these finite modes through the laws of nature, without the finite modes as a whole being directly in the attributes? Then it is not even necessary to think that the formal essences are contained in God: the mediation of the laws of nature would in that case suffice.

Yovel applies the distinction between horizontal and vertical causality to explain this: the horizontal causality is the causal chain between the finite modes (EIP28) and vertical causality the causal chain which stems from God, through the laws of nature.²⁷⁸ This relies upon a conception of laws of nature in which a law of nature is 'the immanent cause of particular things'²⁷⁹, meaning that no further causation is required for the necessity of the finite modes: they need not be contained in any manner in the divine attributes directly. If we grant that God has finite modes and that these modes are determined by the laws of nature, which have God as their source, then Spinoza can account for the necessity of the finite modes merely by relying upon the necessity and stable character of the laws of nature. Finite modes are in that case somewhat distant from God's attributes, but close enough to be necessitated by God's divine laws.

However, this does create the same distance between God and his finite modes which we perceived in Curley's causal dependence reading: the modes are determined by *natura naturans* but are not, in Wolfson's terms, contained in God. The reading in which the finite modes are seen as an infinite mode has the advantage that God's attributes and these modes are now directly or absolutely related, rather than through the mediation of the laws of nature. The suggestion which we have here derived from Yovel is quite akin to Lloyd's idea, rejected above, of the infinite modes as mediators between God and the finite modes. That act of mediation appears to turn God into the remote cause of the finite modes, rather than establishing a close tie between God and finite things. Although the laws of nature do have a role, and an important one, in necessitating the finite modes, a claim in which we follow Curley and thus also Yovel, they are used to no avail here.

²⁷⁶ Yovel, "The Infinite Mode and Natural Laws in Spinoza", 92.

²⁷⁷ Ibidem, 93.

²⁷⁸ Ibidem.

²⁷⁹ Ibidem.

3.7: Solution: The Necessity of the Finite Modes: Eternity

We therefore do follow Garrett and others in holding that the finite modes together form an infinite mode. And an infinite mode has one other element which has not yet been mentioned and which will be a component in our approach to the problem of the necessity of the finite modes, and that is the element of eternity. The infinite modes stem from the divine attributes, and things which do so cannot be limited in duration, i.e. they have to be in possession of eternity: “Id, quod ex necessitate naturae alicujus attributi ita sequitur, non potest determinatam habere durationem.”²⁸⁰ This idea, i.e. that the infinite modes have eternity, is something which can be used in explaining how the finite modes, as one infinite mode, can stem necessarily from God. Spinoza emphasises that finite modes are partly durational and partly eternal. They are eternal regarding their inherence in the divine cause:

*Res duobus modis a nobis ut actuales concipiuntur, vel quatenus easdem cum relatione ad certum tempus et locum existere, vel quatenus ipsas in Deo contineri et ex naturae divinae necessitate consequi concipimus. Quae autem hoc secundo modo ut verae seu reales concipiuntur, eas sub aeternitatis specie concipimus, et earum ideae aeternam et infinitam Dei essentiam involvunt.*²⁸¹

The finite modes are finite in their existence in the world, but not in the manner in which they, as a whole, relate to God: their actuality is twofold, on the one hand durational and on the other hand eternal. This eternity is by Charles Huenemann taken to be the eternity of formal essences²⁸² and by Henk Keizer the eternity of the modes as such, jointly.²⁸³ Eternal here for us means, closer to Keizer than to Huenemann, the eternity of the stability of the collection of modes, i.e. that the finite modes keep springing in the same manner from God. In that way Spinoza believes that the finite modes as a whole are eternal and infinite. That is also the meaning of the passage we quoted earlier, namely of modes being infinite through their causes, which pertains to finite modes as a set. Individual finite modes may perish and may be dependent upon other finite modes, but the collection of modes expresses the eternity of God’s attributes and, as Melamed stressed, their infinity. This eternity, which the finite modes have as an infinite mode, is the foundation of the necessity of these modes. One may object by maintaining that Spinoza in EVP29S speaks of how things are conceived by us: we can conceive them as eternal and as durational. That need not entail their genuine eternity. However, that things can be actual in two ways implies that Spinoza does here speak of the eternal existence of the modes.

²⁸⁰ Spinoza, “Ethica”, EIP22D, II66.

²⁸¹ Spinoza, “Ethica”, EVP29S, II298/II299.

²⁸² Huenemann, “The Necessity of Finite Modes”, 235.

²⁸³ Keizer, “Spinoza: Zijn Essenties van Particuliere Dingen?”, 86.

And that eternal existence of the finite modes rests on their being contained in the eternal order of God, which is ensured by the laws of nature. Having seen the latter's role is the strength of Curley's account of the way in which the finite modes are caused by God: in his account of Spinoza's thought the laws of nature have a prominent role in connecting the infinite and the finite. That connection is something which we do not want to abandon. The fact that the finite modes as a whole are not subject to change and remain always the same, given that God cannot produce anything other than what he does produce, is ensured by the laws of nature, which Spinoza deems the decrees or the order of nature: "Quicquid fit, per Dei voluntatem et aeternum decretum fit, hoc est [...] quicquid fit, id secundum leges et regulas, quae aeternam necessitatem et veritatem involvunt, fit."²⁸⁴ These laws are nature's order. In Curley, this of course does not mean strict necessitarianism, because the order of nature did seem to allow for possible existence.

The existence of any human being e.g. is, from the perspective of the order of nature, as much a possibility as the non-existence. That is something to which we object and to which Spinoza objects. If the laws of nature reign everywhere and cannot be altered, then they must eternally necessitate all that is in nature, which is why Spinoza again and again, also in his political works, emphasises that everything is governed by these laws, including humans: "Natura non legibus humanae rationis, quae non nisi hominum verum utile et conservationem intendunt, continetur, sed infinitis aliis, quae totius naturae, cujus homo particula est, aeternum ordinem respiciunt."²⁸⁵

Another objection we must remove before proceeding has to do with eternity. Arthur O. Lovejoy already noted that it is difficult for Spinoza to say on the one hand that finite things are necessarily caused by God and on the other hand that these finite things retain some duration and also their possible mortality: Spinoza has difficulty explaining, Lovejoy remarks, how change and duration could at all come about: there is no change in God, so how can there be change in anything which flows from God?²⁸⁶ If the finite things stem from God necessarily and eternally, then Spinoza does not seem to be able at all to account for either duration or change. This difficulty is to be solved by referring to the double status of the finite modes. Their eternity is not an individual eternity: they are durational individually. But they do spring from God eternally in the same way. This ensures both their necessity and the possibility of change. The eternity pertains only to the collection as a whole. And hence Jonathan Bennett is correct in holding that Spinoza does succeed in allowing for change and duration.²⁸⁷ As Spinoza states in the *Ethics*: "Nos in continua vivimus variatione."²⁸⁸

²⁸⁴ Spinoza, "Tractatus Theologico-Politicus", Chapter VI, §9, III83.

²⁸⁵ Ibidem, Chapter XVI, §10, III191.

²⁸⁶ Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 154.

²⁸⁷ Bennett, "Spinoza's Metaphysics", 77 – 78.

²⁸⁸ Spinoza, "Ethica", EVP39S, II305.

We have now gathered that finite modes can be expressions of God precisely because of their double status. They are finite and can therefore not, in and by themselves, be caused directly by God, but they express him in the sense that they stem from him eternally and that the finite modes as a set are not subject to change. This explains Spinoza's insistence that the finite modes display the power of God and follow, in a circumscribed and determined way, from the divine attributes, albeit of course differently from infinite modes:

*Res enim singulares modi sunt, quibus Dei attributa certo et determinato modo exprimuntur [...], hoc est [...] res, quae Dei potentiam, qua Deus est et agit, certo et determinato modo exprimunt.*²⁸⁹

However, one challenge to this interpretation is that Spinoza, in one of his letters, explicitly contrasts the eternity of the substance with the transience of the modes. Only the substance has eternity; the modes can perish:

*Nos existentiam Substantiae toto genere à Modorum existentia diversam concipere. Ex quo oritur differentia inter Aeternitatem, & Durationem; per Durationem enim Modorum tantum existentiam explicare possumus; Substantiae verò per Aeternitatem, hoc est, infinitam existendi, sive, invitâ latinitate, essendi fruitionem.*²⁹⁰

This difficulty is resolved when we understand that this distinction applies to a mode as such, when contrasted with the substance. The substance is the cause of itself and has in that capacity necessary and eternal existence. The modes need the substance in order to be necessary and eternal collectively. The eternity of which Spinoza speaks in the passage we quoted earlier, namely that in which he says that the modes can be actual in two different ways, is a dependent eternity. The dependent necessity of the modes, of which Spinoza often speaks, coincides with the dependent eternity.²⁹¹ Things keep flowing from God in the same necessary and unchangeable manner. Finite things need to be considered in a twofold sense: they are finite and durational with regard to their relation to other finite things; they are infinite as a whole when considered from the perspective of the divine nature – something which, apart from the authors we referred to earlier, Noa Shein also notes²⁹² – from which they keep flowing with full necessity. That is why H.H. Joachim could write, in the quotation we used in the introduction to this chapter, that the finite modes or singular things can be in possession of infinity and eternity through their cause, i.e. through the cause in which they are said to inhere, which is of course God.²⁹³

²⁸⁹ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIIIP6D, II146.

²⁹⁰ Spinoza, "Epistola XII", IV54/IV55.

²⁹¹ Yovel, "Infinite Mode", 92.

²⁹² Shein, "Not Wholly Finite", 438.

²⁹³ Joachim, *A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza*, 76.

This interpretation of Spinoza was already held by the eighteenth century historian Johann Gottlieb Buhle, to whom G.W.F. Hegel refers in *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*. Buhle too argued in favour of the view that the finite modes spring from God eternally and in that sense possess of the eternity pertaining to their cause, i.e. to God:

*Die einzelnen Dinge entspringen aus Gott auf eine ewige und unendliche Weise [...] nicht auf eine vorübergehende endliche und vergängliche Weise. Sie entspringen bloß auseinander, indem sie sich gegenseitig erzeugen und zerstören und in ihrem ewigen Dasein aber unwandelbar verharren.*²⁹⁴

Duration applies to the finite things when considered in relation to each other. Eternity and therefore necessity apply to the finite things when considered from the perspective of God. This means that we must understand the notion of finitude in Spinoza differently. Everything which stems from the divine attributes is itself infinite and eternal. And it is in that manner, as Melamed writes in a footnote, that modes can be eternal:

*Modes can be conceived sub specie aeternitatis, and it is this conception which allows Spinoza to speak of attributing ‘the very nature of existence’ (i.e. eternity), not duration, to singular things, or modes, as long as one conceives them as flowing from the necessity of God’s essence.*²⁹⁵

That is true of the finite modes, when considered as a whole. The eternity and infinity of God is the trademark of the finite modes taken together. A particular finite mode depends on other finite modes – e.g. the existence of a particular individual depends upon the causal power of two other individuals, namely its father and its mother – but the finite modes are jointly infinite and eternal.²⁹⁶ In Spinoza’s view it is not a possibility for other finite modes than the ones we currently see to come about. Hence the idea that the order of nature would in the future be different from the current order of nature is not regarded as sensible by him. Nature remains the same. Freudenthal asserts that the aim of Spinoza’s *Ethics* is to teach us the eternal and necessary order of all things: “Die Ethik Spinozas will uns die ewige Ordnung der Dinge in ihrer unverrückbaren Notwendigkeit kennen lehren.”²⁹⁷ The intimacy of the notions of eternity and necessity in Spinoza is here revealed: we move from the eternal order of things, as ensured, following Yovel, by the laws of nature, to the unwavering necessity of all things. The eternity of the finite modes as a whole grounds their necessity.

²⁹⁴ G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie III*, edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2015), 184/185.

²⁹⁵ Yitzhak Y. Melamed, “Spinoza’s Deification of Existence,” in *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy: Vol 6* (2012), 93.

²⁹⁶ Giancotti, “Infinite Modes”, 108.

²⁹⁷ Freudenthal, *Spinoza: Sein Leben und Lehre: Zweiter Teil*, 111.

So the eternity of the finite modes can be used to account for the necessity of the modes, i.e. for their necessarily springing from God. That these modes are, as a whole, eternal means that they can spring directly from the divine attributes and that Spinoza is in possession of that link between the infinite and the finite through which his metaphysics can account for the necessity of the finite modes: eternity grounds necessity here. The present application of the eternity of the finite modes also displays a difference with the recent interpretation of Henk Keizer, for whom the eternity and necessity of the finite modes are likewise connected. Keizer, however, explains the eternity of the finite modes by relying upon their necessarily stemming from God, their following from God's necessity.²⁹⁸ We, on the contrary, argue that Spinoza can account for the necessity of these modes through the eternity they possess, rather than for the eternity through the divine necessity.

In support of our reading of the finite modes as necessary through their eternity is a famous passage from Epistola LXIV to Von Tschirnhaus, in which Spinoza gives an example of the mediate infinite modes, namely the face of the universe, something for which he provided no further elaboration: "Facies totius Universi, quae quamvis infinitis modis variet, manet tamen semper eadem."²⁹⁹ This passage is and has been a struggle for almost all scholars of Spinoza. However, the writer of the present thesis sides with the suggestion that Spinoza is here referring to the eternity of the whole of nature.³⁰⁰ He says that the face of the universe does not alter, by which he is likely to mean that although particular finite modes perish, they as a whole, remain the same (*semper eadem*). An individual human being may come and go, as is nature's course, but other human beings will come into existence, so as to ensure that the face of the universe remains what it has always been. This is not to say that the number of finite modes cannot alter. The permanence of nature to which Spinoza subscribes is the collective permanence of the finite modes. This is corroborated by EIP17S: "Verum ego me satis clare ostendisse puto [...] a summa Dei potentia sive infinita natura infinita infinitis modis, hoc est omnia, necessario effluxisse vel semper eadem necessitate sequi, eodem modo ac ex natura trianguli ab aeterno et in aeternum sequitur ejus tres angulos aequari duobus rectis."³⁰¹ Modes flow necessarily from God and always in the same manner, which is the meaning of the *semper eadem*. The finite modes, flowing from God, remain the same and thus reflect the eternity of God, which is understood by Spinoza to be the omnipotence of God, as EIP17S1 revealed.³⁰² When Spinoza says that things spring from God necessarily, then he implies eternally, i.e. without any alteration. The necessity of the finite modes and consequently their link to God's attributes is guaranteed by this eternity.

²⁹⁸ Keizer, "Zijn Essenties van Particuliere Dingen Eeuwig?", 86.

²⁹⁹ Spinoza, "Epistola LXIV", IV278.

³⁰⁰ Huenemann, "But why was Spinoza a Necessitarian?", 119.

³⁰¹ Spinoza, "Ethica", II62.

³⁰² Ibidem.

One possible objection to this which must be considered has to do with the notion of eternity. When Melamed considers the eternity of infinite modes, he argues that for Spinoza eternal existence is ‘the existence of a thing whose existence follow necessarily from its own essence’³⁰³. It appears to be Spinoza’s view that only God has eternity and not his modes. That is substantiated by the textual evidence of the first part of the *Ethics*, where Spinoza defines eternity by using the following words: “Per aeternitatem intelligo ipsam existentiam, quatenus ex sola rei aeternae definitione necessario sequi concipitur.”³⁰⁴ Eternal is the existence of a thing – *rei* – of which the definition entails necessary existence. This is, naturally, true of God alone. The modes do not exist through their essences – which is why they cannot derive their necessity from thence – and thus not eternally.

However, eternity is not, Melamed asserts, limited to God. Spinoza explicitly says in EIP21 that everything which follows from the absolute nature of the divine attributes must be eternal and infinite.³⁰⁵ So the eternity, which is primarily that of the substance, which exists through its own essence, can be said to apply not only to the substance itself but also to its attributes and to the infinite and eternal modes which stem directly from these attributes. But the problem does not go away: Melamed has also pointed out that in passages where Spinoza speaks of eternity as applying to the substance the necessity attached to this eternal being is that of self-caused existence³⁰⁶: eternal existence can only be equated with necessary existence when God is involved: eternity in the sense in which Spinoza understands it can then not apply to the modes.³⁰⁷ Martha Kneale therefore writes that Spinoza often argues ‘that only God and His attributes are fully eternal and necessary’³⁰⁸.

We could now ask: how is eternity to apply to the finite modes and to ground their necessity if eternity can only be said to pertain to the self-caused being, to the substance whose necessity comes to exist through its essence? The answer is: through the attributes and thus through God. If the finite modes are an infinite mode and spring from the attributes directly, then that ensures their eternity, given that EIP21 says that this eternity can be transferred from the divine attributes to the things which are directly caused by these attributes, i.e. infinite modes. If the finite modes as a collection constitute an infinite mode, then they can derive their necessity from this source. So the eternity of the finite modes need not be self-caused existence, need not be the necessity and the eternity of God himself, as *causa sui*, but is guaranteed by their springing, as a whole, directly from God’s nature.

³⁰³ Yitzhak Y. Melamed, “Spinoza’s Deification of Existence”, 91.

³⁰⁴ Spinoza, “Ethica”, EIDef8, II46.

³⁰⁵ Ibidem, EIP21, II65

³⁰⁶ Ibidem, EIP10S, II52.

³⁰⁷ Melamed, “Spinoza’s Deification of Existence”, 92.

³⁰⁸ Martha Kneale, “Eternity and Sempiternity,” in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol.69 (1968), 233.

Nevertheless, in an article by Yirmiyahu Yovel we can find an objection along similar lines as to the one we derived from Melamed. Yovel also thinks that ‘finite things are as eternal as the substance from which they derive’³⁰⁹. The eternity involved is one which is said to differ from the eternity of God, i.e. the eternity of the self-caused being. In the case of the finite modes ‘eternity is replaced by indefinite duration’³¹⁰. According to Yovel, the necessity and eternity of the things produced by God, including the finite modes, is a ‘borrowed and transmitted necessity [and eternity]’³¹¹. This relies, similar to Melamed’s statements, upon the idea that eternity in Spinoza always refers to a thing which is, as Jonathan Bennett calls it, ‘absolutely necessary’³¹². True eternity, for Spinoza, involves ‘absolute necessity of existence’³¹³. And that necessity pertains to nothing other than the substance, to God himself.

Strong support for this idea is provided by the fact that the finite modes must be subject to change and also destruction. The eternity of the finite modes cannot mean that none of the individual members of these modes is destroyed. Charles Huenemann e.g. thinks that Spinoza saw the necessity of the finite modes as bound up with change.³¹⁴ Here we meet with a problem: if these finite modes are to be eternal, in what sense are they then still prone to change and destruction? It seems that the eternity of the finite modes – and thereby their necessity – must be other than the eternity of God. In God there is no change, no destruction – “Deum sive omnia Dei attributa esse immutabilia.”³¹⁵ – whereas in the finite modes there must be. The immutability and also eternity of the substance is not mirrored in the finite modes of this substance: Spinoza does allow for the possibility of change and destruction: he would for example not deny the mortality of man or giraffes.

The eternity of the finite modes jointly must consequently be of another kind than the eternity of God. This does not prevent Spinoza from arguing that the eternity of the finite modes can be derived from the eternity of God, provided we accept, as Yovel and Melamed do, that eternity here implies sempiternity, and not self-caused existence. In that way the eternity of the substance is visible in the eternity of the modes it produces, including finite modes. These finite modes can individually of course perish and be destroyed, but they do retain something of the eternity of their cause and that something enables Spinoza to account for their necessity, in the sense of their always springing from God in the same way. Nadler remarks that the world we live in ‘is for Spinoza eternal, infinite, and necessary, just because it is the necessary effect of an eternal, infinite, and necessary being’³¹⁶.

³⁰⁹ Yovel, “The Infinite Mode”, 92.

³¹⁰ Ibidem, 94.

³¹¹ Ibidem.

³¹² Bennett, “Spinoza’s Metaphysics”, 76.

³¹³ Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics*, 204.

³¹⁴ Huenemann, “But why was Spinoza a Necessitarian?”, 124.

³¹⁵ Spinoza, “Ethica”, EIP20C2, II65.

³¹⁶ Nadler, *Spinoza’s Ethics*, 106.

This eternity is further ensured, as was said earlier – and here we follow Curley and Yovel – by the laws of nature. One important passage concerning these laws is to be found in the *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione*, where Spinoza insists that everything that happens, happens in accordance with the eternal order of nature and its unalterable laws, both of which stem from God: “Omnia, quae fiunt, secundum aeternum ordinem et secundum certas Naturae leges fieri.”³¹⁷ These laws of nature are inscribed in things, the *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione* states. All things take place in accordance with these laws and nothing happens contrary to them:

*Haec vero tantum est petenda a fixis atque aeternis rebus et simul a legibus in iis rebus, tanquam in suis veris codicibus, inscriptis, secundum quas omnia singularia et fiunt et ordinantur.*³¹⁸

Herman de Dijn reads this quotation as saying that ‘singular, finite things cannot be, or be conceived, without the fixed and eternal things’³¹⁹, which entails that these singular and finite things depend upon the fixed and eternal things for their existence and essence. This alludes, many scholars argue, to the distinction between infinite and finite modes. The laws of nature are inscribed in the infinite modes and these modes transfer them to the finite modes: the laws of nature connect the infinite and finite modes and guarantee the necessity of the latter. The finite modes are dependent upon ‘the infinite modes, which are of an eternal and immutable nature’³²⁰. That is not only De Dijn’s conclusion, but also that of Harry Austryn Wolfson, who takes it that the phrase *fixis atque aeternis rebus* refers to infinite modes.³²¹

Carl Gebhardt draws the same conclusion: “Diese res fixae et aeternae sind nichts anderes als die modi infiniti, die in der Ethik wiederkehren.”³²² These eternal and fixed things, i.e. the infinite modes, guarantee the eternity and necessity of the laws of nature pertaining to the singular things. So the manner in which the divine nature determines the individual things to work is via the laws of nature, which stem from God himself but are transmitted to the finite modes through the infinite modes.³²³ Therefore this particular passage explains the necessity of the individual things, which rests on the divine order and laws. The laws inscribed in the infinite modes, the eternal and fixed things, are the laws governing all earthly things, all the modes. That necessarily links the infinite to the finite in Spinoza’s thought.

³¹⁷ Spinoza, “Tractatus de intellectus emendatione”, §12, II8

³¹⁸ Ibidem, §101, II36/37.

³¹⁹ Herman de Dijn, *The Way to Wisdom* (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1996), 175.

³²⁰ Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, Volume 1, P250.

³²¹ Ibidem, Volume 2, P161.

³²² Carl Gebhardt, *Spinozas Abhandlung über die Verbesserung des Verstandes* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1905), 111.

³²³ Yovel, “The Infinite Mode and Natural Laws in Spinoza”, 79.

It is this link which ultimately enables Spinoza to say that all finite things are necessarily determined by God to work and to act. What Spinoza then means when he says that all things are determined by God to be and work in a particular manner is that all things are governed by the same laws of nature. Jakob Freudenthal describes Spinoza's view in this regard:

*Alles, was geschieht, geschieht [...] nach Gottes ewigem Ratschluß, nach Gesetze und Regeln, die ewige Notwendigkeit und Wahrheit einschließen. Nichts kann demnach geschehen, was diesen Gesetze widerstritte; nichts, was aus ihnen nicht folgte.*³²⁴

One letter of Spinoza, among other things, provides evidence for this: "Omnium eorum, quae sunt, ex Dei aeternis legibus, & Decretis necessario profluant, continuoque à Deo dependeant."³²⁵ All things depend upon the eternal laws and decrees of God. This conception of laws of nature accounts for Spinoza's necessitarianism and allows him to say that the finite modes are necessary. The laws by means of which all things which are in God, i.e. all his modes, are governed, cannot in any manner be altered. The current laws of nature are the only possible laws, given that they stem from the divine nature and are an expression of the divine power and perfection:

*His idea of the sum and source of all being, or the most perfect being, in other words, of God, [...] includes the idea of uniformity as ruling all events whatever, and this uniformity is regarded as inseparable from the unity of the only and all-embracing whole.*³²⁶

God's causality is a necessity, revealed in the laws of nature, and hence a uniform necessity. This has the consequence that the finite modes are in a way always the same, given that the laws by means of which they come into existence and the causes by means of which they are determined to work and act cannot be changed or altered. Spinoza's monism and his conception of the laws of nature imply that everything which is, is necessary but also eternal. This eternity is conveyed in the things which stem directly from the divine attributes and this is true of the finite modes. As a consequence of the eternity of God and his attributes, God cannot vary in his actions and hence cannot differ in the manner in which his modes are brought about. The necessity of all that he brings about is in a sense also eternity, although not in the sense of particular things being eternal. It belongs to the order of nature that singular things perish and vanish. The order of nature itself, on the contrary, does not perish or vanish, implying that it is eternal, for Spinoza, and that the finite modes as a whole to this extent do not alter.

³²⁴ Freudenthal, *Spinoza: Leben und Lehre: Zweiter Teil*, 191.

³²⁵ Spinoza, "Epistola XXIII: To Van Blijenbergh, 13.3.1665", IV149.

³²⁶ Pollock, *Spinoza: His Life and Philosophy*, 134.

So we have gathered that the laws which preside over nature currently will preside over nature through all eternity. That these laws possess eternity and therefore can in no manner whatsoever be altered is also expressed by Spinoza in a passage from the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, where it is stated that the laws of nature are God's eternal decrees, which for Spinoza must involve eternal truth and necessity: "Leges naturae universales, secundum quas omnia fiunt et determinantur, nihil esse nisi Dei aeterna decreta, quae semper aeternam veritatem et necessitatem involvunt."³²⁷ Consequently, the transfer of necessity from God to the finite modes takes place via these eternal decrees of God. God's eternity is expressed in the laws of nature, as inscribed in the infinite modes.

Hence we were justified in arguing that this conception of nature as a place where eternal and divine laws reign helps Spinoza in accounting for his strict necessitarianism: these laws must be what they are and hence the finite modes have to come about with complete necessity. The finite modes are, as all things are, subject to an eternal order: "Nihil contra naturam contingere, sed ipsam aeternum fixum, & immutabilem ordinem servare."³²⁸ One question we may now ask is: if the laws of nature guarantee that the finite modes spring necessarily from God, why then do we – and does Spinoza – need the idea that the finite modes are as a whole an infinite mode, in possession of eternity? Precisely because these laws of nature are not themselves infinite modes, as Curley stressed, but are inscribed in these infinite modes. Through forming an infinite mode, the finite modes can be determined by nature's laws, which are inscribed in these infinite modes.

Jon Miller concludes with reference to these laws of nature: "Since the "universal laws of Nature" are "God's eternal decrees" and since God's decrees "involve eternal truth and necessity," the universal laws of Nature also involve eternal truth and necessity."³²⁹ The eternity of the laws helps grounding the collective eternity of the finite modes and this helps to account for their necessity. However, one may object that Spinoza subscribes to the eternity of the laws of nature and not to the eternity of individual things determined by these laws. When Spinoza says in EIP17S1 that the power of God is actual eternally³³⁰, he might be taken to mean that the laws, which express this power, are eternal and not the finite modes. The eternity then resides in the divine rule and not in the modes. The order of nature could be eternal without the finite modes springing from God eternally in the same manner. But if that were true, the connection between God and these modes would not be sufficiently strong to enable Spinoza to account for their necessity. Hence the finite modes are to be considered eternal as a totality.

³²⁷ Spinoza, "Tractatus Theologico-Politicus", Chapter III, §8, III46.

³²⁸ Ibidem, Chapter VI, §5, III82.

³²⁹ Jon Miller, "Spinoza and the Concept of a Law of Nature," in *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, Vol.20, No.3 (2003), 265.

³³⁰ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP17S1, II62.

The aforementioned also solves an issue with which Melamed's inherence reading is confronted. Melamed writes that God is the finite modes. This is a consequence of Melamed's version of inherence which Curley for one is not willing to accept, because it seemingly turns God into a finite thing, given that in Melamed's reading of inherence God seems to become the finite modes, which appears to be odd. However, on our interpretation finite modes may indeed be said to be contained in God on the basis of their being, as a whole, eternal and infinite. The inherence in God of finite modes that are infinite and eternal as a conglomerate is not a problem. We need not embrace Curley's reading of causal dependence in order to escape from the undesirable conclusion that God is the finite modes. God is the finite modes, but only in the sense that they make up an infinite mode.

However, we do embrace Wolfson's containment reading and not Melamed's inherence reading in which the finite modes become part of infinite modes and are properties predicated of God. This containment reading can, through the idea that modes are contained in each other and ultimately in God, account for the causality of God. We need, accordingly, not accept Curley's identification of God with *natura naturans*. There is a connection between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, namely that of the laws of nature, as e.g. Yovel stresses, and the eternity of the finite modes, that prevents us from having to follow Curley in this regard. The substance, i.e. God, is a unity and the role which the laws of nature play in connecting the infinite and the finite in this unity entails that God equals the realm of nature. The laws which spring from God and which ground the necessity of all finite things do not require us to endorse Curley's causal dependence reading and his commitment to the idea that God is merely *natura naturans*.

So the challenge which was provided by the causal dependence reading of the relation between substance and modes can be settled. Spinoza's notion of the laws of nature and the idea that the finite modes together are eternal and infinite – which means that individual modes perish but that the same finite modes keep flowing eternally from God – makes it more easier to maintain that the modes are in God. But what about Curley's claim that it is unlikely for God to be the cause of his own properties, or at least of the things that inhere in him? John Carriero thinks that the roles God has in Spinoza, namely as the cause of all things and as the thing in which they inhere, are not contradictory and 'that to claim that substance plays these two roles is not to claim that the roles themselves are the same'³³¹. It is especially important to note that the modes are not properties in the sense in which God is the things that inhere in them. The inherence of the finite modes in God does not mean that God himself perishes when a man does, as the *Short Treatise* explains.³³² Finite modes are not God's properties, but they are as a whole contained in God and in that way necessary.

³³¹ Carriero, "On The Relation between Mode and Substance", 260.

³³² Spinoza, *Short Treatise*, Part One, Chapter Two, §22, I26

Another problem which this interpretation settles is the one introduced in the introduction, namely Spinoza's principle that cause and effect must have something in common in order to be order cause and effect. That seemed difficult for Spinoza with regard to God's causing the finite modes, but now he can account for it. That the whole collection of finite modes is eternal and infinite – there are infinitely many finite modes – means that it can spring directly from the divine attributes. That springing now involves similarity: finite things may, on an individual level, be wholly different from God, yet they are similar to him with regard to their features as a collection of modes. God as cause can be similar to his effects, namely the finite modes, through the eternity of these modes. Remember that EIP21 says that all things which follow directly from the divine attributes must be both eternal and infinite. That is a condition now met by the finite modes. This solves the issue of how the finite modes can necessarily stem from God without following individually from God's attributes, something which can only pertain to eternal and infinite things.

But what about Spinoza's insistence in the *Ethics* that what is finite cannot be derived from the divine attributes? After all, Spinoza asserts, in EIP28D³³³, which we quoted before, that things which are finite and have a circumscribed existence cannot be produced by the absolute nature of God's attributes. This should now be taken to mean that nothing finite can individually stem from God and that therefore the individual finite modes must follow from God indirectly when considered individually.³³⁴ As was argued earlier in response to Curley and Walski: this does not prevent the finite modes from, as they said in opposition to Garrett and others, being caused by God as an infinite whole, i.e. as an infinite mode consisting of all the finite modes – not only of their formal essences, as Huenemann argued.

To return, however, to the causal link between the finite and the infinite: the fact that a link has now been established between the finite modes and God which ensures that they can indeed spring necessarily from God, does not entail that cause and effect are wholly alike. Spinoza's principle of causal likeness rules that things which are entirely different cannot be cause and effect (EIP3) and that cause and effect must have something in common. Nonetheless, Spinoza did concede in a letter that particular things are to a certain degree different from their causes, from the divine necessity from which they spring: the essence and existence of a singular thing differs from the essence and existence of God,³³⁵ i.e. God's self-caused existence is not the existence of the finite modes, nor is his essence similar to theirs. This interpretation does not call that fact into question in any way: Spinoza's contention in the letter to Meyer that substance and mode are entirely different ontologically – 'toto genere' – can be respected.

³³³ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP28D, II69.

³³⁴ Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics: Substance*, 107.

³³⁵ Spinoza, "Epistola LXIV", IV278.

3.8: Solution: The Apparent Contingency of Singular Things

That brings us to the problem of the apparent contingency of singular things: the ontological difference between the substance and its modes also leads, as we have seen, to a difference in the kind of necessity applying to each: modes are not necessary through their essences, and in that sense singular things are by Spinoza described as contingent. However, the problem of the apparent contingency of the modes can only occur when one conceives of these modes as separate and autonomous entities. Charles Jarrett notes that the necessity of the modes is included in the necessity of God as the cause of his own existence.³³⁶ If a link is established between God and the modes, particularly the finite modes, then the necessity of singular things is implied by the necessity of God, something which Huenemann thinks is secured through formal essences³³⁷ and which e.g. Yovel thinks is possible through the laws of nature³³⁸. The containment of all the modes – and accordingly of all singular things – in God ensures that the contingency of singular things is only an apparent one.³³⁹

If modes were supposed to have an independent existence of their own, then it would indeed be a problem that they do not exist through their essences. In that case the source of their necessity would be unknown. But, as Griffin also stresses, the intrinsic or essential necessity of God implies the necessity of all the singular things.³⁴⁰ Hence this difficulty can only arise when we conceive of modes as substances: if the modes were substances, i.e. independent beings, then their necessity must have come from their essences, as a result of which the necessity of the modes could not be accounted for by Spinoza, given that these modes have no necessary existence through their essences. It is only because these modes are affections of God and God exists necessarily, that they do so as well.³⁴¹

It is important to stress that Spinoza is only able to account for the necessity of the singular things, i.e. to deny their contingency, if a connection exists between the finite modes and God: that connection, in this case a connection through these modes being an infinite mode, secures their necessity and ensures their containment in God, i.e. in the one substance. The solution to the problem of the necessity of the modes as such consequently has implications for the challenge of the apparent contingency of singular things: Spinoza can overcome that challenge if he is able to account for the necessity of finite modes, which he is able to do through the finite modes forming an infinite mode and through the laws of nature.³⁴²

³³⁶ Jarrett, “Spinoza on Necessity”, 130/139.

³³⁷ Huenemann, “The Necessity of Finite Modes”, 238.

³³⁸ Yovel, “The Infinite Mode”, 93.

³³⁹ Huenemann, “The Necessity of Finite Modes”, 238.

³⁴⁰ Griffin, “Necessitarianism in Leibniz and Spinoza”, 91.

³⁴¹ Koistinen, “Spinoza’s Proof for Necessitarianism”, 305.

³⁴² Yovel, “The Infinite Mode”, 94.

Things are more complicated where the two forms of necessity are concerned. Don Garrett has argued that Spinoza merely distinguishes the sources of necessity: a thing can derive its necessity from its essence or from its causes.³⁴³ In that case no difference in strength is present in Spinoza. It must be acknowledged that Spinoza indeed does not, as we emphasised before, want to conceive of such a distinction in strength. As Dominik Perler explained: the essential and the causal necessity are both said to be absolute forms of necessity, which allows for no contingency whatsoever. The issue at stake is, however, whether Spinoza succeeds in accounting for that view. The strongest argument he seems to have at his disposal is that of the causality of God: if any causality is not absolutely necessary, then God's causality cannot be a necessitation.³⁴⁴ And then the world could not have followed necessarily from the divine nature, as Spinoza thinks it does: "Mundum naturae divinae necessarium effectum eumque fortuito non esse factum."³⁴⁵

The impossibility of God existing and acting contingently entails the impossibility of God's modes being and acting contingently. Hence the causal necessity pertaining to the finite modes can be and is as strict a necessity as the necessity of God himself. Spinoza declares: "Deum [...] non potest dici res contingens."³⁴⁶ The absolute nature of all causality is guaranteed by the fact that God is the fountain from which all causes spring: he is everything's immanent cause. Olli Koistinen explains that for Spinoza contingency 'is impossible because each thing there is depends on one single cause which has to exist by necessity'³⁴⁷. So when Spinoza is asked how he can account for the necessary nature of causality, he is able to answer: through God, who is the source of all causality. Note that this is connected to the necessity of the finite modes: if they are necessitated by God, which they can be through their eternity, then Spinoza can explain that all causation is necessitation.

After all, God as the immanent cause of finite modes necessitates these. Again the close ties between the substance, God, and his modes enable Spinoza to meet a challenge to his strict necessitarianism. The essential necessity pertaining to the substance and the causal necessity pertaining to the modes are ultimately two sides of the same coin. The absolute necessity of which God is an expression is also expressed in the modes of God: when God causes himself to exist, he also causes his modes to exist, meaning that their existence and actions, including causal actions, derive from God's being *causa sui*. This is why Nadler could argue, as we saw in chapter one, that there is ultimately no distinction here. Consequently Spinoza can explain that there is, as Griffin states, only one absolute form of necessity.³⁴⁸

³⁴³ Garrett, "Spinoza's Necessitarianism", 199.

³⁴⁴ Spinoza, *Short Treatise*, Part One, Chapter VI, 142, Page 86.

³⁴⁵ Spinoza, "Epistola LIV", IV252.

³⁴⁶ Spinoza, "Ethica", EIP29D, II70.

³⁴⁷ Koistinen, "Spinoza's Proof for Necessitarianism", 291.

³⁴⁸ Griffin, "Necessitarianism in Spinoza and Leibniz", 90.

Conclusion

We have reached the end of our enquiry. The research question we set out to answer was: does Spinoza's metaphysics succeed in accounting for his strict necessitarianism? Accounting in this context was defined, it may be remembered, as explaining, as grounding. It may now be said that Spinoza's metaphysics does indeed succeed in accounting for his strict necessitarianism and particularly for the necessity of the finite modes: the status of these finite modes as an infinite mode, in which we followed Della Rocca, Garrett and Melamed, allows them to be both closely tied to the divine attributes and eternal. The latter, i.e. the eternity of these finite modes as a collection, ensures their necessity. For this idea of the eternity of the finite modes we are indebted to Joachim, Buhle, Keizer, Melamed and Freudenthal. From this eternity the close link between God and the finite modes follows, albeit not individually but rather collectively.

Thus the causal connection Spinoza's metaphysics needs in order to account for his strict necessitarianism is in point of fact present. This causal connection is related, as we saw, to the laws of nature, which ground the eternal order of the world and the necessity of the finite modes as a consequence of this. These laws necessitate one collection of finite modes, rather than allowing for other collections of finite modes, at least theoretically. Consequently we argued that it is not true that only the order of nature, i.e. the laws of nature, is eternal, but the finite modes determined by these laws are so too, in their joint capacity of infinite mode. They themselves share, contrary to what Edwin Curley maintained, in the eternity of their cause. This eternity is not, we agree with Henk Keizer, expressed in the formal essences of finite modes, as Charles Huenemann and Don Garrett have argued. It is the eternity of the whole collection of modes; and not the eternity of their formal essences.

This at once enables Spinoza to meet the challenges of the apparent contingency of singular things and of two kinds of necessity, both of which threatened his ability to account for his strict necessitarianism. If the finite modes are indeed closely intertwined with God, which they can be as an infinite mode, then it is not a problem that they do not exist through their essences. This would only have been a problem had modes been independent entities, the existence of which had to be ensured by their own essences. The dependence of the modes on the substance, as being contained in this substance – a notion we owe to Harry Austryn Wolfson – guarantees that these finite modes possess the necessity which Spinoza's strict necessitarianism bestows on them. Concerning the two kinds of necessity: the necessity of God implies, as Charles Jarrett maintains, the necessity of his modes; thus Spinoza succeeds in conceiving of two kinds of necessity without thereby impairing his ability to account for his strict necessitarianism. The dependence of all the modes on God, ensured in the case of the finite modes by their joint eternity, helps Spinoza here.

This eternity, however, is sempiternity, as Yovel has argued. Eternity in the strictest sense in Spinoza applies only to God, given that Spinoza defines eternity in terms of self-caused existence, rather than in terms of duration or its absence. Eternity is existence which occurs through the essence of a thing, and this kind of existence can of course pertain only to God. The eternity of God, nonetheless, is mirrored in the eternity of the finite modes, which we have understood as their eternally springing from God in the same manner, meaning that the same modes keep recurring and that the face of the universe does not in any way whatsoever alter. As Steven Nadler has remarked: the eternity of God is reflected in the world, given that this world is caused, indeed necessitated, by God. According to the present thesis, this eternity precedes necessity and allows Spinoza to account for the necessity of all finite things stemming from God, e.g. giraffes, humans and other creatures, i.e. everything that has a limited and a circumscribed existence.

That is the outcome of this thesis. We can now address the question: what are the broader implications of this outcome? It should be said that modesty is here appropriate. The thesis has defended a particular interpretation of Spinoza, elements of which can be found in the rich and vast scholarship on Spinoza. Consequently the thesis is unlikely to shock the world of Spinoza scholarship. On the contrary, it is indebted to, as the third chapter makes abundantly clear, the scholarship which already exists. The interpretation defended here represents an enquiry into Spinoza's work with constant recourse to existing scholarship, which has helped us to construe several key elements of our interpretation, but parts of which we have attempted to refute, especially in the sections 3.5 en 3.6, where other solutions to the issue of the necessity of the finite modes have been considered and a collection of arguments against these solutions has been developed.

All in all, the thesis thus concludes that Spinoza's metaphysics does indeed succeed in accounting for his strict necessitarianism. The problem of the necessity of the finite modes is one that his metaphysics proves able to deal with by supplying the elements that justify and ground this necessity. That the infinite modes, due to the way in which they stem from the divine attributes, are eternal and necessary, helps to account for and hence to ground the eternity and necessity of the finite modes as a whole. As a result of this, Spinoza's metaphysics does succeed in accounting for his strict necessitarianism, the elements of which we described in the first chapter. Spinoza's commitment to strict necessitarianism is thus not, as the second chapter implied, something for which his metaphysics cannot fully account. The necessity of all things, which Spinoza considered the foundation of his *Ethics*, not only, as Spinoza wrote to Van Blijenbergh, belongs to metaphysics in general, but can also be accounted for within Spinoza's own metaphysics, most notably through the eternity of the finite modes.

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