

Transcript

Antonio Salgado Borge - "God or Natura Naturata?"

Antonio Salgado Borge:

First of all, it is for me a great honour to be here sharing this event with so many scholars and colleagues whose work I admire and I find truly inspiring. Thank you to Marie and to Dan for organizing this. It is great to be able to participate in something like this and to discuss Spinoza in this specific way.

I want to begin with a clarification: what I am about to present here is very much a work in progress. Actually, I have only recently began thinking about this, motivated by Marie and Dan's call for abstracts for this conference so I would truly benefit from all your questions or comments or suggestions regarding what I am about to present.

As you all very well know Spinoza identifies God and nature, he believes that is that God and nature are numerically identical or that they are one and the same thing. However, Spinoza also presents in the Ethics a division of nature, he presents a division that is twofold.

On the one hand we have natural naturals what is in itself and is conceived through itself or such attributes of substance as express an eternal and infinite essence i.e., God insofar as he is considered a free cause. On the other hand, we have natura naturata: whatever follows from the necessity of God's nature or from any of God's attributes i.e., all the modes of God's attributes insofar as they are considered as things which are in God and can neither be nor be conceived without God. To put it short what we have here is the distinction between the attributes of God and the modes that follow from those attributes.

The question is then what does Spinoza has explicitly in mind specifically in mind when he identifies God and nature. According to Edwin Curley what Spinoza has in mind is the identification between God and natura naturans; that is the claim that God is numerically identical to the attributes of that substance. An argument for this claim can be presented as follows: natura naturans as we know is God's essence, but God's essence Spinoza holds is numerically identical to God's existence and to God's power therefore nature naturans is numerically identical to God's existence and to God's power that is God exists as natura naturans or God is identical to natura naturans.

On the other hand, we have I think a more accepted view which is the claim that for Spinoza God is identical to both natural naturans and natura naturata. An argument for this claim can be presented as follows: God is both cause and effect for Spinoza but natura naturans is the active part of nature Spinoza holds. Natura naturata, the argument goes, is the passive part of nature but if it is so then God must be identical to natura naturans plus natura naturata, that is the sum of natura naturans and natura naturata

What I want to do here is to introduce and to discuss a further view: the possibility that Spinoza holds when he identifies God or nature that God is numerically identical with each natura naturans and natura naturata, and I will present an argument for this claim. The argument is divided twofold: first I

discuss why Spinoza believes that God is numerically identical to *natura naturata* and not only to *natura naturans* as it is commonly held; and then I derive or explore a possible outcome of this first part of the argument which is the claim that for Spinoza *natura naturata* is God understood as existence. With that said let us get to the details of the argument. The first premise of the argument which I think is the one dubiety doing the heavy lifting is the claim that the power of *natura naturata* is numerically identical to the power of God. As we have seen Edwin Curley believes that only *natura naturans* is identical to God and the *natura naturans* is the active part of God whereas the both view holds that *natura naturata* is passive; *natura naturans* is active, so both Curley and the commonly held view which is the both view involve positioning that *natura natura* is passive this premise says the opposite *natura naturata* is numerically identical to the power of God *natura naturata* is active.

I believe that support for this premise can be found in the TTP. Although Spinoza does not say this explicitly in the Ethics in the TTP he makes two specific claims that I think contribute supporting this premise. The first claim is that the power of all-natural things is nothing but the power itself of God. That is Spinoza is identifying here the power of all-natural things with the power of God. Later on, in the TTP Spinoza claims that the power of the whole of nature is nothing but the power of all individuals together. As we know in the Ethics, Spinoza defines individuals as the result of the composition at least in the case of the attributes of extension between different modes of extension that further compose a further mode.

If we accept this definition of individual and if we accept that something analogous happens across the attributes then we must accept that individuals for Spinoza are modes, but then the claim that the power of the whole of nature is nothing but the power for the power of all individuals would be the claim that the power of the whole of nature is nothing but the power of all modes and as we have seen Spinoza also believed that the power of all of nature is nothing but the power itself of God. Therefore, the power of God would be the power numerically identical to the power of all modes in nature.

Now Spinoza says very explicitly that the power of *x* is numerically identical to the existence of *x*, that is the power of a thing is numerically identical to the existence of that thing. I believe that there are two passages supporting this claim: first, Spinoza says that to be able not to exist is to lack power and conversely to be able to exist is to have power. Spinoza also says that nothing exists from whose nature some effect does not follow. If we accept these claims, if we accept this reading, then we must accept that the power of one thing, the power of anything, is identical to the existence of that thing but if we accept premise number one the claim that the power of nature and is numerically identical to the power of God and if we accept that the power of one thing is numerically identical to the existence of that thing, then we must also accept that *natura naturata* is numerically identical to God.

Spinoza now holds that *natura naturata* is numerically identical to God, that Spinoza says in many passages I believe from the Ethics but explicitly so in the definition of God if we accept that *natura naturata* is numerically identical to God since we have accepted that *natura naturata* is also numerically identical to God by transitivity we must accept that *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* are numerically identical. This is the first part of the argument and I believe this supports the claim that *natura naturata* is numerically identical to God and that *natura naturata* and *natura naturans* are in turn numerically identical.

Now let us turn to the second part of the argument. If *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* are numerically identical as I have here argued then for Spinoza this must be two ways of conceiving one

and the same thing, that is *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* are not subject of the Cartesian real distinction they must be closer the distinction between them must be closer to the conceptual distinction or the distinction of reason. That is, they must be ways of conceiving one and the same thing since in reality they are one and the same thing. Now Spinoza says that *natura naturans* is God understood as essence, he says that in the premise number 19 part 1 in the Ethics. But Spinoza also says that God's essence and God's existence are one and the same. I believe that we can infer from these claims that *natura naturata* can be understood for Spinoza, can be for Spinoza God understood as existence. That is *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* are two ways of understanding the same thing, God, but whereas *natura naturans* is God understood as essence or understood as all attributes, *natura naturata* is God understood as existence or as almost, as I have here argued.

Now I am aware that objections can be raised against this view and I want to discuss at least briefly a couple of these. First of all, I think the most immediate objection that comes to my mind at least is that for Spinoza *natura naturans* is indivisible, the attributes of God are indivisible, whereas *natura naturata* is allegedly it has been discussed but allegedly divisible. That is the modes are divisible, but the attributes are not. So, one might wonder how is it possible that *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* are numerically identical, when, one, *natura naturata* is divisible and the other *natura naturans* is not. I believe that it could be responded to this that this is possible because for Spinoza *natura naturata* and *natura naturans* are ways of conceiving the one and the same thing and there's nothing preventing or contradictory. It defines in the fact that we can conceive one thing in one way that is not divisible and we can conceive the very same thing in another way in which we can divide it conceptually. In reality we are conceiving one the same thing in two ways, so we are not actually performing contradictory operations on the thing we're only doing this conceptually.

Finally, I want to address a further objection which is the claim that modes are conceived through attributes, so if God is numerically identical to *natura naturata* then God must not be would not sorry be conceived in itself and through itself to this I believe it can be replied that well Spinoza believes that God understood as a substance that is all attributes is God in himself in itself. Spinoza claims that if the affections are put on one side the substance is considered in itself i.e., considered truly one cannot be conceived considered truly sorry one cannot be conceived to be distinguished from another. That does not mean that God understood as all modes must be so. That is in this case we would be conceiving modes through substance and that would be the claim that one and the same thing is considered through itself.

What I am for pushing this point further and claims that Spinoza certainly believes that existence is conceived through essence so the fact that *natura naturata* is existence is consistent with the fact that for Spinoza essence is the tool through which we conceive existence. and I think I am about to be out of time so I will leave it like this because I cannot see the the hand or the clock, but I will leave it here to leave space for your questions and comments. Thank you.