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**The Order of Nature and the Nature of
Order in the Philosophy of Spinoza**

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Putting Order in Order

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Relaciones entre Spinoza y España

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The Order of Nature and the Nature of Order in the Philosophy of Spinoza

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I. Elements of Order

In this paper I will argue that a unique conception of order emerges out of Spinoza's view of nature — an order that serves as the basis for the foundation of his universe and that centrally figures in shedding light on his philosophy at whatever level. The kind of order to which I refer in no way can be viewed as being of a serial type, nor one based on some form of inherent teleological principle, and neither is it for that matter the mere appearance of things as they occur. What Spinoza speaks of when he tells us about “the order of nature,” as Wienpahl (1979) indicates, is not that which we ordinarily think. “He means rather the course or manner of nature” (p. 177). It is the essence of nature — the way that it is determined to act and to behave — that demonstrates its manner of being or its order, as it were. The closest one may come to define it — which I do only hesitatingly for fear of oversimplifying the depth and breadth of the concept — is what I would call ‘ontological order’: an order of being. Moreover, this kind of ontological order of the Spinozist kind stands in direct opposition to, let us say, the Baconian view of the order of nature as something to be both mastered and controlled — in the final analysis, as an obstacle to be overcome. Spinoza's view of nature, on the contrary, is that nature is something to be properly acknowledged, not as slave serving master, but more akin to the kind of understanding that develops in the teacher and pupil relationship, or the nurturing relationship that unfolds between mother and child.

To understand more fully Spinoza's conception of order, I shall begin by discussing the structure of the order of nature. Next, I will continue with my focus on the ontological order of nature, highlighting what have been classified as three essential aspects of Spinoza's view of nature: the common order of nature, the eternal order of nature, and the rationally contrived order of nature. And lastly, with regard to the latter, by closely

examining the rationally contrived order of nature, that aspect of nature which serves as the context for developing an adequate understanding of the workings of the cosmos, I am afforded the opportunity to point out some of the more common intellectual blocks that tend to arrest such understanding.

To begin, the order of nature includes within its compass the totality of all that there is in the universe. It is descriptive of the modifications of an all-inclusive substance, (*natura naturata*), and the nature of that substance, (*natura naturans*), referred to by Spinoza as God or nature. With regard to the latter, *natura naturans*, nature is a free cause, that is, “that which is in itself and conceived through itself,” or stated somewhat differently, “the attributes of substance that express eternal and infinite essence” (E1P29Schol).¹ In other words, it has to do with “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” (*ibid.*).² In brief, *natura naturans* refers to God or nature apprehended as principle cause, and *natura naturata* to God or to nature apprehended as an effect. Together they each exhaust reality. From a non-abstract standpoint, neither is distinct from the other except logically.

The ‘order of nature’, as noted above, can be classified under three aspects, the first of which I shall treat now. The “common order of nature” (*communis ordo naturae*) refers to the “fortuitous run of circumstances” (E2P29Schol) that the untutored mind regards for external nature. Such a mind is only in possession of inadequate, confused, and fragmentary knowledge with regard to itself, its body, and external bodies.

. . . Whenever it perceives things from the common order of nature, that is, whenever it is determined externally — namely, by the fortuitous run of circumstances — to regard this or that, and not when it is determined internally, through its regarding several things at the same time, to understand their agreement, their differences, and their opposition. [*ibid.*]³

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1. “. . . quod in se est et per se concipitur; sive talia substantiae attributa, quae aeternam et infinitam essentiam expriment. . . .”
 2. “. . . hoc est omnes Dei attributorum modos, quatenus considerantur ut res, quae in Deo sunt, et quae sine Deo nec esse nec concipi possunt.”

Another way of understanding the common order of nature is to view it as “existence through duration,” more commonly known as contingency (E1P33Schol1), as Joachim has argued (1901, p. 308). Collins (1984) concurs with Joachim in this regard. He states that according to Spinoza, “the common order of nature is not a domain of reality in its own right, but is precisely this undisciplined and shortsighted way of regarding modal nature and man in it” (p. 160). Moreover, he elsewhere aims to clarify Spinoza’s use of ‘common’, as in ‘common order of nature’. He remarks that “it refers to the view of a durational temporal unity or contingently related order of things in which our imaginative way of perception predominates” (p. 243). At best, according to Collins, the common order of nature is “a story of the imagination’s own structure, development, and desires” (p. 243).

The common order of nature stands in direct contrast to the eternal order of nature. As the common order is to sense perception and imagination, the eternal order is to the intellect and reason. In the *Tractatus politicus*, Spinoza states:

. . . for the bounds of nature are not the laws of human reason, which do but pursue the true interest and preservation of mankind, but other infinite laws, which regard the eternal order of universal nature, whereof man is an atom; and according to the necessity of this order only are all individual beings determined in a fixed manner to exist and to operate. [TP2, Sec. 8, p. 295]⁴

Moreover, in the *TdIE*, he notes, “. . . all things which come to pass, come to pass according to the eternal order and fixed laws of nature” (p. 6).⁵

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3. “. . . quoties ex communi Naturae ordine res percipit; hoc est, quoties externe, ex rerum nempe fortuito occurso, determinatur ad hoc vel illud contemplandum, et non quoties interne, ex eo scilicet, quod res plures simul contemplantur, determinatur ad earundem convenientias, differentias et oppugnantias intelligendum. . . .”
 4. “. . . nam 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.”
 5. “. . . omnia, quae fiunt, secundum aeternum ordinem et secundum certas Naturae leges fieri.”

Now, when we fully regard nature as determined in a fixed manner to exist as it does by the necessity of its own nature, and not as a result of contingent circumstances — that is, when we acknowledge the eternal order to which the whole of nature is subject — then we are no longer in a state of ignorance, and have attained the third degree of knowledge; and it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss intuitive knowledge more fully. Suffice it to say, however, in Spinoza’s words, “if anything, therefore, in nature seems ridiculous, absurd, or evil, it is because we only know in part, and are almost entirely ignorant of the order and interdependence of nature as a whole, and also because we want everything to be arranged according to the dictates of our human reason” (TTP16, p. 202; TP8).⁶ The eternal order of nature views existence under the aspect of eternity (*sub specie aeternitatis*); and when eternity becomes the focus of the human mind, then it comes to know itself, its body, and other corporeal things (Collins, p. 190, ff. 33). In short, cognizance of the eternal order is necessary although not sufficient to order one’s life rationally.

The distinction between the common order of nature and the eternal order of nature does not hinge on some ontological bifurcation, but rather refers to two ways by which we know and come to relate to the “order of nature.” The rationally contrived order of nature precisely has to do with how we rationally view and relate to nature. The greater part of *TdIE*, I would argue, can be interpreted as a “how-to” demonstration of rationally determining one’s life according to principles based on obtaining eternal truth. But, of course, we must not overlook that it is essentially a treatise on rational character development of a very special kind. Early in this treatise, Spinoza hints at the nature of the character to be sought. He states, “what that character is we shall show in due time, namely, that it is the knowledge of the union existing between mind and the whole nature” (p. 6).⁷ It is important to point out that, as this short work makes clear, there is a method, on the one hand, and a philosophy of which this method is an integral part, on the other hand. The ‘method’ can be likened to a kind of psychotherapy which aids the mind in re-ordering its internal, cognitive affairs along rational grounds according to an eternal perspective.⁸ In other words,

6. “. . . quicquid ergo nobis in Natura ridiculum, absurdum, aut malum videtur, id inde venit, quod res tantum ex parte novimus, totiusque Naturae ordinem et cohaerentiam maxima ex parte ignoramus, et quod omnia ex usu nostrae Rationis dirigi volumus.”

7. “Quaenam autem illa sit natura ostendemus suo loco, nimirum esse cognitorem unionis, quam mens cum tota Natura habet.”

method has to do with “. . . the character of fictitious, false, and doubtful perception, and the means of freeing ourselves therefrom” (p. 18).⁹ The kind of re-ordering required, Spinoza argues, will involve the rearranging and uniting of our perceptions in a rational manner, and so when we direct our investigation into nature, “we should inquire whether there be any being (and, if so, what being) that is the cause of all things, so that its essence, represented in thought, may be the cause of all our ideas, and then our mind will to the utmost possible extent reflect nature. For it will possess, subjectively, nature’s essence, order, and union” (p. 36).¹⁰ We must be especially careful not to rely on the serial order in which things, at times, appear to be arranged before our senses. Additionally, it should be kept well in mind to guard against attributing to nature “beauty, ugliness, order, or confusion. It is only with respect to our imagination that things can be said to be beautiful, ugly, ordered or confused” (Ep32).¹¹ All that we would possibly discover, along this mode of interpretation, is at best their quantity, relations, and perhaps the circumstances that surround them. The inmost essence of things, however, are what is to be sought after, and the fixed and eternal laws by which their natures are determined can be viewed, in a sense, as therapeutic guides.

There are several “prejudices” of mind, as Spinoza refers to them, and I take him to mean ‘falsehoods or irrationalisms’ which must inevitably be overcome in the process of re-ordering and shaping of a rationally ordered character. (1) That there is an end for which nature, whole or

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8. Cf. Harris (1986), with whom I am in general agreement, and who has convincingly argued that we must first be able to comprehend the principles of order implicit within substance and its attributes before we can begin to employ the methodology outlined in *TdIE*. See also de Dijn (1986, 1974) and Zweerman (1974) for a thoroughgoing analysis of the methodological logic contained in the *TdIE* and expressed elsewhere in the writings of Spinoza.
9. “. . . id est circa quae perceptio ficta, falsa, et dubia versetur, et quomodo ab unaquaque liberabimur.”
10. “. . . inquiramus, an detur quoddam Ens, et simul quale, quod sit omnium rerum causa, ut ejus essentia objectiva sit etiam causa omnium nostrarum idearum; et tum mens nostra, uti diximus, quam maxime referet Naturam: nam et ipsius essentiam, et ordinem, et unionem habebit objective.”
11. “. . . pulchritudinem, deformitatem, ordinem, neque confusionem. Nam res non, nisi respective ad nostram imaginationem, possunt dici pulchrae aut deformes, ordinatae aut confusae.”

part, strives. I shall call this falsehood the ‘illusion of teleology’. (2) That order is somehow in nature, and that it is our task to discern the scheme of this order. I shall refer to this project as the ‘illusion of the inherent order’. (3) That images no less than words are on par with ideas, and that there is no distinction to be made between the imagination and the understanding. The confusion which thereby results I refer to as the ‘illusion of false assumptions’. Finally, (4) that emotions need not so much to be checked, and that there is nothing to learn fundamentally from them either about our nature or the nature of the objects with which we come in contact in the world. I can simply refer to this gross oversight as ‘emotional immaturity’.

II. The Illusion of Teleology

There is an end toward which nature, whole or part, strives. According to Spinoza, because they are ignorant of the causes of things, individuals believe that they are free. Since they are conscious of their volitions and desires, they readily, albeit naïvely, conclude that they are free to determine their actions. However, as Spinoza insightfully remarks, “yet concerning the causes that have determined them to desire and to will, they do not think, nor even dream about, because they are ignorant of them” (EIP36App).¹² Moreover, also characteristic of individuals is to act with an end in view, with an eye toward individual advantages. Since nature is viewed as a means of obtaining ends sought after and modeled on the assumption that implicit within the design of the universe everything has been created to serve some higher purpose, and so likewise, the individual must be subject to the same conditions. The individual is viewed as having the task of ordering his or her life according to his or her respective wants and needs. For Spinoza, however, this misguided belief and the associated perspective are rooted in the misguided assumption that there is final causality in nature. “. . . Nature has no fixed goals and all final causes are but figments of the human imagination” (E1P36App).¹³ Nature, as we recall, is determined by eternal necessity, and limited accordingly. It is the totality of efficient causality. It is not a conglomeration of higher orders

12. “. . . et de causis, a quibus disponuntur ad appetendum et volendum, quia earum sunt ignari, ne per somnium cogitant.”

13. “. . . Naturam finem nullum sibi praefixum habere, et omnes causas finales nihil nisi humana esse figmenta.”

with varying levels of reality or perfection; nor is it the complex interworking of the sum total of all ordered relations working towards the attainment of unity or oneness, in the Platonic or neo-Platonic sense. In short, nature is, from this perspective, the absence of any inherent scheme that serves preconceived, ultimate ends.¹⁴

III. The Illusion of Inherent Order

Order is inherent in nature, and it is our task somehow to discern this order. While it is true that I have been referring to order as the key to understanding nature from a Spinozistic standpoint, we must be careful not to confuse order as arising in the imagination, from order as the manner in which things are determined by the necessity of eternal nature. The basic problem arises “when things are conceived thus abstractly, and not through their true essence, they are apt to be confused by the imagination” (TdIE 9, ff. 2).¹⁵ Based upon the illuminating evidence contained in the appendix Spinoza provided to accompany his work on Descartes’ *Principles of Philosophy*, we may attribute the proposition that ‘there is order in nature’ to the act of comparing things with one another. As a result, “from the fact that we compare things with one another certain notions arise which nevertheless are nothing outside the things themselves but modes of thinking” (146).¹⁶ Order, among others, is one such mode of thinking by which we retain or imagine the objects themselves more easily. But, for the most part, individuals typically are convinced, according to Spinoza, that there is order in things, and are ignorant of the nature of things themselves. When they can be easily pictured and remembered owing to their neat arrangement, individuals conclude that the object is well-ordered; and when

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14. Cf. Jonathan Bennett’s (1984, pp. 213-230) illuminating discussion of Spinoza’s argument against construing nature in terms of final causes and teleological explanations.
 15. “. . . ubi enim res ita abstracte concipiunt, non autem per veram essentiam, statim ab imaginatione confunduntur.” Cf. Gilead (1985) who aptly notes that for Spinoza “abstraction is an essential characteristic of *imaginatio*, the first grade of knowledge which is the source of all errors” (p. 74). Pertaining to the processes involved in the illusion of inherent order, abstraction, in particular, becomes most evident as a distinguishing operation of the imagination.
 16. “Ex is, quod res inter se comparamus, quaedam oriuntur notionones, quae tamen extra res ipsas nihil sunt nisi cogitandi modi.”

objects, contrariwise, are not easily pictured nor readily recalled, individuals typically describe the mass before them as in a state of disarray or chaotic. Believing that order is inherent in nature as they do, held under the heavy sway of the illusion of inherent order in nature, individuals, so Spinoza maintains, assume that “. . . God has created all things in an orderly way, without realizing that they are thus attributing human imagination to God — unless perchance they mean that God, out of consideration for the human imagination, arranged all things in the way that men could most easily imagine” (E1P36App).¹⁷

IV. The Illusion of False Assumptions

Next, we will look at the false assumption that images are on par with words, and that there is no distinction to be made between the imagination and the understanding. Confusion with regard to images, words, and ideas is common, and as Spinoza advises us, we must become clear on this matter “. . . which it is essential to know both for theory and the wise ordering of life. . . .” (E2P49Schol).¹⁸ It is because individuals fail to distinguish among images, words, and ideas, that they are led to believe in the freedom of the will, and especially to the belief of affirming and denying (Wolfson, 1962, II, p. 174). The essential problem hinges on the fact that words “are nothing but signs of things as they exist in the imagination, and not as they exist in the intellect” (quoted in Wolfson, p. 174). Images and words, as distinct from ideas, are constituted by corporeal motions. They are simply modifications of extension. Ideas, however, are conceptions of thought (E2Def3; E2P48Schol). Attacking, as it would appear, two of his most formidable contemporaries, Spinoza states, “for by ideas I do not mean images such as are formed at the back of the eye” (E2P48Schol),¹⁹ as Descartes described the matter; or for that matter, nor do “ideas consist in images formed in us from the contact of external bodies” (E2P49Schol),²⁰ as the Hobbesean position essentially upholds. As

17. “. . . dicuntque Deum omnia ordine creasse, et hoc modo ipsi nescientes Deo imaginationem tribuunt; nisi velint forte, Deum, humanae imaginationi providentem, res omnes es disposuisse modo, quo ipsas facillime imaginari possent.”

18. “. . . sicut prorsus necessariam, tam ad speculationem quam ad vitam sapienter instituendam. . . .”

19. “Non enim per ideas imagines, quales in fundo oculi. . . .”

Joachim interprets the matter, “a word, like an ‘imago’, is in itself a purely corporeal thing — a modification of extension” (1901, p. 164). For Spinoza, according to Joachim (p. 165, ff. 1),

. . . words, then, are ‘signs’ of things, in the sense that the idea of the bodily modification produced by the written or spoken word, tends to reinstate the idea of the bodily modification produced by the thing which in the past affected our body simultaneously with the word: the idea of the word, and the idea of the thing, formed part of the single mental state in our past experience.

Recalling Spinoza’s distinction between method and philosophy in the *TdIE*, true method, that is, the project of re-ordering one’s character, is that which paves the way for the development and eventual achievement of a rationally ordered individual, and accordingly, “one may take any view one likes of the imagination,” maintains Spinoza, “so long as one acknowledges that it is different from the understanding, and that the soul is passive with regard to it” (*TdIE*32).²¹ The imagination corresponds essentially to what Plato calls *doxa* or opinion. It reflects the affections of the body and gives rise to thought content which is arranged fortuitously. Remember, the imagination, unlike the intellect or understanding, reflects the common order of events and gives rise to inadequate ideas; and to achieve a rationally ordered character it is precisely rationally ordered ideas that we seek to attain, that is, “the object aimed at is the acquisition of clear and distinct ideas, such as are produced by the pure intellect, and not by chance physical motions” (*TdIE*, 34).²² Now, the order and connection of things is the same as the order and connection of ideas (*E2P7Schol*), and it is by way of the understanding that we strive to reflect satisfactorily our true connection to nature — knowledge based on the union which the mind has with the whole of nature. In this regard Spinoza advises us that insofar as the order, arrangement, and unity of our perceptions are concerned, “it is necessary that, as soon as is possible and

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20. “Quippe, qui putant ideas consistere in imaginibus, quae in nobis ex corporum occursum formantur. . . .”
21. “Vel si placet, hic per imaginationem, quicquid velis, cape, modo sit quid diversum ab intellectu, et unde anima habeat rationem patientis.”
22. “Scopus itaque est claras et distinctas habere ideas, tales videlicet, quae ex pura mente, et non ex fortuitis motibus corporis factae sint.”

rational, we should inquire whether there be any being (and, if so, what being), that is the cause of all things, so that its essence, represented in thought may be the cause of all our ideas, and then our mind will to the utmost possible extent reflect nature” (TdIE, 36).²³ It is in the final analysis, the inmost essence of things that we seek to know, and it is the essence of nature as the cause of all things, adequately reflected in the mind, that reveals knowledge of this state of fulfillment. In short, in coming to order rationally the mind we must guard against falling sway to the false pronouncements of words and images which inadequately reflect the order of nature, that is, we must guard against being led down the garden path of the illusion of false assumptions.

V. Emotional Immaturity

Lastly, we arrive finally at the topic of emotional self-understanding. Our emotional life, according to Spinoza, can be as rich as it can be varied. The body can be affected in any number of ways during its contacts in the world, and the arrangement of the connections, or the order of causes, corresponds to the way thoughts are arranged and connected in the mind (E5P1). As we may surmise, it is to our advantage to come to know clearly and distinctly our emotions, since, as Spinoza states, “the more an emotion is known to us, the more it is within our control, and the mind is the less passive in respect of it” (E5P3Cor).²⁴ In seeking to acquire a rationally ordered character we must have within our possession the power to arrange and to associate the affections of the body according to the order of the intellect (E5P10). This calls for guarding against emotions that are contrary to our nature; emotions that will hinder our being able to think (E5P9). Now, since we do not have perfect knowledge of our emotions, it is to our advantage to keep arranged and associated bodily affections according to rationally contrived intellectual order. In this way they can be modified, if need be, from a stable, rational ground. Following this line of thinking, Spinoza advises us that:

23. “. . . requiritur, ut quamprimum fieri potest et ratio postulat, inquiramus. . . .” (See Note 10 for continuation.)

24. “Affectus igitur eo magis in nostra potestate est, et Mens ab eo minus patitur, quo nobis est notior.”

the best course we can adopt, as long as we do not have perfect knowledge of our emotions, is to conceive a right method of living, or fixed rules of life, and to commit them to memory and continually to apply them to particular situations that are frequently encountered in life, so that our causal thinking is thoroughly permeated by them and they are always ready at hand. [E5P10Schol]²⁵

This is not to suggest that we ought to adopt ready-made ideologies that necessarily claim to show righteous paths, nor for that matter should we allow ourselves to be naïvely illumined by any credo or maxim attesting to signal the direction of a “right way of life.” For, although they may cause us to become impassioned, perhaps even in the service of some great and noble cause, the particular emotions that may arise in us may prove to be contrary to our nature, and thereby lend themselves in harmful ways. Therefore, we must be careful, and note that “in arranging our thoughts and images we should always concentrate on what is good in every single thing (E4P63Cor; E3P59) so that in so doing we may be determined to act always from the emotion of pleasure” (E5P10Schol).²⁶ Out of the love for freedom in controlling our emotions and appetites our aim ought to be, states Spinoza, to familiarize ourselves “with virtues and their causes and to fill our minds with the joy that arises from the true knowledge of them, while refraining from dwelling on others’ faults and abusing mankind and deriving pleasure from a false show of freedom” (E5P10Schol).²⁷ In short, emotional self-understanding, in contrast to emotional immaturity, consists of learning about the nature of our emotions and appetites, that is, how to arrange and to associate the bodily affections to prevent our becoming assailed by emotions contrary to our nature. This can best be achieved by

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25. “Optimum igitur, quod efficere possumus, quamdiu nostrorum affectuum perfectam cognitionem non habemus, est, rectam vivendi rationem seu certa vitae dogmata concipere, eaque memoriae mandare, et rebus particularibus, in vita frequenter obviis, continuo applicare, ut sic nostra imaginatio late iisdem afficiatur, et nobis in promptu sint semper.”
26. “. . . in ordinandis nostris cogitationibus et imaginibus semper attendendum est (E4P63Cor; E3P59) ad illa quae in unaquaque re bona sunt, ut sic semper ex Laetitiae affectu ad agendum determinemur.”
27. “. . . virutes earumque causas noscere, et animum gaudio, quod ex earum vera cognitione oritur, implere; at minime hominum vitia contemplari, hominesque obrectare, et falsa libertatis specie gaudere.”

following a right method of living — a committed intellectual order based on rationally contrived knowledge of the interworkings of the universe, goodness in things, and the virtues and their causes.²⁸

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Putting Order in Order

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For us in the English-speaking tradition, dealing with commentators such as Duff, Feuer, Rosen, Belaief, Wienpahl, Delahunty, and even Jonathan Bennett, work in Spinoza has often suffered from a lack of grounding in his metaphysics.¹ Gary Finn has done well, therefore, to recall our attention to a fundamental question which must precede the discussion of any aspect of Spinoza's philosophy which presupposes the notion of nature: namely, what is the order of nature (or the nature of order) according to Spinoza? Finn very nicely explicates three different senses of "order" found in Spinoza's texts, and moreover, he clarifies possible misunderstandings of at least one of these senses. A careful reading of Finn's paper, however, not only leaves the reader seeking light for one or two further points but, more importantly, wanting a more definite answer to the query, "What is 'the unique conception of order [that] emerges out of Spinoza's view of nature'?" [Finn 3]. My purpose here is to voice these smaller concerns and to suggest possible remedies for them; by doing so, I believe that I will also be able to do what Finn has not done, which is to state explicitly and to describe more clearly what is Spinoza's idea of the order of nature.²

A major premiss within Finn's argument is that there are running throughout Spinoza's texts three basic understandings of the notion of the "order of nature." There is the common order of nature, the external order, and the contrived order (which is how the rational mind views or understands the universe and its unfolding). Of the first type of order, the common order of nature, I have very little to remark except to note that I

1. See Steven Barbone & Lee Rice, "La naissance d'une nouvelle politique," forthcoming (1994) in an anthology devoted to Matheron (Presses Universitaires de France). The work of these anglophone commentators is analyzed here in terms of their failure to connect Spinoza's notion of social order with its metaphysical underpinnings.

believe that Finn might have done better to explicate more fully how it is that he identifies the common order of nature as both durational and contingent, for these two qualities do not seem to be identified in Spinoza's texts. Contingency, it appears clear, arises from our not knowing the causes of a thing,³ while duration refers only to how the imagination perceives a thing's occurring, that is, a mode of imagination which allows one to form an image of an object. The first must necessarily be inadequate knowledge,⁴ but the second may be and often is adequate; the first reflects the mutilated understanding which we derive from the common order of nature, but the second is not entirely contained by this common order insofar as any event which does occur must necessarily occur within durational time. Finn's overall analysis of the common order of nature nevertheless remains solid if we understand him to mean it to be just the

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2. Although I believe that Finn has done a masterful job of isolating the problem and its importance, I do have a reservation regarding his reliance on those texts in the *TdIE* which he utilizes to amplify his interpretation. I agree more with Koyré's cautionary interpretation: "Aussi est-ce par les textes de l'*Ethique* qu'il faudra, le plus souvent — et non inversement — éclairer le texte du *Traité de la réforme de l'entendement*" [Benedict de Spinoza, *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione*, translated with notes by Alexandre Koyré (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1990), xxi]. Joachim and Gebhardt, for instance, argue for an overall consistency between the *TdIE* and the *Ethics*; whereas Curley and Garrett see it as an earlier and abortive effort. The question for me remains unresolved. See Anthony Beavers and Lee Rice, "Doubt and Belief in the *TIE*," *Studia Spinozana* 4 (1988), 93-119, for an attempted compromise.
 3. "At res aliqua nulla alia de causa contingens dicitur, nisi respectu defectus nostrae cognitionis" [E1P33schol1].
 3. See Ep12: "Quod ut adhuc clarius videas, capo hoc exemplum; nempe, ubi quis durationem abstracte conceperit, eamque cum tempore confundendo in partes dividere inceperit, nunquam poterit intelligere, qua ratione hora ex. grat. transire possit."
 4. I am taking 'contingent' here in the sense of 'that which can be otherwise', the sense given it in E1. Spinoza redefines contingency later in the *Ethics*. See E4Def3: "Res singulares voco contingentes, quatenus, dum ad earum solam essentiam attendimus nihil invenimus, quod earum existentiam necessario ponat, vel quod ipsam necessario secludat." Bennett identifies this sense as epistemic, incorrectly, I believe, since it rather characterizes perishability which is exploited throughout E4. Bennett, I believe, is correct in saying that there is an epistemic sense of contingency in the *Ethics* (primarily in E2 and E3), and if so, then there are at least three senses of contingency at work in Spinoza's discussion of order. Further clarifying their interplay lies beyond the scope of this commentary. See Jonathan Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1984), 115-117.

happenstance run of events which we notice occurring around us, and do not make this inadequacy a *necessary* feature of imaginational cognition.

More provocative are Finn's comments on the eternal order of nature itself. There are points at which I suspect that Finn may confound the ideas of *natura naturata* and *natura naturans* which he so carefully distinguishes earlier in the paper. Certainly he is correct to note that *natura naturata* may be conceived to be nature-as-effect while *natura naturans* could be envisioned as nature-as-cause, and that there really is no difference between them, except, perhaps, logically. The concern I here present is the curious comment on page 6 (which is repeated on page 9) which claims, to the effect that nature is limited or constrained by some type of necessity.⁵ What I believe Finn more correctly means is that everything that occurs in nature does occur necessarily, but this in no way implies that nature is not free. Neither is nature limited by anything, not even itself, for nothing is limited except by external causes, of which nature has none (see E1P11Dem2). Furthermore, we find it very clearly stated by Spinoza himself that God or nature acts solely from the laws of its own nature unconstrained by anything.⁶ And while it is true that nature alone acts solely from the necessity of its own nature, from this there follows the consequence, not that nature is constrained or limited "internally" (whatever that could mean), but that nature is the only free cause.⁷ All Spinoza means is that the impossible cannot occur in nature [E1P17Schol], but this is not so much a limitation⁸ as a definition. In short, Spinoza reserves the term 'constraint' for external determination (thus not properly

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5. As a parenthetical remark, I observe that this was Leibniz's problem in the *Discourse on Metaphysics*: how exactly could God, entirely loving and good *freely* create the best of all possible worlds? God is either necessitated through His benevolence to create one and only one world (and thus He is not free) or it is the case that He was free not to create the best of all possible worlds, but then in that case, He would not have been all loving. Equally parenthetical is my note that there is some doubt as to the importance (or lack thereof) of the distinction between *naturans* and *naturata* in Spinoza. Bennett (op. cit., 118-119) argues, perhaps not entirely persuasively, that the distinction is of no real value, and that Spinoza's introduction of it is merely an historical aside. Against Bennett's interpretation is the fact that the concept seems to do heavier work in the *Korte Verhandeling*.
 6. E1P17: "Deus ex solis suae naturae legibus, et a nemine coactus agit."
 7. E1P17Cor2: "Deus. . . ex sola suae naturae necessitate agit. . . Adeoque (per defin. 7) solus est causa libera." See also E1Def7, where internal necessity is contrasted with external constraint.

applicable to nature or God), and it appears to me that he has ordinary usage on his side. Nature or God, which is determined to act only according to its essence, is really not limited, not even by necessity, but is rather the sole and unique totally free agent in Spinoza's universe.

One other remark is worth making: in the section on the illusion of false assumptions, Finn intimates that the imagination, if it reflects on the common order of nature, gives rise to inadequate ideas. This indeed may be true much of the time, but it is not necessarily true. We know that imagination (or knowledge of the first kind) is the only possible cause of falsity [E2P41].⁹ All ideas, however, inasmuch as they refer to nature, are true [E2P32],¹⁰ and if it is granted that one might imagine from the common order of nature some idea which adequately refers to nature itself, then that person has an adequate idea. Spinoza himself gives examples of those who, because of their vivid and lively imaginations, have been able to perceive clearly and distinctly the causes of things — certain prophets and assuredly Moses and Jesus exemplify this type of person. In TTP2, Spinoza claims that, while the revelations were adapted to Moses' beliefs, many of the former were adequately grasped by him. Christ's position is more problematic. He tells us in TTP1 that, with the exception of Christ, God's revelations were received only with the aid of imagination; but this hardly implies that, in Christ's case, they were received universally without it.¹¹ Indeed, Spinoza even speaks of imagination as enabling some (e.g., the Prophets) to perceive what is beyond the limits of reason (*extra intellectus limites*).¹² What Finn means to say, I suspect, is that since the imagination

8. Except perhaps in an extreme Sartrean sense, which is, I would argue, ultimately not coherent

9. "Cognitio primi generis unica est falsitatis causa. . . ."

10. "Omnes ideae, quatenus ad Deum referuntur, verae sunt."

11. My interpretation would be questioned by Matheron, who interprets Christ's knowledge as being neither imaginational nor rational, but of the third (intuitive) order. See Alexandre Matheron, *Le Christ et le salut des ignorants chez Spinoza* (Paris: Aubier, 1971), 250-253.

12. Cf. TTP1. In his edition of the TTP (Paris: Garnier, 1964-66; 357), Charles Appuhn interprets this as meaning "inferior". I follow Henri Laux in claiming that this interpretation is simply wrong. See Henri Laux, *Imagination et religion chez Spinoza* (Paris: Brin, 1993), 26-30. Laux goes even further in arguing that, for Spinoza, true religion ("la religion libérée") is a *completely imaginational system* purged of all error (258-272).

can give rise to false and inadequate ideas while the intellect understands only true or adequate ideas, we should strive to develop the latter as a surer means of coming to true knowledge; but certainly not that we should abandon the former as necessarily error-ridden.¹³

The imagination, then, is not to be squelched so much as it is to be aligned with reason in securing the most adequate knowledge possible, and this seems to me to be the point of Finn's final section on emotional (affective) immaturity. Thus I propose that Finn's real point is not that we should strive for adequate ideas solely through the understanding, but that rather that we attempt to develop the intellect as a *surer* means to come to true ideas, and not to limit ourselves to knowing only through the intellect.

Through further clarification of these above-mentioned points, I believe that we may come closer to grasping Spinoza's thoughts on the order of nature. Nature is not disordered, but neither is it ordered; nature alone is entirely free. This is not, however, to say that nature does not evolve or manifest itself in an orderly way, and thus there is no paradox to note that *natura naturans* is free while *natura naturata* expresses itself according to its own laws. The error, as Finn correctly points out, is to attribute any kind of teleology or supranatural structure to the unfolding of nature, but this is not the same as to believe that no order exists. While it is correct that nature is nowise considered ordered except through the imagination,¹⁴ this is perhaps exactly the way that the order of nature is to be perceived by finite intellects! An infinite intellect alone is able to know all the causes and workings of the universe, but a full understanding is not possible for a finite mind.¹⁵ Since fully adequate ideas of this order cannot be obtained, therefore, through human understanding,¹⁶ imaginational or

13. The tendency to regard imagination as necessarily error-prone also seems to be a part of a misguided anglophone tradition. While Spinoza does say in E2P41 that "Cognitio primi generis unica est falsitatis causa," he nowhere claims that it "semper est falsitatis causa." See Michèle Bertrand, *Spinoza et l'imaginaire* (Paris: PUF, 1983); Alain Billecoq, *Spinoza et les spectres* (Paris: PUF, 1987); and C. De Deugd, *The Significance of Spinoza's First Kind of Knowledge* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1966). The identification of error with sensory knowledge seems to have its roots in Hegel's (mis)interpretation of Spinoza, for which see Pierre Macherey, *Hegel ou Spinoza* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), esp. 75-94.

14. Cf. Ep32: "Conabor igitur rationem ostendere, quae me id affirmare cogit; attamen prius monere velim, me Naturae non tribuere pulchritudinem, deformitatem, ordinem, neque confusionem. Nam res non, nisi respective ad nostram imaginationem, possunt dici pulchrae aut deformes, ordinatae aut confusae."

sensory knowledge remains a partner, perhaps not always a fully equal partner, for the quest for knowledge and insight.

The “ontological order” suggested by Finn [3] is now easier to comprehend. The order of nature is nothing other than nature itself freely acting and expressing itself. As such, it is not limited by anything though it is necessitated by itself to act according to its own essence. No limited mind can know this order adequately, but the texts do suggest that the order may be perceived through the imagination. It is thus that Finn, in rejecting inadequate order — whether teleological, platonic or serial — does demonstrate that order is the foundation of Spinoza’s universe and that this order is necessary and real without being contrived or based on appearances. Herein clearly lies Spinoza’s unique conception of the order of nature, and it is one which certainly serves him well.¹⁷

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15. Is this not the meaning Spinoza conveys in Letter 32 regarding the discussion of the worm in the bloodstream?
 16. Cf. Ep32: “Nam cognoscere, quomo revera cohaereant, et unaquaeque pars cum suo toto conveniat, id me ignorari dixi in antecedenti mea epistola; quia ad hoc cognoscendum requiretur, totam naturam omnesque ejus partes cognoscere.”
 17. I would like to express thanks to Lee Rice for his encouragement and suggestions in discussing some of the questions raised in this commentary.

Relaciones entre Spinoza y España

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En noviembre, 1992, se ha celebrado en Almagro (Ciudad Real) un Congreso Internacional sobre las “Relaciones entre Spinoza y España”, organizado por el Seminario Spinoza y el Departamento de Filosofía de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha. El título venía sugerido por un artículo de Henry Méchoulan, “Spinoza et l’Espagne” (1978), y su objetivo era que nosotros, los españoles, abordáramos directamente un tema que nos pertenece y que, sin embargo, se mantenía casi inédito: el de la doble influencia, de España en Spinoza y de Spinoza en España. Para comprenderlo, quizá convenga hacer algo de historia.

Es cosa generalmente admitida, aunque todavía no probada, que la familia del filósofo (que nació y pasó toda su vida en Holanda) desciende de los judíos expulsados de España por los Reyes Católicos en 1492. Es cierto, además, que el filósofo se educó en un ambiente hispánico, propio de un país que aún pertenecía al imperio español y al que emigraban numerosos intelectuales hispanos, especialmente judíos. Cómo sorprenderse entonces de que en su biblioteca estuvieran presentes nuestros clásicos, como Cervantes y Góngora, Quevedo y Gracián, Antonio Pérez y Saavedra Fajardo; de que él mencionara en sus escritos a Fernando el Católico y a Felipe II; y de que en su intimidad manifestara deseos de visitar nuestro país? Todo esto reclama un estudio de las posibles relaciones entre España y su cultura con Spinoza y su obra. Pues bien, sobre ninguno de estos temas existe un estudio específico, realizado por españoles. Aparte de ciertas alusiones de segunda mano en las historias del judaísmo español, nuestro país sólo ha ofrecido dos estudios sobre el medio cultural hispánico en el que surgió la obra de Spinoza: el capítulo dedicado por Menéndez Pelayo, en su “Historia de los heterodoxos españoles” (1880-2), a la sinagoga de Amsterdam, en el que, por supuesto, no aparece Spinoza, y el reciente ensayo de G. Albiac, “La sinagoga vacía” (1987), que, cual réplica centenaria al anterior, proyecta la obra del filósofo sobre su entorno marrano de luchas internas y conciencia desgarrada, en el que sobresalen las figuras (ya estudiadas por Gebhardt y Révah, Méchoulan y Kaplan) de Uriel da Costa y Juan de Prado, Abraham Pereyra y Menasseh ben Israel, Orobio de Castro y Levi de Barrios.

El segundo aspecto, la relación de Spinoza con España, no es menos interesante y problemático. Ha logrado la obra de un personaje tan denostado como Spinoza penetrar en un país en el que el tribunal de la

Inquisición estuvo en vigor desde finales del s. XV hasta comienzos del s. XIX? Tampoco en este punto se contaba con más estudios que el de J. Moreau sobre Unamuno, el de E. Olaso sobre Feijoo, los de H. Méchoulan sobre Antonio Pérez y Fernando de Zeballos, y el mío sobre diez personajes de la Ilustración y el Romanticismo: Cadalso y Forner, Vicente Valcarce, Juan Andrés y Tomás Lapeña, Jovellanos y Cabarrús, Balmes, Zeferino González y E. Reus. La mejor prueba de este silencio es que el argentino León Dujovne, en su monumental monografía, *Spinoza. Su vida, su época, su obra, su influencia* (4 vol., 1941-5), en la que cita a centenas de filósofos y literatos de diversos países, que habrían sido leídos por Spinoza o le habrían leído a él, no menciona a ningún escritor español, a excepción de los judíos medievales o contemporáneos suyos.

Que ha aportado, pues, nuestro Congreso a tan vasta y compleja problemática? Ante todo, ha comprobado cuán difícil es descubrir influencias entre dos escritores y ha comenzado a desbrozar el terreno. Sobre la primera sección, la influencia de España en Spinoza, se han presentado once trabajos que abarcan desde el s. XII hasta el s. XVII y cuyo punto de apoyo y resultado son muy diversos. Y así, R. Ramón Guerrero investiga por qué vías pudo Spinoza tener noticia de dos filósofos árabes hispanos, Avempace y Abentofail. Francisco Carrasquer y Miquel Beltrán buscan, con desigual fortuna, analogías entre ciertas ideas de Servet y otras de su enemigo mortal, Calvino (Spinoza poseía la traducción española de las “Instituciones”), y el panteísmo o el naturalismo spinozianos. P. F. Moreau muestra cómo un concepto típicamente spinoziano, el “*ingenium*,” puede inspirarse en la célebre obra de Huarte de San Juan, “Examen de ingenios”, ya que ambos subrayan el papel de las diferencias individuales; Francisco José Martínez contrapone, en cambio, la libertad inmanentista del spinozismo a la libertad de elección que subyace en el debate entre molinistas y bañezianos de la época. Los cuatro trabajos siguientes parten de la presencia de libros españoles en la biblioteca de Spinoza. Carmelo Blanco hace varias calas en la obra de Quevedo, y Julián Carvajal realiza un análisis sistemático de Gracián, descubriendo en uno y otro caso curiosas resonancias o paralelismos; A. Domínguez demuestra con citas textuales que Spinoza ha leído y usado a Antonio Pérez, aunque sus mundos intelectuales son contrapuestos, y Jesús Blanco descubre interesantes resonancias de las “Empresas” de Saavedra Fajardo en Spinoza a través de De la Court. Cierran esta sección tres estudios sobre el judaísmo del Amsterdam spinoziano. Práxedes Caballero detecta las críticas de Orobio a Spinoza bajo las dirigidas a Juan de Prado y a J. Bredenburg; Klever, por el contrario, pone en tela de juicio la tesis de

Révah sobre el papel de Juan de Prado en la evolución de Spinoza, y H. Méchoulan sintetiza sus ideas sobre la actitud del filósofo frente al judaísmo.

Sobre la segunda sección, influencia de Spinoza en España, se han presentado doce estudios, que se refieren a autores de los ss. XIX y XX. Ma. Luisa de la Cámara y Romano García abordan dos pensadores que escriben a mediados del s. XIX, J. Balmes y F. Pi y Margall, llegando a la conclusión de que, a pesar de sus +divergencias ideológicas y políticas, ambos coinciden en criticar una obra que no parecen haber leído: el neoscolástico culto refuta de forma sistemática el monismo de la sustancia y el hegeliano mitigado rechaza por principio el panteísmo absoluto por no salvaguardar la autonomía individual. El ambiente parece haber cambiado a final de siglo. Y así, José Ma. Melero nos recuerda cómo Menéndez Pelayo, en el escrito antes aludido, daba a conocer a figuras tan relevantes del judaísmo hispano como Cardos y Orobio, Uriel da Costa y Juan de Prado. Antonio Jiménez y Javier Espinosa dan cuenta de las primeras traducciones y estudios spinozianos realizados en España en el entorno krausista. Jiménez nos informa cómo U. González Serrano, después de traducir (1878-9) la novela de B. Auerbach, *Spinoza. Ein historisches Roman*, publicó varios artículos con datos biográficos del filósofo. Espinoza opina que la traducción del *TTP* de E. Reus (1878) se independiza poco a poco de la de Saisset para atenerse al texto de Bruder y que su introducción se inspira en Bouillier y Tiberghien, mereciéndole ambas un juicio más positivo que la versión de la misma obra hecha por Vargas y Zozaya (1882) y la de la *Ética* realizada por Manuel Machado (1913), ya que la primera estaría calcada de Saisset y la segunda de Appuhn, y ambas contendrían graves errores. Con estos textos castellanos y otros, cuarenta títulos (entre ellos *OP* y *Vloten/Land*), que J. Espinosa ha localizado en la bibliotecas de Madrid y cuya lista se publicará en las Actas, parece que desde comienzos del siglo XX se podía leer y estudiar seriamente a Spinoza en España. Hasta la década del setenta, sin embargo, los resultados han sido muy pobres. Los siete trabajos del Congreso así hacen suponerlo. José Ma. Rodríguez Paniagua y Jaime Salas muestran cómo Ortega, que le menciona muchas veces desde joven (1914), porque simpatiza con su idea del deseo y del amor, lo trata siempre de paso y para rechazar de plano su racionalismo del *mos geometricus* y del *sub specie aeternitatis*. Una actitud más positiva han manifestado dos grandes escritores, que conjugan la literatura con la teoría, Pío Baroja y María Zambrano. En efecto, Eugenio Fernández ha detectado en la vida y en la obra de la discípula de Ortega las sutiles huellas de su tesis doctoral,

truncada por la guerra civil, sobre el autor de la *Ética* y que revelan su sintonía con la idea de la salvación por el conocimiento y el amor del absoluto. Y Martín del Burgo ha espigado con esquisito cuidado las múltiples alusiones, no sólo biográficas, sino también teóricas (sí al naturalismo de la *cupiditas* y no al absolutismo religioso y estático), que a lo largo de treinta años (1917-49) hace Baroja al filósofo judío. A ese mismo periodo pertenece un libro ignorado por los spinozistas y presentado ahora por Gerardo Lopez, el *Spinoza* (1933) de Jaume Serra Húnter, catedrático de filosofía y rector de la Universidad de Barcelona, el cual constituye la primera monografía completa de autor español sobre el filósofo, ya que en menos de cien páginas describe con rigor su vida, su sistema y su influencia. La segunda mitad de siglo sólo está representada por dos estudios. Eduardo Bello señala los méritos y defectos de la introducción y la traducción del *TP* y del *TTP* (selección) realizadas por E. Tierno en 1966 siguiendo a Wernham y M. Francès, así como su significado en el contexto español del momento. Finalmente, Luciano Espinosa constata con cierta desilusión cómo, a excepción de F. Savater, Spinoza sigue siendo el gran ausente en la ética española actual, tal como es presentada por sus más conspicuos representantes: Aranguren y Sánchez Vázquez, Mosterín y Muguera, G. Bello y E. Guisán, Rubert de Ventós y V. Camps, A. Domenech y E. Triás.

Añadamos, por fin, que estos 24 estudios sobre las relaciones entre Spinoza y España van precedidos de tres ponencias, de máximo interés, sobre la presencia de Spinoza en países de nuestro ámbito geográfico y cultural: C. Santinelli sobre Italia, Yannis Prelourentzos sobre Francia y Luis Machado de Abreu sobre Portugal. En las Actas, que serán publicadas por la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, a los 27 textos del Congreso se añadirá una introducción, en que se describirá el estado de la investigación antes y después del mismo, una bibliografía lo más amplia posible y un índice completo de autores. Es de esperar que este volumen, junto con el ya publicado bajo el título *La ética de Spinoza. Fundamentos y significado* (Actas del Congreso Internacional: Almagro 1990) y que incluye entre sus 42 ponencias algunas de las firmas más prestigiosas del spinozismo actual, darán un impulso a la investigación en este pequeño sector de nuestra cultura, que ya cuenta, de hecho, con la acción coordinada de los cincuenta miembros del Seminario Spinoza (1990), entre cuya metas está la celebración de reuniones periódicas y la constitución de una Biblioteca Spinoza a él anexa.

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