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Alien Alliances:
Becoming-Subject in Spinoza's *Ethics*

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Abstract

This thesis concerns the problem of a human agency facing the dissolution of “the human” resulting from the sciences and hegemonic neoliberalism, as well as the perils of ecological crisis for the human species. Following Spinoza’s insistence that the human results from a process of development, we find the human has always been alien to us at the same time that we have always been subject to its composition. Spinoza exploits this production to shift the problem of what the human is away from any pre-given foundation or pre-determined goal, and towards how its open identity can better enhance ethico-political projects of freedom. To effectuate this transition, this thesis begins exploring the implicit inhumanism of Spinoza’s *Ethics* revealing the unexceptional, precarious status of the human within reality. Humans lack unconditioned freedom or transcendence, and submit to the necessity of God’s activity that produces all that is without purpose or will. This activity constitutes humans as inhuman aliens through myriad causal relations with each other that actuate their continual transformations. We explore how humans ethically respond to these situations without any intrinsic identity or pre-determined ends to guide them. The characteristics of immune systems reveal an immunological ethics, consistent with inhumanism, which reformulates freedom for third person reflexive pronouns. Certain encounters with other natures prove to beget greater agency for the human, enabling it to realize its true advantage as the adequate cause of itself. Active humans seek to empower others and to join for greater true advantage, forming collectives that rationally act for maximal collective human freedom. Prometheans’ collective agency more capably faces contemporary challenges.

“When Spinoza says that we do not even know what a body can do, this is practically a war cry.”¹

“We want neither clean hands nor beautiful souls, neither virtue nor terror. We want superior forms of corruption.”²

Dedicated to:

Anthony, who showed me the door, &
Spyros and Andreas, and our *sub specie aeternitatis* day in Richmond Park

Surbiton, 25th of September 2015

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Supervised by Étienne Balibar

¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1990), 255.

² “Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation,” 0x0C, Laboria Cuboniks, accessed September 17, 2015, <http://www.laboriacuboniks.net/>.

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1. Introduction

This thesis concerns human agency in increasingly weird and desperate times. Our scientific knowledge progressively challenges and undoes any cogency of claims asserting what it means or is to be “human,” and to share this human-ness or humanity with other humans. Biologists are producing new conceptions of what we are as they learn more about the internal ecologies of our bodies. How do our self-conceptions change when we comprehend that a human being is a “functional entity formed by a macrobe and its associated symbiotic microbes and viruses” as a “holobiont?”³ What does the fact that “there are 10 times more bacterial cells in [the human] body than human cells”⁴ mean for our understanding of agency and the presumption that “we” can control our actions? In addition to being “superorganisms,”⁵ our self-conceptions are also being brutally confounded by neuroscientists. In some cases, we find the very categories and ideas of self and selfhood dissolving,⁶ becoming less the intimate truth of what one “really” is and more as a “blindspot” or mere effect of subpersonal information processing.⁷ But the human is in ruins outside of academia as well—even more so. Hegemonic and more intensive processes of neoliberal capitalist political economy move away from concerns of reproducing the health of human labor, towards the exhaustive extraction of all varieties of resources from the commons that sustains and improves human life.⁸ These political economic machinations result in a dizzying destabilization of the social field, encouraging inter-human separation and alienation,⁹ as well as promoting relations with technology that de-emphasize the importance of what benefits humans and their freedom.¹⁰ The human is being liquefied, and with it, lived concepts of its agency.

³ “Superorganisms and Holobionts,” *Microbe Magazine*, accessed September 24, 2015, http://www.microbemagazine.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6300:superorganisms-and-holobionts&Itemid=1464.

⁴ Melinda Wenner, “Humans Carry More Bacterial Cells than Human Ones,” *Scientific American*, accessed September 24, 2015, <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/strange-but-true-humans-carry-more-bacterial-cells-than-human-ones/>.

⁵ “Superorganisms and Holobionts.”

⁶ Thomas Metzinger, *Being No One: The Self-Model Theory of Subjectivity*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2003).

⁷ Paul J. Ennis, “Bleaker than Bleak,” *Three Pound Brain* (blog), April 6, 2015, <https://rsbakker.wordpress.com/2015/04/06/bleaker-than-bleak-by-paul-j-ennis/>.

⁸ Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, “#Accelerate: Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics,” in *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, ed. Armen Avanessian and Robin Mackay (Falmouth: Urbanomic Media Ltd., 2014), 347-62.

⁹ “Xenofeminism.”

¹⁰ Maurizio Lazzarato, *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*, (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2014).

At the same time, we find ourselves becoming more aware of the severity, acceleration, and global scope of a truly frightening ecological crisis on Earth that threatens the human species with its extinction. We are experiencing the 6th mass extinction event in our planet's long history, watching other animal species in the present continue to die off while we anticipate the certain demise of many more in the future—all with effects that prove to be catastrophic for humans.¹¹ Thus, because extinction and the effects of ecological crisis are human problems of unprecedented scope and difficulty, unprecedented scales of human cooperation are absolutely necessary if we are to successfully navigate what will prove to be our most trying time as a species. If we as humans fail to form more effective collectives, we will soon become the interesting bookend to an interesting holobiont experiment.

We thus find ourselves in something of a conundrum. We are undergoing one kind of erasure of “the human” at the same time that we most need collaborative collectives of agential humans to strategically traverse an ecological crisis that is capable of irrevocably completing such an erasure. We are departing the “human,” but need to join together as humans more than ever before. Both kinds of erasure have sets of novel problems that resolutely foreclose any return to the past, pre-empting the success of counting on a nostalgic desire for the older iterations of the human or human sociality for our “salvation,” and forcing us to embody the futures we are becoming. Our philosophical problem becomes clearer: is there a way to think *without* “the human” we are familiar with, but still *for* the human? Can we chart a conceptual movement whereby we can become the humans we need to be to counter-act ecological crisis and what it entails, as well as enhance each other's agency to do so in the face of current, global arrangements of the social, the technological, the ecological, and the political-economical? How can we give a conceptual primacy to effectiveness for human agency, and think what capacitates it and its construction?

Here, Baruch Spinoza becomes our resource, our peer. Spinoza helps us to think the scope of our titanic crises, their interdependence, and what is required for interventive navigation—all without relying upon the conservation of “the human.” Yet, he still articulates personal and collective ethico-political agency that actuates processes of freedom. His non-reductionist materialism and naturalism involve as much of what exists

¹¹ Gerardo Ceballos, et al., “Accelerated modern human-induced species losses: Entering the sixth mass extinction,” *Science Advances* 1 (2015), accessed September 24, 2015, doi: 10.1126/sciadv.1400253.

as possible as resources for thinking and acting with ethico-political projects. By showing that “the human” is the product of a development, this thesis argues that Spinoza helps us to understand how we have always simultaneously become alienated from the human, as well as subject to its composition. Spinoza shifts the problem away from what the human fundamentally is and ought to be, towards hijacking its constitutively open identity in favor of other constructions that facilitate greater freedom. This fundamental shift I call Spinoza’s “inhumanism.”

In the first chapter, we will explore how Spinoza’s implicit philosophical doctrine of inhumanism is well-suited to confront the problems of our contemporary reality which are more than human. His metaphysical framework conceptualizes an infinite reality that positions the human in a precarious relation to reality. We will better define the conceptual architecture of inhumanism and other novel terms (e.g. alienicity, Prometheanism, etc.) in the chapters to follow. Both Spinoza’s inhumanist doctrine and inhumanist reality enable us to see that there is no transcendence of any sort that could intrinsically benefit humans. Furthermore, Spinoza’s inhumanism demonstrates the impossibility of any pre-given human identity that would make one human, opting instead for a directionless production of the human through alien constitution. Given both an impartial reality and the complex relations of things as they continuously undergo change, human agency appears to be in jeopardy.

In the second chapter, we explore how Spinoza posits an ethical theory fully consistent with inhumanism. Deprived of an essential humanity, his humans find themselves as open immunological systems that navigate their environments in ways to their benefit. As they respond to their alien constitutions without any pre-given ethical norms that could guide or enhance their agency, they make contact with other things that alter their states of existence. Through an immunological paradigm, Spinoza forcefully re-conceptualizes the concept of freedom to show how knowing our alienicity actually empowers us to effectuate different kinds of activity that prove to be more beneficial for us.

In the third chapter, we follow Spinoza’s insistence of humans’ utmost value to each other to experiment with how immunological freedom necessarily involves a much larger commons. Personal freedom requires collective freedom, which further enhances personal freedom in a positive feedback loop. This process of Prometheanism continually effects greater freedom for humanity by exploiting inhumanist reality and alien

constitution to engineer a humanity shared in common, one more capable of addressing the problems it faces together.

Overall, we will see how Spinoza offers conceptual resources for not only thinking a different kind of freedom and a different kind of human, but also a different kind of agent enacting that freedom *for* humans, pooling its powers with others to more effectively respond to the problems besetting them all.

2. Metaphysical Inhumanism and Alien Constitution

We must gain an adequate understanding of how and why Spinoza implicitly develops *inhumanism*,¹² his metaphysical framework describing reality as pure immanence, an absolutely infinite and causally necessary activity without any end or purpose—a preliminary definition that we will more fully develop in what follows. Analogous to his movement in his *Ethics* from the first part “Concerning God” that purposively works towards the fifth part on “Human Freedom,” we will investigate how Spinoza’s inhumanism operates concerning the activity and freedom of “God, or Nature”¹³ before turning to his construction of an ethics of specifically *human* freedom consistently derived from inhumanism. In particular, we will abstain from simply reproducing his (many) claims and conclusions, and make salient only the features most pertinent to our investigation.

Spinoza preliminarily defines “God” as “an absolutely infinite being; that is, substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence.”¹⁴ After painstakingly adhering to the rational technology of the geometric method for the construction of Part I of his *Ethics*, Spinoza briefly summarizes his most important conclusions on “the nature and properties of God: that [it] necessarily exists, that [it] is one alone, that [it] is and acts solely from the necessity of [its] own nature, that [it] is the free cause of all things [...], that all things are in God and are so dependent on [it] that they can neither be nor be conceived without [it].”¹⁵ Charting these conclusions helps us to focus upon two key concepts in relation to God, or substance: *freedom* and *necessity*.

Immanence is crucial for freedom and necessity. Spinoza’s God is pure immanence itself, the complete exclusion of anything distinct from or exterior to itself which can affect or cause it to be or to be otherwise. This ontological independence that frees it from being causally dependent upon something else transcendent to it ensures that it is only immanent *to* itself. Spinoza defines this ontological independence as *freedom*, and the free thing “exists solely from the necessity of its own nature, and is determined to action by itself alone.”¹⁶ Absolutely speaking, only substance is free since it “cannot be produced by anything else and

¹² For the original source of this term (despite different usage), see Reza Negarestani, “Labor of the Inhuman,” in *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, ed. Armen Avanessian and Robin Mackay. (Falmouth: Urbanomic Media Ltd., 2014).

¹³ Baruch Spinoza, *The Ethics and Selected Letters*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1992), IV, Preface.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, I, Definition 6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, I, Appendix.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, I, Def 7.

is therefore self-caused.”¹⁷ But this freedom is not the traditionally conceived unconditioned freedom of God’s will, for “God does not act from freedom of will.”¹⁸ Instead, substance is free by the *necessity* of what it is—but how do we comprehend this seeming paradox?

Spinoza delineates a relationship between the freedom and necessity of substance. Substance’s infinite freedom of ontological independence “is the unqualified affirmation of the existence of some nature,”¹⁹ the only nature which “necessarily exists.”²⁰ Spinoza equivocates the necessity whereby substance exists with the laws of the nature of substance.²¹ These laws of nature are “the laws and rules of Nature according to which all things happen and change from one form to another,” universal and eternal laws that “are everywhere and always the same.”²² Furthermore, these laws are “so comprehensive as to suffice for the production of everything”²³ that is. For Spinoza, this productive necessity itself determines that “a thing necessarily exists if there is no reason or cause which prevents its existence.”²⁴ Necessity, in this regard, is a “pure positivity” that is both logical and ontological: ontological existence and reality is guaranteed to all logical possibilities or reasons which are not precluded by other possibilities or reasons. In other words, necessity is the pure positivity that everything that *can* exist, *does* exist—and this necessity could not have been otherwise, since “there is no contingency”²⁵ for God. Nor could substance lack anything, since it is “full” in the absolute infinity of its pure positivity, and has nothing exterior to it by which it could lack.

By tracing the unqualified affirmation of substance in so far as it is an ontologically independent free cause of its absolute infinity, and by elaborating the pure positivity of substance in so far as the immutable laws of its nature operate as a necessary and universal production, Spinoza links freedom and necessity such that they are not just compatible, but of the same process of *pure activity*. Spinoza conceptualizes this pure activity as “Natura naturans,”²⁶ or “nature naturing,”²⁷ whereby substance “is and acts solely from the necessity of [its] own nature.”²⁸ But Spinoza clarifies that there is a *passive* dimension pertaining to

¹⁷ Ibid., I, Proposition 7.

¹⁸ Ibid., I, P32, corollary 1.

¹⁹ Ibid., I, P8, scholium 1.

²⁰ Ibid., I, P11.

²¹ Ibid., I, P17.

²² Ibid., III Pref.

²³ Ibid., I, App.

²⁴ Ibid., I, P11, Proof 2.

²⁵ Ibid., I, P29, Pr.

²⁶ Ibid., I, P29, Schol.

²⁷ Seymour Feldman, introduction to *The Ethics and Selected Letters*, by Baruch Spinoza, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1992), 11.

²⁸ Spinoza, *Ethics*, I, App.

substance, what is fully affirmed in and engendered by the production of its pure activity. He names this passive aspect of substance “Natura naturata,”²⁹ or “all that follows from the necessity of God’s nature.”³⁰ Specifically, Natura naturata names substance “as produced and referring to the modes,”³¹ the modifications or affections of substance “in a definite and determinate way.”³² Thus, the pure activity of absolutely infinite substance—through its necessary and free causation of itself, its pure positivity—is a general production that is also an *individuation* of “an infinity of things in infinite ways.”³³

But what do Natura naturans and Natura naturata *share* that allows for such a pure activity of individuation, for their necessarily mutual relationship? When Spinoza says that Nature “expresses a definite essence, eternal and infinite,”³⁴ he claims that the necessary freedom of its activity is the expression of its unique and absolutely infinite *essence*. By equivocating the essence and existence of substance,³⁵ Spinoza shows that the necessity of Nature’s free activity is identical to the necessity of its essence. The expression of its essence, therefore, is identical to its free auto-production in both passive and active aspects. Modes express this essence through God’s infinite attributes, formal distinctions—of which we only know two, Thought and Extension—that constitute God’s numerically unique essence.³⁶

Operating another equivocation, between essence and *power*,³⁷ Spinoza goes on to posit that “whatever exists expresses God’s power, which is the cause of all things, in a definite and determinate way.”³⁸ Consequently, all modes—even infinite modes—in their passivity as Natura naturata share the characterization of being *limitations* of Nature’s absolutely infinite essence, never exhaustively expressing the fullness of infinite power. But modes *differ* as finite determinations of infinite power. Nature’s infinite power “involves absolute perfection,”³⁹ which produces dependent modes that “owe whatever degree of perfection *or reality* they possess entirely to”⁴⁰ the absolute reality of Nature’s power.⁴¹ Although all that exists is real, Spinoza gives the concept of *degrees* of reality and of power to

²⁹ Ibid., I, P29, Schol.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Feldman, introduction, 11.

³² Spinoza, *Ethics*, I, P25, Cor.

³³ Ibid., I, P16, Pr.

³⁴ Ibid., I, P10, Schol.

³⁵ Ibid., I, P20.

³⁶ Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 66.

³⁷ Spinoza, *Ethics*, I, P34.

³⁸ Ibid., I, P36, Pr.

³⁹ Ibid., I, P11, Schol.

⁴⁰ Ibid., emphasis added.

⁴¹ For the subtle equivalence between “reality” and “energy,” see Spinoza, *Ethics*, I, P11, Schol.

differentiate modes. While no mode can be as fully real or powerful as absolutely infinite Nature, modes are more or less powerful relative to each other along a quantitative continuum of infinite degrees of power, degrees that correspond to greater or lesser degrees of reality or perfection.

Our sketch of inhumanism so far shows that Spinoza's Nature is a "monster of energy, without beginning or end,"⁴² an anonymous, impersonal, nonpartisan substance populated by infinite modes in infinite ways. God is always already fully perfect and free by its very nature and "has no fixed goal"⁴³ which it could lack, and therefore no reason to endeavor towards any final cause for itself or for any of its modes. Because it produces only from and for its free self-causation and "not for the sake of the things to be created,"⁴⁴ Spinoza's inhumanism entails a rejection of any anthropocentrism that gives an exceptional or central status to the human, or any humanism which prescribes a pre-given purpose or end for humans. Humans are finite modes fully subjected to inhumanism's cosmic activity, and cannot be a "kingdom within a kingdom"⁴⁵ operating by a separate order of causality that would exempt them from God's singular necessity. The locus of their activity does not reside in them as if they had an unconditioned will that acts by fiat, preventing themselves from free self-determination. Nor are there final causes for humans: Spinoza makes clear that all "final causes are but figments of the [finite] human imagination" that "take as an effect that which is in fact a cause, and vice versa."⁴⁶ God neither willingly benefits, harms, or affects humans through a final cause directed towards their natures, nor provides specific ends to guide their activity.

While these characteristics of Spinoza's inhuman substance cause distress for those desiring human freedom, Spinoza goes even further by problematizing the identity of "human" so that specifically human freedom seems even more unlikely. An authentic identity of the human that would group modes as "humans" would have to belong to *Natura naturata* as a mode. But this requires a pre-given identity exterior to the vicissitudes of activity's production, an impossibility since all modes must be individuated into existence. The impossibility of positively grounding an authentic, transcendent human identity reveals that there are no human characteristics which modes could possess as humans. Since inhumanism eviscerates every pretension to predetermine what is human, Spinoza opens us upon a generic

⁴² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale and Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 55.

⁴³ Spinoza, *Ethics*, I, App.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, III, Pref.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, I, App.

alien constitution of all modes. This alien constitution, or *alienicity*, guarantees we have never been, and never will be, human when viewed from the perspective of substance *sub specie aeternitatis*⁴⁷—only aliens. Until we explicate Spinoza’s account of the immanent production of the “human,” we will follow his lead in retaining the term for practical purposes.

We now turn to modes’ alienicity, proving to be fundamental to their individuation resulting from pure activity. By investigating the causalities that constitutively produce modes, Spinoza introduces two kinds of causality: immanent causality and efficient (or transitive) causality. *Immanent causality*, strictly speaking, is the only cause that exists. Spinoza makes it clear that “God is the immanent, not the transitive, cause of all things,”⁴⁸ and this immanent cause is the same cause by which God causes himself and produces *Natura naturata*. Immanent causality inheres in its effects, constitutively distributing to each mode a finite degree of the infinite power of its pure activity. For Spinoza, the power of each thing that it expresses throughout its finite existence is its individual *conatus*, the actual essence whereby “each thing endeavors to persist in its own being.”⁴⁹ Spinoza names this essence pertaining to humans “desire.”⁵⁰

Since the *conatus* is one of the most crucial elements of Spinoza’s thought, we must better understand its activity. Because the *conatus* of each mode, “*qua* expression of the [infinite] power of God,”⁵¹ shares in the full positivity of essence, it necessarily posits an existence—specifically, it posits the existence of its correlated individual mode once it begins existing and for as long as it remains in existence. Because a mode’s existence is determined by its ability to continue as an individual—which is the only way any affection of God could exist—the *conatus* is conceptualized as that which strives to secure and individuate its particular coherence over time. This includes opposing “everything that can annul its existence.”⁵² Subsequently, death is totally exterior to the *conatus*,⁵³ and its activity only affirms modes in the “life” of existence.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, V, P29.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, I, P18.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, III, P7.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, III, P9, Schol.

⁵¹ Camille Dumoulié, “Spinoza, or, The Power of Desire,” *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy* 14 (2003): 46.

⁵² Spinoza, *Ethics*, III, P6, Pr.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, III, P4, Pr.

⁵⁴ Baruch Spinoza, *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy with Metaphysical Thoughts*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1998), 120.

But as an expression of God’s infinite power without any final cause, it must effectuate this coherence without specific ends. Rather than aiming for a particular end, including a specific state of coherence, the conatus is fuelled by inhumanism’s “infinite superabundance of power”⁵⁵ not only to persist in being, but also to *better* persist in being. If the conatus were to come to express zero degrees of power, it would express no reality, thereby ceasing to posit its mode, which passes out of existence. The more power the conatus expresses, the further its power is from the termination of its mode’s persistence in being, and the closer it is to God’s infinite power. Thus, the greater power the conatus expresses, the greater its mode’s persistence in being; even without specific ends, the conatus strives to enhance its mode’s persistence in being. Crucially, this entails that the conatus’ activity has two distinct, but inseparable aspects: its mode’s persistence in existence, and its striving to increase the power of this persistence—not only preservation, but also elevation. This dyadic activity achieves true or real advantage when it “aim[s] at whatever really leads a [mode] towards greater perfection.”⁵⁶ This increased power is the successful actuation of one’s persistence in being according to “the laws of [its] own nature,”⁵⁷ a modality of the conatus Spinoza names *virtue*.⁵⁸

Before more fully elaborating the activity of the conatus and its relationship with freedom, we must turn to the differently striving modes that interact with each other through *efficient causality*. To speak of an efficient cause is to narrow down the scope of generic immanent causality so as to focus upon how finite modes affect each other in their finitude, through efficient causes “which [are] also finite and [have] a determine existence.”⁵⁹ The activity of efficient causality produces the same “order and connection”⁶⁰ of finite causal nexuses for all modes, as well as composing their individuation as singularities. Modes retain their unique identities across all attributes, becoming *ideas* under the attribute of Thought and *bodies* under the attribute of Extension.⁶¹ We will explore their individual constitutions under Extension before moving to Thought.

Spinoza’s physics of power under Extension is a vast space of bodies colliding, deforming, jolting, effacing, extinguishing, narrowly avoiding, engendering, and coming into

⁵⁵ Dumoulié, “The Power of Desire,” 46.

⁵⁶ Spinoza, *Ethics*, IV, P18, Schol.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, IV, Def. 8.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, I, P28.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, II, P7.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, II, P7, Schol.

contact with one another—a titanic machinery of communication.⁶² From the moment when a body is caused into existence, it undergoes constant relations of affection with other bodies. Specifically for human bodies, this divine anarchy includes their dynamic constitution as composite bodies made up of a vast amount of simpler bodies within them “of different natures, each of which is extremely complex.”⁶³ These simple bodies are all united as a composite mode by their overall proportion of motion and rest.⁶⁴ This proportion is the human’s individuation, a cohering union gravitationally accumulating different natures into the form by which a body keeps its identity through the many transformations and affections⁶⁵ of Spinoza’s physical maelstrom. This complex body and its many parts “are affected by external bodies in a great many ways.”⁶⁶

Importantly, whenever a part of the human body is impacted by a body external to it, this relation of affectivity is a relation of efficient causality by which both bodies mutate their current speeds and locations, an effect which also communicates its movement to the order of the whole human body,⁶⁷ modifying their own natures of causality. Inversely, if the whole human body is affected by an external body in relations of efficient causality, the effects transfer motion to its simpler bodies, changing their speeds and motion—a rippling effect that becomes more cacophonous the more external bodies affect it. If one considers how each part and the whole of the human body is involved in *myriad* such interactions with other complex and simple bodies, the scale and complexity of the web of causality which all of these bodies are embedded in becomes even clearer. These encounters whereby bodies necessarily affect each other happen continuously—there is no reprieve whereby the human body and its parts can be unaffected by others, unconditioned by its engagements.⁶⁸

But there is no pre-given “human” proportion of motion and rest or properties that individuate modes categorically as humans. Notably for alienicity, bodies involved in the encounters of this wild physics do not preserve any particular state or identity of relations throughout their changes, retaining only their continuously deformed and re-formed proportions of motion and rest (or forms) that cohere uniquely over time. Because “all the ways in which a body is affected by another body follow from the nature of the affected body

⁶² Etienne Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, trans. Peter Snowdon (London: Verso, 2008), 99.

⁶³ Spinoza, *Ethics*, II, P13, Postulate 1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, II, P13, Def.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, II, P13, Lemma 5.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, II, P13, Pr. 3.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, II, P13, Lem. 7, Schol.

⁶⁸ Etienne Balibar, *Spinoza: From Individuality to Transindividuality* (Eburon: Delft, 1997), 13.

together with the nature of the body affecting it,”⁶⁹ a human body’s composition is always receiving an influx of heterogeneous natures from exterior, foreign bodies in ways that not only affects its motion and rest, but also helps *constitute* its causal relations and compose its new nature, its new interiority, its new identity.⁷⁰ To preserve its nature, the human body requires the intake of exteriority into its interiority, ingesting “a great many other bodies, by which, as it were, it is continually regenerated.”⁷¹

Subject to this alien contact under inhumanist immanence, its interiority proves to be “only a selected exterior.”⁷² At each moment a re-composition and redistribution of a mode’s interiority and its exteriority is forced, a process that transforms each alien mode into a multiplicitous relation of complex relations.⁷³ As such a relation of relations, a mode continues both to integrate all of its developing relations with exteriority into each of its states (or affections), as well as to integrate each of its alien constitutions as a temporalized and cumulative series of identity. Spinoza re-conceptualizes identity as processually grounded in the real content of causal natures and the activity of multiplicities of effects, bringing to the fore the real powers and capacities “for affecting and being affected”⁷⁴ that identities become under alienicity. It is for this reason that Spinoza opts for the minimalist criterion for identity as temporally plastic proportion of motion and rest. Only this alien identity conceptualized as a multiplicity dynamically unified under minimally required cohesion can survive its ongoing non-coincidence with itself, its cumulative becoming other to itself.⁷⁵ Importantly, this concept of identity is also minimal enough to apply to *all* modes, which are necessarily composed of interiorities and exteriorities effectuated by the individuating powers of their conatus as they constitutively exchange something of their natures in their affective relations with each other.

The ecstatic activity of continually *becoming-x* that characterizes this non-coincidence explains how the conatus can realize greater power for its respective mode—modal persistence also conditions the possibility of greater perfection. Ceaselessly traversed by swarms of different natures, modal activity involves differences in its states. By defining

⁶⁹ Spinoza, *Ethics*, II, P13, Lem. 3, Axiom 1.

⁷⁰ Gilbert Simondon, “The Position of the Problem of Ontogenesis,” trans. Gregory Flanders, *Parrhesia: A Journal of Critical Philosophy* 7 (2009): 5, accessed February 19, 2015.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, II, P13, Post. 4.

⁷² Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 125.

⁷³ Muriel Combes, *Gilbert Simondon and the Philosophy of the Transindividual*, trans. Thomas LaMarre (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013), 26.

⁷⁴ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 123.

⁷⁵ Simondon, “Problem of Ontogenesis,” 5.

these states—or “emotions,” when concerning the human—as “affections of the body by which the body’s power of activity is increased or diminished, assisted or checked, together with the ideas of these affections,”⁷⁶ Spinoza institutes a direct relationship between a mode’s current state and the exact degree of power its conatus expresses. As a local instance of God’s ontologically full essence, the conatus expresses its “quantum [of power] as if it were infinite,”⁷⁷ engaging with its mode’s changing states so as to ecstatically approximate the infinite reality of God’s infinite essence. When successful, these exertions draw the positive power of essence’s fullness enough to overflow a mode’s current affection, spilling over into new alien arrangements with even greater perfection. Specifically for the essence of the human mode as desire, the conatus always desires to be more like God, to be more inhuman, to achieve ever-higher levels of activity and reality, using the non-coincidence of alienicity as a contraption for these elevated alien becomings.

We now turn to elaborate the attribute of Thought, which likewise undergoes the same order and connection of alienicity’s processes.⁷⁸ Under Thought, the human mode is a mind, the image of the whole human body⁷⁹ that “indicate[s] the constitution of [its] own body more than the nature of external bodies.”⁸⁰ As its body’s image, it registers the sum of effects of its constituent activity and relations of causality during its many becoming-x’s. Identical to the body’s plastically unified form of motion and rest, the mind’s unity is compositely made up of simpler ideas modally identical to the corporeal parts of the whole body.⁸¹ Additionally, the mind can not only perceive the “affections of the body but also the ideas of these affections,”⁸² giving it the unique ability to reflexively have ideas of ideas.

Through alienicity, the mind undergoes continuous syntheses as a thinking alien identity. It is a mutating, multiplicitous idea composed of ideas that is both: a relation collecting its own heterogeneous natures as an interiority and integrating its changes throughout time, as well as a relation unifying its causal relations with other ideas and minds that affect it and constitutively sustain its existence. But the mind is too overwhelmed by the rampant production of alienicity from moment to moment to distinctly know every single causal relation it expresses as an idea within its porous interiority. Because it cannot clearly

⁷⁶ Spinoza, *Ethics*, III, Def. 3.

⁷⁷ Dumoulié, “The Power of Desire,” 46.

⁷⁸ Spinoza, *Ethics*, II, P7.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, II, P13.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, II, P16, Cor. 2.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, II, P15.

⁸² *Ibid.*, II, P22.

discern the natures of all its ideas, the mind only knows the natures of itself and its body rather confusedly.⁸³

Furthermore, its ideas will always be inadequate when compared to the absolutely perfect knowledge of God perceived under the attribute of Thought, “the idea of God, from which infinite things follow in infinite ways.”⁸⁴ This not only makes adequate knowledge of its own nature difficult, but also makes knowledge of exterior natures even more difficult.⁸⁵ When the mind undergoes this lack of clarity or distinction of causal relations regarding bodies or ideas, Spinoza says that the mind is under the first kind of knowledge which circulates inadequate ideas—the *imagination*.⁸⁶ Although inadequate ideas cannot be false in the sense of their sheer positivity,⁸⁷ they poorly express the complex constitutive relations of their bodies: “their capacity to imagine them is surpassed, not indeed completely, but to the extent that the mind is unable to imagine the unimportant differences of individuals.”⁸⁸ For this reason, inadequate ideas must know things by grouping natures (of both ideas and bodies) that share similarities, imagining “distinctly only their common characteristic in so far as the body is affected by them.”⁸⁹

Here, Spinoza presents us with a nominalist epistemological account that describes the process of development by which minds acquire “those notions called ‘universal,’ such as ‘man,’ ‘horse,’ ‘dog,’ etc.”⁹⁰ Instead of positing eternal universals—what we will conceptualize as *icons*—as pre-given, authentic, isomorphically iterable or ultimately *transcendent* identities or properties that are instantiated in each mind, Spinoza argues that all such notions are differentially *produced* into their finite existences, immanently grounded only in God’s pure activity without any final cause. Therefore, notions commonly referring to the “human” that minds form are only *local effects* belonging to *Natura naturata*, produced by the infinite, immanent activity of inhumanist *Natura naturans*. Furthermore, bodies, each with their unique affections of alienicity, have minds which form these “universal images according to the [specific] conditioning of”⁹¹ their bodies, giving each mode claiming to be human a unique and processual notion of what the “human” is. This would obviously apply even to the finite mode of Benedict Spinoza and its use of the notions “human,” “body,”

⁸³ Ibid., II, P27; II, P29.

⁸⁴ Ibid., II, P4.

⁸⁵ Ibid., II, P25.

⁸⁶ Ibid., II, P40, Schol. 2.

⁸⁷ Ibid., II, P33.

⁸⁸ Ibid., II, P40, Schol. 1.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

“idea,” etc. Strictly speaking, an identical identity of the “human” shared by modes is impossible. Nevertheless, Spinoza descriptively insists that we cannot think without these common notions, as there seem to be “certain ideas or notions common to all men.”⁹² Thus, Spinoza appears to have given a satisfactory solution as to how anonymous inhumanism could produce modes that are distinguished as “human,” without having any final cause or template of the human to guide its production. For the remainder of our investigation, we will follow Spinoza by designating a “human” to be a mode having a common notion of the human.

Yet, this partial resolution to the inhumanist problem of accounting for the human becomes further complicated when Spinoza suggests that common notions are “the basis of our reasoning processes.”⁹³ Common notions provide the conceptual resources whereby the human mind can increase the adequacy of its ideas and knowledge. For Spinoza, the imagining mind “regards external bodies through the ideas of affections of its own body,”⁹⁴ that is to say, inadequately. Although the mind can never prevent the generation of its constitution by the alloying of its modal nature with exterior natures, its ideas can increase their adequacy when they know or express more degrees of reality (or perfection) of the webs of causal relations that communicatively implicate their mind. It increases this adequacy by elucidating the natures of modes with its common notions; specifically, it explicates essence’s activity that individuates relations of relations as things that express general production through their causal processes of alien identity. Common notions work as mental scaffolding upon which knowledge of essence is further elaborated, platforms upon which even more common notions can be assembled, protracted, and extrapolated to cumulatively produce knowledge expressing ever more perfection. After common notions synergistically attain enough knowledge of essence’s activity, the mind has ideas expressing sufficient degrees of reality to become *adequate* knowledge that differs from the images of the imagination.⁹⁵

This knowledge that more adequately and fully understands God’s inhuman activity and the causal nexuses it effectuates, Spinoza calls *reason*. In relation to bodies and ideas, reason can distinctly “understand their agreement, their differences, and their opposition”⁹⁶ because it knows things truly as they are according to the unique order and connection of things, that is, according to the necessity of *Natura naturata* and its alien affectivity.⁹⁷ This

⁹² Ibid., II, P38, Cor.

⁹³ Ibid., II, P40, Schol. 1.

⁹⁴ Ibid., II, P26, Pr. 2.

⁹⁵ Ibid., II, P46.

⁹⁶ Ibid., II, P29, Schol.

⁹⁷ Ibid., II, P44, Pr.

scientific reason—with the higher adequacy of its ideas—more closely approximates the absolutely perfect knowledge of the idea of God such that it “perceive[s] things in the light of [necessary] eternity.”⁹⁸

It is precisely at this juncture where a new problematization of the common notion of the human emerges, one bringing to the fore further problems. Spinoza forms a necessary and mutual relationship between *activity* and *knowledge*: “we share in the divine nature, and all the more as our actions become more perfect and as we understand God more and more.”⁹⁹ Although we always finitely express God’s infinite and unique essence, we come to express higher degrees of such divine power in proportion to *both* the increases of the perfection or adequacy of our knowledge, and the increases of our activity as it becomes more perfect. Given Spinoza’s equivocation of the “conatus of the mind, that is, its power to think”¹⁰⁰ with the “conatus of the body, that is, its power to act”¹⁰¹ that results from their modal identity, Spinoza effectively claims that increases in rationality and activity will make one even more God-like, even more *inhuman*.

Since the conatus of human modes intrinsically strives to express greater degrees of the power of God’s pure activity, each human mode desires to burgeon in ways that decisively exceed the scope of what is human, which is nothing “more than a territory, a set of boundaries, a limit on existence.”¹⁰² But as a finite mode, the human is always already barred from embodying the ontological independence of God’s freedom that would allow it the perfect inhumanity of absolute infinity. Here, a more troubling problem than that of the “human” arises for Spinoza: if we all naturally desire and strive for infinite freedom, a goal already precluded by our ontological dependence upon substance, what sort of responses to inhumanism are possible for us? What might an *ethics* fully consistent with inhumanism look like? In order to explore Spinoza’s inhumanist problem of ethical activity, we must transverse his ethical theory; in particular, we will conceive it as an ethics of *immunology*.

⁹⁸ Ibid., II, P44, Cor. 2.

⁹⁹ Ibid., II, P49, Schol.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., III, P28, Pr.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Robert Hurley, introduction to *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, by Gilles Deleuze, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), iii.

3. Immunological Ethics

As we begin to explore Spinoza's ethical theory, we must ask what the conceptual framework of immunology offers to clarify how modes might respond in the face of God's inhumanism. Before we investigate the relation between Spinoza's ethical theory and immunology, we must filter our ontological account of inhumanist reality so far through immunology. To begin understanding what characterizes immune systems as modes, we first conceptualize how his alien modes are *systems*. Echoing Spinoza's account of modal alienicity, a system is constitutively "defined by the excess of [alien] energy operating it,"¹⁰³ gaining its interiority through the causal intake of exterior natures that constitutively defines and sustains its existence. Systems are "subjected to continuous flow[s] of energy and matter,"¹⁰⁴ or essence, that redistribute their configurations of what is interior and exterior to them. Systems undergoing this dynamic exchange with their environments require a fluctuating boundary to differentiate between its interiority and exteriority, while also providing points of contact to allow for these interchanges to continue preserving the systems' existence. These sustained, constitutive relations of causality necessarily provoke the change of the systems involved. Because they are modes ceaselessly becoming-x to persist in being, systems remain consistent with inhumanist alienicity. Under the influence of Spinoza's materialism and the naturalism necessitated by immunology, we accentuate systems' embeddedness in environments to posit their equivalence to *ecologies*. These ecologies form as interiors for themselves and exteriors for others, and contain causal relations varying in power, kinds, configurations, natures, and degrees of reality.

Essentially, Spinoza's alien modal system, or ecology, is a "functioning construct that is open to continuous exchange with its surrounding environment,"¹⁰⁵ populated in its entirety by swarms of heterogeneous natures that it incorporates from its causal relations with other modes experiencing their own alienicity. Immunology helps us to understand how these multiplicitous processes, these identities, can function and co-exist without an icon or blueprint of a pre-given identity to actualize:—the immune system itself *is* this alien constitution, this "third person reflexive pronoun."¹⁰⁶ The activity of the immune system endeavors to ensure its individual's persistence in being, to outstrip the ever-present

¹⁰³ Matteo Pasquinelli, *Animal Spirits: A Bestiary of the Commons* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2008), 54.

¹⁰⁴ Dorion Sagan and Eric D. Schneider, *Into the Cool: Energy Flow, Thermodynamics, and Life* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 81.

¹⁰⁵ Roberto Esposito, *Immunitas: The Protection and Negation of Life*, trans. Zakiya Hanafi (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 17.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 175.

possibility of its decomposition or death. This process is the continuous fabrication of *immunity*,¹⁰⁷ which is a mode's ability to successfully incorporate and tolerate external natures into its own composite interior, into the reach of its activity striving to ensure the mode *as a whole* persists in being.

But with modal existences possibly at stake, immune systems must produce this immunity in ways consistent with its alien dynamics. In fact, there are two types of this immunological tolerance: an *innate immunity* and an *adaptive immunity*. A finite mode's inception that initiates the actual activity of the conatus is synonymous with the innate immunity that can develop a foundational tolerance to *self*,¹⁰⁸ a tolerance conditioning one's individuated true advantage. Yet, in order to identify as "self," the immune system must also identify "non-self," a discriminating recognition the begins with innate immunity and follows the self's evolution as it coincides with its alteration.¹⁰⁹ All immunity acquired posterior to innate immunity through the assimilation of unprecedented external natures is adaptive immunity.¹¹⁰

When the immune system recognizes the presence of a foreign nature, an *antigen*, adaptive immunity provokes the production of a corresponding *antibody* which the immune system recognizes as its own nature.¹¹¹ Their degree of fit, or *affinity*, determines whether they have sufficient complementarity to fuse together as an *immune complex*, producing a tolerance.^{112 113} What is healthy (good) or not (bad) for a body is the effect of its encounters' affinities with other natures and their resultant mixtures and changes, *and nothing else*. The becoming-x of the good encounter forming the immune complex signals an effective annexation that produces "a permanently altered pattern of response,"¹¹⁴ transforming the immune system's nature and causal relations. Specifically, immunity incurs an enduring immunological *memory* that expands the scope of its tolerances, providing it more robust immunity and more powerful immunological responses in the future.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁷ B.M. Chain and J.H.L. Playfair, *Immunology at a Glance*, 9th ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 8.

¹⁰⁸ Angela Hall and Christine Yates, ed. *Immunology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 2.

¹⁰⁹ Richard Coico and Geoffrey Sunshine, *Immunology: A Short Course*, 7th ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 5.

¹¹⁰ Chain and Playfair, *Immunology at a Glance*, 9.

¹¹¹ Hall and Yates, *Immunology*, 2.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 91.

¹¹³ It would be interesting to extrapolate this mechanism to Kant's own account of the faculty of sensibility as it is affected by what is wholly exterior to it, before the understanding conceptually incorporates the resulting manifold of intuitions.

¹¹⁴ Chain and Playfair, *Immunology at a Glance*, 10.

¹¹⁵ Hall and Yates, *Immunology*, 3.

The mechanisms of recognition—which are not restricted to Thought—necessitated by this immunological process strongly resonates with the function of the conatus. Fundamentally, we can conceptualize the activity of the conatus as immunity itself, as the “*process* that always provides for an open system of self-definition, constantly producing self and other from itself”¹¹⁶ in full view of the teeming natures composing modes’ constitutions. But how does this self-definition happen for the mode as a whole, apart from these specific localities of contact, of efficient causality? To address a mode’s more global individuation, we must remember the two simultaneous and irreducible dimensions of the conatus’ activity as persistence and elevation in existence. Immune systems perform these two functions by regulating both their interior alien ecologies, as well as the kinetics of their input-output relations with their exterior relations that osmotically pass through the permeable borders that individuate their processes of becoming-x. By persisting to integrate the mode’s relations with other modes as its constituted interiority, the immune system effectuates attractions between these relations enough for them to hang together in the loosest sense as a minimal, formal identity. When it fails to sustain this unity, the mode becomes dominated by exteriority such that its interiority is totally stripped and its integrity dissolved. But the functioning of modes, by their very nature, also exceeds the bare activity of subsistence to include an intrinsic tendency towards optimization, a sort of “health” that turns the necessity of intercourse and symbiosis into a boon.

However, we now face the question of how the conatus’ duplex activity relates to ethical criteria, becoming fully compatible with inhumanism’s destruction of any iconic identity that could entail preordained and ethically necessary actions relating to a pre-given origin or end. The immune system answers the need for a fully immanent ethics, with its ability to pursue health despite its inability to predetermine its encounters and the kinds of health that emerge from them. This ability to ethically strive for greater virtue without reference to any kind of icon or transcendence characterizes immunological ethics as *without an image*. Each mode—with its unique conatus and varying nature—is its own *immanent* ethical criterion that determines the health of its preservation and elevation in being as a fundamentally relational, or ecological, individual. The ethical norm for alien identity isn’t exterior to it, but rather “inscribed in the matter [or specific essence] through which it exerts itself.”¹¹⁷ For this reason, Spinoza asserts that the “perfection of things should be measured

¹¹⁶ Alfred I. Tauber, *The Immune Self: Theory or Metaphor?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 196.

¹¹⁷ Esposito, *Immunitas*, 142.

solely from their own nature and power.”¹¹⁸ ¹¹⁹ Regardless of the affinities and configurations of essence produced by a mode’s serial alienicity, immunology can trace its dynamic criteria over time to gauge its power, discern its activity, and qualify its persistence and optimization in being according to lesser or greater immunity.

But we cannot simply assert this immanent health; we must show how it functions for Spinoza. Before we move on to superimpose the immunological schema upon his inhumanist *ethical* theory, we must examine his ethical concepts and their machinations. Because ethical action must be thought through the ecological intimacy of interiority and exteriority in communication, as well as through the mode’s identity with its ethical criterion, our point of departure will be Spinoza’s concept of *adequate causation*. Spinoza defines an adequate cause as a “cause whose effect can be clearly and distinctly perceived through the said cause.”¹²⁰ Strictly speaking, according to Spinoza’s inhumanism, only God is an adequate cause: God’s immanent causality, equivalent to its self-causation as *Natura naturans*, is the activity of essence of all causes and effects.

But Spinoza intends more than this conclusion, and argues that modes too can be considered as adequate causes in their causal relations.¹²¹ There must be knowledge which can adequately discern from an effect the mode which it is causally dependent upon. This necessary concatenation between adequate knowledge and adequate causality implies that one must have adequate knowledge of the causal relations of both cause and effect in their complexity. Because modes are constituted by their relations with a great many other modes, the singling out of a mode as an adequate cause indicates that it has sufficient power to actuate not only parts of the mode it helps to effectuate, but also a sufficient portion of the whole mode in all its constitutive activity. The adequate cause is a power of determination, and the greater its adequacy as a cause, the greater its power of constitutively determining through its effects. God, as the true adequate cause, comprehensively determines all modes of *Natura naturata* in this way.

Concerning human modes, Spinoza posits that “if we can be the adequate cause of one of these affections, [our emotions,] then by emotion I understand *activity*, otherwise

¹¹⁸ Spinoza, *Ethics*, I, App.

¹¹⁹ Even the iconic ethical exemplar of *Ethics*’ Part IV is admitted to only be for educational purposes, see Spinoza, *Ethics*, IV, Pref.

¹²⁰ Spinoza, *Ethics*, III, Def. 1.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, III, Def. 2.

passivity.”¹²² Although human modes can also, by definition, be the adequate cause of other modes, Spinoza focuses specifically upon how they become adequate causes of *themselves*. He links the modal affections “by which the body’s power of activity is increased”¹²³ with one’s capacity to effectually determine one’s own affections to a sufficiently high degree so that becoming the adequate cause of oneself is to be active.¹²⁴ Since the conatus strives to be increasingly more powerful in its activity, its mode strives to increasingly be active as the adequate cause of itself. By being active as one’s adequate cause, one more closely approximate God’s perfect freedom.

But *how* does this determining auto-affection work so that one can better attain higher degrees of power and freedom proper to true advantage? Here, we must turn to Proposition 38 of Part IV of the *Ethics* in full:

that which so disposes the human body that it can be affected in more ways, or which renders it capable of affecting external bodies in more ways, is advantageous to man, and proportionately more advantageous as the body is thereby rendered more capable of being affected in more ways and of affecting other bodies in more ways. On the other hand, that which renders the body less capable in these respects is harmful.¹²⁵

At first glance, Spinoza’s insistence that higher degrees of true advantage, or freedom, have a direct proportional relationship with increases in the body’s capacities to both affect and be affected by other bodies seems like a miscalculation or redundant—is not *every* mode, including the incredibly complex human mode, *always already* embedded in continuous and dynamic ecologies of myriad constitutive relations of affectivity, the vast majority of which we do not even have adequate knowledge? Furthermore, why is the increased “surface area” that opens up to contact with other natures through a greater affectivity desirable and empowering for projects of freedom?

To begin the exploration of this ethical problem, we must follow Spinoza’s elaboration of two crucial axes: the *axis of joy-sadness* and the *axis of activity-passivity*. These two axes are fundamentally ethical because they express both the activity belonging to any conatus, as well as the degree of power that any alien identity expresses by this activity. Here we find Spinoza’s three dominant ethical states:

¹²² Ibid., III, Def. 3., emphasis added.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., III, Def. 2.

¹²⁵ Ibid., IV, P38.

Table 1.

Structural Composition of Ethical States.

	Activity	Passivity
Joy	Active Joy	Joyful Passion
Sadness	X	Sad Passion

What distinguishes the polarity of each axis is the implicit deployment of the concept of a *threshold*,¹²⁶ “the magnitude or intensity that must be exceeded for a certain reaction, phenomena, result, or condition to occur or be manifested.”¹²⁷ How do these thresholds come to be? They are made possible by each mode’s temporally serial process of identity-formation which unremittingly undergoes a “rupture of a previous equilibrium and the consequent need for its reconstitution.”¹²⁸ These ecstatic transgressions of thresholds between alien states correspond to both quantitative and qualitative differences. Each ethical axis is characterized by a quantitative gradient of degrees that correspond to qualitative effects of such transformations. The threshold, then, is the point whereby a certain degree is attained or exceeded such that the qualitative composition of an axis’ polarity changes to express the dominance or prominence of one pole’s quality. The interdependence between quantitative and qualitative differences ensures that quantitative differences are significant differences in so far as they engender distinct qualitative differences. To better understand what these differences are and the effects that they exercise, we will first investigate the axis of joy-sadness; then, we will continue to develop our preliminary sketch of the other axis that relates to the locus of adequate causation.

The axis of joy-sadness specifies an *affective* polarity proper to the dyadic states or affections of human modes as minds and bodies. The axis is an emotional gradient that directly correlates with a mode’s constitutive composition and relations with other modes—it is an effect of sharing a commons of causality and essence. These emotions can be dominantly configured by *joy* or *sadness*. A joy is a “transition to a state of greater perfection,”¹²⁹ while a sadness is a “passive transition of the mind [and body] to [a] state of

¹²⁶ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 124-5.

¹²⁷ *Oxford Dictionary*, s.v. “threshold,” accessed September 10, 2015, <https://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/threshold>.

¹²⁸ Esposito, *Immunitas*, 2.

¹²⁹ Spinoza, *Ethics*, III, P21, Pr.

less perfection.”¹³⁰ The many emotions that humans are capable of arise from combinations of joy, sadness, and the desire that is the human’s essence.¹³¹ Spinoza’s extensive catalogue of the emotions in Part III of his *Ethics* shows that the many parts of the human body and mind which are composed of different natures and are affected in different ways generate mixtures of joy and sadness for the human mode as a whole. Strictly speaking, there are as many emotions “as there are kinds of objects by which we are affected.”¹³² These unique mixtures thus have different proportions of joy and sadness, and the emotion that the human mind and body register is an effective, qualitative summation of the human’s persistence in being as a whole. Additionally, the emotion is a threshold in so far as the degree of power corresponding to one’s persistence in being is a quantitative measurement with immediate effects of qualitative emotional variability.

To begin elaborating the gradient of joy-sadness, we first focus on joys as states or effects that the mind and body undergo when the human mode encounters other ideas and bodies that “increase or assist [one’s] power of activity.”¹³³ Absolutely speaking, there are no pre-given limits to what can affect a body to generate an affinity affirming the human’s mode’s existence, its striving for adequate causation, and increases in its knowledge’s adequacy. These increases of power vary in magnitude, and can be minute or momentous shifts that raise one’s exercised degree of activity. Because there is no specific limit upon the joys one can incur as a finite mode given God’s infinite power, nor any predetermined restrictions for what can produce joy, joys are essentially without an image. As singularities without a pre-given or preconceived identity, they cannot be known ahead of time, but only experientially known as effects.

On the other hand, sadness expresses diminutions of one’s degree of activity and power whereby one becomes less capable of becoming freer as the adequate cause of oneself. Like with joy, these diminutions vary in their magnitude. Sadness results from encounters with other modes that actuate decreases in power, blocking or minimizing the conatus’ activity. In this sense, sadness is an effect *inflicted upon* a mode, dampening its striving to continually approximate infinite activity. For this reason, when sadnesses attain emotional prevalence along the affective gradient, they never entail activity, but can only facilitate passions.

¹³⁰ Ibid., III, P11, Schol.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid., III, P56.

¹³³ Ibid., III, P12, Pr.

To understand what the passions are, we will now turn to the second axis of activity-passivity and outline Spinoza's conceptualization of them. Although it also utilizes the concepts of gradients and thresholds, it arranges them differently than the first axis. Specifically, this axis hinges around the freedom of becoming the adequate cause of oneself. Although alien constitution requires that modal existence be vulnerable to transformations and capacities that result from pure affectivity, there are different responses and adaptations—modalities of existing—to the necessary embeddedness within ecologies of essence. In addition to the axis of emotion or affect by which one can experience causal encounters as joys which boost, fortify, and amplify one's persistence in being, or as sadness which threaten this activity by undoing, dissolving, or inhibiting a mode's coherence, there are modalities proper to the dynamics of simultaneously becoming affected and affecting in one's constitution.

A human mode is always more or less capable of becoming the adequate cause of its own constitution, its own activity, its own nature. When its persistence in being is not the adequate cause of itself, and it cannot perceive itself as making effects that contribute enough to empowering the activity of its conatus, the human is said to be in the state of passivity, dominated by the *passions*. Spinoza admits that most of our lives are lived under the passions,¹³⁴ especially since there is no mode “that is not surpassed in strength and power by some other thing.”¹³⁵ To be under the passions, the natures of modes that affect the human determine its own nature, or relational composition, to a proportionally greater extent than the human's capacity of determining itself according to its own desire, or conatus. The order and connection proper to the human mode's coherent nature—as a proportion of motion and rest, and as a single mind—attributes the locus of adequacy of causation to what is exterior to it. This positions the human in a relatively precarious state whereby it is more subject to the whims and strivings of other modes than to its own desire's intrinsic endeavoring for more perfection. This has peculiar consequences for Spinoza's doctrine of the conatus. The conatus is forcibly burdened with the duress of other natures that do not primarily seek its real advantage enough to attenuate its activity to actualize what will concretely and certainly result in becoming its own adequate cause. Through its inherent need to affirm the existence of its mode, the conatus caught in the passions ends up exercising its unalloyed and positive activity to affirm that which leads away from its utmost true advantage.

¹³⁴ Baruch Spinoza, *Political Treatise*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2000), 38-9.

¹³⁵ Spinoza, *Ethics*, IV, Ax.

But the passions are not uniform, nor are their relations with the conatus. As long as a mode persists in being, its conatus expresses a degree of power, even if an extremely low one. It is only fully divorced from its activity through the event of death. Thus, human modes exist with varying proportional relations of passivity and activity.¹³⁶ The quantitative measure of degrees of power, or activity, belonging to this polarized gradient ensures that passions can be more or less intensive, correlating with greater or lesser over-determinations of one's nature by the natures of other modes. In addition, the passions—unlike activity—involve both joy and sadness, acquiring affective valences that enrich their complexity and the scope of their mixtures.

Before detailing Spinoza's account of activity, we will briefly describe sad and joyful passions. Because these ethical states comprise two out of the three modalities—sad passions, joyful passions, active joys—that any mode predominantly expresses at any time, we will also begin to concretely detail their specifically immunological import. In addition to what we have already made explicit about it as an emotion, sadness also (necessarily) indicates a passive dimension. Following the suggestion that the passions involve auto-destruction for the predominantly passive mode in question,¹³⁷ and given the peculiar relation between the conatus and the passions detailed above, we can comprehend the sad passions as states whereby the human mode participates in its own incapacitation. Humans suffer the sad passions when their causal relations produce an overpowering influx of external natures that decompose, destabilize, or threaten one's existence as a complex individual. We can understand this overwhelming causality as a poison which disagrees with one's nature,¹³⁸ a poor affinity of the encounter. Because the conatus necessarily affirms the existence of its human mode, under the sad passions it is forced to affirm its weakened nature, instead of superior ethical states.

Nevertheless, the conatus' affirmative activity requires that it strive to actualize what it takes to be its true advantage, which, in situations dominated by sad passions, becomes distorted. This can be explained by the directly proportional relationship between degrees of power and adequacy of ideas, whereby a reduction in one corresponds to a decrease in the other. The weakness of inadequate ideas prevent them from clearly and distinctly knowing the causal relations constituting one's own passively impotent nature, causing one to seek

¹³⁶ Ibid., IV, P5.

¹³⁷ Warren Montag, *Bodies, Masses, Power: Spinoza and His Contemporaries* (London: Verso, 1999), 30.

¹³⁸ Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 22.

one's greatest advantage more or less blindly. Instead, one begins to act more from the true advantages belonging to the poisonous natures that overrun the robustness of the conatus' activity which necessarily exercises its diluted strength to actively work against one's true advantage. This self-cannibalization still strives to actualize advantages, but these goals are *impoverished* advantages, reduced goods which continue to consign the locus of activity to other modes without the fortifying activity of joys.

Immunologically speaking, the sad passions are thus conceivable as vicious *auto-immune diseases* by which the immune system's mechanisms of discerning interiority and exteriority fail. The natures that prove to be poisonous as they enter and circulate around a mode's interior ecology are like infections which the immune system's activity could not joyfully manage. Even worse, these infections prove to be parasites siphoning the mode's power and activity for the preservation of their own foreign natures instead of the mode's, producing a hostile interior ecology where elements toxic to the body "exploit its own resources to harm it."¹³⁹ Modes enter a hazardous modality of weakened immunity whereby they are forced to simultaneously preserve and impair their own power.

This structural and immunological ambivalence generates extreme, yet simultaneous, reactions: first, the mode's immune system incites an "excess of preservation"¹⁴⁰ to counter the dominance of infection, a whole program of hypersensitive defense that becomes more aggressive in its desperate gambit to gain the locus of adequate causation, or health; second, it marks the passive erasure of immunological tolerance to self since the interior ecology is no longer primarily defined by the mode's true advantage that individuates its nature. The immune system's regulations become characterized by this state of *civil war*.¹⁴¹ The common conception of immune systems that employs language or metaphors of aggression and battle to describe the frantic warfare against foreign substances is to be found here. But such relations and affections detail only one responsive organization towards inhumanism's activity, and the least adequate one at that.

At its most intense, this auto-destructive depletion of freedom results in the self-liquidation of suicide: suicides "are of weak spirit and are completely overcome by external causes opposed to their own nature."¹⁴² These extreme cases of suicide accentuate how the behaviors engendered by the sad passions—just like all causality and activity in Spinoza's

¹³⁹ Esposito, *Immunitas*, 160.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁴² Spinoza, *Ethics*, IV, P18, Schol.

inhumanism—are not a question of an unconditioned free choice that would result from an exceptional series or kind of causality, but of enduring the embeddedness in causal ecologies that prove toxic to one.¹⁴³ The extreme example of suicide illustrates how all sad passions, as decreases of power forced upon one, essentially mimic death’s shriveling that reduces a mode towards expressing a zero degree of power. One’s immunological surface area closes in on itself and “lacks the ability to modify itself, to produce new norms.”¹⁴⁴ At this junction of a withering immunological surface area we find the much-heralded critique of interiority: the “hatred”¹⁴⁵ for all that causally decimates a mode’s power instead of magnifying it, truncating the activity of its conatus so that it devotes a disproportionate amount of its attention to the defensive subsistence of the bare life found within the claustrophobic walls of a mode’s ecology. This critique also extends to the attending logic of being a “kingdom within a kingdom” that traps one into inadequately thinking oneself as the adequate cause of one’s burdening sadness¹⁴⁶ at the moments of its lowest powers.¹⁴⁷

Despite sharing the element of auto-destruction with the sad passions as passions, the joyful passions articulate it in markedly different ways. Although the sufficiency of adequate self-causality is suspended or impaired as a passion, the joyful passions are to be conceptualized *positively* as processes of developing one’s activity and amassing what aids one’s power. The positivity of the regime of joyful passions is rewardingly understood with the immunological concept of *building immunity*. Immunity is the optimizing activity that seeks a mode’s true advantage, depending upon its degree of power, in every realizable alien constitution. As opposed to an achieved state of invulnerability which would debar disempowerment, the immunity of finite modes must be constructed: “reason, strength, and freedom are in Spinoza inseparable from a development, a formative process, a culture. Nobody is born free, nobody is born reasonable.”¹⁴⁸ By tracing the joyful passions, we can conceptualize the dynamics that enhance the conatus’ optimization to engineer the activity of freedom, or health.

¹⁴³ “...the wickedness of subjects [due] to the faulty organisation of the state,” see Spinoza, *Political Treatise*, 61.

¹⁴⁴ Esposito, *Immunitas*, 143.

¹⁴⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 6.

¹⁴⁶ Spinoza, *Ethics*, IV, P64.

¹⁴⁷ I wish to pose the consonance between the prophylactic configuration of the sad passions and the psychoanalytic structure of paranoia, suggesting a fruitful cross-breeding between psychoanalytic states and the immunological paradigm.

¹⁴⁸ Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 262.

Even though the activity of one's conatus can only affirm, and not comprehensively guide, the effects following from the interiorization of the overdetermining natures of other modes, these encounters empower for the human mode experiencing joyful passions. One becomes constitutively affected by other modes such that one's degree of power is elevated, causing an approximation to the tipping point which spills over into degrees of power proper to adequate activity. The conatus, or desire, is stoked as one learns to feel one's capacity to act that results from beneficial foreign natures generously imparting their strengthening activity. The human mode remembers or recognizes that not only are relationships of causality not inherently oppressive or stultifying, but also that there are always some relations which are invigorating, enhancing, or restorative for one's constitution, for one's health. The joyful passions elucidate how distinct true advantages can resonate with each other to generate mutual amplifications of power.

Analogous to the formation of immunological memory, multiplying the repertoire of joyful passions provides one with more sources of joy to draw from to improve the conatus' striving in both present and future becoming-x's. Each of these felicitous relations augments and reshuffles the range of what agrees with one's body, with "each differential element absorbed from the outside do[ing] nothing but expand[ing] and enrich[ing] the range of its internal potential."¹⁴⁹ Through the development of this immunological surface area, we understand how the dynamics of auto-destruction under the regime of joyful passions are marked by *recombination* rather than auto-cannibalization. The human mode does not come away from these causally necessary rendezvous preserved, instead becoming transformed by the introjected traces of the invigorating natures of other modes. Although its identity is always becoming synthesized and re-tooled, the recombination brought on by the joyful passions is distinguished by the ways they expand the reach, intensity, number, effectiveness, and degrees of power of older and more recent joys to energetically enlarge one's surface area. Humans' bodies and minds discover how to exercise their power of affecting and being affected in unprecedented ways, ways that required the passions to scramble one's adequacy of action so that alternative modalities with greater scopes of accessible power could emerge.

In this sense, the empowering development of joyful passions is a process of acquiring *prosthetics*, additives with the direct effect of simultaneously modifying and renovating one's power of activity. But these prosthetics should not be conceptualized as supplements to deficits or to an original nature that is essentially lacking. On the contrary,

¹⁴⁹ Esposito, *Immunitas*, 174.

Spinoza's inhuman alienicity prohibits any original or authentic identity for comparison. Prosthetics recombine the body's capacities and powers to enduringly modify the actualization of its striving, revealing an immune system's tolerance for the "other within itself, not only as its driving force but also as one of its effects."¹⁵⁰ Instead of the prophylactic configuration of the sad passions that institute the inadequate idea of a riveted self, we see prosthetics transplanted into and readily accepted by an always already prosthetic immune system to improve its vigor and to expand its perfection, or reality. The ability to receive such transplants is a key marker for health, since it allows one to revise the ethical normativity of one's body in favor of modalities that beget activity.¹⁵¹

This revisionary process has repercussions for the reciprocal relationship between joyful prosthetics and adequate ideas. By raising one's power and reconnecting one with the conatus' intrinsic striving for elevation and more perfection, the joyful passions simultaneously increase the adequacy of one's knowledge as well. As prosthetics, they produce a movement from the imagination to reason that enhances the mind's ideas to better understand the vast reality of essence's productive activity. This increased adequacy makes a mode freer to recognize itself as a collective, both in its own alienicity and in its ecological embeddedness. This more adequate knowledge of essence enables one to know with greater competence how and which causal relations will lead most to one's true advantage, further bolstering one's capacity to be a more perfect conduit of this power.

Yet, the joyful passions still remain within regimes of affections that separate the human from superlative embodiments of activity,¹⁵² and can even harm one by precluding greater power.¹⁵³ But these affections of one's fluid modality only represent mixtures dominated by the pole of passivity in the activity-passivity axis. By attaining or exceeding the degree of power that is the threshold between activity and passivity at any moment, one crosses over into affections and actions which are sustained by the sufficiency attached to ingesting the locus of adequate causation of oneself. Once expressing quantitative degrees of power correlating to this adequacy, one also enters into qualitative ways of being that are more active and more rational because one becomes *sufficient enough* to know and make effects that institute feedback loops of causality which sustain or elevate one's adequate strivings to achieve true advantage.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 167.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 143.

¹⁵² Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 28.

¹⁵³ Spinoza, *Ethics*, IV, P65, Pr.

For Spinoza, this is the immanent process of freedom, of health *without an image* for his ethical aliens. Spinoza's conceptualization of freedom demonstrates what it means for humans to be free under inhumanist substance's causal necessity. This freedom involves embodying one's existence that necessarily follows from essence's actual activity *as if* one were willing it in alignment with the laws of one's nature, successfully executing causes whose effects directly or indirectly optimize one's own power. While incapable of being the truly free cause, this ethically active materialization as a robust "principle of action"¹⁵⁴—of becoming a "subject-less verb, or perhaps a predicate"¹⁵⁵—describes how the human mode becomes "the quasi-cause of what is produced within"¹⁵⁶ its alienicity, a crucial and inconspicuous node within the mesh of its causal ecologies of essence that draws power from them through its own concerted actions. This more perfect relation to one's immunological non-self of third person reflexivity actuates the power of adequate causation in a wide distribution to alter the natures of itself and others with effects that in turn nourish its power and promote true advantage. Because the active mode knows that it can be other than itself and therefore be otherwise, everything it encounters becomes pertinently available for constructing states of greater ethical power.

In the utmost degrees of freedom, the persistence in existence and elevation in perfection become synonymous, auspiciously coincident. The reason that is co-extensive with joyful activity goes beyond representing the causal relations of God's activity more adequately and accurately in an intellectualist manner. Supreme degrees of perfection allow a mode to not only know its alienicity, but also to rationally obtain the force to effectuate cuts into the fabric of immanence with a "procedural" knowledge that makes operative differences for itself.¹⁵⁷ Reason, then, re-purposes its strictly scientific knowledge of causality to become part of its "art of organizing encounters, or forming a *totality* of compatible relations"¹⁵⁸ for one's nature. But this intensification proves to be bilateral as procedural knowledge engenders causality that raises one's power in turn, further increasing the power and adequacy of scientific reason. Thus both dimensions of reason enter into a positive feedback loop that multiplies and fortifies the array available for a mode to continue optimizing its striving for superior freedom, for healthy god-making under Thought and Extension.

¹⁵⁴ Esposito, *Immunitas*, 169.

¹⁵⁵ Tauber, *The Immune Self*, 178.

¹⁵⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 148.

¹⁵⁷ Jonathan Rubin, "Spinoza: Superior Empiricist," *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy* 14 (2003): 27.

¹⁵⁸ Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 262.

This necessary concatenation reveals that Spinoza's concept of freedom is a radical *pragmatics* which concerns itself with actuating joyful interventions upon inhumanist causal necessity to produce joyful effects—inhuman desire invested in a generic *technics of joy*. In fact, this pragmatics must essentially be a technics first and foremost because of the rational knowledge of, and concern for, causal nexuses. The joyfully active mode knows that joys and activity are causal effects that must be immanently produced like any other, and not a priori given. Since there are no inherent limits to the numbers and kinds of joy and activity possible in the face of the infinite power of God's inhumanism, the only problems of freedom are problems of designing and engineering joys and activity. The conatus' intrinsic desire for elevation in being virally insists this for its true advantage:— ethical virtue “sought for its own sake”¹⁵⁹ is the fully immanent *conative imperative*.¹⁶⁰ Spinoza's conative imperative is the great health encompassing a positive feedback loop between the maximum amount of prosthetics for maximal immunological surface area, and maximal power of activity, prompting him to finish his *Ethics* with the challenge that “all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare.”¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Spinoza, *Ethics*, IV, P18, Schol.

¹⁶⁰ Freedom “does not remove the necessity of action, but imposes it,” see Spinoza, *Political Treatise*, 42.

¹⁶¹ Spinoza, *Ethics*, IV, P42, Schol.

4. Ethical Immunology of the Commons and Prometheanism

In the previous chapters covering ontological inhumanism and ethical immunology, we have strategically abstained from elaborating a key dimension to the process of freedom: the *commons*. Given that modes are thoroughly ecological—always already enmeshed in relations as parts of even larger composite distributions of even more diverse natures—we push Spinoza further to ask what might an ethical *immunology of the commons* be? How might it further amplify the power of freedom? What happens to ethical technics of joy for larger degrees of reality?

To begin exploring these questions, we return to the passive and active joys to conceptualize them as belonging to a commons. Spinoza’s implicitly asserts that freedom is the process of learning to not say “I,” learning to not be “I,” to embody the fullness of alienicity and multiplicities of ecologies. Each prosthetic that increases one’s power reveals a different set of capacities, of affections, of affectivities for the human mode. The surface area produced by prosthetics compounding their powers generates the knowledge of and activity proper to being an immune system, a third person reflexive pronoun, whereby one traverses many collectives and immunological profiles. One more readily accepts and exploits one’s immunological alienicity to amass ethical norms belonging to a variety of health that best facilitate an individual’s movement towards active joys. This knowledge un-rivets a mode from the normativity of the sad passions’ impoverished infrastructure of desire. Prosthetics generate the adequacy of knowledge that increasingly reveals how one always already belongs to the commons of essence shared with other modes.

Joyfully active modes virtuously act upon the knowledge that modality is “proper, but only to the extent it is common to those who are thus characterized”¹⁶² as expressions of essence generically inhering in all relations. The active mode rationally intervenes upon God’s activity by virtue of this commons of the immanent order and connection of things. Since even individuated true advantage is “a form of life-in-common”¹⁶³ that extends beyond one’s specifically individuated territory of existence, reason knows all modes and ecologies as pertinent to its labor of striving for adequate causation. Furthermore, with knowledge of itself as an immune system, the joyfully active mode better knows the causal ecologies it navigates. Not only does it know with greater perfection how it relates to multiple ecologies as one of its parts simultaneously receiving and distributing effects, but also how these

¹⁶² Esposito, *Immunitas*, 177.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 15.

ecologies function with their own alienicity bearing their own ethical criteria of health. By investing its inhuman desire in the ecologies that concern its perseverance, the virtuous individual more fully embraces its alien identity to become the more powerful multiplicities of *becoming-common*.

But we encounter a familiar impasse: if we are always already among an alien commons, even in our weakest health, what is exceptional about this more perfect modality of becoming-common? What specifically characterizes its kinds of causality, and how do they enhance processes of freedom? To begin formulating the relationship between freedom and the ethical commons, we turn to Spinoza's unequivocal assertion that "there is no individual thing in the universe more advantageous to man than a man who lives by the guidance of reason."¹⁶⁴ To understand the boldness of his claim, we must attend to the dynamics of rational human community. Even in Spinoza's modal alienicity, human modes share more similar natures and capacities with each other¹⁶⁵ than they do with other modes like books, planets, and cups of tea. Additionally, there are prosthetics and technologies that produce greater consonance for humans, especially reason: "in so far as men live under the guidance of reason, to that extent only do they always necessarily agree in nature."¹⁶⁶ The adequate causation that rational humans exercise in their technics of joy optimizes their encounters so they agree with one's own immunological nature to raise the power of activity. This positive feedback loop also involves inter-human encounters--when humans are rational they strive to affect the humans they encounter in ways that will assist their true advantage in so far as possible.

But the joyful success of these encounters depends upon the ethical mixtures of the modes involved. The auto-immune diseases of the sad passions cause humans to "be contrary to one another"¹⁶⁷ by producing infectious encounters between them that reproduce the sad passions and lead away from their true advantages. For Spinoza's active human, it is more profitable for others to be affected by joys since they raise others' degrees of power and improve the likelihood that they desire good encounters as well. When others incur enough joys to actively become their adequate causes, they start desiring the circulation of joys and activity in their own inter-human causal relations as part of their true advantage. Assisting

¹⁶⁴ Spinoza, *Ethics*, IV, P35, Cor. 1.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, II, Post. 1-6.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, IV, P35.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, IV, P34.

with the formation of other rational individuals will, through more or less proximate causality, more likely produce effects of joy for oneself.

By requiring the joyful development of other humans as an integral part of their respective technics of joy, rational individuals intentionally expand their adequate causation to involve more of the commons. For this reason, Spinoza declares that the “highest good of those who pursue virtue is common to all, and all can equally enjoy it.”¹⁶⁸ Instead of abiding by the zero-sum logic of sadness’ poisonous relations, a destructive interference, rational individuals compound their power in a *constructive interference*¹⁶⁹ that extends the reach of their pragmatics.¹⁷⁰ Just as superimposed physical waves sharing equal frequency and phase summate their amplitudes to produce a greater amplitude,¹⁷¹ humans that most agree in nature through rationality more virtuously effectuate their freedom by aggregating their degrees, or amplitudes, of power to produce a composite mode with an even greater amplitude of power. Although total agreement in nature is impossible, reason’s greater consonance for modes produces increasingly more joyful effects. When rational humans form composite modes, their pooling of powers and resonating true advantages creates constructive interference that furthers their adequate causation to produce more freedom for themselves and others. These collectives also amalgamate their diverse immunological surface areas to provide an even greater, distributed network of mind-prosthetics and body-prosthetics for more robust immunity in common. Therefore, rational individuals’ conative imperative convince them to become-common by plugging into the power of collectives composed of other rational individuals to express even greater adequate causation.

In so far as modes composed of humans increase in population with as many rationally active humans as possible, to that extent can their individual freedoms combine to form a positive feedback loop with the processes of freedom of the collective: freedom “will be collective or it will not be.”¹⁷² The largest inter-human composite mode possible, “humanity,” includes all who share the common notion of the “human.” Rational individuals strive to maximalize the joyfully active numbers of humanity to produce the greatest scope of

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., IV, P36.

¹⁶⁹ “[T]he interference of two or more waves of [equal frequency and phase, resulting in their mutual reinforcement and producing a single amplitude equal to the sum of the amplitudes of the individual waves,” see *Dictionary.com Unabridged*, s.v. “constructive interference,” accessed September 7, 2015, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/constructiveinterference>.

¹⁷⁰ Spinoza, *Ethics*, IV, P18, Schol.

¹⁷¹ “[T]he absolute value of the maximum displacement from a zero value during one period of an oscillation,” see *Dictionary.com Unabridged*, s.v. “amplitude,” accessed September 7, 2015, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/amplitude>.

¹⁷² Montag, *Bodies, Masses, Power*, 82.

constructive interference possible for personal and collective freedom. Here we encounter Spinoza, the uncompromising Promethean. *Prometheanism* is the rational activity in common of any and all modes taking the collective freedom of the complex mode of humanity to be its principal object. Prometheanism as a rational, collective project engages the actual dynamics of humanity's alienicity as an immune system, as an ethical third person reflexive pronoun, to engineer it as the ever more adequate cause of itself by whatever means available. Like all processes of freedom consistent with inhumanism, Prometheanism labors without any image: it debars no activity a priori, it rejects all icons of the human, and it liquefies all impositions upon the limits of reason, whether theoretical or procedural. Prometheanism vigorously asserts "there is no reason to assume a predetermined limit to what we can achieve or to the ways in which we can transform ourselves and our world."¹⁷³ We must now investigate how this is so, and what this entails.

First, we run into a recognizable problem: what does it mean for the "human" be an object for Prometheanism, given Spinoza's firm alienicity and the inhumanist impossibility of a pre-given icon? Because humanity and the common notions of the human are always enduring their becoming-x's as modes,¹⁷⁴ Prometheanism can be nothing other than the rationally guided *elaboration* of these processes, "treating the human as a constructible hypothesis, a space of navigation and intervention."¹⁷⁵ Freed from inadequate ideas of the human, Prometheanism attends to humanity's causal alienicity "in the context of use and practices"¹⁷⁶ to know what it currently is and what it could become. Distinguished from projects or processes that assist or dominate the elaboration of the human without concern for maximizing its adequate causation, Prometheanism stresses a rational construction moving along vectors of optimal health *for* the human. It howls that "*things are not as they should be*, and that things *ought* to be understood and reorganized"¹⁷⁷—they are not joyful *enough!*, they are not active *enough!* for the human. This ethical charge is Prometheus' conative imperative that fuels its modulations of humanity's open system of self-definition in favor of its ever greater freedom.

Before delving into its specific activity, we must address how Promethean rationality joyfully intervenes into the complex alienicity of humanity and its related ecologies, as well

¹⁷³ Ray Brassier, "Prometheanism and Its Critics," in *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, ed. Armen Avanessian and Robin Mackay (Falmouth: Urbanomic Media Ltd., 2014), 470.

¹⁷⁴ "We are all alienated—but have we ever been otherwise?" see "Xenofeminism," 0x01.

¹⁷⁵ Negarestani, "Labor of the Inhuman," 427.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 430.

¹⁷⁷ Brassier, "Prometheanism," 470.

as escalates its ideas' adequacy to embrace the Promethean challenge. Dyadic reason consists of both scientifically adequate ideas of the causal necessity of essence, and the procedural adequacy that successfully re-purposes its scientific knowledge to enact greater adequate causation. Because Prometheus, a scavenger of joys, seeks to mobilize every possible resource for its gambit of collective human freedom, it requires the highest adequacies for reason's two aspects to increase the constructive interference of human power.

In the face of inhumanism, Prometheanism utilizes *immunography*, a technological deployment of reason that illustratively maps the complex alienicity of the various ecologies that humans are enmeshed within. In order to more adequately understand what the human is becoming and how its power might be elevated, Prometheanism uses immunography as a tool to formulate more adequate ideas of the causal relations that help compose human modes. Humans are simpler parts of larger modes enduring continuous alien constitution. These larger modes express vaster degrees of reality than its simpler modes and are more likely to be the adequate causes of its parts than the parts are. As powerful immune systems with their own conatuses, these ecologies heavily accent its parts' constitutions in ways that lead to the modal preservation of these ecologies. This accenting involves their singular human parts, incapacitating or enhancing collective human power.

Immunography obtains its explanatory power by mapping out the order and connection of these ecologies' complex alien immune systems. It traces the permutating natures of their embedded constitutive parts, the ethical criteria and effects of these parts' encounters, and the relations between ecologies' natures that influence their conatus' activities. The comprehension of these ecologies as self-defining immune systems with their own health and strivings for adequate causation specifically focuses attention on their ethical activity and how they implicate human elements. The immunographical method informs Promethean construction of the aliens in our midst that exclude, neglect, or eviscerate human true advantage through their own virtuous conative imperatives, while also making salient what might be done about these aliens in their specificity and relations.

As Prometheanism undergoes its own becoming-Promethean as a mode, scientific immunography better informs the procedural rationality that intervenes through technics of joy, thus creating *revisionary* rationality.¹⁷⁸ To develop the highest adequacy of ideas, immunography ceaselessly calibrates current distributions of essence's activity, funneling new data, conceptualizations, and causal accounts into the mainframe of Prometheanism.

¹⁷⁸ Negarestani, "Labor of the Inhuman," 451.

These integrative updates of knowledge enable Promethean collectives to more adequately analyze how the constitutive activity of current conjunctures can maximalize constructive interference for humanity's true advantage. By evaluating the constitutive activity and the order and connection of ecologies, immunography maps current configurations of essence upon which Prometheanism's alternative coordinates for joy can be planned, detailed, and strategically effectuated. The Promethean commons mobilizes elements of ecologies to modulate their ethical activity of becoming-x, varying amongst its operations as redeployment, reconfiguration, alteration, destruction, navigational experimentation, grouping, mixing, and re-purposing—all of which attempt to yoke ecological conative imperatives to the developing Promethean conative imperative that rationally facilitates greater adequate causation for humanity. The cumulative effects of these interventions revise previously adequate ideas again in a positive feedback loop: the phases of the “constructive oscillation between description and prescription”¹⁷⁹ expose alien, “growing rift[s] with no possibility of restoration,”¹⁸⁰ which Promethean rationality exploits, captures, and revises for collective freedom. The aptitude to continually change one's rational norms immunologically signals a healthy¹⁸¹ Prometheus that expands the adequacy of its ideas without predetermined limits,¹⁸² exercising immunography and other rational aids.

Although current distributions of essence are *causally* necessary due to God's necessity, the Promethean dyad of rationality rejects any hypostatization of this configuration that also deems it necessary for future becoming-x's. Because Prometheanism's finitude bars it from having perfectly adequate knowledge as does the infinite idea of God, it cannot foresee and exclude all future possible transformations proper to modes' inalienable alienicity: we “do not know what the body can do, or what can be deduced solely from a consideration of its nature.”¹⁸³ This accentuates Prometheanism's magnetization towards an open, alien future, immunizing it from falling prey to false necessities that impose limitations or closures for its god-making. This requires that the revisionary activity of Promethean reason also be an *iconoclasm* that works comfortably with the primacy of inhumanist cause and effect. Iconoclasm is the activity that mercilessly rejects any transcendent, pre-given, original, or final identity—icons—not consistent with Spinoza's metaphysical inhumanism. Instead it fully embraces the reality of alienicity to adequately know the real content of modal

¹⁷⁹ “Xenofeminism,” 0x07.

¹⁸⁰ Negarestani, “Labor of the Inhuman,” 448.

¹⁸¹ Esposito, *Immunitas*, 143.

¹⁸² Negarestani, “Labor of the Inhuman,” 437.

¹⁸³ Spinoza, *Ethics*, III, P2, Schol.

identities as elaborations. Iconoclasm knows the truth of the icon:—each icon is, to varying degrees, an “expression of [humans’] inability to see themselves as fully responsible for their own collective”¹⁸⁴ freedom. Since icons are ideas that posit their own inadequate and obfuscating knowledge of essence’s activity as sufficient for human freedom, they weaken the adequacy of revisionary rational knowledge by obstructing, delaying, or countering Promethean reason’s positive feedback loop.

Iconoclasm joyfully destroys icons and always prefers what opens up humans to their superlative, and as yet unknown, power. When it comes to rationally knowing humanity’s alienicity, Prometheanism attends to the multiplicities of the diverse becoming-human’s that comprise it. It becomes sensitive to the common notions of the human (under Thought) and the bodily relations of causality (under Extension) that describe humanity in its actual ethical activity. After absorbing these “human effects”—these multiplicities of human composition and elaboration—Prometheanism investigates how they make operative differences in ecologies to effect the ethical states of humans.

Iconoclastic activity uses revisionary reason to navigate the noise of human multiplicities, positioning the Promethean project to more adequately engineer human freedom. Positing the human as a constructible hypothesis, it ethically discerns, selects, and elaborates human alienicity along vectors that produce the greatest constructive interference for humanity’s amplitudes of power, and separates it from icons that do not. But even these identities that informatively guide Prometheanism can never fully anticipate what results from their actually extended elaboration, once again needing reason’s “corrosive revisionary acid”¹⁸⁵ to gauge their ethical success. Iconoclasm outpaces the necessary obsolescence and conservatism of ideas of the human that become increasingly inadequate over time, eliding the inadequacy of exhausted nostalgia to launch Prometheus forward towards alien, yet strategic, futures.

Having sketched how Prometheanism interactively alters its limitations, we can now turn to the more specific ethical dimensions of humanity’s immunological commons. Even though different ecologies have their own ethical normativity, the humans ingrained in them traverse the main ethical states with each other: sad passions, joyful passions, and joyful activity. The technics of joy of Promethean humans focuses upon deploying joys across the divide between passions and activity since they ensure approximations to and optimizations of

¹⁸⁴ Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 15.

¹⁸⁵ Negarestani, “Labor of the Inhuman,” 446.

their adequate causality. These two vectors, which are technically distinguishable, are parts of the same intertwined process, reciprocally aiding each other.

The first vector concerns humans' passions: here, Prometheanism attacks the thinking and extended parasites that siphon off power from the humans they infect to institute regimes of sad passions. Given that these parasites tend to effectively divorce humans from their power, they also impede their ethical activity that strives towards elevated rational and joyful activity. Destructively modulating parasites or their adequate causes in favor of more joyful configurations for the human involves Prometheanism's attempts to unfix human modes from the learned helplessness¹⁸⁶ of the sad passions. The Promethean harnessing of negativity for its ethical affirmation seeks to distribute joyful effects that regenerate and rehabilitate humans' health and immunological surface areas, preparing them not only for individual adequate causation, but also for their integration into the causal circuitry of the Promethean project to additionally raise their power and further strengthen collective freedom¹⁸⁷ through a positive feedback loop.

The second vector concentrates on the active joys of humans rationally seeking each other for their greatest health. Together, they construct constructive interference of human power through the labor of summations and accumulations, decisively opting for the elaborations of the human which rationally prove to be the largest multipliers for their compounding amplitudes of power and resultant effects. This ethical selection prefers active joys over joyful passions whenever possible, as their conative imperatives rationally demand ever greater freedom. Projects of constructive interference actually optimize the activity of Prometheanism's own conative imperative to persist in its efforts and reinforce its robustness. In a sense, this vector is effectively its own reproduction, but in ways that continually navigate and revise its transformations with a view to its enhancement.

The Promethean activity of constructive interference even functions within and across ecologies. Considering how Promethean reason conjoins processes of freedom into ever more complex and alien inhumanist activity without an image, it is opened upon increasing multitudes of sites to contest human joys and activity, sites of opposition and of strategic maneuvering. The Promethean humans rationally working for humanity's collective true

¹⁸⁶ "A mental state in which an organism forced to bear aversive [or painful or unpleasant] stimuli...becomes unable or unwilling to avoid subsequent encounters with those stimuli, even if they are 'escapable,' presumably because it has learned that it cannot control the situation," see *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s.v. "learned helplessness", accessed September 20, 2015, <http://www.britannica.com/topic/learned-helplessness>.

¹⁸⁷ "Men are not born to be citizens, but are made so," see Spinoza, *Political Treatise*, 61.

advantage all strive to capture these sites in their technics of joy, integrating their ideas and activity into the Promethean collective. The quantitative summation of their collaborative power produces resonance through all the ecologies they inhabit to mutually and capably provide prosthetics for each other.

Driven to fabricate a shared, more powerful immunity that can be held in common for more individual and collective human freedom, Prometheans know that “all together they should aim at the common advantage of all”¹⁸⁸ in a common becoming-common. The commons becomes a space for the dexterous elaboration of the human—for oneself, for humans, and for other modes and ecologies—as a third person reflexive pronoun with boundaries that “are not only negotiable but also constructible and synthetic.”¹⁸⁹ There are limits to human power, but there are also ways to re-make such limits, to modify ourselves in order to produce the freedom that becomes free enough to demand whatever it needs from inhumanist substance. Ironically, the acceptance of a most brutal inhumanism and its alien architectures provokes the “‘we’ [as] a mode of being,”¹⁹⁰ providing an alien intimacy. With this intimacy, new forms of life and knowing become possible, opening new territories to re-purpose for maximal human freedom—nothing less is worthy of Prometheus’ name.

¹⁸⁸ Spinoza, *Ethics*, IV, P18, Cor.

¹⁸⁹ Negarestani, “Labor of the Inhuman,” 434.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

5. Conclusion

In the introduction, we accentuated the problem of agency resulting from the disjunction between the current erasures of the human and the imperative for us to collaboratively join as humans to prevent our species' extinction following from ecological crisis. We posited the question of how agency might emerge from this abstraction to still effectuate what benefits humans. This thesis argued that inhumanism's production of the human reveals how we have never been human, freeing us up to exploit our alienicity in ways that enhance our agency for ethico-political projects. In fact, Spinoza's thought underscores how embracing alienicity actually improves our ethical competence to undertake needed projects for humanity's persistence and elevation in being.

The full acceptance of inhumanism and alienicity help us to see how the human agency saddled with contemporary problems like neoliberal hegemony and worsening climate crisis is in a precarious predicament with no guaranteed outcome, in need of any and all aid it can muster. But its focus upon its alien character opens it up to knowing that self and other modes can be otherwise in its ecologies, prompting its impulse to see what greater powers it can express. Through immunological ethics, the human comes to know itself as part of a commons available to it for its projects, leading it to meet and seek out other humans seeking likewise. Together, they purposively form greater superorganisms that facilitate the Promethean project of augmenting the scope and power of human agency for both personal and collective freedom.

The sciences and hegemonic political economic power effect irrevocable liquefactions of the human, and will continue to do so. Seeing their endgame as Spinoza's pure physics of power, we must head them off and reclaim the primacy of cause and effect and the emphasis upon third person reflexive pronouns in his thought. His ethics lend us the divinely austere perspective that causal composition of joyful encounters for personal and collective freedom is all that matters for human agency. This "subjectivism without a selfhood,...articulates an autonomy without voluntarism"¹⁹¹ that transforms the very modalities and capacities of our existences. Alienicity decisively changes the moralizing black holes of "who we really are" or "who we should be" into non-problems to jettison in favor of what, why, and how we need to construct within complex immunological ecologies.

¹⁹¹ Brassier, "Prometheanism," 471.

Given their inability to think the immunology and ecology of the human, and therefore its greatest true advantage, ethico-political projects giving primacy to icons of the human¹⁹² lack the wide scope of resources needed to effectively respond to ecological crisis and all it entails. Instead, without images of the human to conserve, and with a rigorous conative imperative, Prometheans open up to the real causal content of the commons to more rationally scavenge it for the facilitation of our freedom. Unprecedented joys become enabling prosthetics, and new alien territories are mined for the maximal health of progressive Prometheus. Only by expanding the scope of what enables our agency as humans can we gather the support and cumulative force to successfully navigate a problem as global and as severe as ecological crisis. Additionally, Prometheanism, aiming to elevate collective freedom and not just to preserve our species, explicitly concerns itself with progressive and emancipatory politics. It finds in the conjuncture of every present the opportunity to elaborate Karl Marx's own Promethean impulse for human freedom. Instead of submitting to the impotence of "the pathos of negativity"¹⁹³ as its ultimate horizon, Prometheanism opts for the construction of counter-hegemonic power¹⁹⁴ that dares to *win* human freedom under inhumanism. There is no other option.

¹⁹² Negarestani, "Labor of the Inhuman," 438-43.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 441.

¹⁹⁴ Srnicek and Williams, "#Accelerate: MAP," 354-62.

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