

Spinoza and occasionalism

1. Occasionalism

Most Christian theologians and philosophers have maintained that God did not simply wind up the universe and walk away from it. Instead, they have maintained that God sustains and preserves creation, lending to it at every moment a force of existing which is naturally lacking in creatures. Furthermore, they have also held that God not only sustains creatures, but also sustains (or as they say, *concurrs with*) their causal activity. So, for example, when the sun warms the stone, God sustains both the sun and the stone and also the sun's *warming* of the stone. Medieval philosophers disagreed over the details of divine concurrence, but the general idea was this: all of the causal power in the universe belongs ultimately to God, and this power is distributed among creatures, and so when one creature causally influences another, it does so with God's power – rather like a servant going out and buying things with the master's money. Both God and creatures are reckoned as causes, each of them contributing to the event, with neither of them being superfluous. God is called the *primary* cause of any event and any involved creature is a *secondary* cause. Each cause plays a significant role.

This view – call it *divine concurrentism* – was defended by many medieval philosophers against two extremes.¹ The first extreme was *mere conservationism*, or the view that God sustains creatures without also sustaining the causal activities among them. Many thought this makes God too distant from the activities of the world, and makes

¹ My account of medieval causality is drawn from Alfred J. Freddoso, "Medieval Aristotelianism and the Case against Secondary Causation in Nature," in Thomas V. Morris, ed., *Divine and Human Action* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

creatures too self-sufficient. It even might seem to make certain actions awkward for God: for example, if God wished to blot out the sun, he would have to go so far as to either destroy the sun or insert something to block its rays – God couldn't simply stop the sun's shining for a while. The second extreme against which divine concurrentism was defended was occasionalism, or the denial of secondary causes.² According to occasionalism, God is the only cause, even in what appears to be normal and natural causal activity among creatures. So when the sun warms the stone, it is really God causing the stone to warm, with the shining of the sun serving only as the occasion for God to cause the actual warming. Many interesting arguments were brought against occasionalism, but typically the one topping everyone's list was that the view is *stupid*. "Stupid" in this context is a technical term, referring to any argument asking us to deny what the senses evidently teach. It is evident that creatures have causal powers, and any view saying otherwise is plainly stupid. Occasionalists tried to argue that their view exalted God's power, but their many opponents believed that it is even a taller trick for God to create genuine causal agents than for him to do all the work himself – and so if occasionalism exalts God's power, divine concurrentism does so even more.

Occasionalism was revived in the 17th century among Descartes's successors. The motivation was largely what it had been before – namely, to exalt God's power and make creatures as unlike him as possible with regard to their own powers. But the later occasionalists had some additional motivation for their view. The new mechanical philosophy championed by Galileo, Descartes, and Boyle promised to reduce all the

² It seems that occasionalists typically denied secondary causes only among nonfree agents; no one wished to maintain that God is the sole cause of evil moral actions. (Human will must be involved somehow.) Since I will not address the problem of human freedom here, I will drop this qualification in the text and consider only nonfree agents.

world's phenomena to matter in motion. But motion, it was believed, is a property (specifically, a *mode*) of bodies, and no available metaphysics offered a clear explanation of how a mode could pass from one body to another. The later occasionalists needed some way of explaining how one body gets another to move, and occasionalism provided a nifty solution. On top of that, it also provided a neat solution to the problem of how mind and body could causally interact: they don't, but God makes it seem as if they do.

We should note here why this metaphysical (as opposed to theological) motivation for occasionalism does not seem to have been much on the minds of the scholastics, since this will have some bearing on Spinoza's own view of causation among bodies. So far as I have been able to determine, the problem of how one body communicates anything to another did not bother medieval philosophers. They all more or less agreed that in cases of efficient causation, nothing is literally transferred from agent to patient. Instead, they maintained, a potentiality in the patient is awakened somehow by the determining influence of the agent, in just the same way that Meno's slave boy is supposed to have been determined toward knowledge by Socrates's questioning.³ As Aquinas wrote in *On the Power of God*, "A natural agent does not hand over its form to another subject, but it reduces the passive subject from potency to act." Late in the 14th century, John Buridan mused over how one body might cause motion in another, and suggested that motion (as a mode) could indeed be sent off into space, in the same way that magnets can somehow throw their influence into their neighboring vicinities. But few others seem to have paused to puzzle this out. It is relevant that the 17th-century philosophers were interested in quantitative laws governing the transference

³ See Denis Des Chene, *Physiologia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 62-3.

of motion, while the scholastics were not. This gave the modern philosophers more of a need to figure out how the transference takes place. In any event, the scholastics certainly had little reason to be so bothered by this problem as to make the stupidity of occasionalism attractive.

Anyway, many of Descartes's followers did embrace occasionalism, and opinions are still somewhat mixed over the extent to which their master did the same.⁴ Let us consider now another of Descartes's followers, and ask whether Spinoza was an occasionalist.

2. Some initial observations

At first it seems obvious that Spinoza was an occasionalist. After all, he was a monist, and so he did not believe there are any substances other than God, let alone any with causal powers. But this quick and easy answer, though technically correct, does not get at the heart of the question. We would like to know whether Spinoza believed that finite modes – which are what Spinoza understood creatures to be – have any causal force that is independent of God's causal powers. Again, the answer is obviously no, since all power in Spinoza's universe belongs ultimately to God. But as we have seen, defenders of divine concurrentism would make the same claim; it is just that they believe God's power is channeled through creatures. So, finally, we might ask: did Spinoza believe that finite modes exert causal influence upon one another?

⁴ See, for example, Daniel Garber, *Descartes Embodied* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), chapters 9 and 10; and also Michael Della Rocca, "If a Body Meet a Body': Descartes on Body-Body Causation," in Gennaro and Huenemann, eds., *New Essays on the Rationalists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Prima facie it seems that Spinoza's finite modes do exert causal influence upon one another. There is the claim in IP28 that a singular thing "can neither exist nor be determined to produce an effect unless it is determined to exist and produce an effect by another cause, which is also finite and has a determinate existence" (Geb II/69; Curley, p. 433).⁵ This general proposition is applied to the case of bodies in Lemma 3 following IIP13S: "A body which moves or is at rest must be determined to motion or rest by another body, which has been determined to motion or rest by another, and that again by another, and so on, to infinity" (Geb II/98; Curley, p. 459). These claims certainly seem to imply that finite modes exert causal influence on one another. But here we need to be careful, as any occasionalist could make similar-sounding claims; it is just that the occasionalist might be speaking loosely, writing as if bodies caused effects in one another while meaning only that bodies, in certain circumstances, provide the occasion for God to produce effects. The same goes for Spinoza's claims in Lemmas 5, 6, and 7 about bodies "communicating" their motions to one another; how literally should we take these claims?

At the same time, we should recognize that Spinoza never suggested explicitly that bodies don't really communicate motions to one another. That is, he never wrote, "Here I am speaking as if bodies really communicate motions to one another, but the fact is that all changes in motion and rest issue directly from God's absolute nature and not

⁵ "Geb" followed by volume and page numbers, refers to Carl Gebhardt, ed., *Spinoza Opera* (Heidelberg: Carl Winters, 1925). "Curley" refers to Edwin Curley, ed. and trans., *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). "Shirley" refers to Samuel Shirley, trans., and Steven Barbone, Lee Rice, and Jacob Adler, eds., *Spinoza: The Letters* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1995). References to the *Ethics* are by part, proposition, corollary, or scholia: so "IIP38S" refers to part II, proposition 38, scholium.

from finite modes” or some such thing. So this might put our presumption in favor of not reading Spinoza as an occasionalist. But Spinoza did make some remarks that complicate things a little. I am thinking of a passage in Letter 32 [to Oldenburg], where Spinoza wrote that

All bodies are surrounded by others and are reciprocally determined to exist and to act in a fixed and determinate way, the same ratio of motion and rest being preserved in them all taken together, that is, in the universe as a whole. Hence it follows that every body, in so far as it exists as modified in a definite way, must be considered as a part of the whole universe, and as agreeing with the whole and cohering with the other parts. (Geb IV/172-3; Shirley, p. 194)

Spinoza’s claim is that the changes bodies undergo are determined by holistic forces: bodies *must* be considered as parts of the whole universe if we are to understand their various motions. The character of the whole somehow determines the behavior of the parts. Elsewhere in the same letter Spinoza offers the familiar “worm in the blood” analogy, which suggests that this holistic governance is no less true for bodies in the universe than it is for organs in a body. In a word, Spinoza’s universe is supposed to be *organic*.

So what? Well, we need to ask to what extent a body’s behavior is determined by these holistic forces. If the determination is partial – so a body acts partially from its own impetus, and partially from the holistic requirements of the whole universe – then we may infer that bodies in Spinoza’s universe do have their own causal force, which is

governed somewhat by holistic parameters. On the other hand, if the holistic determination is complete – so a body does what it does because the whole universe imparts a certain degree of motion and rest to it – then Spinoza might qualify as an occasionalist. For the universe as a whole, according to Spinoza, is a mediate infinite mode of God. That is to say, it follows from the absolute nature of God’s attributes, when those attributes are conjoined with other features that follow immediately from that absolute nature. In short, the holistic features of the universe are very closely bound up with God’s nature – so close that it would not be wrong to say that, *if* those holistic features are the sole causal agents determining bodily behavior, then God is in fact the sole causal agent. And that would be occasionalism.

So we need to turn to more details of causal change in Spinoza’s metaphysics.

3. Bodies in Spinoza’s metaphysics

There is no way to enter into a detailed discussion of bodily nature in Spinoza without presuming one or another of a range of interpretations that have been offered in recent years. I will assume a Baylean interpretation of Spinoza’s extension, which claims that Spinoza’s God is the material substrate of the universe, rather like the prime matter of the scholastics, though not quite as formless, since Spinoza believed that some kind of principal power or activity was intrinsic to this substrate.⁶ The active principal in this

⁶ I defend this interpretation in Charlie Huenemann, “Spinoza and Prime Matter,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 42:21-32. This interpretation was offered by Bayle in his *Dictionary* of 1697, and has been challenged by Edwin Curley, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), Roger Woolhouse, *Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz: The Concept of Substance in 17th-Century Metaphysics* (London: Routledge, 1993), and Tad Schmaltz, “Spinoza on the Vacuum,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 81:174-205.

substrate serves to individuate bodies and lend them the structural features that give rise ultimately to the familiar world around us.

In such a metaphysics, bodies are *modes* of the underlying substrate. In order to understand this, it will help to briefly review the understanding of “mode” Spinoza probably inherited from the later scholastics. According to the scholastics, individual substances (such as particular human beings) are composites of form and matter. Each substance also has a set of accidents, or so-called *real* accidents, some changing over time, others changeless. These real accidents are properties that characterize the substance at a general level: the substance is said to be in motion, or shaped, or heated, for example. The specific motion or shape or heat of the substance is understood as a *mode* – literally, the mode is the specific *way* (*modus*) in which the substance is moving, shaped, or heated. Modes are thus specific determinations of real accidents.

Typically, there was thought to be a distinction between the substance and its real accidents. Though real accidents could not naturally exist without their subjects, some scholastics believed that God could miraculously sustain real accidents without a subject. But not so for modes, which were usually described as being *nothing other than* the substance itself in a particular state. So the particular motion of a body just is that body moving in that particular way, and similarly for its particular shape or whatever. Not even God could sustain a mode without the underlying substance. One of the biggest breaks Descartes made with scholasticism – what he believed would prove to be “the

greatest stumbling block among his readers – was his reduction of all real accidents to modes.⁷

Spinoza followed Descartes in this reduction. So when Spinoza conceived bodies as modes of God, he conceived them as particular “swirls” of motion within a material substrate – at least according to the Baylean interpretation. As Spinoza explains in the series of lemmas and axioms following IIP13S, a body is individuated from its neighbors so long as the pattern (*ratio*) of motion and rest among its parts is stable. Furthermore, each body is part of a larger body, moving in such a way as to preserve the pattern of motion and rest in the larger body. There is, at the outermost limit, an infinite body – the corporeal universe – of which all smaller bodies are parts, and this largest body maintains a constant pattern of motion and rest, which accounts for the universe’s conservation of motion and rest. Spinoza never makes clear what is at the smaller end of the scale. He writes of “simplest bodies,” but it may be that he uses this notion as merely a device to get his physics off the ground; perhaps he thought bodies are endlessly complex *all the way down*.⁸

So the individual motions of bodies must, when summed together, satisfy the specific “metabolic” requirements of the larger body or bodies containing them. This means that when one body communicates motion to another body in Spinoza’s universe, that communication must not violate the universe’s conservation of motion and rest: for every acceleration in one region there must be a deceleration elsewhere (or some such

⁷ See Stephen Menn, “The Greatest Stumbling Block: Descartes’ Denial of Real Qualities,” in Roger Ariew and Marjorie Grene, eds., *Descartes and His Contemporaries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

⁸ See Charles Huenemann, “Predicative Interpretations of Spinoza’s Divine Extension,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 14: 53-75.

compensation). But what is the strength of the phrase “must not violate” here? In our scientific age, we might easily recognize this force as *nomological* – that is, the laws of nature forbid such violations. But this is a perspective that was just being established in Spinoza’s day. Before the scientific revolution, laws were not typically thought to be quasi-causal agents which could rule over bodies’ behaviors. Instead, laws were reckoned merely as descriptions of the usual behaviors of bodies – rather like sociological generalizations, which of course allow for occasional violations. The bodies’ behaviors were determined not by abstract laws, but by the natures of the bodies and by any other forces acting in opposition to them. So it was a “law” that fire rose upward – unless something hindered it. Descartes was one of the first to advance a more modern conception of laws of nature, but on this point Spinoza’s physics was more scholastic than Cartesian. The force of the “must not violate” is *natural* in the sense that such violations would be in opposition to a stronger and bigger body’s nature – in particular, its striving to maintain itself over time. The bigger body’s nature constrains the behavior of its parts in such a way as to maintain its metabolism over time.

And so the biggest body of all – the entire corporeal universe – maintains itself over time by shepherding the motions of its constituent bodies according to some set pattern of motion and rest. This universe is, after all, an infinite mode of God, and so is eternal (by IPP22&23). It has not come into being and will not go out of being. So its pattern of motion and rest is absolutely changeless – this is a *metaphysically* necessary fact – and the description of this constancy in the form of the law of universal conservation of motion and rest holds without exception. Of course, the motion and rest of smaller bodies change all the time, as they change or grow or die. But these changes

are compensated by other changes forced by the self-maintenance of the universe as a whole.

But how exactly is this self-maintenance brought about? That is, how does the universe as a whole step in to regulate exchanges of motion and rest among its parts? The only hint Spinoza offers to answer this question is found in the “Worm in the Blood” analogy in Letter 32 [to Oldenburg]. In this analogy, Spinoza asks us to consider the plight of a worm in a person’s blood, a worm that is

... capable of distinguishing by sight the particles of blood – lymph, etc. – and of intelligently observing how each particle, on colliding with another, either rebounds or communicates some degree of motion, and so forth. That worm would be living in the blood as we are living in our part of the universe, and it would regard each individual particle of the blood as a whole, not a part, and it could have no idea as to *how all the parts are controlled by the overall nature of the blood and compelled to mutual adaptation as the overall nature of the blood requires, so as to agree with one another in a definite way.* (Geb IV/171; Shirley, p. 193 – emphasis added)

And so there are some invisible forces at work in the determination of bodies’ motions – namely, forces stemming from the “overall nature” of the corporeal universe. To make better sense of this passage, it would help to know how we are supposed to understand the phrases “controlled by the overall nature” and “compelled to mutual adaptation”. The Latin reads “*quomodo partes omnes ab universali natura sanguinis moderantur, &*

invicem, prout universalis natura sanguinis exiget, se accommodare coguntur, ut certa ratione inter se consentient". A clumsy but more precise translation would be: "how all the parts are controlled by the universal nature of the blood, and in turn how they are brought into adjustment, as the universal nature of the blood compels, so that they coordinate themselves into a certain order". This more precise translation brings out the sense that the universal nature (of the blood, of the universe) plays a very active role in regulating the behavior of bodies. In short, laws of impact are simply not enough for us or for the worm. We need also to know that there are other global forces at work, acting to control and adjust the motions of bodies when they collide.

We cannot get further details from this passage or any other in Spinoza's writings, but another glance toward scholastic metaphysics might help to explain how the universal nature is supposed to exercise this influence. Recall that the standard scholastic accounts of efficient causality maintained that motion is never literally transferred from agent to patient. Instead, the agent somehow brings about the actualization of a certain potency in the patient without actually passing anything over to it. Perhaps, in Spinoza's metaphysics, the more global nature of the universe can exert itself by establishing, in each body, a particular potency that will be actualized upon collision with another body. That is, when A and B collide, each of them will have a certain potency actualized; exactly *which* potency gets actualized is determined, at least in part, by the global nature of the universe.

This is purely speculative, of course, but if it were right, it would add an interesting dimension to the passage from Letter 32 quoted earlier in this essay:

All bodies are surrounded by others and are reciprocally determined to exist and to act in a fixed and determinate way, the same ratio of motion and rest being preserved in them all taken together, that is, in the universe as a whole. Hence it follows that every body, in so far as it exists as modified in a definite way, must be considered as a part of the whole universe, and as agreeing with the whole and cohering with the other parts. (Geb IV/172-3; Shirley, p. 194)

Bodies in Spinoza's physics must be considered as parts of a whole since there is no other way that we can understand why they take on particular states of motion. *If* the scholastic model applies here -- and this is pure speculation -- then we have a little more understanding of how bodies are "reciprocally determined to exist and to act in a fixed and determinate way", and of how every body agrees with the whole and coheres with the other parts. The potentialities of bodies toward motions are determined by other bodies and by the metabolic requirements of larger bodies containing them, and so there really is no way of understanding particular motions without viewing bodies as parts of a whole. Specifically, one cannot simply use Descartes's mechanistic laws to discover the outcome of a particular collision, since one must also factor in the pattern of motion being sustained by the larger body containing the colliding ones. This could be one reason why Spinoza took such a dim view of Descartes's rules of motion.

4. "The face of the universe"

In section 1 we found that, in determining whether someone is an occasionalist, the main question is whether the person denies secondary causes. Then in section 2 we saw that,

in Spinoza's case, the question becomes whether finite modes causally influence one another. Now we have seen (in section 3) that a principal player in any collision between bodies is a more global entity, the nature of the corporeal universe, which regulates and directs bodies' motions so as to preserve a constant configuration of motion and rest in the universe. So the question now is just how closely this more global entity is related to Spinoza's God. If the relationship is so close that it would be accurate to say that God directs the causal interactions among bodies, then Spinoza would qualify as an occasionalist – a rather unorthodox one, to be sure, but an occasionalist nonetheless.

So we need to look more carefully at this global entity. In Letter 64 [to Schuller], Spinoza calls it the "*facies totius universi*" – the "face" (or *appearance*) of the whole universe, "which, although varying in infinite ways, yet always remains the same" (Geb IV/278; Shirley, p. 299). Spinoza then refers Schuller to a passage in the *Ethics* where this entity is described as "the whole of nature" which is "one Individual, whose parts, i.e., all bodies, vary in infinite ways, without any change of the whole Individual" (Geb II/102; Curley, p. 462). Spinoza offers this Individual to Schuller as an example of a *mediate* infinite mode of God, or one that follows not directly but *mediately* from the absolute nature of God's extension.

("Facies totius universi", by the way, is an unusual and interesting phrase. One wonders whether Spinoza had in mind the Jewish notion of the *Shekinah*, which can be understood as the face or appearance of God. So, for example, when it is said that God dwells with his people or in the tabernacle (as Exodus 25:8 and 29:45), it is the Shekinah

that so dwells.⁹ Some rabbis have considered the *Shekinah* as playing a kind of intermediary role between God and the world: it is one way in which God can represent himself to humans. Since Spinoza, in his letter, is answering Schuller's request for an example of a *mediate* infinite mode of God, it may be that the notion of the *Shekinah* is just the sort of thing he felt he needed to make his point, since both Spinoza's *facies* and the *Shekinah* are supposed to be, in their own ways, the nonpersonal manifestation of God in our world.)

How close is the relationship between this global entity and Spinoza's God? It is a *mode* of God, and as we have seen, a mode was generally understood as the *way* in which a substance has a property: a body's actual speed or velocity, for example, is the particular way in which the body has the property of motion. In Spinoza's metaphysics, an infinite mode is a particular way in which God has an attribute. So, for example, motion and rest is the way in which God is extended (i.e., God's extension is such that motion and rest are present within it). And the global entity, as a mediate infinite mode, is the way in which motion and rest are present within God's extension: namely, they are kept in the same configuration over time. So the global entity is something like an adverb modifying an adverb: God is extended, and God must be extended in some specific way, and that way must be further specified, and this last specification is the mediate infinite mode of God.

The relation is thus *very* close, especially as it was commonly believed that not even God could separate a mode from a substance. But it is very difficult to get a clear

⁹ See the entry in JewishEncyclopedia.com. "Shekinah", it is said, was used by the Rabbis in place of "God" where the anthropomorphic expressions of the Bible were no longer regarded as proper.

view of whether it is so close as to qualify Spinoza as an occasionalist. To better appreciate this difficulty, let us consider an analogy. Suppose there is a king with great power; and suppose he expresses this power in his unwavering resolve to do only what is just; and suppose his commands to his subjects are the ways in which this resolve is expressed. When the king's subjects obey his commands, can we say that what caused their actions are his commands -- and not the king himself? No consideration seems decisive on this point; we could easily see it one way or the other. If we wanted to make things clear, we might want to distinguish an immediate cause of the subjects' actions (the commands) from a less immediate cause (the king). And this is just what Spinoza does when he tries to make clear how God is causally responsible for singular things in *Ethics* IP28S. He writes that "certain things had to be produced by God immediately, viz. those which follow necessarily from his absolute nature, and others (which nevertheless can neither be nor be conceived without God) had to be produced by mediation of these first things" (Geb II/70; Curley, pp. 432-433). He then goes on to note that this makes God "the proximate cause of the things produced immediately by him" and, on the other hand, "the remote cause of singular things".

At first, this distinction may sound strong enough to disqualify Spinoza as an occasionalist. After all, Spinoza resists the claim that God is the *sole* cause of singular things or their changes; he puts a little distance between God and singular things by saying that God is the *remote* cause of them. But doubt creeps in when we ask whether a full-blown occasionalist would not also want to "put at least a little distance" between God and God's actions on singular things. Consider Malebranche's occasionalism, for

example. To be sure, Malebranche insists that “God needs no instruments to act”.¹⁰ Indeed, he says, God could not make angels or other intermediaries into true causes, even if he wanted to. But it is hard to see how Malebranche can reconcile the simplicity of God, and the constancy of God’s volition, with the fact that God must actually will very different kinds of motions to different bodies in various circumstances in order to preserve the truth of the general laws of nature. It seems that there needs to be some intermediary inserted between these varying volitions and God’s unvarying volition to preserve the universal laws of nature: some divine “office” whose task it is to turn God’s general will into specific volitions. This line of thought leads to this question: is the distance between Malebranche’s God and his various volitions equal to or less than the distance between Spinoza’s God and the mediate infinite mode? It is hard to see how one could go about answering that question, since there is no common scale available to measure these systematic “distances”.

5. So: was Spinoza an occasionalist?

We have seen that Spinoza’s God – in some way – does direct the motions and behavior of bodies. Whether the direction is so immediate as to qualify him as an occasionalist is harder to determine for sure. But there is one further consideration that may be enough to settle the issue. The consideration is that occasionalists and concurrentists alike share the presumption that God’s influence in the world – whether in sustaining creatures or their actions or in bringing about effects – is *volitional*. God decides to sustain the world, and

¹⁰ *The Search After Truth*, translated and edited by Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 450.

we are grateful. God could annihilate the world by simply withdrawing his volition to sustain it.

But Spinoza's God has no will (*Ethics*, IP17S). Spinoza's God is free, but only in the sense that God is not constrained by any nature other than his own. Other theists typically want to ascribe a further kind of freedom to God, one that allows for God to do otherwise. And they regard God's decision to do what he actually does as morally *praiseworthy*. One could not possibly adopt such an attitude toward Spinoza's God, as what this God does is done out of sheer necessity. The most we can obtain is a kind of intellectual or possibly mystical joy in apprehending the sheer necessity of God's effects, and in apprehending our place among those effects. This puts a significant distance between Spinoza and both the occasionalists and concurrentists, regardless of his doctrine of causality among finite modes.

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