

*In-der-Gott-seinlassen: a note on Spinoza's Religion*¹

Carlisle makes a strong case that Spinoza propounded a “theological metaphysics of substance.”² *Quidquam est in Deo est*, ‘being-in-God’ as she puts it, “is the fundamental tenet of Spinoza’s thought.” She hyphenates the English

“to emphasise that there is, for Spinoza, no being apart from God, or prior to God—just as Heidegger’s concept of *In-der-Welt-sein*, ‘being-in-the-world’, affirms that the human being is always already related to a world. According to Spinoza, the fundamental and immediate truth about anything that is—anything at all—is that it is in God.”³

Carlisle takes care to disabuse us of the one thing everybody knows about Spinoza: that *Deus sive Natura* means ‘God’ is ‘really only’ another name for what is – the universe, nature, *phusis*, cosmos, etc.⁴ Not so. On the contrary, “Spinoza offers *Natura naturans* as, so to speak, an alternative name of God. . . . ‘God’ and ‘Nature’ refer to distinct (though not separate) realities: Nature has parts, while God is simple, neither composed of parts nor divisible into parts.”⁵ Nature as godhead is the keystone of the *Ethics*:

“If we assume that *Deus sive Natura* simply reduces God to a familiar modern notion of nature, stripped of any theological meaning, then we lose the conception of God (or *Natura naturans*) as ontological ground which is so integral to Spinoza’s metaphysics, with its deep commitment to the intelligibility of being.”⁶

¹ Clare Carlisle, *Spinoza's Religion: A New Reading of the Ethics* (Princeton Univ. Press 2021).

² *Id.* 105.

³ *Id.* 56.

⁴ I.e., “the prevailing interpretation of the *Ethics* as advancing a radical secular philosophy of ‘pure immanence’ that contrasts with the unequivocal transcendence espoused by theologies vaguely defined as ‘traditional’ or ‘orthodox’.” *Id.* 106. Cf. Updike on the Pentateuch: “An impression grew upon me, as I made my way through these obdurate old texts, that to the ancient Hebrews God was simply a word for what was: a universe often beautiful and gracious but also implacable and unfathomable.” John Updike, “The Great I Am,” *The New Yorker* October 24, 2004; <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/11/01/the-great-i-am> .

⁵ *Spinoza's Religion* 66, 67.

⁶ *Id.* 186.

Then what is God? God is infinite substance, the one and only substance.⁷ All finite things are ‘modes,’ modifications of that eternal substance.⁸ So there are two sorts of being-in-God. “God’s own being-in-God is a being *in se*, while our [and every other mode’s] being-in-God is a being *in alio*.” Carlisle notes that “This is an ontological difference, and it secures the relation of profound metaphysical intimacy between God and finite things—an intimacy indicated by some of Spinoza’s key concepts: expression, participation, immanence.”⁹ The principle of being-in-God “establishes an asymmetry between God and the universe.” With the concepts of substance and mode Spinoza “asserts the dependence of all things on God: to be a mode is to be constitutionally dependent, ‘in another’ and conceived through another, whereas substance is self-sufficient, ‘in itself and conceived through itself.’”¹⁰

The *conatus* to secure, found, ground, establish, guarantee and so on motivates the metaphysics:

“Without the concept of God (or *Natura naturans*) as ontological ground, finite things could be explained by other finite things, but nature as a whole would have no explanation. It would be radically contingent. Spinoza’s metaphysics needs the concept of something that causes itself, and exists necessarily—that is, the concept of substance—to secure the intelligibility of nature as a whole. Part One of the *Ethics* proposes God as precisely this ground of being, and guarantor of intelligibility.”¹¹

His proposal that there is an eternal ground of all being, and that this one ground, existing necessarily, is a self-sufficient substance ‘in itself and conceived through itself,’ means that Spinoza was an *advaitamahāsvabhāvādin* (here’s hoping that’s a word). Sanskrit *svabhāva* means ‘self-nature,’ ‘intrinsic nature,’ ‘own-being,’ and the like. (Over these traditional renderings Garfield prefers ‘essence.’¹²) The one and only (non-dual, undivided, *advaita*)

⁷ E1D6: *Per Deum intelligo ens absolute infinitum, hoc est, substantiam constantem infinitis attributis, quorum unumquodque aeternam et infinitam essentiam exprimit.* “By God I understand a being absolutely infinite, i.e., a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which each one expresses an external [*sic*, misprint for ‘eternal’] and infinite essence.” *Spinoza’s Religion* 47. E1P5: *In rerum natura non possunt dari duae aut plures substantiae eiusdem naturae sive attributi.* “Two or more substances of the same kind or having the same attribute are not possible in *rerum natura*.”

⁸ E1D5: *Per modum intelligo substantiae affectiones, sive id quod in alio est, per quod etiam concipitur.* “Mode I take to be the affections of substance; in other words that which is in another and is conceived through that other.”

⁹ *Spinoza’s Religion* 57.

¹⁰ *Id.* 67.

¹¹ *Id.* 68.

¹² More precisely, he translates as ‘essence’ the words *rang bzhin*, the Tibetan translation of *svabhāva*. *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nāgārjuna’s Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (translation and commentary by Jay L. Garfield 1995) 89 fn. 4. Westerhoff cautions that “there is no single term used in Western philosophy that covers the different aspects of [*svabhāva*’s] meaning in the Madhyamaka context in a satisfactory manner.” He devotes two chapters to the concept. Jan Westerhoff, *Nāgārjuna’s Madhyamaka: A Philosophical Introduction* (2009) 4.

svabhāva in which we live and move and have our being is therefore the One Great (*mahā*) Substance, *advaitamahāsvabhāva*; and Spinoza himself an *advaitamahāsvabhāvādin*, a One-Great-Substance-ologist; in Heidegger's term an ontotheologian.

The insight of the Mahāyāna school was to recognize *svabhāva* as 'the decisive move in the conjuring trick.' As Garfield stresses,

"It cannot be overemphasized that as far as Nāgārjuna—or any Mahāyāna Buddhist philosopher, for that matter—is concerned, the view that the things we perceive and of which we conceive, to the extent they exist at all, do so inherently originates as an innate [*sic*; better 'inveterate'?] misapprehension and is not the product of sophisticated philosophical theory. That is, we naively and pretheoretically take things as substantial. . . . We can, to be sure, make sophisticated philosophy out of this. And much of Western and Asian metaphysics is devoted to that enterprise."¹³

The notion *sarvam śūnyam*, 'everything is empty,' is accordingly the "conceptual foundation [*sic*; the language of substance and ground is, like the Borg, everywhere] of Mahayana Buddhism."¹⁴ Everything is empty of *svabhāva*, inherent nature. There is no such hypostasis, great or small. Everything depends on other things; everything is relational; there is no ontological basis, ground, foundation, etc.¹⁵ "[T]he ultimate truth is that there is no ultimate truth."¹⁶ So starting out as substantivists, *svabhāvins*, we should 'learn to tolerate the groundlessness of things'.¹⁷ A person learning to tolerate emptiness (*śūnyatā*), the groundlessness of being, is a *śūnyasin*; a philosophical explorer of emptiness a *śūnyavādin*. Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger were *śūnyavādins*.

On the empty hand "The difficulty is to realize the groundlessness of our believing."¹⁸ On the ontotheological hand, "When the righteous man searches [ζητῶν ὁ δίκαιος] for the nature of all things [τὴν τῶν ὄντων φύσιν], he makes his own admirable discovery [εὕρισκει ἄριστον εὐρημα]: that all is God's grace. . . . Everything in the world [ἐν κόσμῳ], and the very world itself

¹³ *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* 88, fn. 2. 'Ousiology' in the West.

¹⁴ Francis H. Cook, *Hua-yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra* (1977) 37.

¹⁵ Brief, clear exposition: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OILmGpgzYIM>.

¹⁶ Mark Siderits and Shōryū Katsura, *Nāgārjuna's Middle Way: Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (2013) 273.

¹⁷ A teaching of The Middle Way as paraphrased by Priest and Garfield, "Nāgārjuna and the limits of thought," in Graham Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought* (2nd ed. 2002) 266; citing Robert A. F. Thurman, *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti: A Mahāyāna Scripture* (1976) 73: "Thus the attainment of the tolerance of the birthlessness of things is the entrance into nonduality."

¹⁸ *Die Schwierigkeit ist, die Grundlosigkeit unseres Glaubens einzusehen.* Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, tr. Denis Paul and Anscombe 1969) 24. "[M]uch of what the later Wittgenstein had to say was anticipated about 1800 years ago in India." By Nāgārjuna and other Mādhyamikas. Chris Gudmunsen, *Wittgenstein and Buddhism* (1977) 113.

[αὐτὸς ὁ κόσμος], manifests [simply ἐστὶ in the text] the blessings and generosity of God.”¹⁹ The realization (*einzusehen*), respectively discovery (εὑρημα), is ontological insight into the intelligibility of being,²⁰ so the task on both sides of the table is to induce the insight.

Carlisle explicates Spinoza’s conception of *scientia intuitiva* as subsuming the human capacity for insight, anagnorisis, etc. in these words:

“[A] more palpable instance of *scientia intuitiva* is the sense of realisation and recognition that comes when we suddenly grasp something that was previously obscure: in this case, we really feel the transition in our mind, as we pass from not understanding something to understanding it. This transition is so evident—the contrast is so stark—that it is impossible not to notice it. To use Spinoza’s own metaphor, it is like lighting a candle in a dark room (see E2p43s), and this is why, when we describe a sudden realisation, we sometimes say ‘it dawned on me’. The *Ethics* itself provides very ample opportunities to experience this dawning—the passage from darkness to light, from confusion to understanding—and to thereby feel our own intellectual activity, our own power of thinking. This is always an affective breakthrough, too, a passage from the frustrated, fumbling impotence of bewilderment to the happy power of clear vision. It can take time—minutes, days, years—to fully understand a single proposition, yet *as soon as* understanding comes, we recognise its truth and *at the same time* know that we have grasped this truth.”²¹

What both Spinozists and Mahāyānists hope to do is induce ontological insight of the most powerful – life-changing – significance; namely, that “*Everything* is in God”²² and that ‘everything is empty’, respectively.²³

¹⁹ Philo of Alexandria as cited in Thomas Sheehan, *The First Coming: How the Kingdom of God Became Christianity* (1988) 225.

²⁰ “By intelligibility is meant the content of a direct insight.” *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan Volume 3; Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran 1992) 44.

²¹ *Spinoza’s Religion* 43; Carlisle’s emphasis. And Lonergan: “What we have to grasp is that insight (1) comes as a release to the tension of inquiry, (2) comes suddenly and unexpectedly, (3) is a function not of outer circumstances but of inner conditions, (4) pivots between the concrete and the abstract, and (5) passes into the habitual texture of one’s mind.” *Insight* 28. But that, in a burst of happy power, “we recognise its truth and *at the same time* know that we have grasped this truth” may suggest that insights are self-proving. *Caute*; or to alter slightly Richard Kinder’s business motto, “Let’s not start smoking our own dopamine.” “Inquiry leads to the delight of insight,” Lonergan says, “but insights are a dime a dozen, so critical reasonableness doubts, checks, makes sure.” Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (1971) 13.

²² *Spinoza’s Religion* 174.

²³ If insights are a dime a dozen then what about the distribution of their ‘importance,’ ‘significance,’ ‘intensity,’ or ‘power’ (the quotes are believed to scare off the measurement problem) as a function of their frequency? My guess is that like lots of other phenomena the impact of insight varies as the inverse of its frequency raised to some positive power: $1 \propto 1/f^\alpha$. Though not *insisting* on a power law (cave Cosma Shalizi, “So you think you have a power law, do you? Well, isn’t that special?” <http://www.stat.cmu.edu/~cshalizi/2010-10-18-Meetup.pdf>) we still retain the impression that their size-frequency distribution is quite skew, like that of earthquakes and Moon-craters. Or

And – *kull wahad* – **they both do**. But they cannot, so far as I can find out, induce both ontological insights in the same person at the same time. This duck-rabbit crux echoes in Bohr's outcry to Jerome Bruner, "You cannot know somebody at the same time in the light of love and in the light of justice!"²⁴ If the phenomenon of the whole is both what shows up **and** the person it shows up to, then 'complementarity' names the limiting condition: one ontological insight at a time. Being is intelligible, shows up as, particle in this set-up, wave in that, never both at once.

Take another case. Spinoza's highest human good is *acquiescentia in se ipso*.²⁵ The analog in Heidegger – *eigentliche Entschlossenheit* – we can gloss as 'opened-upness *in se ipso*.' How's that? Carlisle shows that Spinoza's three kinds of *acquiescentia* "express three different qualities of thinking: the unsettled, confused, anxious thinking of imagination and opinion; the stable, ordered thinking of reason; and the intuitive thinking that understands things immediately, as they are in God, *sub specie aeternitatis*."²⁶ In Heidegger their correlates are *Verfallen*,²⁷ *rechnende Denken*,²⁸ and *eigentliche Entschlossenheit*.²⁹

"While the second kind of cognition," Carlisle explains,

"consists in a process of reasoning that traces, step by step, the logical connections between ideas and the causal connection between things, intuitive thinking [*scientia intuitiva*] is not a process at all: it grasps the truth immediately. . . . While it brings deep rest and peace, it also expresses the highest degree of activity and striving. Spinoza states that 'the greatest virtue of the mind, that is, the mind's power, or nature, or its greatest striving, is to understand things by

the model of productivity as distributed log-normally among members of a scientific research team. ("It is well-known that some workers in scientific research laboratories are enormously more creative than others." William Shockley, "On the Statistics of Individual Variations of Productivity in Research Laboratories," 45 *Proceedings of the Institute of Radio Engineers* 279 (1957)). If we could model a large random sample of insights under a suitable skew distribution function, it seems plausible that the bulk of the distribution would be populated by empirical insights of the everyday problem-solving kind, whereas ontological insights (into the intelligibility of being) and paradigm-shifting (revolutionary) empirical insights would be found only in the long tail of rarity. »*Eigentliche*« *Angst ist . . . selten. Sein und Zeit* 190.

²⁴ Gerald Holton, "The Roots of Complementarity" in *Thematic Origins of Scientific Thought: Kepler to Einstein* (rev. ed. 1988) 133.

²⁵ *Spinoza's Religion* 153.

²⁶ *Id.* 131. "Intuition, the third kind of cognition, involves insight into being-in-God: it conceives things truly 'under a species of eternity', for it is a simple, direct, immediate comprehension of the way singular things 'are contained in God and follow from the necessity of the divine nature' (E5p29s). . . . intuitive knowing offers a single insight into oneself as 'in' God. To put it another way, one knows God's nature as containing and expressing *this* singular existing being. This insight is an immediate awareness of being-in-God." *Id.* 138, 140.

²⁷ 'Das alltägliche Sein des Da und das Verfallen des Daseins', *Sein und Zeit* §§ 35-38.

²⁸ "Postscript" to "What is Metaphysics?" in *Pathmarks* (ed. William McNeill 1998) 235-236, contrasting *das rechnende Denken* with essential (*wesentliche*), inceptive (*anfängliche*) thinking.

²⁹ *Sein und Zeit* 296-331 *passim*.

the third kind of knowledge' (E5p25d); and just two propositions later he asserts that 'the greatest *acquiescentia* there can be arises from this kind of knowledge' (E5p27)."³⁰

According to Heidegger "The most primordial [*ursprünglichste*], and indeed the most authentic [*eigentlichste*], disclosedness [*Erschlossenheit*] in which Dasein, as a potentiality-for-Being [*Seinkönnen*], can be, is the truth of existence [**die Wahrheit der Existenz**]."³¹ And the truth of existence is the finitude of existence. The truth of existence is grasped – the ontological insight comes – in *Angst* or in some other 'original experience,' *in einer ursprünglichen Erfahrung*,³² some "decisive experience where we might learn with that abysmal depth the richness of being sheltering itself in the essential nothingness."³³ Anyhow,

"Once grasped, the finitude of existence [*Endlichkeit der Existenz*] snatches one back from the endless multiplicity of easily available possibilities—taking it easy, treating things lightly, shirking responsibility—and brings openness [*Dasein*] to the simplicity of 'choosing its fate.' . . . 'Choosing one's fate' is the powerless superior power (ever ready for adversity) of silently and dreadfully understanding oneself in terms of one's own lack-in-being [*Schuldigsein*]."³⁴

As Sheehan puts it vividly,

"But surprisingly, the no-thing we encounter [in dreadful wonder], this yawning abyss under our feet, is a *nihil* that is neither *absolutum* nor even *negativum*. . . . You cannot make sense of the absurd—trying to do so would itself be absurd—but you can make sense of everything else as you stand there with your back pressed up against your death. You now see that, against the encompassing dark, you sustain a fragile bit of space within which things appear as meaningful."³⁵

³⁰ *Spinoza's Religion* 131.

³¹ *Being and Time* (tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson 1962) 264; emphasis in original.

³² "The 'fact' that Dasein [sense-making] 'is' at all and 'is not not' . . . can be experienced by Dasein itself in an original experience [*in einer ursprünglichen Erfahrung erfahren werden*]; this is nothing but the disposition of dread. . . . Dread is nothing other than the pure and simple experience [*die schlechthinnige Erfahrung*] of being in the sense of being-in-the-world." Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena* (tr. Theodore Kisiel 1985) 291.

³³ Heidegger's letter to Sartre, October 28, 1945; tr. Pete Ferreira here:

<http://enowning.blogspot.com/2006/06/heres-my-translation-original-in.html> .

³⁴ *Sein und Zeit* 384-385; as translated by Thomas Sheehan and Corinne Painter, "Choosing One's Fate: A Re-Reading of *Sein und Zeit* ¶ 74," 29 *Research in Phenomenology* 63 at 66-67 (1999).

³⁵ Thomas Sheehan, *Making Sense of Heidegger: A Paradigm Shift* (2015) 164. How stand with the abyss underfoot? "The abyss doesn't gape, it doesn't yawn; it has better manners; it is always awake, open like a lively eye; nor is the abyss funnel-shaped, or a bag without a bottom; the abyss goes nowhere; the abyss is the obliteration of the sign; it is reality without disguise, without appearance, without remainder. . . . it is the utter

This insight into the intelligibility of being is that Dasein is the being of intelligibility. Dasein, the sense-making entity, is finite in all respects and does not through its ontological insight – unlike Spinoza’s human being – take part in the eternity of God.³⁶ Heidegger nonetheless attests to the same benefits from this experience as Spinoza does for the third kind of *acquiescentia*: empowerment (*das vereinzelt Seinkönnen*),³⁷ self-constancy (*die Ständigkeit des Selbst*),³⁸ absence of fear (*der Entschlossene kennt keine Furcht*),³⁹ joy (*die gerüstete Freude*).⁴⁰

Carlisle comments that *acquiescentia in se ipso* is “a single affect in which cognition—ideas about oneself and one’s relation to God—is thoroughly blended with feeling. Of course we may distinguish them conceptually . . . as two elements or aspects of *acquiescentia in se ipso*, but this is only to explain why they are inseparable.”⁴¹ As inseparable as are the existentials *Verstehen*, understanding, and *Befindlichkeit*, the state of mind in which Dasein finds itself, its *Stimmung*, ‘mood’.⁴²

“The ‘power’ of the third kind of knowledge consists in the way it produces affects—and these particular affects are themselves especially empowering.” In other words “the thing itself is very simple. Do we feel anxious or contented? Are we agitated or at peace? Spinoza offers this feeling of being ourselves as a guide to the depth of our self-understanding, the adequacy of our metaphysics and our theology, the truth of our religion.”⁴³

It’s time to take the leap and assert that the truth of ontological insight is beside the point. “Truth is the kind of error without which a particular kind of living creature could not live. The value for life is ultimately decisive.”⁴⁴ ‘Truth,’ in Nietzsche’s way of thinking, “designates not

absence of significance; it is the world as unread and unreadable.” William H. Gass, *The Tunnel* ([1995] 1999) 184-185.

³⁶ The *Ethics* conceives human eternity as a way of existing in God, and thereby participating in God’s eternity while still living.” “Spinoza’s account of the eternity of the mind should be understood . . . as a transformation, at once ethical and ontological, that softens the distinction, perhaps even to the vanishing point, between a human being’s finite life and the eternal life of God.” *Spinoza’s Religion* 163.

³⁷*Sein und Zeit* 310.

³⁸ *Id.* 322.

³⁹ *Id.* 344.

⁴⁰ *Id.* 310.

⁴¹ *Spinoza’s Religion* 133.

⁴² “Every understanding has its mood. Every state-of-mind is one in which one understands.” *Being and Time* 385.

Jedes Verstehen hat eine Stimmung. Jede Befindlichkeit ist verstehend. Sein und Zeit 335.

⁴³ *Id.* 144, 133. For Heidegger ‘being ourselves’ is ‘being uncanny.’ See Katherine Withy, *Heidegger on Being Uncanny* (2019).

⁴⁴ *Wahrheit ist die Art von Irrthum, ohne welche eine bestimmte Art von lebendigen Wesen nicht leben könnte. Der Werth für das Leben entscheidet zuletzt.* Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente April–Juni 1885, Gruppe 34* [253]. Cf. “Desire for life . . . is an intrinsic or immanent fulfillment . . .” *Spinoza’s Religion* 159.

necessarily the opposite of error but in its most fundamental cases only the position of various errors in relation to one another.”⁴⁵ ‘Truth’ springs from the mutual interference of various errors, their interrelation the *Ur* in *Ursprung*. “There are many kinds of eyes,”⁴⁶ many kinds of ‘fundamental cases,’ in the sense of mutually exclusive ontological insights; being is intelligible in a variety of incompatible ways. How can this be?

Carlisle’s text provides a clue. The *Ethics*

“advances a robust critique of the doctrine of divine love that imagines God as a heteronomous cause outside the world, external to and indeed far beyond each individual. According to this anthropomorphic theology, the relational dynamic between ourselves and God is often imagined to be like that between an uncomprehending child, who is anxious for approval and fearful of punishment, and her remote, forbidding, inscrutable father.”⁴⁷

The anxious, fearful, uncomprehending child personifies the problem-situation that is human social existence. “In highly social organisms,” West-Eberhard writes,

“social competition screens access to virtually all crucial resources (food, space, protection, and mates . . . [sc. and approval, esteem, love]). . . . Humans engage in fine-tuned assessment of relatedness, status, and reciprocity in alliances and exchange, where they make precise quantitative assessments and remember them for long periods of time. For these reasons, hypotheses for the evolutionary increase in the size of the human brain seem to me most convincing when they deal with social aspects of judgment and intelligence, such as use of language . . . or the expansion and assessment of social alliances . . . , and least convincing when they address ecological aspects, such as tool making or throwing ability of hunters . . . Throwing ability of warriors would be more credible, but not as convincing as assessment of alliances and tactics on the battlefield, where an unending, runaway process of evolution under social selection would apply . . .”⁴⁸

⁴⁵ „Wahrheit“: das bezeichnet innerhalb meiner Denkweise nicht nothwendig einen Gegensatz zum Irrthum, sondern in den grundsätzlichen Fällen nur eine Stellung verschiedener Irrthümer zu einander. *NF April–Juni 1885, Gruppe 38* [4].

⁴⁶ *Es giebt vielerlei Augen*. *NF April–Juni 1885, Gruppe 34* [230]. Taylor Carman’s translation of these fragments in his anthology *Nietzsche On Truth and Untruth: Selected Writings* (ed. tr. Taylor Carman 2010).

⁴⁷ *Spinoza’s Religion* 139.

⁴⁸ Mary Jane West-Eberhard, *Developmental Plasticity and Evolution* (2003) 464, references omitted.

Ordinary insight is very beneficial in practical problem-solving,⁴⁹ and insight as a problem-solving aid seems to be a primate specialty; Köhler's chimpanzees showed insight in solving the problems he contrived to test them.⁵⁰ But most everyday problems in highly social organisms like primates are social problems⁵¹ – social life *is* the battlefield – and insight into social situations the most beneficial of all “social aspects of judgment and intelligence” in the “unending, runaway process of evolution under social selection.” So the primate child, if she is to thrive, must quickly see when to approach and when to avoid the Old Guy, that is, to assess the present Situation; albeit uncomprehending of *why* there are situations at all, instead of just nothing.

Aristotle describes insight both in terms of solution to a non-social puzzle and of swift intuition into social situations:

“Quick wit [ἀγχινοία] is a faculty of hitting upon [εὐστοχία τις, ‘a good shot’] the middle term instantaneously [‘in the blink of an eye,’ ἐν ἀσκέπτῳ χρόνῳ; Spinoza’s *uno intuitu videmus*]. It would be exemplified by a man who saw that the moon has her bright side always turned towards the sun, and quickly grasped [ταχὺ ἐνενόησε] the cause of this, namely that she borrows her light from him; or observed somebody in conversation with a man of wealth and divined [ἔγνων] that he was borrowing money, or that the friendship of these people sprang from a common enmity. In all these instances he has seen [ἰδὼν] the major and minor terms and then grasped [ἔγνώρισεν] the causes, the middle terms.”⁵²

⁴⁹ “What is progress toward the solution? Advancing mobilization and organization of our knowledge, evolution of our conception of the problem, increasing prevision of the steps which will constitute the final argument. We may advance steadily, by small imperceptible steps, but now and then we advance abruptly, by leaps and bounds. A sudden advance toward the solution is called a BRIGHT IDEA, a good idea, a happy thought, a brain-wave (in German there is a more technical term, *Einfall*). What is a bright idea? An abrupt and momentous change of our outlook, a sudden reorganization of our mode of conceiving the problem, a just emerging confident prevision of the steps we have to take in order to attain the solution.” Georg Polya, *How to Solve It: A new aspect of mathematical method* (2nd ed. 1957) 159.

⁵⁰ The hallmark of insight: “The genuine achievement takes place as a single continuous occurrence, a unity [*als ein einziger Vorgang . . . ein stetiger Lauf*], as it were, in space as well as in time . . . the moment in which a true solution is struck is generally sharply marked [*scharf markiert*] in the behaviour of the animal (or the child) by a kind of jerk [*eine Art Ruck*]: the dog stops, then suddenly [*plötzlich*] turns completely round (180°), etc., the child looks about, suddenly [*plötzlich*] its face lights up, and so forth. Thus the characteristic smoothness [*Stetigkeit*] of the true solution is made more striking by a discontinuity [*Unstetigkeit*] at its beginning.” Wolfgang Köhler, *The Mentality of Apes (Intelligenzprüfungen an Menschenaffen* 2nd rev. ed. tr. Ella Winter 1927) 16, 17.

⁵¹ “Almost every chapter of this book has emphasized the complexity of the fusion-fission society in which the chimpanzee lives and has provided examples of the way in which he must cope with this ever-changing social scene. In the natural habitat heavy demands are placed on his cognitive abilities; if he cannot meet the challenge, he will fare less well than his more intelligent companions. He must be able to sort out and correctly respond to information from a wide variety of stimuli. His social environment may change at any moment from a peaceful party of two or three individuals to a large and excited gathering, and he must be able to adjust his behavior accordingly.” Jane Goodall, *The Chimpanzees of Gombe: Patterns of Behavior* (1986) 565.

⁵² *Analytica posteriora* 89b 10-15 (tr. G. R. G. Mure 1925).

The interest here is not the shoehorning of insight into syllogism, but the phenomenon of *scientia intuitiva* in assessing situations of resource-access and alliance-maintenance. This meat-and-potatoes kind of insight gets Platonized at *De Anima* 431b 2: τὰ μὲν οὖν εἶδη τὸ νοητικὸν ἐν τοῖς φαντάσμασι νοεῖ, ‘the noetic faculty cognizes the forms in ‘phantasms,’ images.’ So for the main difference between situational insight and metaphysical vision we can adapt a thought from West-Eberhard: ontological insights are less constrained in their objects than are situational insights, since they encounter no ceiling of truth in their reach.⁵³

Carlisle suggests that “in *scientia intuitiva* there is no distinction between what is known and the act of knowing it.”⁵⁴ She cites E5p30:

“Our mind, so far as it knows itself and its body under the form of eternity, has necessarily the knowledge of God, and knows itself to be in God and to be conceived by and through God.” [*Mens nostra quatenus se et corpus sub aeternitatis specie cognoscit, eatenus Dei cognitionem necessario habet, scitque se in Deo esse et per Deum concipi.*]

“Has the knowledge of God,” *Dei cognitionem habet*, may mean either ‘knows God’ or ‘has the knowledge that God has,’ or both. In ‘the knowledge that God has’ there is no distinction between what is known and the act of knowing it. God knows in creating the objects of knowing.

Heidegger, glossing Kant, distinguishes human knowledge from God’s knowledge. “The finitude of human knowledge must first of all be sought in the finitude of its own intuition [*in der Endlichkeit der ihr eigenen Anschauung*].”

“The essence of finite human knowledge [*Erkenntnis*] is illustrated by the contrast between it and the idea of infinite divine knowledge, or *intuitus originarius*. . . . Now, the difference between infinite and finite intuition [*Anschauung*] consists in the fact that the former, in its immediate representation of the individual [*in ihrem unmittelbaren Vorstellen des Einzelnen*], i.e., of the unique, singular being as a whole, first brings this being into its Being [*dieses Seiende allererst in sein Sein bringt*], helps it into its coming-into-being (*origo*). Absolute intuiting would not be absolute if it depended upon a being already at

⁵³ She writes: “manipulative signals are less constrained in their evolution than are indicator signals, since there is no ceiling of truth to their change, other than their costs under natural selection.” *Developmental Plasticity and Evolution* 467. That ontological insights are omni-directional runaways from practical service is just a guess, of course, and any guess at the riddle will come from an ontological presupposition. The present guess has obviously been lifted from a shelf at GOFMANS (good old-fashioned materialist-atheist natural selection).

⁵⁴ *Spinoza's Religion* 150.

hand and if the intuitable first became accessible in its 'taking the measure' of this being. Divine knowing is representing which, in intuiting, first creates the intuitable being as such [*das im Anschauen das anschaubare Seiende als solches allererst schafft*]. But because it immediately looks at the being as a whole, simply seeing through it in advance [*es im vorhinein schlechthin durchschauend*], it cannot require thinking [*Denken*]. Thinking as such is thus already the mark of finitude."⁵⁵

Whereas *scientia intuitiva sub aeternitatis specie* is divine.

Human knowledge apes, if you like, the divine in that it too creates intuitable beings; not, proximally, like God, 'out of nothing'⁵⁶ but out of somethings already at hand:⁵⁷ "they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons." Before that fatal day Creation knew no aprons. Spinoza did the same: he took the metaphysics of the ancients, being-as-substance,⁵⁸ and stitched the spirit of Scripture into it,⁵⁹ creating a novel fabric of ontotheology. Thanks to Clare Carlisle for making that novelty and its power explicit for us.

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⁵⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (5th ed., enlarged tr. Richard Taft 1997) 17.

⁵⁶ Yet distally, primordially, rather closer to God's way: "*ex nihilo omne ens qua ens fit*. Only in the nothing of Dasein do beings as a whole, in accord with their own most proper possibility – that is, in a finite way – come to themselves." "What is metaphysics?" in *Pathmarks* 95. Meaningfulness proceeds from unmeaning, *Sinnlosigkeit*. Reworking a line of Nietzsche's: 'Let us beware of saying that the absurd is the opposite of the meaningful. The meaningful is only a type of what is absurd—and a very rare type.' *Hüten wir uns, zu sagen, dass Tod dem Leben entgegengesetzt sei. Das Lebende ist nur eine Art des Todten, und eine sehr seltene Art. Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882/1887) *Drittes Buch* ¶ 109.

⁵⁷ Gould's "Nietzsche-Darwin principle of quirky functional shift." Stephen Jay Gould, *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory* (2002) 1230.

⁵⁸ Per Ernst Cassirer "Being in ancient metaphysics was substance, what forms a ground [*das eine Zugrundeliegende*]." As cited in Peter E. Gordon, *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (2010) 208. A book all about 'two kinds of eyes.'

⁵⁹ "Indeed, the *Ethics* might plausibly be read as a philosophical exposition of the theology of 1 John, situating the biblical text in the seventeenth-century European context by accentuating (and explaining with rational arguments) the harmful psychological and social effects of fear, and by insisting that hatred fuelling sectarian conflict must be overcome by love." *Spinoza's Religion* 161.