Chapter 13
Spinozism and Native Americans on Pantheism and Panentheism

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Abstract Baruch Spinoza famously said, "Whatsoever is, is in God, and without God, nothing can be, or be conceived". This form of Pantheism is quite like eastern Pantheism, where in Hinduism they assert that "everything is Brahma", or in Taoism, where Lao Tzu says, "Heaven and I were created together, and all things and I are one". Although the western and eastern world shared their respective ideas of Pantheism, Native Americans also contributed to such discussion. However, comparative philosophy between western and Native American philosophy has been far neglected, and the same neglect has been shown regarding Native American contribution to Pantheism. Many Indigenous religions believe that there is a Great Spirit that is manifested as a life force or energy that communicates and speaks through nature. In other words, some Native American tribes believe that nature, or in extension the universe, is part of a Great Spirit that communicates to individuals in a naturalistic way. Such a Great Spirit created the world and is in everything that the Great Spirit created. Moreover, there are other Indigenous beliefs that not only hold a Pantheistic view but hold a Panentheistic perspective where God is a being that is present in creation but transcends from it. Therefore, although Indigenous beliefs about Pantheism or Panentheism have been much neglected, there is much to say about it. With such input from Native American religious culture, this paper seeks to show and compare Spinoza's Pantheism and that of Native Americans. In addition, I wish to investigate in what ways Native American philosophy contributes to the discussion of cosmology, nature, and Pantheism. In particular, how do some Native American tribes understand God in a Pantheistic sense where nature and cosmology are one.

Keywords Pantheism · Panentheism · Great Spirit · Nature · Cosmology

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13.1 Introduction

There have been various philosophical contributions between the Western and the Eastern world regarding Pantheism. However, there has been no mention or comparison of some sort between Native Americans and the forms of Pantheism in Western and Eastern philosophy. That is quite surprising since Native American philosophy has much to say about it. In particular, Native Americans believe that a Great Spirit manifests as a life force or energy in nature. Moreover, many Native Americans also hold a Panentheistic perspective where God is a being that transcends creation and communicates with it. With such input, this paper seeks to show and compare Spinoza's Pantheism and that of Native Americans. I will show how Indigenous Pantheism, such as the Great Spirit, can have a form of Spinozism regarding infinite and finite modes. However, I argue that the Native American departs from Spinoza's Pantheism and instead arrives at a form of Panentheism because the Great Spirit is involved with nature and individuals.

13.2 Spinoza's Pantheism

Before we begin discussing Native American Pantheism and Panentheism, let us first explain Spinoza's form of Pantheism. As we see in Spinoza's Ethics: Concerning God, he goes against the traditional Abrahamic (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) understanding of God's nature and states that "nothing can be or be conceived without God, but that all things are in God" (E1P17 dem). In particular, this stemming away from traditional Abrahamic religion is that in God, there are modes. And these modes are inside of God. It is Spinoza's assertion of modes and their residing in God that classifies Spinoza as a Pantheist. As such, I pursue here to explain what Spinoza means when he says, "things are in God," and how exactly Spinoza's modes correlate with God.

13.2.1 God and Substance

Spinoza, like theists, believes that everything comes from or is caused by God (E1P8chS2); however, theists assert that everything comes from God in the sense that God created all that exists that is external to Him. Moreover, these existing things for the theist are substances. For Spinoza, this is not the case. Instead of God creating everything external to Him, Spinoza argues in the ethics that all things exist in God and that "apart from God there can be no substance" (E1P14). This take on Spinoza derives from one of his definitions where he says, "by

substance I mean that which is in itself and is conceived through itself" (E1D3). In other words, for something to be a substance, it needs to have the power to conceive itself. The point being made here is that everything that God causes cannot be a substance since these particular things cannot conceive themselves. Therefore, unlike the theist, Spinoza classifies God as the only substance that exists since God is the only thing that can conceive itself.

13.2.2 Infinite and Finite Modes

Now, although for Spinoza, God is the only substance, there needs to be an explanation of some sort that shows how existing things can be part of God since this essentially is what classifies Spinoza as a Pantheist.

We can get such an explanation from Spinoza when he speaks of modes. However, what exactly, is a mode? For Spinoza, these particular modes are either infinite or finite modes, and most importantly, these modes are existing things. In fact, modes, along with substance (God), are the only two things that exist. That is, "nothing exists except substance and modes" (E1P15 proof). But although modes, like substance, are existing things, modes are prior to substance (E1P1) and depend on substance because they "cannot be or be conceived without substance" (E1P15 proof). In other words, since modes are in the Divine nature, they must and can only be conceived through God.

Now, as already mentioned, there are two types of modes: infinite and finite. Regarding infinite modes, they can be understood as the laws of nature. For instance, the laws that control gravity, motion, force, or rest are laws of nature. Spinoza makes this clear in his *Theological-Political Treatise* when he states, "those features that are most universal and common to the whole of Nature, to wit, motion-and-rest and the rules and laws governing them which Nature always observes and through which she constantly acts" (TTP7). Now, for Spinoza, laws of nature do not only govern these things, but for Spinoza, it consists of everything that happens (E1P15 schol; E3 preface). And most importantly, these infinite modes, Spinoza claims, are the determined acts of God that are expressed infinitely (TTP6).

However, regarding finite modes, they are things that depend on God and the laws of nature. But in addition to this, these modes are individual finite things (E2Exp. 3) that are classified as bodies (E1D2). They are "things" in the sense that they have properties such as length, breadth, depth, and shape (E1P15 schol). This would entail that bodies or individual things are in extension since, for Spinoza, "bodies are extended things" (E2D1). For instance, humans, ani- mals, rocks, or celestial bodies are extended things since they have "length, breadth, and shape." Simply put, finite modes must reside in extension because they have properties.

13.2.3 God, Modes, and Spinoza's Pantheism

It is from these two modes that one can interpret Spinoza as a Pantheist. Essentially, the crux of Spinoza's Pantheism is that finite modes are affections of God, and concerning infinite modes, they are "what necessarily follows from the absolute nature of some attribute of God" (E1P21Dem) (these particular attributes will be discussed in Sect. 13.3). In other words, these finite modes are "particular things that are affections of the attributes of God" (E1P25 Cor). Whereas infinite modes are eternal and can be considered features of God.

Regarding finite modes, Spinoza mentions in the fifth definition in the first part of his Ethics that modes are the affections of substance (God) (E1D5). Furthermore, in Spinoza's letter to Lodewijk Meyer, he called affections modes (EP12). What this entails is that every finite mode and their way of interacting in extension are all affection of the attributes of God. For instance, if a human were to eat vegetables or if a rock were to cause an avalanche, these particular events would be affections of God's attributes. Overall, all events that occur in extension are the affections of God. Thus, these modes that are affection are not external to God but instead are occurrences that are internal to the substance. Now besides finite modes, infinite modes are also part of Spinoza's Pantheism. As previously mentioned, infinite modes are laws of nature that govern finite modes. They are metaphorically the organs of Spinoza's God, allowing finite modes to be expressed in God. One can think of the human body as an example. For instance, suppose x is God the substance, and the white or blood cells of x would be the finite modes of x. What moves the cells are the organs (infinite modes) of x. In other words, the organs would be the infinite modes that govern and moves the cells (finite modes). Although these two modes function differently, they are both in x. Similarly, although not entirely identical, infinite modes for Spinoza are the driving force of things in extension.

As shown, Spinoza's Pantheism consists of God as the substance that has inhered infinite and finite modes. In particular, the former governs and allows things in extension to do what is determined to do, and in the case of the latter, they are things in extension that are affections of God. These modes are the pillars and foundation of Spinoza's Pantheism, and Native Americans have quite a similar perspective where the Divine has attributes that showcases its power.

13.3 Native American Pantheism

Unlike western philosophy, where things are written and preserved in books, Native Americans share their ideas orally. They are heavily involved in oral traditions, where stories and legends are passed down from generation to generation. Various philosophical ideas exist among these stories, and many speak of a Great Spirit with similar views of Spinoza's God. In particular, the similarity is from some of the Native American legends that describe the great spirit as a force that has within

itself attributes. And these attributes can be the laws of nature or the things that the laws of nature govern. These same attributes interestingly correlate to Spinoza's infinite and finite modes, where each showcases the Divine.

13.3.1 The Great Spirit

In many Native American tribes, they believe that there is a Great Spirit that underlies all of creation and this Spirit has various names. For instance, the Great Spirit is called Orenda, Manitou, or Wakan Tanka. Moreover, the naming of such Spirit can also be called "Gigantic Spirit," "Superior Lake," "Huge Lake," or "Great Mystery." Paula R. Hartz in *Native American Religions* gives a similar description stating: "The Algonquins speak of Manitou, the Iroquois of Orenda, and the Lakota of Wakan Tanka, words usually translated as "Great Spirit" or "Great Mystery." These words all refer to the indefinable power that underlies all creation" (Hartz 2009, p. 20). Overall, the Great Spirit has various names, but regardless of their different names, they all are attributed as a force or energy that "animates all things" (Wilshire 2000, p. 64).

In addition, it is described that the Great Spirit is the giver of breath and spirit in which nothing can exist without it. As described by Hartz (2009, p. 23): "Everything in the world that can be seen or touched is alive with spirit or breath." This is in connection with what Jamil Nassar in *Spirit Talks* conveys, "We refer to the originator of life as the Great Spirit! Nothing can have life within itself without the active life of spirit in it!" (Nassar 2016, Ch. 3). Each thing has spirit or breath that the Great Spirit gives, and most importantly, without these things, nothing can exist. In other words, nothing inside of the Great Spirit can exist unless breath and spirit are given. Thus, like Spinoza, nothing can be or be conceived without the Great Spirit.

13.3.2 The Great Spirit and Infinite and Finite Modes

This Great Spirit, like Spinoza's God, has within it all that exists where each thing is a sort of attribute of the divine. For instance, some Native American tribes believe that the Great Spirit has Earth and the Sun as its attribute. Such a description is mentioned in The Native American Book of Wisdom, stating:

> The Great Mystery is both male and female, so many Native Americans think of the Sky, or sometimes of the Sun, as Father, and the Earth as Mother. These are the male and female qualities of the Great Mystery. Both are equally important, although each has a different role (White Deer of Autumn 2009).

As noticed, the Earth and the Sun are not the Divine, but they are qualities or attributes of it. For this reason, one can incorporate Spinoza modes here, where the Earth and the Sun are the modes of the Great Spirit.

But besides the Earth and Sun being part of its attribute, the Great Spirit also has other attributes. In The Old Lady Trill, the Victory Yell, Patrice E.M. Hollrah mentions other attributes when she says:

> The reverent and poetic natures of these forest children feel the benign influence of the Great Spirit; they hear his voice in the wind; see his frown in the storm cloud; his smile in the sunbeam. Thus in reverential awe the Red man lived. His was the life that is the common lot of humankind (Hollrah 2016, p. 33).

Not only does the Great Spirit have Earth and the Sun as attributes, but the wind, storm cloud, and sunbeam are part of its attributes. The interesting aspect here is that both the sun and the sunbeam are attributes of the divine, but the two are entirely different. This suggests that there are multiple things within things that are qualities of the Great Spirit. Such classification can indicate that these can work as finite modes. For example, for Spinoza, finite modes consist not only of humans, rocks, or water but also of celestial bodies. As such, the sun as a heavenly body can be a finite mode that brings forth a sunbeam that is another finite mode.

Now concerning infinite modes, these modes can be, for Native Americans, the attributes of the divine that keeps things in motion. For instance, Hartz describes the Great Spirit in such a way, saying, "almost all Native American peoples believe in a great sacred force from which all things come and which keeps the universe in motion" (2009, p. 20). The force that keeps things in motion can have the same meaning as that of infinite modes, where it governs everything inside the Divine. Now, although the Great Spirit as a force keeps things in motion, it's essential to discuss the details that keep things in motion. Some possible explanations exist, such as energy, spirit forces, or cultural hero.

Regarding the first, some Native Americans believe that the law of nature is the energy of the Great Spirit, who governs everything inside it. For instance,

> Wakan-Tanka is an American Indian word for the Great Spirit in Manifestation. It is the universe and all that is. It has also been called The Great Everything. In order to manifest, the Great Spirit split in two, creating male and female energies. This is the principle of polarity or duality. It is the law of attraction that governs everything. This is why there is an inherent attraction to all things; this law governs every atom (Sacco-Belli 2012, p. 18).

Vincenzo Petrullo says something similar, but it's not called energy but Spirit-Forces. These forces manifest the power of the Great Spirit where they "reveal themselves to human beings, teaching them the ways of the Great Spirit" (Petrullo 1975, p. 29). It's the Spirit-Forces that showcase the Great Spirit's power. These particular Spirit-Forces are influential in Native American thought since they contributed to the creation of the universe. For example, these forces, also called cultural heroes, are the world's creators. Now it's important to mention that some Native Americans believe that the Great Spirit is not the creator of the world. Like Spinoza, the Divine does not create the world, but everything stems and comes from the divine. Instead, what contributed to the existence of things within the Great Spirit are the Spirit-Force, energy, or culture heroes, who have special powers that come from the Great Spirit (Hartz 2009, p. 23). Like infinite modes, they govern the

whole universe, whether by creating the world, the way nature functions, or the movements of atoms. They function as infinite modes where it governs things that are finite modes, and most importantly, they are the very expression and attributes God.

13.3.3 Circles Within Circles and Spinoza's Modes

Now, as shown in Native American thought, they have within their philosophy infinite and finite modes. However, there is another aspect of their philosophy that would suggest modes existing in the Great Spirit. In particular, the Great Spirit is a "Great Circle" or "Hoop" that has within it smaller circles. For instance, The Native American Book of Wisdom illustrated a dialogue between Native American family members, saying:

> One day on the bus, Showanna Jones asked Jamie what his god, the Great Mystery, looked like. "I bet you can't even draw a picture of him", she said. "How can you draw a picture of all things living together for all time?" Uncle Nip asked later when he heard the story. "No, Jamie, no Indian ever tried to picture what the Great Mystery looks like." "We do, however, have a symbol that helps us to represent the Mystery –the Circle. It has no beginning and no end." The circle seemed like a fitting symbol to Jamie. He would always remember Uncle Nip explaining, "Is not the earth round? And does she not move, spinning slowly, in a circle around the sun, which is also round? And are not the stars round, and do not the great galaxies of stars spin in great spirals? The trunks of trees, the eagle's eggs, even our bodies are round. Do not the seasons move in circles, and life too? Circles within circles" (White Deer of Autumn 2009, p. 31).

As stated, the smaller circles are the earth, the sun, stars, galaxies, trees, eggs, and humans. This entails that everything inside the Great Spirit is a circle. The whole world, the cosmos, and the universe are circles (Wilshire 2000, p. 24). But these things are not the only circles; the Great Spirit is also a circle. Essentially, the circle is in everything and in each of us (White Deer of Autumn 2009, p. 32), and all these circles are within the Great Spirit. This, therefore, implies that all these smaller circles can be understood as modes where the laws of nature (infinite modes) are what control and govern the smaller circles (finite modes). And these modes, the laws of nature, and the smaller circles are the attributes or affections of the Great Spirit.

As shown, Native American Pantheism is quite similar to Spinoza, where the divine is a circle and a Great Spirit with various things within it. In particular, the Great Spirit has within it all that exist and the laws of nature that govern all creation. These laws of nature, such as the Energy, Spirit-Force, and culture heroes, can be understood as infinite modes which control all of existence that are finite modes. However, Although Spinoza and Native Americans have similarities regarding Pantheism, they differ in how the divine is active in nature. And in particular, it's through this difference where Native Americans would no longer be classified as Pantheists but rather Panentheistic.

13.4 Spinoza and Native Americans on God and Nature

Spinoza and Native Americans both implement in their philosophy that God is involved in nature. However, they have a different understanding of how exactly the divine is part of nature and the universe. For Spinoza, God is active in nature because our thoughts are included in the attribute of God called thinking, and modes in general as extended substance are in the attribute of God called extension. Whereas for Native Americans, God is involved in nature by spirits being messengers of the Divine and individuals praying and receiving blessings from the Great Spirit.

13.4.1 Thinking and Extension as Attributes of God

For Spinoza, there are two attributes that belong to God: extension and thinking (E1P1–2). These two particular attributes of God are involved in some ways with individuals that are finite modes. And it is from this involvement that some interpreters of Spinoza would classify him as Panentheistic. However, such a take is incorrect because, for Spinoza, God is not involved with humans in a personal matter, nor is God in everything. Instead, God is involved in human affairs in the sense that God's attribute of thinking and extension is connected with human thoughts and individual extended things.

Regarding God's attribute thought, Spinoza argues that the thoughts of humans are modes that express the nature of God. In other words, our thoughts or ideas are modes that showcase God's nature. Spinoza makes such a claim when he states, "Individual thoughts, or this and that thought, are modes expressing the nature of God in a definite and determinate way" (E2P1 dem). Now, given that individual thoughts are modes, there must be an attribute of God to which all our thoughts belong. For Spinoza, such belongingness of individual thoughts belongs in God's attribute thought. This is the case for Spinoza since everything originates in God, for everything cannot be conceived without such a being (E1P17 dem). For Spinoza, such thoughts of individuals must belong in God's attribute "thought" since God ultimately is a thinking thing. This is asserted by Spinoza when he says:

> Therefore, there belongs to God (P1Def. 5, I) an attribute the conception of which is involved in all individual thoughts, and through which they are conceived. Thought, therefore, is one of God's infinite attributes, expressing the eternal and infinite essence of God (EID6); that is, God is a thinking thing (E2P1 dem).

As stated, by Spinoza, since all things are in God as modes, then our thinking as a mode must also belong in God. In connection to this, Spinoza also asserts in the second part of his ethics that thoughts are in God, "idea of both thought and its affection –and consequently of the human mind as well– must necessarily be in God" (E2P20 dem). Overall, this signifies that our thoughts and ideas are modes of God that are subject to God's attribute thought.

Now, although our thoughts belong in God's attribute "thought," our body as an extended thing also belongs in one of God's attributes. Mainly, the body or any extended thing Spinoza argues belongs in God's attribute extension. And these particular extended things, like thoughts of individuals, are modes of the Divine. However, unlike modes of thought, extended things are modes of God's attribute extension.

13.4.2 God's Intellect and Nature

Given that our thoughts and extended things are involved in God as modes, the question at hand is how exactly are his attributes involved in nature? In other words, how does Spinoza's God extend itself to nature and individuals? One suggestion in trying to answer such a question may come from Spinoza's second part of his ethics, when he speaks of ideas, saying, "In God there is necessarily the idea both of his essence and of everything that necessarily follows from his essence" (E2P3). Additionally, regarding extension, he says that extended things necessarily follow from God's action (E2P3Sch). As Spinoza said in the former and the latter, the infinite number of ideas and extended things stem from and are caused by God's attribute thought and extension. And it is from here that one can connect God and nature. Notably, God and nature for Spinoza are connected since ideas, and extended things are one with God. Not only are they one with God, but both thoughts and extended things are connected and the same. This may sound unclear at first, but this can be clarified if we understand Spinoza as a parallelist. Essentially, ideas are con- nected to extended things and cannot be separated from each other. Spinoza asserts it this way: "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connec- tion of things" (E2P7). One can use formal and objective essences to affirm their connection. Objective essences are ideas of things, whereas formal essences are things in extension. According to Spinoza, ideas and extended things are structurally connected, where the idea of a thing is also the very thing in extension. Spinoza uses Peter as an illustration saying that the idea of Peter is also what Peter is in extension. In Spinoza's words:

> Now the true idea of Peter is the objective essence of Peter and is in itself something real, something entirely different from Peter. So since the idea of Peter is something real, having its own individual essence, it will also be something intelligible, that is, the object of another idea which has in itself objectively everything that the idea of Peter has formally. And in turn the idea of the idea of Peter again has its own essence, which can also be the object of another idea, and so on without end (TIE 34).

In other words, the idea of the mind thus has to represent the body that is in extension perfectly. And interestingly, the ideas of things and their extended representation are both in unison with God. Therefore, God's involvement in nature is by formal and objective reality being inside God and both realities being subject under the attribute thought and extension.

13.4.3 Native American and Panentheism

Unlike Spinoza, Native Americans' take on God and nature is entirely different since some Native American tribes understand the Great Spirit to be personally involved in human affairs. This would thus classify these particular Native tribes as Panentheistic since God transcends the universe but is also involved in human activity. There are many ways that the Great Spirit is involved in nature and too many to describe, but there are precisely three that I wish to discuss here. In particular, I want to discuss the messengers of the Great Spirit, praying and communicating to the divine, receiving blessings from the great spirit, and the Great Spirit's omniscience and omnipresence.

13.4.4 Communication with the Great Spirit

Regarding speaking with the Divine, various Native American tribes have a form of communication with the Great Spirit. One form of communication is through prayer. In some tribes, prayers are spontaneous; in many others, they are ritualized because they need to be memorized. But regardless, these forms of prayers are so that they can communicate with the Great Spirit. But in addition, Native American tribes would also commence rituals dedicated to the Great Spirit, showcasing their thankfulness for the Great Spirits' provisions of nature (Hartz 2009, p. 72). But besides prayers, other tribes would go to sacred places of nature to communicate with the Great Spirit (Hartz 2009, p. 27). Now, although there are various Native American tribes that believe one can communicate with the Great Spirit by going to sacred places or doing rituals, there are some that believe there are animals that are the messengers of the Great Spirit, such as the buffalo (Hartz 2009, p. 25, 36) and the eagle (Hartz 2009, p. 136). For instance, it is believed that the Eagle carries the people's prayers and sends them to the Great Spirit (Hartz 2009, p. 60). In addition, the Great Spirit would send its messengers to communicate to individuals how they ought to behave, what rituals they should practice, and what is expected from them (Petrullo 1975, p. 29). Overall, this is quite different from Spinoza since the Great Spirit has a sort of persona where it can communicate with individuals in various ways. However, the Great Spirit does not speak but uses the very things in nature to share what it wants to convey.

13.4.5 Ecology and Blessings from the Great Spirit

Now, prayers are not the only aspect of Native American culture that showcases how the Great Spirit is connected to nature and individuals. The Great Spirit is also involved with nature and individuals by providing blessings to humans and

providing blessings to nature by placing humans on Earth to take care of it. An example can be made in *The Sacred Wisdom of the Native American,* where Larry J. Zimmerman describes an anguish of an individual from the Cayuse tribe stating:

> "I wonder if the ground has anything to say?" I hear what the ground says. The ground says, "It is the Great Spirit that placed me here. The Great Spirit tells me to take care of the Indians, to feed them properly." The water says the same thing. The grass says the same thing. "Feed the Indians well," the ground says, "It was from me man was made. The Great Spirit, in placing men on Earth, desired them to take good care of the ground and to do each other no harm" (Zimmerman 2011, pp. 105–106).

As shown here by Zimmerman, particular things in nature are placed on Earth to bless humans, and in return, humans are placed on Earth to take care of Earth. Everything overall on Earth is considered a blessing that the Great Spirit gave (Hartz 2009, p. 102). And interestingly, for many Native Americans living a long life was also considered a blessing from the Great Spirit (Hartz 2009, p. 98). Not only was long life a blessing, but also the provision of food was a blessing from the divine (Hartz 2009, p. 26).

13.4.6 The Great Spirit's Attributes and Its Dichotomy from Spinoza

The Great Spirit overall is involved in nature, and how it is involved would classify some Native Americans as Panentheistic. This is the case since the Great Spirit communicates with individuals. Whereas for Spinoza, God is only involved in nature in the sense that the ideas of nature and its extension are in God as modes that are subjected under God's attribute thought or extension. This would thus label Spinoza more as a Pantheist rather than Panentheistic since God is not involved in nature on a personal level.

But amongst these differences, Native Americans also differ in describing God's attributes and how God is involved in us. For instance, the Lakota tribe believes that the Great Spirit is omnipresent and omniscient. Zimmerman gives such description saying, "For the Lakota, every human act is imbued with spiritual significance and pays homage to the omnipresent and omniscient Great Mystery, or Great Spirit, a transcendent god-like power pervading people, animals, places and phenomena" (Zimmerman 2011, p. 84). As mentioned here, the Great Spirit is present in all of creation and pervades in us all. However, it is unclear how exactly the Great Spirit is all-knowing. One thing we can consider to answer such unclarity is that everything has in it the power and presence of the Great Spirit. Thus, perhaps one can understand God's omniscience in the sense that God is present in all things, and through his presence within things, the Great Spirit also simultaneously knows all.

Now, as seen in Sect. 13.3, the Great Spirit is similar to Spinoza's God regarding infinite and finite modes. However, for Spinoza, these modes are in God. For Native

Americans, these modes are in the Great Spirit, but in the same way we are in the Great Spirit, the Great Spirit is within us all. As stated by White Deer of Autumn, "where is the center of the circle of an endless universe? It is everywhere and within each of us, making us all relatives of equal value and importance" (White Deer of Autumn, p. 33). Spinoza does not give such an assertion. Instead, he says all things are in the Divine. Therefore, many Native Americans differ from Spinoza in that they have a Panentheistic understanding of the Great Spirit, where the Great Spirit can communicate with us and are also in us. Whereas Spinoza is classified as a Pantheist since God is not in all, but everything is in God.

13.5 Conclusion

It's pretty fascinating how much Native American Philosophy can contribute to philosophical discussion. And here, precisely, we see their contribution to Pantheism and Panentheism. One can pinpoint here how similar is the Great Spirit with that of Spinoza's God. In particular, everything in the Great Spirit can be applied to infinite and finite modes, where infinite modes are the laws of nature that govern all things in the Great Spirit that are finite modes. However, Spinoza and Native Americans differ because Spinoza's God is not involved in nature on a personal level. Instead, God is in unison with individuals and nature by both the ideas of things and things in extension being under God's attribute thought or extension. For Native Americans, on the other hand, the Great Spirit is involved in nature, where he blesses both humans and the Earth. And in addition, the Great Spirit is connected to nature by things not only residing in God like Spinoza suggests but that God is in everything. Moreover, for Native Americans, the Great Spirit can have some persona where it can communicate to individuals not in the form of language but by the Great Spirit speaking through nature. But overall, between the two, Spinoza's God and the Great Spirit for Native Americans assert that God's attributes are showcased in nature. However, for the former, God is taken in a more Pantheistic sense, whereas, for the latter, the Great Spirit has characteristics of Panentheism.

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