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**THE NIETZSCHE – SPINOZA CONNECTIONS:  
THE ‘KANTIAN BRIDGE’**

*or, The Spinozan Legacy of the Antinomies in Nietzsche's Thought*

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C. L. Blieka

THERE are great many people whom I would like to thank for helping me in countless ways, large and small, during the writing of this thesis. First and foremost I would like to thank my professors, starting with Prof. Harvey Burstein for being the definition of passionate philosophy as well as my introduction to Spinoza. Without him, this thesis would not exist. I would also like to thank Prof. Alberto Cordero for my appreciation for naturalistic philosophy and the interconnectedness of all knowledge. I would like to thank Prof. Edmund Leites for the single greatest lesson I ever learned regarding philosophical research: that it is, in itself, a bold experiment; one which demands every bit as much creativity, curiosity, patience, and willingness to try and fail as a scientific experiment. I would also like to thank Profs. Sari Kisilevsky and Jessica Polish for teaching me to discipline my writing. And finally, I would like to thank three of my fellow students for their gracious willingness to read my many clumsy drafts and provide feedback. Thank you, Solomon Yousef, for always pushing me toward a clearer understanding of what I was trying to say and helping me to put the heart of my thesis into words. Thank you, Alexandros Luis Campos, for not indulging my non-linear impulses and being unafraid to tell me when I was wrong. Finally, thank you Aliza Ashraf for your many kind words of camaraderie and encouragement, especially on those days when I regretted ever hearing the names of Nietzsche and Spinoza. Thank you, and the many, many others I have not named.

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## INTRODUCTION: THE KANTIAN BRIDGE

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FEW scholars have seriously considered the idea that Kant's philosophy may have ties to Spinoza's,<sup>1</sup> and fewer still have considered the possibility that those ties may form the first anchorage points of a bridge between Spinoza's philosophy and Nietzsche's. However, it is well known that Kant was one of the key contributors to Nietzsche's philosophical development.<sup>2</sup> If in turn Spinoza made important contributions to Kant's development, then Kant becomes a potential point of contact between Spinoza and Nietzsche. Here we will argue that the direct influence which Spinoza exerted upon Kant's philosophy has, in turn, exerted an indirect (but powerful) force upon Nietzsche's as well; and the through line of this influence can be traced back to Kant's own masterwork, the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and specifically to a part of the *Critique* commonly referred to as the Antinomies. Omri Boehm, whose work forms the backbone of much of this essay, demonstrates convincingly that the Antinomies were influenced more profoundly by Spinoza than most Kant scholars have ever dreamed.

However, before we continue on with our main argument, there is a potential snare to be addressed: Nietzsche likely never read Kant's first *Critique* [Brobjer 2008, p.77].<sup>3</sup> So the question arises: If we have no good reason to believe that Nietzsche had ever read it, then why should we believe that the *Critique*, or any part of it, had any real influence on Nietzsche's thought – much less that it connects his thought to Spinoza's? The answer is this: although Nietzsche may not have read Kant, he read voraciously *about* him via secondary (generally Neo-Kantian)<sup>4</sup> sources for extended periods of time (a pattern which holds true regarding Nietzsche's exposure to Spinoza as well).<sup>5</sup> Though the detour through secondary literature will place additional layers of mediation between Nietzsche and Spinoza, it preserves the viability of an argument for a Kantian bridge between them; *so long* as we can prove that the following points are true regarding these secondary sources: a) important aspects of Nietzsche's thought were directly impacted by them; b) they were themselves directly impacted by Kant's original works; and c) the parts of Kant's original works that impacted them are the ones that were wholly or partly formed under the influence of Spinozism. It is fortunate, then, that we know of at least one author whose works fulfill all three of these requirements: Afrikan Spir.

That Spir impacted Nietzsche's thought is common knowledge;<sup>6</sup> in fact it's Spir's claim to fame. Spir was a Neo-Kantian, influenced most profoundly by the *Critique of Pure Reason* – though it is sometimes claimed in the literature that he was influenced by Spinoza as well [Brobjer 2008, p.71]. (As of the time of this essay's completion, I do not know of any literature in any language which attempts to substantiate the relationship between Spir and Spinoza; however there are certain parallels in their thinking which make Spinoza particularly useful as a guide to understanding Spir, as we shall see later.) And most importantly of all – for our purposes at least – we know that a central component of Spir's philosophy was a direct response to a part of the *Critique* which we believe (with good reason) was formed under the influence of Spinozism: i.e. the Antinomies. Specifically, Spir's reading of Kant's Antinomies lead him to conclude that there is a 'fundamental antinomy' at the heart of all thought, and that as a result we can never have knowledge of the objects we encounter in the world. From Michael Green, whose work forms the second half of our argument's spine, we learn that Nietzsche had accepted the logic behind Spir's 'fundamental antinomy,' which he then incorporated into his own thinking. This allows us to make sense of aspects of Nietzsche's epistemology which have frustrated interpreters since the dawn of Nietzsche scholarship – such as his theory that all thought falsifies.

And thus we discover our through line. Green traces the thread from Nietzsche to Kant, and Boehm traces it from Kant to Spinoza. What we are contributing here is the missing link in between, the proof that there is no break in the thread. This antinomial through line proves that Nietzsche was influenced by Spinoza via an indirect Kantian connection. It was Spir's antinomial influence that led Nietzsche to adopt his metaphysical stance, his metaphysics of 'radical Becoming,' which broadly aligns with the Antithesis positions of the Antinomies. This is intriguing because Spinozism also broadly aligns with the Antithesis positions. If Nietzsche and his "precursor" share an antithetic alignment, then Yovel's famous claim that Nietzsche saw Spinoza as a "genealogical scandal" is deepened and clarified [cf. Yovel 2018]. Not only do we find proof of ancestry, we find a genetic similarity that does more than make it easier to compare and contrast them – it illustrates how Nietzsche's thought developed as a result of Spinoza's legacy, and why he came to be so similar to Spinoza in so many ways. (It also helps to shed light on Nietzsche's various and contradictory responses to his "precursor.")<sup>7</sup> For these reasons (and others), it will be argued that Green's and Boehm's theories are not merely compatible, but in fact strengthen and support one another to such a degree that if we accept the one, we are compelled to accept the other. In doing so we see that without Spinoza, neither Kant nor Spir nor Nietzsche could have become who they are.

This essay's main argument is as follows: **1)** Spinozism was the backbone of Kant's Antinomies; and Spinoza's position (at least insofar as Kant understood it) was the model upon which numerous antinomial positions (particularly the Antitheses) were based. **2)** Spir was led by the Antinomies to his own invention – the 'fundamental antinomy' – which states that all thought about the empirical objects in the world is false. **3)** Nietzsche adopted the logic behind the 'fundamental antimony,' but rejected Spir's conclusions. As a result, he was lead to a metaphysics of 'radical Becoming.' **4)** Nietzsche's 'radical Becoming' broadly aligns with the Antithesis positions in general. **5)** Spinoza's metaphysics broadly aligns with the Antithesis positions in general [see 1]. **6)** Thus, despite drawing very different metaphysical conclusions, Nietzsche's and Spinoza's metaphysics also share a great many similarities – all of which can be broadly defined as an "antithetic alignment" [see 4 & 5]. **7)** Moreover, Nietzsche's metaphysics, to a significant degree, is a descendant of Spinoza's, in that it only exists as the result of Spinoza's influence through history – that is, Spinoza's influence on the Antinomies, and on those influenced by the Antinomies [see 1, 2, & 3]. We call this historical connection the "antinomial through line." **8)** We conclude that Nietzsche's thought is significantly defined by its relation to Spinoza – philosophically and historically [see 6 & 7].

This essay is divided into two main sections. The first deals exclusively with Spinoza and Spinozism in the Antinomies – for unless this relationship is firmly established, the antinomial through line has no foundation. The second deals primarily with Nietzsche's relation to Spir, and Spir's relation to Kant. This section establishes Nietzsche's connection to the through line, the antithetic alignment between him and Spinoza, and the ramifications which follow from it.

## I. SPINOZA AND THE ANTINOMIES: KANT'S "SILENT WAR"<sup>8</sup>

WHILE it is widely known that Kant designed the Antinomies to attack transcendental realism,<sup>9</sup> Boehm argues that the majority of Kant scholars have missed a crucial detail: Kant believed the most consistent form of transcendental realism in existence was, in fact, Spinozism.<sup>10</sup> From this fact, Boehm infers that if

Kant's ambition in crafting the Antinomies was to attack transcendental realism, then surely his primary target would have been what he took to be the strongest representative of transcendental realism – which was Spinoza [Boehm 2014, p.68-69]. However, Boehm's inference runs counter to the traditional reading of the Antinomies, which has it that, in each case of Antinomy, a Newtonian position is pitted against a Leibnizian position (and Spinozism has nothing to do with it). As Boehm demonstrates, this view suffers from a number of inconsistencies which he does not; not least of which is that none of the positions in the Antinomies, when carefully analyzed, appear to be particularly Leibnizian or Newtonian. Yet many bear a striking resemblance to Spinoza's position. Furthermore, Kant's explicit references to Spinoza and Spinozism appear to indicate not only that Kant believed Spinoza to be more consistent than most other transcendental realists, but that many of them (e.g. Leibniz) actually collapse into Spinozism when they are examined honestly. In addition, on several occasions Kant explicitly associates Spinozism with his own conceptions, several of which play a key role in Kant's metaphysical thought – within and beyond the Antinomies. Therefore, the Spinozistic reading of the Antinomies advanced by Boehm is most likely the correct one.

But before we continue on, there is another potential snare that we must address: the Spinozism of Spinoza, when properly construed, actually escapes the Antinomies [Boehm 2014, p.78, 92-94]. Spinoza escapes because Kant's refutation “relies on the claim that an infinite *totum syntheticum* is impossible” [Boehm 2014, p.93]. The phrase “infinite *totum syntheticum*” means the synthesis of an infinite number of discrete ‘parts’ into a complete ‘whole.’ But, as Boehm points out, “the entities expressing Spinoza's substance are not numerically distinct from it”; therefore, “[Spinoza's] substance is simple” [ibid., p.92]. In other words, there are no ‘parts’ in the Spinozistic conception substance, only infinitely many *modes* (or “modifications” of the whole). Thus, Spinoza's position “is immune to Kant's Antinomy” [ibid., p.93]. However, these aspects of Spinoza's argument were not recognized by commentators in Kant's day. Both Wolff and Mendelssohn, in their own attempts to refute Spinozism, employed the same argument Kant does in the Antinomies (i.e. the impossibility of an infinite successive synthesis) [ibid., ch.2, n.39]. Thus, it can be argued that Kant's attacks against Spinozism were informed by the way it was understood in his day – and understandably contained many of the same flaws. (Later in his career, Kant himself may have come to understand the insufficiency of this reading (V-MP-K2/Heinze AA 28:713) [ibid.].) Some may be inclined to doubt our case on account of these flaws – taking them as a sign that Kant could not have been knowledgeable enough about Spinoza to be meaningfully related to his philosophy. We, on the other hand, argue that since the Antinomies do succeed in undermining the way Spinoza's position was read in his day [ibid.], we cannot rule out that Kant was any less knowledgeable of Spinozism than Wolff and Mendelssohn were. Moreover, Kant believed that Leibniz, Wolff and Mendelssohn all collapsed into Spinozism (as we shall see later). This implies that Kant would not have been inclined to copy and paste their refutations of Spinozism (since they inevitably collapsed into it). A better supposition would be that Kant was actively trying to build upon and surpass their refutations of Spinoza's position.

There are several more complications to address – most with regard to Kant's explicit references to “Spinozism.” Much of Boehm's argument hinges upon these references,<sup>11</sup> but it is a matter of contention whether they are applicable to the Antinomies at all. For they were all written post-*Pantheismusstreit* – the famous controversy which erupted when Jacobi accused several prominent thinkers of Spinozism (and came close to naming Kant as one of them) – well after Kant's first *Critique* was published. Moreover, it

is traditionally held that Kant was ignorant of Spinozism prior to the outbreak of the *Streit*. And even if Kant was familiar with Spinoza before then, some may ask why, if Spinoza had such a great impact on the *Critique*, does Kant not mention him anywhere in it? After all, he explicitly mentions almost every name in the philosophical canon in the *Critique* [cf. Boehm 2018, p.483-485]. Why would he choose to leave out Spinoza, if Spinoza was indeed so relevant? Additionally, in the passages where Kant does speak explicitly of Spinozism, his arguments are often neither elaborate nor detailed [Boehm 2014, p.85]. As such, some may be skeptical about Kant's seriousness in these passages; are they indeed his considered view [ibid.]? Either way, we must be mindful of Boehm's warning that Kant's explicit references to Spinozism "must be examined with care," lest their true relevance be misconstrued [Boehm 2018, p.485].

Toward these numerous ends, we will advance the following three points: A) despite never explicitly invoking "Spinozism" in the Antinomies, the evidence suggests that Kant held Spinoza in his mind as he wrote key parts of the Antinomies; and that he had consciously ruled out any transcendental realist alternative to Spinoza. B) the first three Antitheses resemble Spinoza's position to such a degree that it seems implausible to ascribe them to any other thinker; and the fourth Antinomy's Thesis seems to rule out all other transcendental realist alternatives to Spinozism as cosmologically invalid. C) it is highly plausible that Kant was familiar with Spinoza and Spinozism before he wrote the *Critique's* Antinomies, and his decision to leave all mention of "Spinozism" out of the first *Critique* was likely motivated by politics. If we can defend these points, then we can justify our main argument's first claim – that "Spinozism was the backbone of Kant's Antinomies, and Spinoza's position itself [...] was the model upon which numerous antinomial positions [...] were based" – the claim upon which the antinomial through line rests.

#### *I-A. Groundwork for the Metaphysics of the Antinomies: Spinoza as "Antithetic Representative"*

THE first place we can find evidence that Kant had Spinoza in mind as he wrote the Antinomies is in his understanding of Epicurus. Epicurus is relevant to Kant's view of Spinoza because, immediately after he explicitly associates Epicurus' position with Spinoza's, he argues that Spinoza is the more consistent of the two (KU AA 5:393) [Boehm 2014, ch.2, n.18]. Elsewhere, Kant would associate the Thesis positions with Plato, and the Antithesis positions with Epicurus (A471/B499) [ibid.]. It therefore follows that if the Antithesis positions are associated with Epicurus, and Epicurus is associated with Spinoza, then Spinoza must be associated with the Antithesis positions as well – at least to a certain degree. And, if we are correct in assuming that Kant would be inclined to attack the strongest possible representatives of transcendental realism, then it would stand to reason that Kant must have had Spinoza in mind as he wrote the Antithesis positions, rather than Epicurus – whom Kant thought to be a less consistent Spinozist. (As for the reason why Kant would choose to publicly say "Epicurus" when he privately thought "Spinoza," in *I-C* we will demonstrate that Kant had good reason to be indirect where Spinoza was concerned.) Furthermore, Kant states that at the heart of the Antitheses is a principle of "pure empiricism"<sup>12</sup> (A465f/B493f). In Boehm's words, "This ['pure empiricist'] principle [...] is that of granting only philosophical knowledge acquired by naturalistic principles; that is, by the standard of 'possible experience' (A468/B496). More specifically, 'pure empiricism' consists in an overriding acceptance of a mechanism of nature: in the Antitheses, only mechanistic-natural explanations are seen as legitimate" [Boehm 2014, p.86]. This notion is then tied to Epicurus when Kant identifies him with the empiricism of the Antithesis positions (A471/B499) [Boehm 2014, p.86-87; ch.2, n.28]. If our argument is on the right track, then one should expect – on account of

Kant's association of Epicurus with Spinoza, and the logical deduction that Spinoza is thereby associated with the Antitheses – that Kant would have associated “pure empiricism” with Spinoza as well; which is entirely plausible. For although Spinoza is not what we would call an empiricist, when we compare him to Kant's notion of “pure empiricism,” Spinoza is a good match. The necessitarianism of Spinoza's picture of the universe [E1app; E2p48-49], and his insistence that the “natural light” of empirical experience and reason is the only source and criteria of truth [TTP, ch.2, §70-94], both fit nicely with this notion. Equally notable is that Leibniz, who is traditionally associated with the Antitheses, does not match Kant's notion at all [ibid.].<sup>13</sup> Thus, Spinoza is already a strong candidate to represent the Antitheses.

Second, there is good reason to believe Kant is in agreement with commentators who argue that many transcendental realists (e.g., Wolff, Leibniz, Mendelssohn, etc.) ultimately collapse into Spinozism when analyzed carefully.<sup>14</sup> In fact, Kant dismisses vital aspects of their metaphysical strategy to prevent such a collapse – specifically, the attempt to relativize space and time by viewing them as properties of things – as arbitrary and inconsistent.<sup>15</sup> “Towards the second *Critique's* conclusion [cf. KpV AA 5:102],” Boehm says, “[Kant] addresses the Leibnizian-Wolffian denial of the world's infinity and eternity<sup>16</sup> – in fact, he refers to the Leibnizian denial of Spinozism – and rejects it as inadequate. Whoever relativizes space and time by viewing them as *properties of things* (monads), Kant argues, cannot genuinely avoid affirming the world's infinity and eternity” [ibid., p.82 (my italics)]. In the same passage, Kant goes even further by insisting that “if the ideality of space and time [i.e. Kant's own transcendental idealist view] is not adopted, *nothing remains but Spinozism*, in which space and time are essential determinations of the original [i.e. unconditioned] being itself, while the things dependent upon it [i.e. conditioned beings] [...] are merely accidents inhering in it. Thus Spinozism [...] argues more consistently than the creation theory<sup>17</sup> can, when beings assumed to be substances and in themselves existing in time are regarded as effects of a supreme cause and yet not belonging to him and his action as substances themselves” (KpV AA 5:102 [my italics]) [ibid., p.83]. Kant's seriousness about these claims becomes clear in *Lectures on Metaphysics*, where he argues that “[i]f we take space as real, we accept Spinoza's system” [V-MP/Dohna (AA 28:103)]; and elsewhere, in an even more telling passage: “Those who take space as a thing in itself or as *a property of things* are forced to be Spinozists” (V-MP-K3E/Arnoldt AA 29:132 {my italics}; cf. AA 29:65f.) [ibid., 84-85]. Although these claims do not rule out the possibility that Mendelssohn, Wolff, or Leibniz [etc.] were significant influences on the Antinomies, they effectively rule them out as potential representatives for the various positions within the Antinomies. If, in Kant's mind, most transcendental realists collapsed into Spinozism, then Spinozism in general must have been what Kant had in mind as he designed the Antinomies. Moreover, since Kant seemed to think Spinoza more consistent than other Spinozists, it stands to reason that when Kant thought of Spinozism in general, he would have focused on Spinoza in particular – especially regarding the Antitheses. Not only does this further strengthen the viability of Spinoza as Antithetic representative, it significantly narrows the pool of competitors.

Third, when Kant is setting up the Antinomies, his descriptions of the “unconditioned” do show, at times, some remarkable similarities to Spinozistic metaphysics. In Kant's words: “The unconditioned may be conceived in either of two ways. It may be viewed as [A1] consisting of the entire series in which all the members without exception are conditioned and only the totality of them is absolutely unconditioned. This regress is to be entitled infinite. Or alternatively, [A2] the absolutely unconditioned is only a part of the series – of which the other members are subordinated, and which does not itself stand under any other

condition” (A417/B445).<sup>18</sup> As Boehm explains, “The former [which is marked A1] is an infinitistic conception and the latter [which is marked A2] is a finitistic one. The clash between them generates the Antinomies. A1 thus maps onto the Antithesis [...]. Kant explains that it eliminates the possibility of a transcendent unconditioned (hence the Judeo-Christian deity), creation, and freedom. A2 maps onto the Thesis: it relies on an unconditioned entity to which the series is subordinated, and it allows room for creation [...] and freedom [...] (A418/B445-6)” [Boehm 2014, p.77]. Boehm continues, arguing that the A1 conception strongly suggests Spinozism, for “[t]he infinite series itself, considered as a totality may be conceived as Spinoza’s unconditioned substance, whereas the series’s conditioned members may be conceived as its modes. [...] It is infinite and yet the One” [ibid.]. (This impression is further strengthened if we compare A1 to the Ideal of Pure Reason [ibid., p.78] – which is both very similar to [A575/B603] and explicitly associated with [FM AA 20:302] Spinozism – and see that the two concepts parallel each other {see subsection I-C}.) Once again, not only is Spinoza a strong candidate, it is difficult to think of many others who would even qualify: “Giordano Bruno may have held an analogous pantheistic conception, but Leibniz and Wolff certainly did not.<sup>19</sup> It can safely be assumed that Kant either has Spinoza in mind, or he invents Spinozistic substance monism independently – construing it as the Antithesis’s cosmological conception” [ibid., p.77-78]. Given what we have said so far – that Spinoza is related (via Epicurus) to the Antithesis positions and the notion of “pure empiricism” (which Kant claims is at the heart of the Antitheses) – it seems safer to assume that Kant did not merely invent a kind of Spinozistic substance monism, but rather he had Spinozism in mind as he conceived of A1. And, given that Kant believed a) that many competing transcendental realist positions (e.g. Leibniz, Wolff, Mendelssohn) inevitably collapsed into Spinozism, and b) that Epicurus (his given representative of the Antithesis positions) was a less consistent relative of Spinoza, the pool of alternatives to Spinoza himself (even among those whom Kant considered to be Spinozists) was at best rather small.

More and more it seems as if Spinoza is not just a big fish in a small pond – he’s also the only fish in that pond. Of course Spinoza was far from the only influence on the Antinomies – or their only target. Yet the more Spinoza proves to be a perfect (or near perfect) fit as representative for numerous (usually Antithesis) positions within the Antinomies, the more his potential competitors for those roles prove to be ill fitting. Some might be inclined to ask: Why should we suppose that the positions in the Antinomies have actual, historical representatives at all? “The answer” Boehm explains, “is that Kant has a somewhat historical – albeit pre-Hegelian – conception of reason’s development” [Boehm 2014, ch.2, n.9]. In other words, Kant did not believe that attacking abstract ideas of his own design was sufficient to prove that his own position, transcendental idealism, was the superior alternative. “In order to argue that reason necessarily leads to contradictions, Kant [believes that he] needs to be able to show that the Antinomies, which he constructs abstractly, can be mapped onto actual (historical) positions—i.e., have actually confused metaphysical thought” [ibid.]. Therefore, as Kant wrote each Antithesis position, he would have been thinking of an actual person. Recall that Spinoza is a good fit for the “pure empiricism” and A1 conceptions which underlie the Antithesis positions, and that Kant seemed to be consciously ruling out all other candidates. It should be plain that we are being pulled from both directions toward accepting that Kant was thinking of Spinoza as he wrote the Antitheses.

With the fact of Kant’s deliberate consideration of Spinoza and Spinozism as he was writing the Antinomies sufficiently established, we can move on to the Antinomies themselves. Since we now have

evidence that Kant was indeed thinking of them at the same time, we can assert with confidence that any perceptible similarities between Spinoza/Spinozism and the actual antinomial arguments are not merely coincidental. Rather, they are there by design. As we shall see momentarily, the similarities between the A1-antithetic positions and Spinoza's position are impossible to ignore.

*I-B1. The Spinozism of the Antinomies: First Antinomy*

“THE first Antinomy debates the world's beginning in space and time. The Thesis states that the world has a beginning in time and space: ‘The world has a beginning in time, and is also limited as regards space’ (A427/B455)” [Boehm 2014, p.71]. As Boehm continues: “The Antithesis states that the world has no beginning and is infinite: ‘The world has no beginning, and no limits in space; it is infinite as regards both time and space’ (A427/B455)” [ibid., p.72]. Beginning with the Thesis, it attacks the Antithesis on the grounds that the notion of a complete infinity is inconsistent [ibid.]. By a “complete infinity,” we mean that in the sense of a series completed through successive synthesis. The easiest analogy that I know of is to Hilbert's Infinite Hotel. If we imagine a hotel with infinitely many rooms, then it can always hold more people – even if all the rooms are already “full.” By simply asking everyone who is already in a room to move one door down, an infinite number of rooms are made vacant. This can be done an infinite number of times, in an infinite number of ways (by asking everyone to move two doors down, three doors down, and so on, etc.) [Stewart 2017, p.11-12, 16-18]. Similarly, with a conception of reality that is infinitistic [e.g. A1], no cosmological series could ever be “completed” through successive synthesis; for the number of “rooms” we need to fill will always be infinite, even if the series is already “full.”<sup>20</sup> In the field of mathematics, perhaps, a conception of this sort is permissible – but in the field of metaphysics, it is simply absurd.<sup>21</sup>

The Antithesis responds with a counterattack, which is based on Leibniz's counter-argument from the PSR<sup>22</sup> against Newton's conception of empty containers<sup>23</sup> [ibid., p.72-73]. (We repeat, our position is not that Leibniz, Newton, or a great many others have not in any way influenced the Antinomies – only that a. Spinoza exerted a greater influence than they did; and b. none of them are good representatives of any position within the Antinomies, whereas Spinoza *is* for *several*. We will demonstrate these points again shortly.) The Antithesis's argument may be thought of as a variant of the “nothing comes from nothing” argument. If the world did have a beginning in time, then there must have been a point in time in which nothing existed – a point in which the entire universe resembled Newton's ‘empty containers.’ Yet, under such conditions, the universe could have never come to be. Even if you postulate an all powerful God who can create something from nothing, you still could not explain how or why creation occurred in the first place; because, according to the PSR (and as a transcendental realist position, the Thesis *must* accept the PSR), everything that happens *must* happen as the result of some reason, cause or ground. In a universe that is completely empty, there are no reasons, causes, or grounds. Even an all powerful God would not have any sufficient reason to create the universe at one particular moment as opposed to any other. Thus, the Thesis can provide no explanation for the why or the how behind the world's creation [ibid.]. And with that, both Thesis and Antithesis collapse into self-contradiction.

Sadiq Al Azm, in his widely influential reading of the Antinomies,<sup>24</sup> assigns Leibniz to the Antithesis position and Newton to the Thesis. After all, Newton did embrace the notion of ‘empty containers’ and reject the world's infinity. As we said above, the Antithetical argument against the creation of the world is very similar to Leibniz's refutation of Newton's empty containers, and was likely drawn from Leibniz.



However, it must be noted that “the Antithesis is committed to two propositions, not only one. It denies a beginning to the world in (empty) time and space, and it states that the world is infinite” [Boehm 2014, p.73-74]. This makes it impossible to wholly ascribe the Antithesis position to Leibniz, because Leibniz – like most dogmatic rationalists – rejected the world’s infinity. Like Descartes, Leibniz reserved infinity for God alone, who is perfect and absolute. The world itself is merely indefinite<sup>25</sup> (although Leibniz was not quite as careful about maintaining this distinction as Descartes was) [ibid., p.74]. “According to Leibniz,” Boehm explains, “the existence of infinite wholes contradicts the whole-part axiom,<sup>26</sup> which states that a whole must be larger than its part. If it existed, an infinite whole would admit to having an infinite part that is just as large as the whole itself (both being infinite)” [Boehm 2014, p.74]. (For Leibniz, only God may be an infinite whole without contradicting the whole-part axiom – because God, Leibniz reasoned, must be simple, whereas the world is complex and made of parts.)<sup>27</sup> Kant, a reader of Leibniz and Wolff, was aware of the infinite/indefinite distinction. Hence in his first *Critique*, Kant argues that even though the infinite/indefinite distinction is an empty ‘Subtilität’ in mathematics and geometry, it still has crucial metaphysical implications (A511-5/B369-43) – and the Antinomies are without a doubt concerned with metaphysics [ibid., p.75]. Therefore, as Boehm argues, “the fact that the first Antinomy states the world’s infinity rather than its indefiniteness is crucial” [ibid.]. We are forced to recognize that “despite proving a Leibnizian argument from the PSR,” the first Antinomy’s Antithesis still “does not arrive at a Leibnizian conclusion” [ibid., p.76]. Instead, it arrives at the Spinozistic conclusion that the world is both infinite and eternal [ibid., p.82]. (In fact, though Leibniz denies that the universe could have been created in an empty container, he still affirms creation [ibid., p.70, 74].). Al Azm cannot be correct in ascribing Leibnizianism to the Antithesis position.

Attempts to associate Leibniz with the Thesis position<sup>28</sup> fare better, for he does assent to theories of creation and freedom – which would align him with the third Antinomy’s Thesis as well – and he denies that the world is infinite [Boehm 2014, p.70]. However, that is not enough to place the Thesis position in Leibniz’s camp. For the view that the world is not infinite and has a beginning was common to dogmatic rationalists. Descartes, Newton, and Leibniz (among others) all shared this view [ibid., p.80]. Moreover, Al Azm is correct in detecting more specifically Leibnizian echoes in the Antithesis position than in the Thesis; despite the fact that it affirms conclusions which are the opposite of his own [ibid., p.81]. Al Azm’s interpretation of the Thesis position as Newtonian is not definitive either. For even though Newton does argue against the world’s infinity (as most transcendental realists did), his actual argument has nothing to do with an infinite *totum syntheticum* or successive synthesis. Rather, it “appeals to the definition of matter in Newtonian physics, and, as such, has nothing to do with the argument invoked by the Thesis” [ibid., p.80]. That Leibnizian and Newtonian strands can be found in the Antinomial positions need not (and at times, cannot) be disputed. Still, this has certainly led to discrepancies and general confusion in the secondary literature about the Antinomies [ibid., p.81] – with contradictory metaphysical positions (“there is a beginning of the world,” “there is none”) often being ascribed to the same philosopher, and an abundance of opposite interpretations which appear equally persuasive [ibid., p.70]. The solution to this confusion could very well be the key to understanding the Antinomies [ibid., p.81].

To that end, it is worth noting as Boehm does that there “is only one relevant rationalist thinker who has a good reason to insist, as the Antithesis does, that the world is positively infinite,” i.e. Spinoza [Boehm 2014, p.80]. Spinoza also insists that the world is eternal and has no beginning in time. Both of

these position, as we have said above, were uncommon amongst transcendental realists. Once again, we are left in a position where Spinoza seems to be a strong competitor with no rivals. Add to this what we have argued above regarding the A1 conception which maps onto the Antitheses – its great similarity to and association with Spinoza/Spinozism – and our case appears even more conclusive, without the many contradictions which beset other readings.

*I-B2. The Spinozism of the Antinomies: Third Antinomy*<sup>29</sup>

BEFORE we continue on to the third Antinomy itself, it is worth noting, as Boehm does, that the third Antinomy is “systematically related to the first [...]. Kant explains that ‘*if you do not, as regards time, admit anything as being mathematically first in the world*’” – that is, as the ‘first cause’ of the world, as is required by creation theories – “then there is no necessity as regards causality to seek for something that is dynamically [causally] first’ (A449/B477). Thus whoever sides with the first Thesis,” which deals with creation, “will also side with the Thesis of the third,” which deals with causality; “while those who side with the first Antithesis [...] will also side with the Antithesis of the third” [Boehm 2018, p.487]. In brief, Kant believes that a cosmology’s view of creation has important implications for that cosmology’s view of causality – and, as a result, that cosmology’s view of freedom – such that the cosmologies of the Thesis positions from various cases of Antinomy should agree with each other. This principle is also true with regard to the Antitheses. As such, if Leibniz was aligned with the Antithesis of the first Antinomy, as Al Azm postulates, then he should also align with Antithesis of the third. If, however, he has more in common with the Thesis of the first, as we postulate, then he should also have more in common with the Thesis of the third. The same holds true for Spinoza.

As Boehm explains, “The third Antinomy deals with the problem of causality and freedom. The Thesis maintains that there are two types of causality – that of ‘nature,’ whereby worldly events follow necessarily from antecedent states; and that of ‘freedom,’ whereby events occur through a power ‘of generating a state spontaneously.’ The Antithesis argues in opposition to this that there is only one type of causality ‘in accordance with the laws of nature’ (A444/B472). On the Antithesis view, every worldly event necessarily follows from the cosmos’s preceding state. The idea of freedom is therefore an illusion, an ‘empty thought entity’ (A445/B473)” [Boehm 2018, p.486-487]. Recall now what we said above: if it is true that Leibniz is aligned with the first Antithesis, then it should also be true that he aligns with the third and denies free will. And yet, Leibniz affirms free will [ibid., p.491]. Spinoza is the one who denies freedom of the will (or the ‘causality of freedom’ as the Thesis puts it) – while also affirming the world’s infinity and eternity. Therefore, it is Spinoza who is likely to be Kant’s representative for the Antithesis position – not Leibniz.

The core of the third Thesis argument is that “the law of nature consists just in this, that nothing happens without a cause sufficiently (*hinreichend*) determined a priori” [Boehm 2018, p.489]. Note that Kant’s usage of ‘determined a priori’ does not carry its usual meaning of ‘independence of experience.’ Rather, he is using it in the traditional sense of ‘in advance of,’ or ‘prior to’ [ibid.]. Therefore, what the Thesis means by ‘natural causality’ is ‘mechanistic causality,’ whereby all things are understood by their cause/antecedent event [ibid.]. The Thesis attacks the Antithesis on the grounds that, “[h]ad there been only natural causality, no explanation would be ultimate or complete” due to infinite regress [ibid.]. The reason why natural causality leads inevitably to infinite regress is this: if everything is understood by an

antecedent event (i.e. a cause), then every cause requires its own cause, which, in turn, requires a cause, and so on, ad infinitum. This creates an ‘infinite series,’ which fails by the same reasoning employed by the Thesis in the first Antinomy. The notion of a “complete infinity” or an “infinite *totum syntheticum*” is by Kant’s lights as metaphysically inconsistent as the notion of an “Infinite Hotel” being “full” (A431-33/B459-61). The Thesis therefore proves that the Antithesis violates its own demand that “nothing can happen without being sufficiently antecedently determined” [ibid.]. (In other words, the Thesis is accusing the Antithesis position of violating the PSR.) The Thesis therefore concludes that reality cannot be wholly explained through ‘natural’ causality.

The heart of the Antithesis’s argument is what Kant refers to as the “unity of experience,” which presupposes “that every change must be connected to the antecedent state of the changing agent” [ibid., p.493]. For if there was a change in the agent – such as an action – and this change was not connected to the agent’s antecedent states, then the agent could never experience the cause of this change. By Kant’s lights, any concept which can never be met with in experience is nothing more than an “empty thought entity” [ibid.] – a form with no content. From this starting point, the Antithesis argues that in order for an action to be “spontaneous” (i.e. not explained through mechanical causality), then it would have to be the ‘first cause’ of its own chain of events [ibid., p.492]. Of course, this ‘spontaneous first cause’ must in turn have its own ‘first cause,’ its own “absolute beginning” [ibid.]. This “absolute beginning” is usually called the agent’s ‘free will.’ However, this ‘free will’ cannot reside in the agent’s antecedent states; for if it did, it would be a part of the pre-existing series, and that would place it under natural causality. Yet if it is not connected to the agent’s antecedent states, then the ‘free will’ necessarily violates the “unity of experience” [ibid., p.493]. In other words, the agent could never experience the ‘free will’ from which their “spontaneous” actions supposedly spring. Therefore, the Antithesis proves that the ‘free will’ (or ‘causality of freedom’) which the Thesis view postulates is a mere “empty thought entity.” Once again, both Thesis and Antithesis crumble into self-contradiction.

It is true that Kant’s notion of the “unity of experience” has no parallel in Spinoza’s thought; and, as Boehm notes, “Kant’s terminology of ‘experience’ evokes transcendental idealism and, to that extent, is unfortunate” – at least as far as our argument is concerned [Boehm 2018, p.493]. “However,” as Boehm continues, “the [Antithesis] argument itself is carried out from a position of transcendental realism and is not circular” [ibid.]. In other words, the core conceit of the Antinomies is that both positions (the Thesis and Antithesis) are representations of transcendental realist positions – not the Kantian idealist position. Kant’s entire purpose in the Antinomies is to prove that the rationalist project is fundamentally flawed by demonstrating that it will inevitably result in irreconcilable oppositions. As such, even though Kant uses terminology which is evocative of his own position (i.e., the “unity of experience”), we must assume that the core of the third Antithesis is not derived from “Kant’s Second Analogy of Experience (which would be the PSR’s transcendental idealist version) but the PSR” [ibid., p.494]. Put another way, the core of the Antithesis’s argument “follows from the claim that there are no brute facts: the abrupt emergence of an event [e.g. a ‘spontaneous’ action], a sudden beginning which is not connected to the previous state of the ‘not yet acting cause,’ is just a brute fact. [...] (Put simply, the Antithesis’s denial of freedom does not depend on the claim that freedom violates the ‘unity of experience.’ It depends on freedom violating the PSR)” [ibid., p.494]. This reading makes the most sense, both for the reasons given above, and because – by its lights – Kant is arguing against more than two transcendental realist conceptions of causality; he is arg-

uing against accepting the PSR as a transcendently real principle. If Kant can demonstrate that the PSR itself – if it is taken to be transcendently real – would force us to both accept *and* reject free will, he can undermine the core of transcendental realism rather than two vestigial versions of it.

The centrality of the PSR to the Antitheses makes it even more important to note that “Leibniz does not offer an argument from the PSR against freedom: in contrast to the third Antithesis he argues that freedom and the PSR are compatible, even complimentary” [ibid. p.488]. (In fact, the argument that the Thesis uses to attack the Antithesis – i.e., the recurring charge that an infinite series could never offer a complete explanation – is reminiscent of the Wolffian-Leibnizian refutation of Spinozism.) It is Spinoza and not Leibniz who “excludes freedom by an argument from the PSR” [ibid., p.494] – a fact Kant seems to be aware of. “In the *Critique of Practical Reason*,” Boehm argues, “[Kant] writes that the Leibnizians pretend to preserve room for freedom by taking space and time as properties of finite beings but not of God” [ibid., p.494] – a position that he believed must inevitably collapse into Spinozistic fatalism [ibid.] (see subsection *I-A*). In short, Kant was well aware of the Spinozistic and Leibnizian positions regarding freedom. Thus it implausible to claim that Kant could have had Leibniz rather than Spinoza in mind as he designed the third Antithesis. In brief, not only is Spinoza’s view of freedom similar to the third Antithesis, Kant was *fully aware* of Spinoza’s view as he wrote it – so we have twice as many reasons to believe that the third Antithesis was written to be a Spinozist position.

### *I-B3. The Spinozism of the Antinomies: Fourth Antinomy*

JUST as the third Antinomy is systematically connected to the first, the fourth Antinomy – “which deals with the (non-) existence of a necessary being” – is systematically connected to the third. “This is due to the fact that they draw on similar cosmological (first cause) arguments” [Boehm 2018, p.487]. Norman Kemp Smith corroborates Boehm’s claim, writing that “Kant’s proof of freedom in the thesis of the third antinomy is merely a corollary from his proof [in the fourth Thesis] of the existence of a cosmological or theological unconditioned” [Kemp Smith 1918, p.497]. However, the fourth Antinomy cannot be related to the third in exactly the same way that the third Antinomy is related to the first – meaning we cannot expect to find that Spinozism aligns with the Antithesis while Leibnizianism shares commonalities with the Thesis – because the fourth breaks the general pattern of aligning the Thesis and Antithesis with the A2 and A1 conceptions [respectively]. Yet, as we will demonstrate shortly, the A1 and A2 conceptions do once again appear opposite each other in the fourth Antinomy – this time together under the Thesis position. Thus Spinozism does still, in an important sense, align with the same position as before (i.e., A1). The validity of Boehm’s theory (and, by extension, the foundation of our Kantian bridge) depends upon our ability to prove that this is indeed the case. (The reason for this deviation from the general pattern will be examined in subsection *I-D*.)

“The fourth Antinomy revolves around the question of the existence of an unconditioned being,” Boehm continues. “The Thesis states, ‘there belongs to the world, either as its parts or its cause, a being that is absolutely necessary’ (A452/B480). The Antithesis states, ‘An absolutely necessary being nowhere exists in the world as its cause’ (A453/B481). [...] The argument for the Thesis seems to have two main stages. The first establishes the existence of an unconditioned being by a cosmological argument” [Boehm 2012, p.32]. To put the argument briefly: transcendental realists, committed as they are to the PSR, are forced to make the two following assumptions. First, everything in existence must be explained by its

cause (i.e., its antecedent state) as per the third Antinomy. If every cause must itself have a cause, then all causes (and effects) must be thought of as part of one causal series. Therefore, all existing things must be explained through their placement in that series. Second, for this series to be comprehensible it must be “complete,” or else fall into an infinite regress, as per the first Antinomy; and in order for the series to be complete, it must terminate. Thus, there must be an uncaused cause – i.e. an unconditioned being – which grounds the series. With this cosmological argument firmly in place, Kant then “moves, in the argument’s second stage, to reflect on the connection between the unconditioned being and the worldly (conditioned) cosmological series. Is this unconditioned being [...] external to the series that it grounds or immanent to it?” [ibid.]. Kant’s answer to this question carries far reaching implications for the Antinomies as a whole, and is therefore crucial to our case.

As Kant argues in the ‘Observation on the Thesis,’ those who adopt the fourth Thesis position must choose one of two possible conceptions of an unconditioned being. Either it is conceived as “[A] just the world itself or [B] a thing distinct from it” (A456/B484) [Boehm 2012, p.32]. After Kant makes this claim, he “immediately proceeds to argue that the unconditioned is not distinct from the world [cf. A458/B486]” [ibid.]. Kant rules out option [B] by arguing that positing the existence of an unconditioned can only be justified if it provides explanatory power – e.g. by terminating the casual series, and thereby preventing an infinite regress. The unconditioned can only have this explanatory power, by Kant’s lights, if it stands in *the same grounding relation to the series as the members within the series stand to one another*. In other words, the unconditioned must be a part of or immanent to the causal series itself [ibid., 33-34]. As a result, Kant’s conclusion “appears to be that the necessary being just is ‘the world itself’” [ibid., p.32]. Ruling out [B] thereby “excludes the Wolffian-Leibnizian position” [ibid., p.34], since it posits a transcendent (and *not* an immanent) unconditioned. However, as Boehm points out, a “careful reading may at first suggest that Kant’s formulation is somewhat careless or inaccurate” [ibid., p.32]. Regarding the unconditioned’s grounding relation, his either [A] or [B] formulation in the fourth Thesis “may seem too quick, because Kant’s position is that even if the unconditioned is immanent to the world two alternatives still remain,” according to his claims at the outset of Antinomies [ibid.]. An immanent unconditioned can be viewed as **A1**, i.e., “the complete series of conditioned elements, taken as a whole – hence ‘the world itself’”; or it “can belong to the world only as ‘the highest member of the cosmological series’” (i.e., as **A2**) [ibid.]. A1 and A2 are thus housed together in the fourth’s Thesis under [A]. This fact carries two implications. First, the reasoning we have been using to explain the first three Antinomies is compatible with the fourth as well (despite the break in the general pattern). Second, whatever is true of [A] must also be true for A1 and A2 – in other words, for every position in the first three Antinomies. Note this principle, for it is of crucial importance to our reading.

Boehm goes on to explain that the fourth’s Thesis “applies this principle [from the ‘Observation’] to transcendental realism. Transcendental realists view explanatory grounding relations among things in the world as causal-temporal. This generates a regressing causal-explanatory series, which is ‘supposed to carry us by continuous advance to the supreme [unconditioned] condition’ (A452f./B480f.)” [Boehm 2012, p.34]. As discussed above, transcendental realists are forced to make two assumptions. First, that all things are explicable through their placement in this causal-temporal chain; and second, that the causal-temporal series itself must “completed” or grounded by the unconditioned – which must be conceived as [A], or immanent to the series. Note that the causal-temporal series, given that it is “temporal,” necessarily

exists in time. As such, in order to be ‘immanent’ to the ‘causal-temporal’ series, the unconditioned itself must also exist in time. “If time is viewed as a property of things,” Boehm writes, “time is a property of the unconditioned” [ibid.].<sup>30</sup> (Compare this position to the Wolffian-Leibnizian attempt to refute Spinozism – rejected by Kant as arbitrary and inconsistent – by claiming that time is a property of things but *not* the unconditioned [see *I-A*].) Note also that [A] can be conceived in one of two ways (A1 or A2) [ibid., p.36], and what is true for [A] must be true for both. This means that both A1’s and A2’s unconditioned must be conceived as existing in time as well – which, in turn, means that every Thesis and Antithesis position in the first three Antinomies must be conceived as grounded by an immanent unconditioned which exists in time. If this is the case, then Kant has effectively excluded the Wolffian-Leibnizian cosmology – not just from the fourth Antinomy, but from the Antinomies altogether. Spinoza, on the other hand, embraces the existence of an immanent, spatio-temporal unconditioned. As such, his cosmology remains valid.

Yet the admission that every position in the first three Antinomies is grounded by an immanent, spatial-temporal unconditioned carries a greater implication than the exclusion of a Wolffian-Leibnizian cosmology from the Antinomies. Indeed, it implies that, by Kant’s lights, every cosmologically consistent form of transcendental realism must be conceived as some sort of “Spinozism.” Boehm, the originator of this argument, admits that it is not always clear what Kant means by “Spinozism” [Boehm 2018, p.485]. However, Boehm argues that a careful study of Kant’s comments in *Lectures on Metaphysics* reveals that Kant understands “Spinozism” to mean ‘substance monism’ [Boehm 2012, p.29]. (This presents “Spinozism” as a broad category which contains, but does not necessarily refer to, Spinoza’s view. Boehm argues that “Epicurus or Lucretius can be regarded as Spinozists, just as Spinoza can be regarded as an Epicurean,” and “Kant, who was fond of Lucretius, certainly saw this continuity” [Boehm 2014, Pref. §2].) In *I-A*, we saw how A1 can be construed as substance monism – “It is infinite and yet the One” [Boehm 2014, p.77] – and the arguments from the fourth’s Thesis regarding [A] only reinforce this impression. Though some may be tempted to search A2 for a way to escape the Spinozist conception of the unconditioned, “there is no genuine way out – not insofar as Kant is concerned” [Boehm 2012, p.35]; for “if a temporal unconditioned cause has always existed then ‘its consequences would have also always existed’ (A444/B472)” [ibid.]. In other words, even though A2’s unconditioned is not simply “the world itself” (as is the case with A1’s), it must still be conceived as *eternally one with* ‘the world.’ Both A2’s unconditioned and ‘the world’ that it grounds would have necessarily always existed together as a unified whole – i.e., as a kind of ‘substance monism,’ i.e. as a form of “Spinozism.” Thus, every kind of transcendental realism must be conceived, by Kant’s lights, as some sort of “Spinozism.” A1 is merely a form of Spinozism which is closer to Spinozism as Spinoza would have it. (Note: this reading is entirely consistent with Kant’s later claim that, should his transcendental idealism be rejected, “nothing remains but Spinozism” [see *I-A*].)

To summarize our discussion in this segment: because the first three Antitheses correspond with A1, where “the cosmological series is the unconditioned itself,” we must conclude that “all three Antitheses are to be read as Spinozist positions” – in the sense that they are very similar to (though not identical with) Spinoza’s actual position, and no other thinker comes close [Boehm 2012, p.36]. In fact, the thinker who has been traditionally associated with the Antitheses (i.e. Leibniz) is not merely a poor fit for the position, his cosmology is excluded from the Antinomies by Kant’s own arguments concerning valid conceptions of the unconditioned. Furthermore, a careful reading of the Thesis position from the fourth Antinomy would indicate that Kant believed that any consistent form of transcendental realism must be conceived as a form

of Spinozism. As such, Spinozism is more than a representative for (most of) the Antithesis positions – it is a principle which undergirds the Antinomies throughout. However, it may be reasonable to ask: If the importance of Spinozism to the Antinomies is so undeniable, why has it been neglected for so long?

*I-C. Who Fears a “Dead Dog”? Kant Familiarity With the Jewish Atheist* <sup>31</sup>

BOEHM is fond of saying that Kantian scholarship generally holds the opinion that, in Kant’s day, right up until the outbreak of the *Pantheismusstreit*, Spinoza was considered to be, in the words of Lessing, a “dead dog” [Boehm 2018, p.483]. As a result, Spinoza is not considered to be a significant influence upon the Kantian tradition. This opinion has been motivated by a number of misconceptions, overlooked facts, and naive readings of Kant’s comments on Spinoza during the *Streit*. Though we lack ironclad evidence that Kant was familiar with Spinoza or Spinozism before the *Streit*, it is highly plausible that he was, and arguments to the contrary have so far been flimsy. Clearing away these obstacles should clear away the last vestiges of doubt regarding our case.

One obstacle is a second-hand report from Hamann to Jacobi, according to which Kant claimed that he had “never been able to understand Spinoza’s philosophy” [*Briefwechsel*, October 1785]. Leaving the fallibility of second-hand reporting aside, even if we assume that Kant did indeed say this, there is ample reason to suspect that Kant was being coy with Hamann [Boehm 2018, p. 484]. Considering the scandal surrounding Spinoza’s name, and that Jacobi had stopped just short of calling Kant a Spinozist,<sup>32</sup> he had good reason to be indirect. One need only recall the treatment of Christian Wolff, champion of Leibniz and one of the most eminent philosophers of the German-speaking world in his day, to realize just how damaging an association with Spinozism could be. In 1723, Wolff’s enemies denounced his philosophy as a backdoor for Spinozism to enter through. This link to Spinoza (remote as it may seem) became the primary weapon in their campaign against him – and it was effective. Wolff was ousted from his chair at Halle, the teaching of his philosophy and the sale of his books were banned in Prussia for years, and both he and supporters were dragged into an international war of words to defend their good names [Israel 2001, p. 544-52]. Though in the end Wolff won his war [ibid.], Kant would surely have wanted to avoid fighting one himself – and the obvious tactic would have been to distance himself from Spinoza as artfully as possible.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, if one bears in mind that Spinoza was condemned as an atheist,<sup>34</sup> and that some esteemed intellectuals (e.g. Pierre Bayle) argued that atheism was fundamentally incoherent,<sup>35</sup> then it is easy to see why in this case a brilliant man might choose to play dumb. Kant would likely have understood that claiming to be “unable to understand” an “atheist” philosopher – who on account of his “atheism” many believed, or wanted to believe, must be incoherent – was a politically safe maneuver. Therefore, Kant’s claim that he could never understand Spinoza should do little to deter us.

Another obstacle is that Kant never mentions either Spinoza or Spinozism within the *Critique of Pure Reason*. There are numerous mentions of both in Kant’s later career. Yet in the *Critique*, despite the fact that he mentions almost every other name in the philosophical canon there, he never mentions Spinoza [Boehm 2018, p.483-485]. Therefore it could be reasonably surmised that, before the *Streit*, Kant either ignored Spinozism, or he was simply ignorant of it. Boehm counters by pointing out that although Kant never mentions Spinoza by name in the *Critique*, he does take time to attack the geometrical method, a very Spinozistic theme.<sup>36</sup> The use of the geometrical method, which begins with definitions, followed by axioms, and then by demonstrations, is a rarity in philosophy (even Spinoza wrote only two – perhaps

three – of his works in a geometrical mode);<sup>37</sup> and Spinoza’s application of this method to philosophical matters was controversial even among those who eulogized him.<sup>38</sup> “There is then at least one moment in the *Critique of Pure Reason*,” Boehm says, “where Kant does engage with Spinoza – one moment where it is untenable to conclude that Kant did not think of Spinoza from the fact that he did not mention his name” [ibid., p.485]. The Antinomies, as we demonstrated above, are another. Furthermore, Kant would have had a vested interest in not appearing to be overly sympathetic to Spinoza (at least, not until after the *Streit* had blown the issue wide open). So if Kant wanted to portray a Spinozistic conception without immediately attacking it, it might have seemed wise to give that position a different name, or associate it with a different thinker (hence why Kant says “Epicurus” while thinking “Spinoza” as he is describing the Antitheses). Yet such strategies, if this is indeed what Kant was doing, were not wholly effective – as Jacobi went ahead and accused Kant of writing certain aspects of the *Critique* “fully in Spinoza’s spirit” in spite of them [cf. Boehm 2018, p.484].

The third obstacle is the view that, before the *Streit*, Spinoza had become passe, that he was seen as a defeated philosopher [Boehm 2018, p.483], and that active discourse about him had dried up. This is far from true. Spinoza and Spinozism were discussed both publicly and at length in Kant’s day. Spinoza was the subject of the single longest entry in Bayle’s *Dictionnaire* (1702). A detailed, five-page treatment was dedicated to him in J. Zedler’s *Grosses Universal Lexikon* (1734-52), whereas most philosophers received only a page or less. And in D. Diderot and J. d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* (1751-72), Spinoza was given an equally lengthy treatment. According to Boehm they dedicated “five times more space [to Spinoza] than to most relevant thinkers in the history of philosophy” [ibid.]. In all three publications – which were, in Boehm’s words, “the main transmitters of Enlightenment thought” [ibid.] – Spinoza and Spinozism were being publicly discussed in greater detail than most any other philosopher or philosophy. And, based on the publication dates of each of these works, Spinoza had been receiving this level of rigorous attention for seventy years (that is, between the years of 1702 and 1772). Additionally, as Boehm observes, “most Enlightenment philosophers of ambition [Leibniz, Wolff, Mendelssohn, Hume, etc.] explicitly strived to answer Spinozism” [Boehm 2014, Pref. §7]. The idea that Spinoza had faded into obscurity during Kant’s time or in the years prior to the *Streit* seems to be, in light of these facts, quite dubious.<sup>39</sup>

Of course, there is more than the public discourse to consider. We cannot forget the clandestine manuscripts of forbidden philosophical works sold and discussed in secret throughout Europe between 1680 and the 1740s. (The manufacture and distribution of these manuscript had found major centers in Germany, particularly in Berlin and Potsdam.) J. Israel notes that the “central thrust” or “main bloc” of radical ideas from these so-called *clandestina* “stems predominantly from [...] Spinoza and Spinozism,” most ubiquitously and influentially in the form of the *Traité des Trois Imposteurs*, alternatively named *L’Esprit de Spinoza* [Israel 2001, p.684-85, 694-95]. Although the form of Spinozism contained in these manuscripts was often quite far from Spinozism as Spinoza would have it, nevertheless they broadened the area in which Kant may have encountered some form of Spinoza’s philosophical legacy (either via manuscripts or conversations with the people who read them). This is especially likely after 1740 – the year that Frederick the Great (who had himself acquired a taste for clandestine literature) ascended to the Prussian crown. Soon afterward, there would be a pronounced easing of censorship laws regarding philosophical and theological topics in Prussia (and coincidentally, all throughout Europe), increasing the availability of *clandestina* – so much so that the business of producing, selling, and sharing these



materials in secret became nearly obsolete [Israel 2001, p.684-86]. Therefore, during Kant's active life, the chances of encountering Spinozism (publicly or privately) were the highest they had ever been.

The fourth and final obstacle is the doubt that some scholars have regarding Kant's seriousness in his claims about Spinozism. When Kant says, for example, that "[t]hose who take space as a thing in itself or as a property of things are forced to be Spinozists" (V-MP-K3E/Arnoldt AA 29:132), is this his considered view? For the arguments in these passages are often neither elaborate nor detailed. Boehm admits that this is the case, but he contends that this is so because Kant "is relying here on an elaborate argument he had provided in the fourth Antinomy" [Boehm 2014, p.85]. In short, he is relying here on the argument that only an immanent unconditioned is possible, and that the unconditioned must exist in time and space as part of a causal-temporal series; thus, all sufficiently coherent transcendental realist cosmologies (A1 and A2) are to be conceived as some form of Spinozism. He argues for this in detail in the first *Critique* – where he never refers to Spinoza by name – and implicitly assumes it in the second [Boehm 2012, p.31]. Moreover, as Boehm points out, the texts from the second *Critique* and the *Lectures on Metaphysics*, where Kant openly refers to Spinoza by name, "appear only after the first edition of the *Critique*. Indeed, they appear only after the break of the *Pantheismusstreit* (1785)" [ibid.]. This is likely due to political prudence on Kant's part [ibid.]. In other words, the *Pantheismusstreit* was not the time that Kant discovered, or even *re-discovered* Spinozism, "because," as Boehm puts it, "Spinoza's ideas [...] had not been forgotten" [ibid., p.485]. It was simply the sea change that Kant and others needed in order to be able to speak of it in public without censure.

Indeed, there is a strong case to be made that Kant himself was a special kind of Spinozist. Aside from the fact that Kant seems to believe that all consistent forms of transcendental realism are some sort of Spinozism, there are a number of important Kantian concepts which are remarkably Spinozistic – and are often explicitly associated with Spinozism. One example is Kant's concept of the Ideal of Pure Reason, i.e., "a (regulative) idea of an unconditioned being, conceived in the form of A1: it is the 'All of Reality,' encompassing all other conditioned beings as 'nothing but limitations'" (A575/B603) [Boehm 2014, p.78]. "[I]t should be observed," as Boehm points out, "that in the same period in which Kant explicitly names Spinozism 'the most consistent form of dogmatic metaphysics,' he also claims that the regulative ideal of reason yields a Spinozist conception" (Lectures AA 20:302; cf. 28:706) [Boehm 2018, p.501]. The same is true for what Kant calls the *ens realissimum* – i.e., the ground of "all possibilities," such that "everything that is possible – insofar as it is real – is but a limitation of the *realissimum*, the All of Reality" [ibid., p.41]. Boehm takes this to be "a Spinozist construal of the *realissimum*" [ibid.]. "In fact, Kant writes explicitly, at least later in his career, that the *ens realissimum*, the ground of all possibility, must be conceived along Spinozist lines" (AA 28:785-786) [ibid., p.43]. Though some might take this as evidence that any Spinozistic tendencies in Kant's thinking were confined to his later career, it is worth noting that some of Kant's pre-critical essays were remarkably Spinozistic – e.g. "One Possible Basis" [Boehm 2012, p.38-40]. Moreover, the line of argument in "One Possible Basis" concerning the unconditioned seems to be contiguous with Kant's reasoning in the fourth Antinomy's Thesis. This fact leads Boehm to conclude that Kant was likely a Spinozist in his pre-critical phase [Boehm 2014, Pref. §7], and that the reasoning which we see in the Ideal and the fourth Antinomy's Thesis evolved out of his pre-critical Spinozism.

Boehm's interpretation is (again) at variance with the common view. For example, with regard to interpreting the Ideal of Pure Reason, the common view holds (contra Boehm) that complex, finite things

are external to the Ideal – even if they are grounded by it. Still, Boehm’s view has the advantage in that the common view seems to deviate from the fourth Antinomy’s main requirements for valid grounding relations between conditioned beings and the unconditioned – namely, that all beings, conditioned and unconditioned alike, must be understood through the same grounding relation. Furthermore, how could the Ideal be thought of as the ‘All of Reality,’ even in a regulative sense, if there are real things which are ‘external’ to it? Although there is some evidence which can be read as ruling out a Spinozist reading of the Ideal (A579/B607), such arguments have so far been hinged on the idea that Spinozism equates God (i.e. the All, the One, Substance, Nature, etc.) with the sum total of reality.<sup>40</sup> This idea is not accurate, for while Spinoza’s God *is* the All of Reality, “the totality of all existing things,” He is ontologically prior to His “parts” – and thus He cannot be reduced to a mere *sum* of all things<sup>41</sup> [ibid., p.42]. (This idea should be retained as we conceive of A1. When we compare the various statements Kant makes with regard to the unconditioned, Spinozism, Pantheism, and adequate grounding relations, it becomes clear that A1’s unconditioned – i.e., the entire cosmological series taken as a whole – is to be conceived as the ground in which all things *inhere*, and *not* as an aggregate of everything in the world. According to Kant, “the supreme reality [i.e. the unconditioned] must condition the possibility of all things as their ground, not as their sum” {A578f./ B606f.}.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, Kant seems to have known that Spinoza did not conceive of substance as a sum (AA 28:794–795). Although Kant certainly thought Spinozism was deeply mistaken in that it deduces the existence of the *realissimum* from its concept,<sup>43</sup> he still agreed with the way that Spinozism represents the *realissimum* as the ground of all things [Boehm 2018, p.501]. Therefore, it is reasonable to infer as Boehm does that Kant’s mature, critical position is a kind of “regulative Spinozism” [Boehm 2012, p.41, 43].

The bottom line is this: not only are the common arguments against Spinoza’s influence on Kant’s philosophy rather flimsy, we have a significant amount of evidence which would indicate the presence of an intense and career-spanning dialogue between the two; the Antinomies being but one product of that dialogue. As such, we have good reason to be confident that Boehm’s Spinozist reading of the Antinomies is sound. We contend that Spinoza was the single greatest contributor to the design of the Antinomies as a whole, particularly with regard to the first three Antitheses. He was also their primary target, although Kant never so much as used his name in writing them – hence Israel’s claim that Kant was conducting a “silent war against Spinoza” [Israel 2011, p.707].

#### *I-D. A Spinozan Legacy: Final Thoughts on the Antinomies*

OUR purpose in this section – which I believe we have been successful in fulfilling – was to establish the profound influence of Spinoza on the Antinomies. Thus, we have secured the first link in the antinomial through line (what we earlier called the first anchorage points of the Kantian bridge). The next step is to demonstrate that Nietzsche’s philosophical development is, to a significant extent, the historical result of the Antinomies, which themselves exist as an historical result of Spinoza’s philosophical legacy.

Yet before bring this section to a close, there is one complication in our picture of the Antinomies to address. Although we have repeatedly argued that the clash between A1 and A2 generates the Antinomies – and that A1 maps onto the Antithesis positions while A2 maps onto the Thesis positions – this pattern seems to falter in the fourth Antinomy. Specifically, in the fourth both A1 and A2 together reside in the Thesis position; and neither can be found in the fourth Antinomy’s Antithesis, which flatly denies that any

necessary (i.e. unconditioned) beings exist. Therefore, the fourth Antithesis rules out not only A2, but A1 and Spinozism as well – the concepts we have been repeatedly associating with the Antitheses. How can this apparent deviation from the pattern be explained? To my knowledge, Boehm never directly addresses this concern. However, we can defend Boehm’s argument if we recall that the Antinomies are systematically connected. These systematic connections between the antinomial positions imply that an adequate explanation of the Antinomies must, in similar fashion, be able to locate consistent lines of reasoning that underlie the systematically connected positions. By demonstrating that A1 [along with A2] appears in the fourth Antinomy’s Thesis, Boehm’s reading achieves two important goals. First, it succeeds in maintaining the connection between the Antinomies and Kant’s claim that it is the clash between A1 and A2 that generates them (a claim which creates the expectation that both A1 and A2 will be present in every case). Second, he makes it feasible to claim as he does that Spinozism is one such consistent line of reasoning – connecting the systematically linked first, third, and fourth Antinomies. Any theory which would supplant Boehm’s would have to be similarly successful.

Furthermore, I believe that if we reflect on the relationship between Kant’s Antinomies and the PSR, then we can explain the deviation from the general pattern. As we have seen, every antinomial position implicitly endorses the PSR – which demands that absolutely everything must have a reason, cause, or ground. Hence the importance of A1’s and A2’s unconditioned, each of which provides a logically viable yet opposite view of the *ultimate* reason, cause, or ground. Each case of the Antinomies is generated by the impossibility of reconciling these views, or justifying the preference of one over the other. Thus Kant is asserting that the PSR inevitably leads to paradox when it is taken as a transcendently real principle. (Kant finds no problem in taking it as a transcendently *ideal* principle, as per the “Second Analogy of Experience”). However, a careful examination of the fourth Antinomy suggests that Kant is making an even bolder claim. In the fourth, both A1’s and A2’s unconditioned are located on *the same side*, the Thesis side. Meanwhile, in the Antithesis position – which *must* be conceived as a transcendental realist position, and therefore *must* be an argument from the PSR – it is argued that there are no necessary, unconditioned beings; meaning that there is no *ultimate* reason, cause or ground. This implies that, unlike the first three Antinomies – which give us two options to pick from (A1 and A2) – the fourth Antinomy gives us three. In the fourth Antinomy, Kant is arguing that, if we accept the PSR to be a transcendently real principle, then it is equally coherent (and ultimately paradoxical) to choose A1, A2, or a *third* option – a nihilistic option – according to which all reasons, causes, and grounds are purely contingent. In fact, because there is no reason, cause, or ground for existence itself, one could argue that any concept of existence as a kind of permanent Being is false. (As we shall see in Section II, this is exactly the position which is taken up by Nietzsche – almost a hundred years later.) Thus, in breaking the general pattern and introducing a third option, Kant is hoping to prove that transcendental realism is even more futile – more *nihilistic*<sup>44</sup> – than was realized at the outset of the Antinomies.

One final note: it is important to realize that, despite their fundamentally incompatible views of the unconditioned, the A1 conception and the nihilistic ‘third option’ do share certain commonalities. Both conceive of reality as a causal-temporal chain devoid of any unconditioned members. There is nothing to condition the series except the series itself. (Such a conception leads to a relativistic picture of empirical reality, as we will discuss in detail in Section II.) The difference is, for A1, the ‘series itself’ (or what Kant refers to as ‘the world itself,’ or the ‘All of Reality’) is itself an eternal Being. A1 conceives of reality in a

manner akin to Spinoza's "face of the whole universe" [Letter 64 (OP); cf. Curley 2016, p.438-39], according to which the particulars of the universe may change, but the whole, the aggregate, the proportions of reality itself, are always the same. For A1, the face of reality itself never changes. However, if there are no necessary or unconditioned beings anywhere (as is the case for the 'third option' of the fourth Antithesis), then the 'series itself' cannot be an eternal Being. There is nothing to stop the face of reality itself from changing – assuming it was ever self-identical to begin with. (These similarities and differences will be important themes throughout Section II – most especially in our discussion of the 'antinomial alignment' shared by Nietzsche and Spinoza.)

## II. SPINOZA'S SUBTERRANEAN LEGACY: THE ANTINOMIES AND NIETZSCHE

WITH the foundation of our Kantian bridge laid – that is, by firmly establishing Spinoza's influence on the Antinomies – we can move on to the bridge itself. To put it briefly, Spir's reading of the Antinomies equates the Thesis positions with the concept of Being, and the Antithesis positions with the concept of Becoming. Under such a reading, one could infer that every case of Antinomy can be summarized by a single relation: the fundamental (and paradoxical) conflict between the concepts of Being and Becoming. Spir extends this 'fundamental antinomy' to his theory of judgment, and thus concludes that all thought about empirical objects is false. This is so, according to Spir, because both Being and Becoming exist in every object, and yet only Being can be thought. Being – including the idea of a self-identical object – is necessary for cognition, but it is incompatible with the Becoming which is evident and experienced via the senses; thus all cognition is self-contradictory [Green 2002, p.60]. Therefore, whereas Kant views the Antinomies as a trap from which philosophy needs to escape, Spir boils them down to a single principle and compels us to bite the bullet. Rather than escape the paradox, we must accept that the natural world is inherently paradoxical, and then refocus our minds on the inexperiencable world of Being – the world of eternal, logical truths – the absolute, Parmenidean One.

Green demonstrates that Nietzsche accepts the reasoning behind Spir's 'fundamental antinomy' – hence his theory that all thought falsifies – but he rejects Spir's conclusion as a Christian-like rejection of the world. If Being does not exist in the world of experience and Becoming, and can provide us with no explanatory power, better to do as Kant does with the idea of a transcendental unconditioned in the fourth Antinomy and simply deny that it exists at all. As a result, Nietzsche takes a position of 'radical Becoming' – one that is very similar to the metaphysics in Kant's fourth Antithesis. In fact, Nietzsche's metaphysical picture of the universe broadly aligns with the Antitheses in general – just like Spinoza's. Therefore, while the two thinkers draw very different metaphysical conclusions, they share a broad antithetic alignment – one which neatly characterizes their respective philosophies, their similarities and differences, their relation to each other, and (in Nietzsche's case) how they came to be what they are. In brief, as the 'antinomial through line' traces the influence of Spinoza's legacy through time, the 'antithetic alignment' characterizes the remarkable similarity between Nietzsche and Spinoza which resulted from that influence.

Tom Bailey, in his article on Nietzsche's Kantianism, draws conclusions that are quite different from our own. Regardless, he responds to many of the same problems and indeed provides us with an excellent outline of these problems. During his exploration of Nietzsche's criticisms of the Kantian notion of an

‘inaccessible reality,’ he argues that a careful reading of the relevant passages reveals a second concern, “one regarding less the accessibility of reality than how we make judgments about reality at all” [Bailey 2013, p.138-39]. In fact, as Nietzsche engages with Kantian conceptions of judgment, he addresses “three significant issues regarding Kant’s own account of judgment” [ibid., p.146]. The first issue is concerned with the problem of how sensible experience can be admitted into judgment. “Kant’s solution,” as Bailey observes, “to claim that the imagination provides criteria for the application of concepts to sensible experience, is notoriously unsatisfactory and it might be more fruitful to reject the notion of judgment on which the problem rests” [ibid.]. The second issue concerns the “I” (or the “doer,” or the “ego”). As Bailey explains, “Kant also claims that a judgment must refer to an ‘I,’ understood as a non-empirical being” – a claim which raises questions about how the non-empirical ‘I’ can interact with and attain knowledge of empirical objects, and Nietzsche’s “attempt to formulate an ontology without substantial subjects might be considered a response to such questions” [ibid.]. Finally, the third issue concerns the notions of Being and causality. Nietzsche’s treatment of “thinghood and causality” is similar to Kant’s attempts to defend the concept of causality against empiricist objections (e.g. Hume). Bailey interprets Nietzsche’s criticism of causality as an effort to preserve some portion of the concept from empiricist attacks [ibid.].

Bailey’s account is largely correct, and Nietzsche is indeed attempting to address all of these issues. Yet what his account is missing is that, for Nietzsche, these are not really separate problems. Rather, they are all relatives of one problem: i.e. the (non-) existence of Being. Nietzsche’s denial of Being is profoundly important concerning his rejection of “doers,” as well as his critiques of causality. If there are no ‘beings,’ how can there be absolutely discrete “doers” behind “deeds,” or even absolutely discrete events – ‘cause,’ and ‘effect’? Moreover, Nietzsche’s denial of Being largely stems from a single source: Nietzsche’s “error theory” – i.e., his argument that all thought falsifies. What Bailey also fails to realize is that Nietzsche’s “error theory” is, in large part, adapted from Spir’s “error theory,” which in turn stems from his notion of the ‘fundamental antinomy’ – an invention which is a direct response, not just to the Antinomies, but to the first issue: the weaknesses in Kant’s solution to the problem of how sensible experience is admitted into judgment. Nietzsche largely accepts and then adapts the reasoning behind Spir’s “error theory” as a result of accepting the ‘fundamental antinomy.’ This leads Nietzsche to question the capacity of human beings to form objective, empirical judgments. This skepticism characterizes the majority of Nietzsche’s career, and it continued to influence him (possibly in a weakened form) throughout the last year of his productive (and sane) life.

This is not the way Nietzsche’s work is usually interpreted by Anglophone scholarship, however. As a matter of fact, the same naturalistic tendencies which make Nietzsche attractive to these interpreters in the first place seem to sew seeds of insecurity in them regarding the value of Nietzsche’s philosophy. For as much as Nietzsche (particularly in his late phase) is driven by a powerful naturalistic tendency, there is much about Nietzsche’s philosophy which is not amenable to naturalism – particularly with regard to epistemology. (There are fewer things more anathematic to the naturalist than the claim that all thought falsifies and that nothing is knowable.) Brian Leiter nicely summarizes these attitudes toward Nietzsche when he says that “one important reason that philosophers should take Nietzsche seriously is because he seems to have gotten, at least in broad contours, many points about human moral psychology *right*”; that is, from a modern scientific standpoint [Leiter 2013, p.595]. And to the degree that Nietzsche truly does believe in concepts not amenable to the philosophical naturalist, “then so much the worse for Nietzsche we

might say. We may do Nietzsche *the philosopher* a favor, however,” if we reconstruct his project by using terms that are “both recognizably his in significant part, and yet at the same time far more plausible once the crackpot metaphysics of the will to power [...] is expunged” [ibid., p.594]. Thus motivated by the fear that if one allows Nietzsche’s less-than-naturalistic tendencies into view, it will doom some part (if not the whole) of his philosophy to the wastebasket – or, worse yet, to the clutches of those much-maligned, truth-skeptical post-modernists (a fate worse than death, to be sure) – sympathetic Anglophone scholars will often try to rescue Nietzsche from himself. Some will try to rehabilitate Nietzsche by de-radicalizing his more extreme views. Others will leapfrog over large swaths of Nietzsche’s career, avoiding as much as possible those times in which he was most under the influence of Spir, so they can highlight his more naturalistically inclined late-phase. Though well-intentioned and often rich with insight, both strategies do Nietzsche (the man *and* the philosopher) a disservice. If we want to understand Nietzsche’s naturalist period, then we must understand the earlier periods from which it emerged – including the influence of older philosophers (e.g. the naturalist Spinoza *and* the anti-naturalist Spir) who played a role in making Nietzsche who he was at each particular stage. Furthermore, while Nietzsche did indeed shift away from the anti-naturalism of his earlier periods, the evidence seems to suggest that Nietzsche never completely escaped the influence of Spir and the transcendental tradition [Green 2002, p.165]. As we read naturalist accounts of Nietzsche’s thought, we must be mindful of Green’s warning to remain “skeptical about whether Nietzsche’s interests are theirs” [ibid.].

Our purpose in this section will be twofold: proving Michael Green’s case for the Spirean influence on Nietzsche’s thought, and tying these insights to the antinomial through line and Nietzsche’s antithetic alignment with Spinoza – all while striking a balance between learning from naturalist interpretations of Nietzsche and being wiser than they. Like the last section, this one is divided into four segments. In A) we will focus on Spir’s thought: its relations to the Antinomies and Kant’s theory of judgment, and how the ‘fundamental antinomy’ and his “error theory” came to be as a result of those influences. We will thereby establish the second point [2] of our main argument. In B) we turn to Nietzsche’s thought and its relation to Spir’s: how he accepted the reasoning behind the ‘fundamental antinomy’ and adapted his own “error theory” from Spir’s, and how these developments influenced his views on logic, judgment, and causality. Here we establish our main argument’s third claim [3]: i.e., that Nietzsche’s acceptance Spir’s antinomial reasoning, and simultaneous rejection of Spir’s conclusions, resulted in Nietzsche adopting a metaphysics of ‘radical Becoming.’ In C) we begin tying the various threads of the essay together with an account of the antithetic alignment – exploring the great similarity between Nietzsche’s and Spinoza’s metaphysical pictures of the empirical world, in spite of their radically different ontologies – concluding the segment with a demonstration of the compatibility of Boehm’s and Green’s theories [4-6]. In D) we complete the section with an account of the antinomial through line from which the antithetic alignment follows, and demonstrate the strength of this through line by showing: a) how it historically grounds the oft-perceived similarities between Nietzsche and Spinoza, b) the promising leads it offers us with regard to future research, and c) the potential value of the ‘Kantian bridge’ for Nietzsche studies in general [7-8].

### *II-A1. The Antinomial Spir: Kant’s Antinomies and Spir’s Denial of Empirical Knowledge*

“SPIR relies a great deal on Kant’s antinomies of pure reason (Kant 1965, A405-576/B432-595) to argue that empirical objects contain irreconcilable elements of both being and becoming” [Green 2002, p.59].

To sum up our earlier discussion, the Antinomies are generated by transcendental realism's conviction that the empirical world is wholly intelligible through causal-temporal explanations (via the PSR). This conviction, Kant argues, inevitably leads to mutually contradictory positions – both of which ultimately collapse into self-contradiction, thereby leaving us in a state of paradox. In the fourth case of Antinomy, for example, arguments are made both for and against the existence of an unconditioned being, and both cases are equally convincing and self-contradictory. This occurs because the transcendental realist view of nature is one in which all things are explained through their placement in a causal-temporal chain; an image that “naturally both invites and forbids the introduction of a first cause [i.e. unconditioned being] that explains why this chain of causation exists at all” [ibid., p.76]. Spir's reading of Kant's Antinomies is what leads him to conclude that all empirical knowledge is inherently contradictory. (It also connects him to Spinoza via the antinomial through line.)

Before continuing on we must note that, in his explication of Spir's arguments, Green often uses the terms “unconditional/ed unity,” “substance,” and “Being” in a seemingly interchangeable manner. Similarly, Green uses the terms “conditional/ed unity” and “Becoming” in an interchangeable fashion. This makes sense if we recall the fourth Antinomy. The Thesis position argues that in order for reality to exist at all, it must be grounded by an *unconditioned being*. It then argues that the unconditioned must be immanent to the series; and, since the series is temporal, must have always existed together with the series in time. That is, as an *unconditional unity*. The Antithesis position, on the other hand, argues that unconditioned beings simply do not exist anywhere, and as such neither do unconditional unities. Only a *conditional unity* is possible in such a universe. Furthermore, Spir is often particularly concerned not merely with the existence of empirical objects, but with the unification of qualities *within* an object – and he argues that an ‘objective unification of qualities’ is only possible if said unity is unconditional (i.e., derived from an unconditioned Being) [Green 2002, p.65]. Thus, it makes sense for “unconditioned unity” to be associated with “Being” (and “substance,” which is the same thing), and for “conditioned unity” to be associated with Becoming [cf. Green 2002, p.58-60, 63-68, 69, 75-80]. Whenever we use these terms, we will use them in the same interchangeable manner as Green.

There is one more thing which we must note regarding Green's explication of Spir – specifically, a mistake he makes in understanding the Antinomies. For Spir himself may have made the same mistake (which could possibly explain why Spir equates the Thesis with Being and the Antithesis with Becoming). In his explication of the antinomial influence in Spir's thought, Green seems to conflate the metaphysics of the first three Antitheses [which are based on A1 and affirm the existence of the unconditioned] with the fourth's Antithesis [which is nihilistic and denies that an unconditioned being exists anywhere]. For example, in Green's summary of the first Antinomy [cf. Green 2002, p.64-66], he rightfully perceives that the Thesis entails absolute time and space, and that the Antithesis precludes both (as we shall see in *II-C2*). However, he wrongfully characterizes the first Antithesis's view as one in which the world is “*infinitely* conditioned” without “unconditional unification.” He claims an “unconditional unification” is impossible for the Antithesis to support, because “[t]his unconditional unification is a substance,” and unconditional substances can only exist in the thesis view [ibid., p.65]. This is false. The first Antinomy's Antithesis – as Boehm has demonstrated – is, indeed, arguing for the existence of an unconditional substance [i.e., A1]. Only in the fourth Antinomy does the Antithesis position deny the existence of any unconditioned Being. Although it is possible that Spir read the Antinomies in a manner similar to Boehm – i.e., that the fourth

Antinomy is “crucial for our understanding of the other three Antinomies as well” [Boehm 2012, p.36] – it is also possible that Spir read the Antinomies in same the manner as Green: conflating the metaphysical commitments of the first three Antitheses with those of the fourth. For the sake of charity and simplicity, we will assume that Spir did not make this mistake and that he derived his reading mainly from the fourth Antinomy. (Our theory is compatible with either case. We are noting it here for transparency.)

There in the fourth Antinomy, as Thesis and Antithesis positions argued (respectively) for either an “unconditioned unity” (Being) or a “conditioned unity” (Becoming) as the ground of all existence – and ultimately collapsed into paradox – Spir discovered what he took to be the true lesson of the Antinomies. Specifically, that an eternal and paradoxical struggle between Being and Becoming underlies all cases of Antinomy – and all empirical thought. This is Spir’s *‘fundamental antinomy.’* It was Spir’s reading of the Antinomies that lead him to the belief that there was an unbridgeable gap between Being and Becoming. Since only Being can be thought (but never experienced) and only Becoming can be experienced (but never thought), this unbridgeable gap between Being and Becoming makes objective, empirical knowledge of the objects we meet with in experience impossible to attain.

But why does Spir believe that Being can be thought, but not experienced? First, because in order for something to qualify as “Being” (that is, an “unconditional unity”), two things must be true about it: it must always be equal to itself (that is, it must be self-identical), and it cannot contain any contradictions (that is, it cannot violate the law of noncontradiction). However, Green explains that “[c]ontrary to the philosophical tradition, the principle that everything is identical to itself is, for Spir, a *synthetic* rather than an analytic proposition. ‘The concept of the real or the actual and that of the selfsame [...] or self-identical [...] are [...] not one and the same, but instead two different concepts’ (1:164). Analogously, the principle of non-contradiction is synthetic for Spir; it is something that reality could fail to satisfy ([1877]1:168-70)” [Green 2002, p.61]. In other words, Spir argues that self-identity is necessary for an object to be a *Being*, yet it is not necessary for it to *exist*. Hence the existence of Becoming, which cannot be a Being because it is never self-identical. Not only does it lack “diachronic self-identity” (or a selfhood which endures over time), it also lacks “synchronic self-identity” (meaning it is not self-identical at any given moment) [ibid., p.60-63]. Becoming is a world of “unending flux or change” (Spir 1877, 1:164), and Becoming is all that our senses perceive [ibid., p.61]. For example, if we experience a pencil, our senses may tell us that the pencil is hard, or that the pencil is cylindrical. Yet, neither of these experiences are a synthesis of identical things [P = P]. Rather, they are a synthesis of different things [P = H, or P = C]. As a result, the experience is a ‘unity of difference’ which is not self-identical at any moment, and therefore violates the principle of non-contradiction at every moment. In brief, all experience is Becoming [ibid., p.61-62, 64].

But why does Spir believe that Becoming cannot be thought? The answer is Spir, like Parmenides, associates thought with Being – and therefore with self-identity (Spir 1877, 2:177). (In fact, Spir conceives of Being/knowledge as “an absolute unconditional Parmenidean One” [Green 2002, p.60].) This is due to Becoming’s lack of self-identity. Indeed, because it is never self-identical, Becoming violates the law of noncontradiction – it is contradictory. While Spir admits that something which is contradictory – e.g. a square not-square – could exist, it could never be conceived or thought. However, this raises the question of why we should believe that Becoming literally exists. While it is true that the mere inability to *think* something is not proof that it cannot exist [ibid., p.66], that does not mean we have any reason to *believe* that it exists. Green explains Spir’s position in this way: “Becoming – the occurrence of events in time –



is incompatible with the truth or falsity of our judgments. This might lead one to deny that becoming is objectively real, but Spir insists that the reality of time cannot be denied. The final inescapable argument for the existence of time is the succession of our own thoughts and sensations – the fact that our mental life itself becomes” [Green 2002, p.50]. In other words, the fact that Becoming exists is proven by the fact that our thoughts come to be. As such, Becoming cannot be thought, yet its influence on our thoughts is undeniable due our direct experience of it in the coming-to-be of our mental lives.

But why should that preclude the possibility of empirical knowledge? Why is the gap between Being and Becoming ‘unbridgeable’? Spir himself admits that “there is no contradiction in the idea of a merely conditional unity of different qualities (e.g. 1:179-80)” [Green 2002, p.64; cf. Spir 1877, 1:191]. However, he does not believe this to be a viable solution; for Spir believes that in order to be thought, empirical objects have to be *Beings*. As such, they have to be self-identical, “unconditional unities.” (This fact is especially important for our purposes – for as Green explains, “Spir’s argument that objects must be unconditional unities derives in large measure from arguments in Kant’s antinomies of pure reason” [Green 2002, p.64].) Furthermore, “Spir argues that empirical objects, by their very nature, refer to unconditioned substances such as atoms or a Spinozistic God (1877, 1:281, 295). Without these substances there would be no objective connections between qualities in the world” [ibid., p.65]. An empirical object demands “a condition for why its qualities are united (2:75). This tendency of objects to refer to the unconditioned is the objective correlate of the fact that our thoughts about objects must be unconditioned unities” [ibid.]. Put briefly, an empirical object can only be thought if it is Being, and Being alone. If there is any Becoming in the object, it cannot be thought at all – for Becoming is contradictory. There is no way to synthesize Becoming with Being in an object, without rendering that object an unthinkable contradiction (e.g., an “unconditional conditional unity,” a “thing-identical-with-difference,” a “square not-square”). However, the change and Becoming present in our empirical experiences cannot be denied, which means every empirical thought must be contradictory – *unless* we can explain away these changes by grounding them in Being, in the unconditioned. Then we can say that change and Becoming are not ‘change’ or ‘Becoming,’ per se. They are merely expressions of Being – causes and effects – which form a chain of causation reaching all the way back to the unconditioned (e.g., atoms, Spinoza’s God, etc.). Thus empirical objects and the changes we experience in them are, in fact, Being and Being alone, and can be thought. The question is: Can we really reduce ‘change’ and ‘Becoming’ to expressions of an unconditioned Being? Spir’s answer: No.

While “Spir argues that empirical objects demand to be conditioned by the unconditioned, he also argues that this demand can never be satisfied. Empirical objects are a multiplicity, and no unconditional unification of multiplicity is possible” [ibid., p.66]. Green continues, explaining that for Spir, “absolutely simple and unconditioned substances cannot intersect with the multiplicity of the world they are meant to explain. The unconditioned can never condition the conditioned” [ibid.]. To put this simply, Spir agrees with Kant’s Antinomies that empirical objects must be explained in terms of Being [A1, A2] – yet Being itself [as per the fourth Antinomy] collapses in the face of nihilistic Becoming. Spir’s reasoning for why this is the case is quite interesting: Spir argues that Being must be immanent to the series that it grounds in order to have any explanatory power. (Note that this is the same argument Kant employs in the fourth Antinomy’s Thesis when he denies the viability of a transcendent unconditioned being.) Yet Spir denies that ‘Being’ is capable of being immanent in the first place.

*II-A2. The Antinomial Spir: 'Causality' and The Impossibility of 'Immanence'*

SPIR'S conception of causality is quite similar to Spinoza's,<sup>45</sup> in that he thinks that in order for causality to be conceived, it must be conceived as the expression of a single, unconditional unity (Spir 1877, 1:256-57, 1:268-71; cf. Green 2002, p.76-77). For unless the whole of reality is identical to itself – and the relationships between objects are governed by eternal, lawlike connections [Spir 1877, 1:271] – there can be no guarantee that any two cases are the same, or that identical things came to be as they are through identical processes. Causal reasoning requires the existence of *identical cases* [ibid., 1:102]; and if the face of reality itself could change, the existence of identical cases could never be guaranteed. “The validity of induction,” Green explains, “rests upon the belief in the essential identity of the world with itself (1:271). To see the world as becoming [...] is to reject inductive reasoning and to see each event as an uncaused arbitrary happening (2:134)” [Green 2002, p.77]. In other words, the concept of ‘causality’ demands that the universe be conceived as Being – that we “see nature as a whole as one unchanging unit, as a self-identical substance” [ibid., p.76] – and ‘change’ as a mere expression of the lawlike nature of Being. This singular and eternal unity may change “in its particulars,” but never “in the aggregate” (Spir 1877, 1:271). Thus, for Spir, ‘causality’ itself demands a reality akin to Spinoza’s “face of the whole universe.”<sup>46</sup>

But if Spir’s conceptions of Being, causation, the universe, and our knowledge of it are so remarkably Spinozistic, then why does Spir embrace the ‘fundamental antinomy’ at all? It would not make sense to do so unless Spir, like Kant, did not believe that such a conception could escape the Antinomies. In other words, Spir believed that the concept of ‘causation’ necessarily demanded a conception of reality similar to Spinoza’s “face of the whole universe,” but that such a conception was ultimately contradictory. Why would Spir believe this? Green offers this answer: “The principle of causality’s attempt to force the image of being and self-identical unity onto becoming and plurality fails. For the unconditioned can never intersect with the changes or alterations in the world (1:327, 2:130-31). Any ‘first cause’ would have to itself be caused. Any general law of nature will not be necessary but will always require an explanation of why it is the way it is rather than some way else (1:329-30)” [Green 2002, p.77]. Green’s answer is really two answers, for it deals with two separate problems. (Whether or not Spir connected both of these problems in this way in his own writings is irrelevant.)

The first problem is ‘the problem of justifying first causes.’ If Aristotle tells his class that there is a ‘Prime Mover,’ any reasonably intelligent student might ask where the ‘Prime Mover’ comes from. This is not a particularly difficult problem, however. In the face of such questions, all Aristotle would have to do is shrug his shoulders and say that motion demands a ‘Prime Mover,’ and that nothing beyond it can be conceived – which is sufficient reason to postulate it as a ‘first cause.’ Being unable to explain where this ‘first cause’ came from does not, in any conceivable way, introduce contradictions into the cosmology that it grounds. (No one thinks that the inability to prove an axiom introduces contradictions into the logical system which is built upon it.) More importantly, for our purposes, is just because Aristotle cannot know where the ‘Prime Mover’ comes from does not mean he cannot explain how it can intersect with changes and alterations in the world. In order to prove that a ‘first cause’ cannot intersect with its effects, one has to prove that there is a mysterious gap *between* ‘first cause’ and the world, *not* that the origin of the ‘first cause’ itself is unknown (or unknowable). The latter is irrelevant to ‘causal reasoning,’ except with regard to the origin of the universe itself. Spinoza also addresses this exact problem with his doctrine of *causa sui*:

the idea that God is the cause of Himself. Because He is infinite and eternal, God must exist always and everywhere, for he simply *is* existence – there is nothing which *could be* the cause of Him *except* Him. Nietzsche would eventually rebuke this concept in the harshest terms, without argument.<sup>47</sup> Spir may have done the same, but even if he did, it would not be a real threat to Spinoza’s position; and even if it was, it would do nothing to indicate that ‘causality’ itself is a contradictory notion.

The second problem is ‘the problem of the (im)possibility of immanence,’ or ‘the problem of locating a connection between the unconditioned and the conditioned.’ This problem is far trickier, and it actually poses a threat to causal reasoning – because it threatens to create a gap between the unconditioned ‘first cause’ and the conditioned ‘world’ that it grounds. If we recall the fourth Thesis of the Antinomies, we recall Kant’s argument that an unconditioned must be ‘immanent’ to the series that it grounds. Spinoza’s God is immanent – or at least, He is on paper. Yet proving that Spinoza’s God is indeed immanent is more complicated than it may seem. For example, according to Spinoza, the existence of any finite thing must be explained by following the chain of causation all the way back to the infinite Attribute which grounds it (which itself must be grounded in God’s essence). All well and good – but how do finite things emerge from an infinite thing? How can infinity become finite? Spinoza attempts to address this by introducing the concept of ‘infinite modes,’ which act as bridges between Attributes and ‘finite modes.’ However, this solution leaves us with the same predicament – how can an infinite thing become finite? – only the words have changed. If ‘infinite modes’ were supposed to be the bridge between Attributes and modes, now we find ourselves wanting a bridge to connect to the bridge – and it is entirely possible that no matter how many bridges between bridges we introduce, the actual point of contact between infinite and finite may never be found. If the point of contact between infinite and finite cannot be located, this would mean that Spinoza’s God is immanent on paper, and nothing more. Goethe, with his usual eloquence, sums up the problem in this way: “Here we meet the real difficulty, one we do not always see clearly: between idea and experience there inevitably yawns a chasm.”<sup>48</sup> It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore whether or not Spinoza – or any other thinker – succeeds in bridging this chasm. What matters for our purposes here is that Spir believed that such pursuits were futile.

Some may be tempted to think that this second problem is really only a problem for an infinitistic cosmology (e.g. Spinoza’s God, Kant’s A1 conception, etc.), and that a finitistic cosmology (e.g. A2) and its ‘first cause’ (e.g. Aristotle’s ‘Prime Mover’) can avoid the issue altogether. After all, in a finite universe, there is no need to find the bridge between the infinite and the finite – thus there is no unbridgeable gap between the unconditioned and the conditioned. However, the reality is not so simple – for even without the finite/infinite problem, it may still be impossible to locate the point of contact between unconditioned and conditioned. Green explains the issue in this way: according to Spir, “absolutely unconditioned substances cannot intersect with the multiplicity of the world they are meant to explain. The unconditioned can never condition the conditioned” [Green 2002, p.66]. Green asks us to consider the A2/Thesis position of the first Antinomy (which he misidentifies as the “Newtonian position” [ibid.]), and its ramifications as regards absolute space [see II-C2]: “Absolute space was supposed to determine how big and where things are over and above the size and position of things in relationships to other things. It was supposed to be the measurer of all things that does not itself get measured. But how does absolute space perform this act of determination? The totality of relations are compatible with *any* relationship in absolute space. They could be within a vast expanse or within the head of a pin. They could be slightly to the left or slightly to

the right. But that means that there is no content to the connection between absolute space [i.e. the unconditioned] and the totality of relations [i.e. the “series”] that will determine how big or where the totality is. The same point can be made concerning the simple substances, or atoms, out of which the thesis position claims the world is constituted” [ibid.; cf. Spir 1877, 1:285].

As such, whether we look to atoms or the “face of the whole universe,” the point of contact with the unconditioned ‘first cause’ is never located. An atom (the lowest conceivable level of the series) can always be broken down into subatomic particles, then into sub-subatomic particles, and so on, *ad infinitum*. Each level demands an even lower level to condition it. The face of the universe (i.e. the causal series taken as a whole) – even when it is conceived in “absolute” terms – can never enter into any definitive relationship with the ‘highest [unconditioned] member’ which is supposed to determine it. It will always point to an even higher conditioned – one that may determine its absolute size, absolute location, and so on, etc. From the point of view of the series, there is always both another level up and another level down. The Prime Mover never actually makes contact with the world that was supposed to receive motion from it, no matter how many bridges we introduce. So even in the finitistic A2 conception, the unconditioned being which grounds the series turns out to be immanent on paper alone; thus it cannot actually ground the series. In brief, the presence of Being in the empirical realm is undermined from both sides of the cosmology by a ‘pincer attack of Becoming’ – that is, by Becoming asserting itself and destabilizing Being at the highest and lowest levels of the cosmology. Thus, for Spir, no matter what cosmological conception one chooses, ‘immanence’ is impossible; and the unconditioned (Being) can have no explanatory power in the empirical world of experience.

The ‘impossibility of immanence’ is profoundly important to Spir’s position regarding ‘causality.’ For ‘causality’ demands Being, and therefore (as per the fourth Antinomy) demands ‘immanence.’ As a result, ‘causality’ is a contradictory concept. Because the demand for ‘immanence’ can never be fulfilled, neither can the demand for ‘causality.’ Thus, “instead of being, the [empirical] world is an unending chain of contingency. [...] Under this position, in the end no alteration or change is ever *explained* (1:373-74). As Spir puts it [...]: ‘That something happens *at all*, that alterations occur at all, that change exists, that cannot have a condition or cause’ (2:131). In the end, change simply happens without cause: ‘Thus we must view change in general as a given state of reality, which is maintained through its own impulse, and not ask about its original source’ (2:132). Our feeling that this is intolerable is simply our desire to apply the concept of being [‘causation’/‘immanence’] to becoming” [Green 2002, p.77]. In other words, just like the fourth Antinomy – in which the Thesis position (Being) ultimately collapses into the Antithesis position (Becoming) – the concept of ‘causality’ must collapse into a series of ‘uncaused, arbitrary happenings.’ Of course, the Antithesis position must also collapse – and our experiences inevitably call out for ‘causality’ again. Hence, rather than being a simple falsehood, the concept of ‘causality’ is a necessary contradiction governed by the ‘fundamental antinomy.’

### *II-A3. The Antinomical Spir: Kant’s Schematism as Failed Antinomical Escape Hatch*

ONE mystery still remains regarding Spir’s reading of the Antinomies, however. Why does Spir, a Neo-Kantian, believe that the Antinomies must bar empirical knowledge to *everyone*? The Antinomies are traps designed to undermine transcendental realists – such as Spinoza, Leibniz, and Newton. Kant’s own position – transcendental *idealism* – is posed as an alternative that avoids the Antinomies altogether. As

such, one would expect Spir – a thinker who embraces much of Kant’s theory of judgment – to apply the ‘fundamental antinomy’ to transcendental realists alone. And yet, Spir applies his ‘antinomy’ universally. Why? It would make no sense to do so unless, contra Kant, Spir did not believe that the Kantian idealist position was capable of either avoiding or escaping the Antinomies. This is indeed the case. In fact, Spir believed that rather than seeking an escape hatch to the Antinomies, the proper course of action was to bite the bullet and accept that the Antinomies were inescapable. To briefly summarize his position: Spir believes that the concept of ‘empirical judgment’ is contradictory for the same reason that ‘causality’ is contradictory. Goethe’s chasm yawns between the timeless unity of the ‘I’ (Being) and the plurality and change of sensible experience (Becoming). Spir is led to this conclusion by the flaws in Kant’s theory of judgment – specifically, in his theory of apperception.

As Green explains it: “Apperception is [...] a unity of the self of which we are not empirically aware” [Green 2002, p.40]. “We have independent evidence of the apperceptive self through the ‘I think’ that we can reflectively attach to any of our representations. The self indicated by the ‘I think’ is the subject of experience that is never able to be made an object of experience (B131-33). [...] The fact that we are so aware [of our mental representations, associations, etc.] shows that we have a unity of self that cannot be reduced to empirical regularities” [ibid.]. Apperception is vital to Kant’s account of judgment because it preserves the objective validity of human, empirical judgment in a way that is compatible with the notion of the non-empirical, timeless and transcendental ‘I’ [ibid., p.41]. However, in establishing the objective validity of our judgments about reality, “Kant has explained only the formal character of thought” [ibid.]. He has not explained “why we engage in the *particular* conceptualizations that we do. Why is it that one empirical concept is used rather than another? [...] Why are the striking of a match and its lighting necessarily connected and not the striking of a match and the appearance of a genie?” [ibid., p.41-42]. This problem is what Bailey refers to as the problem of how sensible experience can be admitted into judgment [Bailey 2013, p.146]. If Kant fails to explain why and how the non-empirical ‘I’ applies a specific judgment to a specific empirical experience, then his theory of apperception loses the ability to justify the claim that objective, empirical judgment is possible. In order for the objective validity of an empirical judgment to be preserved in a way which is compatible with the transcendental ‘I,’ Kant needs to be able to account for how the ‘I’ intersects with empirical data – to explain how empirical data can *cause* the ‘I’ to apply a particular judgment. Otherwise, a mysterious gap remains between the ‘I’ and sensible experience, such that we could never explain why or how the empirical experience of striking a match could cause the non-empirical ‘I’ to think anything at all, much less to apply a specific judgment to it [ibid., p.43-45].

Kant attempts to solve this problem by proving that the choices of empirical concepts which the mind applies to particular cases “follow from the necessary character of apperception” [Green 2002, p.42]. To that end, Kant employs what Green calls “Kant’s unhappy solution,” namely: “the deus ex machina of the transcendental synthesis of the imagination, which is supposed to function as a bridge between the passive and spontaneous elements in cognition. It is the imagination that unites them together so that they can be taken up by the spontaneity of the understanding (Kant 1965, A77-78/B102-3)” [ibid., p.44]. This occurs when “the synthesis of the imagination makes the formal categories relevant to the intuition by creating sensory conditions or markers for their application” [ibid.]. Kant’s strategy, which Green refers to as the *schematism*, is “widely acknowledged to be the weak link in Kant’s transcendental deduction” (or, as Bailey puts it: Kant’s solution is “notoriously unsatisfactory” [Bailey 2013, p.146]) [Green 2002, p.44].

We do not have time to adequately discuss the difficulties raised by the *schematism*; or how it creates, as Green argues, a “causal gap between sensory content and empirical content” that “separates our empirical judgments from what they are about” [ibid., p.45]. The easiest analogy is to the third Antinomy. Kant conceives of the transcendental ‘I’ as a Being which is “spontaneous” – meaning that it has ‘free will,’ or an ability “to begin to act of itself, without requiring to be determined to action by an antecedent cause in accordance with the law of causality” (B561/A533) [cf. Green 2002, p.40]. In other words, this ‘I’ entails what the third Antinomy’s Thesis calls the ‘causality of freedom’ – and with it, the threat of violating the “unity of experience,” which would reduce the ‘I’ to an “empty thought entity” [see I-B2.]. Introducing the transcendental *schematism* was meant to supply the answer to this problem – the explanation for how the ‘I’ could be “spontaneous” *and* connected to the agent’s antecedent states (e.g., sensible experiences). However, this introduces a new dilemma: does the *schematism*’s ‘synthesis of the imagination’ occur in a causal fashion, or spontaneously? If it is a causal process, “it is impossible to see how it can be linked to the spontaneity of thought. If it is an act of spontaneity, however, it is hard to see how it can connect with the determinate character of intuition” [ibid., p.45]. In brief, the *schematism* does not allow us to escape the Antinomies, since we are forced to choose between two different understandings of the ‘synthesis of imagination’: the former (i.e., the ‘causal’ understanding) aligns with the Antithesis – the latter (i.e., the ‘spontaneous’ understanding) aligns with the Thesis. As both positions inevitably collapse, they take the *schematism* with them, no matter which option we choose.

Kant’s apperceptive account of judgment is the cornerstone of Spir’s account [Green 2002, p.47]. “For Spir, the distinguishing characteristics of the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception, which is required for thought, are its *timelessness* and *unity*” [ibid.]. However, in taking up so much of Kant’s theory of apperception, Spir now faces the same problem as Kant: that is, the problem of the causal gap between sensible experience and the transcendental ‘I’ – between an empirical judgment and how the ‘I’ applies it. If this causal gap – the same gap that Kant tried to cross with the transcendental *schematism* – cannot be bridged, then Spir cannot explain how “this timeless unity of apperception *connects* with the temporal flow of sensations” [ibid., p.47]. “Spir generally speaks of the problem as one of connecting the temporality and particularity of sensation [i.e. sensible experience] with the timelessness and simplicity of apperception [i.e. thought]. Spir takes this gap so seriously that he denies that it can be bridged at all” [ibid.]. Accordingly, he denies the validity of empirical judgments. Once again, rather than being simple falsehoods, the concepts which we need in order to think of reality (‘empirical judgment,’ ‘causality,’ etc.), prove to be contradictions.

Put simply, Kant’s transcendental ‘I’ of apperception is a timeless, unconditional unity. Hence, the ‘I’ is Being, every bit as much as the unconditioned is Being. As such, Kant’s transcendental realism does not avoid the Antinomies by Spir’s lights – since it still has to account for how the chasm between Being and Becoming can be bridged (or, in this specific case, the gap between thought and sensible experience). Kant’s *schematism* is precisely such an attempt to locate a bridge between thought (Being) and sensible experience (Becoming). Yet Kant’s *schematism* fails, and thereby Kant’s theory of apperception fails to bridge thought and experience, Being and Becoming. Being, whether it is conceived as a transcendental ‘I’ or the unconditioned ground of a cosmological series, fails to be immanent to the world of Becoming (i.e. the world of experience). Thus, Kant’s transcendental idealism not only fails to avoid the Antinomies, it fails to escape them; and Spir concludes that they simply cannot be escaped.

For Kant, the lesson of the Antinomies is that transcendental realism leads to contradictions, and philosophy requires a transcendently ideal alternative. Kant constructs the Antinomies thinking he has an escape hatch, but Spir takes the failure of Kant's *schematism* as proof that his escape hatch fails with it. Rather than seeking to find an alternative to the *schematism*, Spir denies that an antinomial escape hatch exists. Hence, he derives a very different lesson from the Antinomies: that contradiction is an inextricable aspect of reality. There is no alternative to be sought. He boils the Antinomies down to a single principle – the 'fundamental antinomy' – and compels us to bite the bullet.

#### *II-A4. The Antinomial Spir: His "Error Theory" and the Threat of Noncognitivism*

FOR Spir, "[i]nsofar as we *think*, we must be thinking of a world without any time or *particularity* – an a-temporal Parmenidean One" [Green 2002, p.47]. But if that is the case, then what do we call our thoughts about this world, and our empirical experiences within it? What do we call empirical judgment, which, as we have seen above, Spir takes to be a contradictory concept? We cannot simply deny their existence, for even if such thoughts are contradictory, there is no denying that we experience them. So what are they? Spir's answer: we call them "errors."

Green explains Spir's "error theory" in this way. The "nature of representation is always the same – it is the necessary unity standing outside the temporal flow of consciousness. It therefore follows that individual representations [i.e. thoughts] do not actually exist at all, rather only *individual content* [i.e., sense experiences]," and that "representations differ from each other only in this content and receive the semblance of individuality" (Spir 1877, 1:73) [Green 2002, p.47-48]. Thought is independent of individuality and particularity [ibid.], and "if we deviate from being [i.e., Spir's 'Parmenidean One'], we fail to think" (Spir 1877, 1:30-31). As such, "thought exists in inescapable tension with the world of experience," because we cannot think anything that we meet in experience [ibid.]. "[C]ognition of experience is contradictory because it is an attempt to force the image of necessity onto the temporal flows of sensation. We are thinking about the world only to the extent that we apply the image of unity, and yet in doing so we conceive a world that contradicts particularity and the flow of time. The idea of the empirical world contains within itself this contradiction between particularity and unity, between time and timelessness" [ibid.]. Because concepts of Being – unity, timelessness, self-identity, causality, etc. – are as necessary for cognition as they are incompatible with the Becoming that is evident through sensible experience, all empirical judgment or knowledge is false, a mere instance of erroneous thought [ibid., p.60]. This is Spir's "error theory," and it too is governed by the 'fundamental antinomy.'

However, it must be noted that Spir's "error theory" is fundamentally unstable. His argument for the erroneous nature of empirical judgment – i.e., that it is false on account of the impossibility of taking up sensible experience into judgment – only justifies the claim that empirical objects cannot be *thought*. It does not provide us with reason to believe that our thought about empirical objects *errs*. Yet if Spir cannot prove that falsehood in cognition occurs [cf. Spir 1877, 1:107], then his "error theory" has no justification [ibid., 1:81-89]. Instead of an "error theory," Green explains, the inability to think of objects "would push him toward a noncognitivist position" [Green 2002, p.66]. Spir seems to sense this problem, so he argues "that error occurs because thought about multiplicity" – which is entailed by empirical objects – "rather than being only empirical association, 'stands under the influence of two sorts of laws'" (Spir 1877, 1:107) [Green 2002, p.63]. The "two sorts of laws" Spir mentions are a) empirical laws of association, and b) logical

laws [ibid.]. “Spir admits that ‘if the function of thought were determined only through logical laws, falsehood in cognition could not occur’ (1:107)” [Green 2002, p.63]. Moreover, empirical associations do not qualify as thought (Spir 1877, 1:83). However, Spir argues, because empirical judgments fall under both logical laws *and* empirical laws of association, the tension between them leads to an error: a false belief in individual, particular thoughts. These cannot exist, for the only thought which is possible is the universal, non-particular thought of Being – of the absolute Parmenidean One [cf. Green 2002, p.47-48, 63]. Thus, Spir claims, our empirical judgments are indeed errors, and not merely non-thoughts.

Yet, Spir’s solution struggles with the same sort of problems that beset Kant’s *schematism*: How do these contingent laws of association *connect* with the pure Being of thought? It would be more consistent, Green argues, to claim “we are thinking only to the extent that our thoughts are of an unconditioned unity. If we deviate from this unconditioned unity and admit plurality, we do not err – we simply fail to think” [ibid., p.64]. Note this tension between “non-thought” [or noncognitivism] and “error theory”; for we shall see that Nietzsche’s theory of judgment falls into a very similar pattern.

And so concludes our discussion of Spir, the purpose of which was two-fold. First, we aimed to show how Spir’s ‘fundamental antinomy’ was a direct response to Kant’s Antinomies; thus connecting Spir to the antinomial through line, which will, in turn, allow us to connect it to Nietzsche. Second, by examining the ramifications of the ‘fundamental antinomy’ – particularly regarding Spir’s theories of causality and judgment (his “error theory”) – we set the stage for an examination of the impact it would have on Nietzsche’s thinking. Nietzsche’s response to the ‘fundamental antinomy’ – which drove him to reject a) the possibility of objective empirical judgment, and b) the very existence of Being – not only characterized a significant portion of his philosophy for the majority (perhaps the entirety) of his career. It is what drove him toward an “antithetic view” of reality, and, by extension, toward an antithetic alignment with Spinoza.

### *II-B1. Nietzsche the Neo-Kantian?: Spir’s Relation to Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context*<sup>49</sup>

IT was near the end of a period of intense engagement with Neo-Kantianism<sup>50</sup> that Nietzsche discovered Spir. “Nietzsche borrowed the first edition of Afrikan Alexandrovich Spir’s (1837-90) *Denken und Wirklichkeit* [...] in 1873,” Brobjer explains, “and rereading it extended his knowledge of Kant and influenced his writing” [Brobjer 2008, p.59]. He borrowed the first edition of Spir’s book from the Basel University Library five times between 1873 and 1874 – more than any other book during that period [Green 2002, p.46; cf. Crescenzi 1994]. Then, in 1877, Nietzsche would buy and intensively read the second edition of the work [Brobjer 2008, p.59]. He would continue reading, re-reading, annotating and excerpting from it for the rest of his active life [ibid., Table 3].<sup>51</sup> In fact, “many of Nietzsche’s notes and comments regarding epistemological questions were written in response to, and in opposition to, *Denken und Wirklichkeit*” [ibid., p.71]. One of the main ideas from Spir that forcefully impacted Nietzsche was his “postulation of a single non-empirical object of judgment, on the grounds that the temporal and manifold character of sensible experience contradicts the requirements of concept application” [Bailey 2013, p.136]. Although he rejected the idea of a ‘non-empirical object of judgment,’ Nietzsche absorbed the reasoning behind it – that ‘the character of sensible experience contradicts the requirements of concept application’ – and as a result, became skeptical about the possibility that any judgment could be successfully applied to reality; or, in other words, that any judgment could be “true.” “Indeed,” Bailey continues, “before *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche found himself in the peculiar position of rejecting the notion of an inaccessible reality in



the name of the reality that is accessible to us whilst also denying that we can make genuine judgments about that reality” [ibid., p.141]. Nietzsche’s early unpublished writings, as well as his published works from *Human, All Too Human* to *Beyond Good and Evil*, “endorsed Spir’s argument for the impossibility of empirical judgments, according to which a concept can be applied only to a self-identical object and no such object manifested in sensible experience” [ibid., p.142]. This is indeed a strange position, as “it is paradoxical to claim to know that we can have no genuine knowledge,” especially while at the same time affirming (as Nietzsche does) “the importance of empirical knowledge and making numerous knowledge claims” [ibid., p.138].

It is in moments of this sort that the naturalistically-inclined Nietzsche reader feels the long, cold shadow of the wastebasket looming over them, and out of charity they attempt to reinterpret his thought into a more defensible form. This tendency has affected not only how Nietzsche is read, but also how his intellectual development is charted. Bailey, for example, in his article on Nietzsche’s relationship to Kant and the Kantians, de-emphasizes the period in which Nietzsche was most under the influence of Spir by leapfrogging over it. Though Bailey does admit, as he must, that Nietzsche questioned the accessibility of knowledge to the human perspective for quite some time, he seems to think this period better represents the Spirean influence which Nietzsche eventually escaped rather than the mature thought of Nietzsche’s later works [ibid. p.143-44; cf. fn.23].<sup>52</sup> Bailey argues that in *Twilight* [Ch.3, “Reason’ in Philosophy”], “Nietzsche abandons Spir’s argument for the impossibility of empirical judgments.” Moreover, Nietzsche “not only rejects the postulation of non-empirical objects, as he had done previously, but also denies that reality can be determined on logical grounds” – a key component of Spir’s argument [ibid., p.142]. Thus, “only in *Twilight* [...] does Nietzsche reject the Spirean grounds on which he had previously denied that we can make empirical judgments – that is, the ‘logical’ grounds that concepts can be applied only to a self-identical object. By rejecting these grounds [...] he comes to accept that we can make judgments of this reality” [ibid., p.143]. While Bailey’s argument is entirely plausible and worthy of serious attention, it is incredibly limited in scope. By jumping to Nietzsche’s arguments in *Twilight of the Idols* (written in 1888), Bailey passes over quite nearly Nietzsche’s entire career (which ended in 1889 with his complete mental collapse). In what seems to be an attempt to save at least some part of Nietzsche’s work – i.e. the parts which can be justified from a naturalistic standpoint – Bailey jettisons most of Nietzsche’s career as an incomprehensible (and indefensible) Spirean paradox.

Yet, unfortunately for Bailey, right up until very end of Nietzsche’s career – even as he worked on his intended magnum opus, *The Will to Power*, which he never completed due to his mental collapse – there continued to be recurring echoes of the Spirean themes from his pre-*Twilight* writings. He still returns, time and time again, to the notion that to the extent that we think at all, what we think must be false: “Parmenides said, ‘One cannot think of what is not’; – we are at the other end of the extreme, and say, ‘What can be thought must certainly be a fiction’” (WP 539) [cf. Green 2002, p.60]. Therefore, even if Nietzsche did break with the Neo-Kantians in *Twilight*, it was not a clean break. Bailey might counter that the book known as *The Will to Power* is an amalgam of notes assembled after his death.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, the arguments found in *The Will* may not be positions he was truly committed to – they may simply be more of his famous philosophical “experiments.” According to Bailey, Nietzsche’s dabbling with idealism (particularly in his notebooks) are usually mere experiments to which Nietzsche never truly committed himself [Bailey 2013, p.137-138] – and this may be true. Still, it must be noted that extreme caution must

be used in declaring this or that statement by Nietzsche to be an “experiment.” For it is incredibly easy for a commentator to nip-tuck away any aspect of Nietzsche’s thinking which is offensive to their theory by declaring it a mere “experiment.” Moreover, even if they were “experiments,” the fact that Nietzsche was still “experimenting” with Spirean concepts in his post-*Twilight* notes implies that he had not completely abandoned Spir. In fact, since Bailey’s main source of evidence that Nietzsche had left the Spirean view of judgment behind is merely one chapter from one book in one period of Nietzsche’s active life (that is, *TI*: “Reason’ in Philosophy”), the onus falls on Bailey to prove that the argument from *Twilight* was not, itself, an “experiment.” Either way, Nietzsche’s *Twilight of the Idols* likely represents a far less dramatic departure from Spir than Bailey suggests. While it is plausible that Nietzsche drifted from Spir and the Neo-Kantians as he matured, the evidence seems to suggest that he never completely escaped the grip of the transcendental tradition [Green 2002, p.165]. Therefore, one cannot understand Nietzsche’s thought and its development, not even in his final works, by leapfrogging over his seemingly paradoxical Spirean period. If sense can be made of either, it must be made in light of Spir’s influence.

In either case, we are faced with a clear distinction. Where the influence of Spir and Neo-Kantian philosophy on Nietzsche’s thought prior to 1888 is well-established and agreed upon [Bailey and Green both attest to it (Bailey 2013, p.141)], the relationship between Nietzsche and Kantian philosophy after *Twilight* is unclear. Therefore, we will be limiting our window of Spirean influence to the years between 1873 (the year Nietzsche first discovered Spir) and 1888 (the year *TI* was written). This is another boon to Green’s theory: if true, it canvases nearly the whole of Nietzsche’s career, and it retains (some) value even with regard to the last year of Nietzsche’s sanity – the year in which he was furthest removed from the Neo-Kantians who had influenced his thinking for so long. For if Nietzsche was still in the middle of a process of separating himself from Spir when he collapsed – if he had not yet “had done” with Spir by the writing of *Twilight*, as Bailey seems to believe – then no picture of Nietzsche’s thought, at any stage of his life, can be complete without accounting for Spir’s place in it.

### *II-B2. Nietzsche the Contrarian?: Spir’s Relation to Nietzsche’s View of Contradictions*

“NIETZSCHE’S comments concerning logic,” Green argues, “provide further support for a Neo-Kantian reading of his epistemologies” [Green 2002, p.55]. Nietzsche famously (or infamously) questions logic’s utility – especially later in his career as he drifted from Spir’s logic-oriented arguments (as Bailey has pointed out [Bailey 2013, p.142-43]). However, this aspect of Nietzsche’s philosophy is explored almost exclusively “by those who argue that his philosophy itself must be understood independently of logic” (Haar 1977, p.6-7); an approach which “ignores the fact that Nietzsche praises logical form in reasoning (*HA* 265) and that he provides, or at least attempts to provide, logically consistent, if extremely compressed, arguments for his conclusions” [Green 2002, p.55]. However, he nevertheless makes radical claims regarding logical principles, such as his criticisms of the principle of noncontradiction. Nietzsche does not claim that the principle of noncontradiction is without value. However, he “does [...] argue that an acceptance of the principle is not demanded by the nature of the world. It is instead a consequence of a merely psychological disinclination to contradict” (see *KSA* 7:7[110]; *WP* 515, 516, 535) [Green 2002, p. 56]. Nietzsche’s view makes sense if we accept the Spirean influence in his thought. “Because Nietzsche denies the objective validity of all judgments,” on account of his acceptance of the Spirean argument for the ‘fundamental antinomy,’ “he denies that anything but our subjective dispositions stand in the way of

contradiction" (*WP* 516; *KSA* 9:6[124]) [*ibid.*]. The world can only demand noncontradiction from us if we can successfully form and apply concepts to it – a possibility that Spir (and consequently Nietzsche) denies [*ibid.*; cf. Bailey 2013, p.136].

It is common for sympathetic commentators to attempt a de-radicalization of Nietzsche's stance regarding logic. "Consider," Boehm suggests, "Maudemarie Clark, who takes Nietzsche to hold that our judgments can be true or false not with respect to things-in-themselves but according to our 'best standards of rational acceptability' (1990, 50)," which our current theories can fail to meet [Green 2002, p.56-57]. Such an interpretation does not fit Nietzsche's stance, however. As Green observes, "if there is anything that violates our best standards of rational acceptability, it is contradictions" [*ibid.*, p.57]. Leiter is another example. In his discussion of Nietzsche's 'perspectivism,' he "accepts that Nietzsche abandons metaphysical realism (1994, 343-51), but he rejects what he calls the 'Received View' of Nietzsche's epistemology, under which 'no perspective can enjoy an *epistemic* privilege over any other' (334)" [*ibid.*, p. 57]. Leiter writes: "The *epistemic* merits of a view are those bearing on its claim to count as knowledge; at a bare minimum, then, an epistemically privileged view must be capable of being true or false. Truth carries an implicit requirement of objectivity: what counts as being the case (as true) must be independent of our predilections" [Leiter 1994, p.336]. However, if Nietzsche did believe that our judgments were capable of being 'true or false' by 'objective' standards which are 'independent of our predilections,' then we would expect Nietzsche to reject contradictions as mere falsehoods. As Green succinctly puts it, "He doesn't" [Green 2002, p.57]. Instead, Nietzsche claims that "[w]e are unable to affirm and deny one and the same thing," but "this is a subjective empirical law, not the expression of any 'necessity' but only of an 'inability'" [*WP* 516; cf. Green 2002, p.56].<sup>54</sup> Therefore, even if we accept that Nietzsche drifted from Spir and Spir's notions regarding logic in his post-*Twilight* years, as Bailey does, the influence of Spir in Nietzsche's thinking remains. Accepting this allows us to better make sense of Nietzsche's epistemology. These attitude are entirely consistent if one allows that contradictions can actually exist, as per the 'fundamental antinomy.'

Accepting Nietzsche's Spirean attitude toward contradictions also helps us to make sense of other aspects of Nietzsche's thought – for example, his views of self-identity. Nietzsche repeatedly denies the existence of self-identical objects, in his published works (*HA* 11, 18-19; *BGE* 4; *TI* 3:5) and his notebooks (*KSA* 9:11[329-30]; *WP* 516, 521, 552, 574) – and yet, this facet of Nietzsche's philosophy "has not been given much attention by commentators. To the extent that the idea has been addressed, it has generally been assumed that Nietzsche rejects *diachronically* self-identical objects, [...] as opposed to *synchronically* self-identical objects, that is, objects that are self-identical at the very same moment. An example is Maudemarie Clark, who reads Nietzsche as rejecting a metaphysical world of *eternal* substances only (1990, 104-9). For Clark, Nietzsche's denial that reality is self-identical is compatible with standard empirical and scientific knowledge" [Green 2002, p.60]. Green provides us with two reason why it is more consistent to read Nietzsche as denying that anything is self-identical at any moment, not merely that a thing's identity does not endure over time. The first is that Nietzsche "links his rejections of self-identical substances with a rejection of the logical principle of self-identity (*KSA* 8:9[1, p.136], 12:7[4, p.266]; *WP* 520). To read Nietzsche as rejecting merely diachronic self-identity is to conclude that he is confused about one of the simplest and most rudimentary logical principles, for the logical principle of self-identity concerns synchronic self-identity only. It says nothing about whether an object is the same thing over time.

Nor can one argue that Nietzsche means something else by ‘law of self-identity,’ for he makes it clear that his target is one of the ‘basic laws of logic’ (*WP* 530). The second piece of evidence is Nietzsche’s frequent claims that reality is *contradictory* (e.g. *PTG* 15; *KSA* 7:19 [239], 9:21[3.53]). [...] Once again, the idea that reality is contradictory must be a claim about a lack of synchronic self-identity. For nothing about an object changing *over time* is incompatible with the law of noncontradiction” (cf. *WP* 517) [*ibid.*, p.60-61]. Nietzsche’s reasoning can be better tracked if we accept that his views regarding logic, noncontradiction, and self-identity have their source in Spir’s ‘fundamental antinomy.’ In fact, “[w]hen Nietzsche spells out the self-identical objects whose existence he is rejecting (*HA* 18), he quotes Spir (1877, 2:177),” driving home the lasting impact of Spir on Nietzsche’s thought [*ibid.*, p.61].

In brief, through the majority of his career, Nietzsche embraces some radical conclusions in regard to the notion of judgment (on account of Spir’s influence). And even if he drifted away from Spir in the last year of his productive life, he still retained elements of Spirean thought in his own – as evidenced by his notes regarding logic and self-identity. As such, whether we read Nietzsche’s works for the enrichment of naturalist projects, post-modernist projects, or any other project whatsoever, we will be that much more successful to the degree that we can properly account for the Spirean influence on his thought at each of the various stages of his development – rather than strategically ignoring that influence.

It is also worth noting that the strategy of de-radicalization is often applied to Nietzsche’s theory of judgment as well. Bailey, for example, attempts to de-radicalize Nietzsche’s skepticism regarding empirical judgments. He argues that Nietzsche’s critique of Neo-Kantian notions of an ‘inaccessible reality’ “suggest that he does not hold [our] capacities ‘simplify’ or ‘falsify’ reality or that the notion of reality is incoherent, and instead indicate that, in rejecting [...] inaccessible reality, he also admits a reality which is, [...] in principle, accessible to our perceptual and conceptual capacities, while being ontologically independent of them” [Bailey 2013., p.139]. Bailey is claiming that Nietzsche’s rejection of an ‘inaccessible reality’ is evidence that Nietzsche supports empirical judgment. Nietzsche merely asserts that human knowledge is perspectival; he does not “preclude knowledge such that reality must be inaccessible, or *completely incomprehensible*, to perspectival knowers like ourselves” [*ibid.*, p.139-140]. Nietzsche is trying to *protect* the accessibility of knowledge to partial, experimental, “frog’s” perspectives [cf. *BGE*, ch.1, §2] from the Kantians who would deny that reality is accessible to our perceptual/conceptual capacities [*ibid.*, p.138]. However, these attempts struggle for the same reasons that Clark’s and Leiter’s attempts to de-radicalize Nietzsche’s views of logic struggle. Nietzsche embraces contradictions (*WP* 515), declares all knowledge to be a fiction (*WP* 539), and questions our ability to form ‘concepts’ (*WP* 516; *KSA* 9:6[124]). Moreover, even Bailey admits that Nietzsche endorses Spir’s argument for the impossibility of empirical judgments prior to *Twilight* [*ibid.*, p.142]. The final nail in the coffin is that Nietzsche – following Spir – continually identifies ‘thought’ with ‘Being’ (*PTG* 12-13; *TI* 3:2; *WP* 517-520); yet he insists that the fact that thought “moves” and comes-to-be is proof that there is no ‘Being’ and only ‘Becoming’ exists (*HA* 2, *TI* 3:2, *KSA* 7:23[12 & 19], *WP* 1062) [Green 2002, p.51-52]. At times he argues that to lose the false belief in ‘Being’ would cost us the ability to think (*WP* 487). Even *if* he softened on this stance in his post-*Twilight* works, he never fully relinquished the notion that all thought falsifies. The question is: why? Once again, Spir’s ‘fundamental antinomy’ can provide us with an answer. The short version is this: if he accepts objective empirical judgment as a possibility, Nietzsche loses his metaphysics of ‘radical Becoming.’

*II-B3. Nietzsche and the Antinomial Through Line: The “Error Theory” and ‘Radical Becoming’*

GREEN explains that “much of what Nietzsche says about the falsity of judgment – the incompatibility with change and becoming – has strong parallels in Spir’s thought” [Green 2002, p.48]. “In a revealing passage in his notebooks, Nietzsche paraphrases much of Spir’s discussion of the fundamental antinomy (Spir 1877, 1:379-80) and then offers his *own* solution (see D’Iorio 1993, 277-83), under which *only* error, and not true knowledge of the self-identical, exists:

*The antinomy:* “the elements in given reality that are *foreign* to the true essence of the thing cannot be derived from this true essence, and thus *must* have been added to it— but from where? there is nothing outside the true essence of things [that is, outside of Being]— therefore an explanation of the world is just as much necessary as impossible.” I untie the knot in this way: the true essence of the world [that is, Being] is a *fabrication* of the representing being [that is, the ‘ego,’ the ‘I,’ the ‘doer’], without which it would be impossible to represent. Those elements in the given reality that are foreign to this fabricated “true essence” [...] are *not* added. But also the representing being, whose existence is tied to the *erroneous* beliefs, must be itself *created* [...] representing *and* the belief in the self-identical and enduring must be created *at the same time*.— My view then is that *everything organic* presupposes representation. (KSA 9:11[329]).

“Thus, Nietzsche agrees with Spir that empirical knowledge is contradictory and therefore false. But he disagrees with Spir about the true nature of reality. Instead of claiming that reality is in its essence simple and unitary, [...] Nietzsche argues that reality is becoming. *This amounts to adopting the antithetic positions in Kant’s antinomies as the correct description of reality.* But Nietzsche nevertheless accepts that thinking requires the application of the *thetic* [A1, A2] position to the world. Therefore the true nature of reality cannot be correctly described” [ibid., p.67-68]. This passage highlights a number of recurring themes in Nietzsche’s writings: the rejection of the ‘I,’ the rejection of the existence of Being, and (most importantly) the notion that the ‘I’ and ‘Being’ are created by “erroneous beliefs” which are ‘presupposed’ by “everything organic.” In other words, that all conscious, organic “beings” necessarily falsify reality in order to *think* of it. This is Nietzsche’s “error theory,” and it is directly adapted from Spir’s; altered to accord with his rejection of Being – that is, his metaphysics of ‘radical Becoming.’

Like Spir and Kant before him, Nietzsche found himself facing what Bailey calls the problem of how sensible experience can be admitted into judgment [Bailey 2013, p.146] – and what we referred to as the gap between the transcendental ‘I’ and the empirical series. Kant tried to bridge the gap with the “deus ex machina” of the transcendental ‘synthesis of the imagination’ [ibid., p.44]. However, to repeat Bailey’s observation: “to claim that the imagination provides criteria for the application of concepts to sensible experience, is notoriously unsatisfactory and it might be more fruitful to reject the notion of judgment on which the problem rests” [Bailey 2013, p.146]. This is exactly what Nietzsche is doing when he denies the existence of a transcendental ‘I,’ or a ‘doer’ behind ‘deeds.’<sup>55</sup> By denying that the ‘I’ is anything more than a fabrication which facilitates representation, he avoids the problem of taking up sensible experience into judgment altogether – for without the non-empirical, transcendental ‘I,’ there is no longer anything that stands outside of the empirical series. As a result, the mysterious gap between ‘I’ and empirical series is collapsed in the direction of the series. Under such a conception, knowledge can be accounted for as some amalgamation of drives and experiences. This is the aspect of Nietzsche’s account of judgment which the

naturalistically-inclined reader finds amenable. By eliminating non-empirical beings such as the Kantian transcendental 'I,' there is no longer anything beyond the empirical world to account for.

However, in celebrating Nietzsche's rejection of non-empirical beings, naturalistic commentators have overlooked (willfully, it seems) the other half of Nietzsche's motivation for doing so. Nietzsche does not stop at rejecting the 'I' (or the "representing being"), whose existence is tied to "erroneous beliefs"; he also rejects the existence of 'Being' itself (the "true essence" of things) as a mere projection of the falsely posited 'I.' In other words, Nietzsche is arguing that 'Being' is an error built atop an error. While it may be tempting to argue as Maudemarie Clark does that Nietzsche is merely rejecting the existence of *eternal* beings or substances, as we saw above, Nietzsche rejects synchronic self-identity – meaning he denies that a "thing" is self-identical at any given moment in time (*HA* 11, 18-19; *BGE* 4; *TI* 3:5; *KSA* 9:11[329-30]; *WP* 516-521, 552, 574). As Nietzsche says in the passage just quoted, "the true essence of the world is a *fabrication* of the representing being"; both "representing *and* the belief in the self-identical and enduring [i.e. synchronic and diachronic self-identity] must be created *at the same time*" (*KSA* 9:11[329]). He does this because he accepts Spir's 'fundamental antinomy,' which, as we saw above [see *II-A2*], argues for the impossibility of immanence – thus removing all explanatory power from 'Being.' His solution, therefore, is to eliminate 'Being' altogether. 'Being,' therefore, is merely an illusion – an "error" which is necessary for thought. 'Becoming' cannot be thought, and yet 'Becoming' is all there is. As such, all thought falsifies reality. Like Spir, Nietzsche accepts that empirical experience is a contradiction. Unlike Spir, he believes that the contradictory realm of sensible experience is the only one that exists. Note also Nietzsche's claim that the erroneous belief in the 'I' and in 'Being' are created "at the same time." Because 'Being' and the 'I' are created at the same time, they must be rejected at the same time. The 'I,' as we argued above (*II-A3*), is a *Being*. Nietzsche's rejection of the 'I' is motivated by a rejection of Being; which, in turn, is motivated by accepting of Spir's antinomial reasoning while rejecting its 'afterworldly' conclusions.

Green notes a problem in Nietzsche's theory of judgment, however – "a problem explaining error that is curiously the compliment of Spir's" (cf. Spir 1877, 1:81) [Green 2002, p.68]. Spir struggles because he cannot explain how deviation from Being result in erroneous thought, rather than a failure to think.<sup>56</sup> Nietzsche, on the other hand, struggles because in giving up Being, and the transcendental 'I' along with it, he loses a significant piece of Spir's justification for the notion that empirical judgment is contradictory. Spir, like Kant, believes that judgment must be grounded in the 'I' (as 'causality' must be grounded in the 'unconditioned'). Yet the 'I' fails to be immanent to the empirical series. It is this tension between the 'I' (which is Being) and sensible experience (which is Becoming) that generates the 'fundamental antinomy.' By collapsing the gap toward the series – that is, by denying the existence of Being – Nietzsche removes the source of tension (the unbridgeable gap between Being and Becoming) that Spir's theory relies upon. Furthermore, since Nietzsche follows Spir in associating thought with Being, and yet rejects the existence of Being, Nietzsche now has to explain how thought is "possible at all in the world of becoming" [Green 2002, p.69]; and he needs to do so in a way which is compatible with his "error theory." How can notions of Being – both 'self-identical objects,' and the 'I' which thinks and has knowledge of them – arise out of a world characterized by 'radical Becoming' [ibid.]? How and why does Becoming create the deception of Being?<sup>57</sup> Although Nietzsche does at times suggest that an explanation is possible (cf. *KSA* 9:11[268]; *WP* 517), it is unclear what that could be [ibid., p.69-70]. As a result, Nietzsche is compelled to make a choice: accept that Becoming cannot be thought, and thus lose thought altogether; or accept that Becoming *can* be

thought, thus accepting the possibility of ‘objective,’ empirical judgment. Yet, if Nietzsche were to take up either position, he would lose his “error theory” – and with it, a good deal of his justification for rejecting both Being and the transcendental ‘I’ in the first place.

To put the problem in another way: Nietzsche’s “error theory” “appears to be predicated upon an antinaturalist theory of cognition, which, given Nietzsche’s rigorous naturalism, will not allow cognition to exist at all – even erroneous cognition” [Green 2002, p.70]. Green argues there are two solutions that Nietzsche could (and at times does) turn to: the “first is to bite the bullet and deny that cognition occurs [i.e. noncognitivism]. [...] The second is to allow that thought within becoming is possible [i.e. embrace a naturalized theory of cognition]” – both of which would force Nietzsche to give up his argument that thought falsifies [ibid., p.70]. This explains many of the apparent contradictions in Nietzsche’s notes and published works regarding judgment. The truth is Nietzsche employed, at different times, three different positions regarding judgment: (1) “error theory,” (2) noncognitivism (a position which Green believes to be generally overlooked by Nietzsche scholarship [ibid.]), and (3) a naturalized theory of cognition. It is option (3) that writers like Bailey, Leiter, and Clark tend to focus on (to the exclusion of the others) and which Nietzsche began to favor in his post-*Twilight* writings. (Recall, however, that he never completely abandoned his Spirean influence, and we will unfortunately never know exactly what direction he was heading in when he collapsed.) What Spir offers us here is not a single explanation for all of Nietzsche’s thought, but a simple theory which unifies the apparent deviations in Nietzsche’s thought: they were all various expressions of an instability at the heart of Nietzsche’s adaptation of Spir’s “error theory.”

It should be noted, however, that Nietzsche’s deviations were not random “experiments.” In order to fully understand Nietzsche’s theory of judgment, we need to understand why this apparent vacillation occurs. It is my belief that positions (1), (2), and (3) can be unified by a single theory of judgment, and that a careful analysis of Nietzsche’s apparent vacillation between them points the way toward it; but these are topics which we do not have time to address here. For our purposes, it is enough to realize that Nietzsche’s various positions regarding empirical judgment – “error theory,” noncognitivist, and naturalistic – are best explained through their relationship to Spir’s “error theory”; and that Spir’s “error theory” is itself a result of the ‘fundamental antinomy.’ Since the ‘fundamental antinomy’ is a direct response to the Antinomies, and the Antinomies are a direct response to Spinozism, Nietzsche’s theories of judgment connect him – via Spir – to the antinomial through line.

Before moving on, there is one more thing we should note: Nietzsche’s “error theory” is one of the key components of his rejection of Being. Indeed, Nietzsche’s ‘radical Becoming’ is difficult to justify without it. From the point of view of option (3) – i.e. naturalized theories of cognition – the notion of ‘radical Becoming’ would appear to be nothing other than the “crackpot metaphysics” Leiter says it is. If empirical objects and human judgment about them are no longer contradictory, then how can Nietzsche justify his stance regarding noncontradiction, or his claim that synchronic self-identity is impossible? And if he cannot claim that synchronic self-identity does not exist, then how can he deny that Being exists? By option (3)’s lights, a metaphysics based in Being is far more consistent. Some might be tempted to turn to option (2) for a justification of ‘radical Becoming’; but as Green points out, noncognitivism is as unstable as the “error theory” [Green 2002, p.71]. “If one entirely denies the existence of truth and falsity but allows that the sources of our judgments in becoming gives us reasons to continue judging as we did before, the question then arises why these reasons are not sufficient to formulate a naturalized theory of *truthful* cogni-

tion” [ibid.]. Put another way, there is nothing about a noncognitivist position which is incompatible with Being. So what if none of our thoughts qualify as ‘thought’ by Kantian standards? How could that justify the claim that nothing is ever self-identical? In brief, if Nietzsche cannot defend option (1) – i.e. his “error theory” – his justification for ‘radical Becoming’ is significantly weakened, and his metaphysics is at risk of collapsing back into Being (just as the fourth Antithesis collapses back into the Thesis).

In other words, Nietzsche is not content to bite the bullet where the Antinomies are concerned (as Spir is). Nietzsche wants to find a *solution* to the problem. His “error theory” and metaphysics of ‘radical Becoming’ were meant to be that solution. Yet the instability at the core of his “error theory” threatens to collapse back into a naturalized theory of cognition, thus collapsing back into the possibility Being – back into the Antinomies. Nietzsche faces a similar problem at the metaphysical level.

#### *II-B4. Nietzsche and the Antinomial Through Line: ‘Causality’ and the ‘Pincer Attack of Being’*

“NIETZSCHE’S views about causality have proven intractable to commentators,” Green explains. “Given his naturalism, Nietzsche is obviously well disposed toward causal explanations. Indeed, it is precisely his commitment to causal explanations of human judgment that leads him to deny the existence of cognition [and ‘Being’]. Furthermore, Nietzsche’s works often contain cautions concerning the correct use of causal reasoning – for example, that one should not confuse effect with cause (*HA* 608; *TI* 6:1). These passages appear to presuppose the general respectability of causal reasoning. Nevertheless Nietzsche also engages in one of the most radical critiques of the concept of causation in the history of philosophy. The main theme in this critique is that cause and effect are somehow improperly separated from the flow of events (*BGE* 21; *KSA* 9:6[412 and 433]; *WP* 624, 633) [cf. *GS* 112; *WP* 624]. [...] These fictitious isolated causes, Nietzsche argues, are modeled after human agents (e.g. *GS* 127; *GM* 1:13; *KSA* 9:12[63]; *WP* 550, 552, 547). ‘The interpretation of an event as either an act or the suffering of an act (–thus every act a becoming other, presupposes an author and someone upon whom “change” is effected)’ (*WP* 546). What we need is a reading that can make sense of these critiques *and* Nietzsche’s philosophical sympathy to causal explanations. Once again, Spir’s fundamental antinomy can provide the answer.” [Green 2002, p. 75]. To put it briefly, Nietzsche accepts Spir’s arguments for the impossibility of an immanent unconditioned,<sup>58</sup> and the implications this has for the concept of causality. Unlike Spir, Nietzsche is unwilling to grant that ‘causality’ itself is simply contradictory.

According to Brobjer, “Spir argued that it is the task of philosophy to seek absolutely true knowledge (and thus assumed the dichotomy of a true and apparent reality, which Nietzsche came to reject)” [Brobjer 2008, p.71]. This explains why Spir held onto the concept of Being, even as he denied that Being offered any explanatory power regarding the empirical world: for him, the inexperienceable world of the Parmenidean One (i.e. Being) was the last bastion of absolute truth. Nietzsche, however, when offered a choice between explanatorily useless Being and ‘causality,’ he diverged from Spir. Rather than abandon ‘causality’ as a contradiction, he chose to abandon Being (and ‘absolute truths’) as non-existent. Instead, he tries to ground the concept of ‘causality’ in Becoming. However, this poses a few difficulties. Because there is no Being, there is no such thing as self-identity (synchronic or otherwise). As such, not only are there no self-identical ‘things,’ there are no self-identical ‘events.’ Clearly, under such circumstances, the concept of ‘causality’ cannot be conceived in the traditional sense: i.e., as a process of discrete ‘objects’ or



'events' making contact with and moving each other like billiard balls or falling dominoes. For Nietzsche, 'causality' itself has to be re-conceived – not as an absolute truth, but as a “conditional unity.”

So now Nietzsche has a new problem: How can causality be explained if there is no 'Being' to ground it? Green argues that Nietzsche's attempts to solve this problem – from within his Spirean framework – leave him vacillating between two pictures of an antithetic reality of Becoming [Green 2002, p.85]. The first picture (what Green calls “the chain version” of the antithetic picture), relies upon external causation to explain change – but this leads back to the problem of causal chains always demanding to be grounded in some kind of Being, and thus back to the Antinomies. The second picture (which Green calls “the telescoped version” of the antithetic picture), describes change as a “radically contingent happening that cannot be explained in terms of an underlying source” [ibid.]. The advantage of this position is that there is no intrinsic pull toward Being. As discussed above, such a position destabilizes the explanatory power of causation – for one could never be sure whether a change occurred as a result of external causes, or if it was merely an “uncaused, arbitrary happening” (Spir 1877, 2:134). Green calls this position “a repudiation of causality entirely” [Green 2002, p.85]. The problem with this view – aside from the fact that it seems to undermine causality (the very concept Nietzsche was trying to save) – is it undermines the justification for a metaphysics of 'radical Becoming.' For it was Being's inability to preserve causality (its lack of explanatory power) that justified Nietzsche's rejection of Being in the first place.

Those who would support the telescoped version of causality may attempt to address this problem by articulating their ontology of Becoming in terms of Boscovichean or Helmholtzean centers of force – as Nietzsche famously does in *BGE* 12 [Green 2002, p.83]. Because these 'centers of force' are not physical objects but 'energy' or 'wills,' one could argue that they are not beings, and thus do not require Being to ground them. Moreover, it could be used to explain change without a “causal chain” – which calls out for Being to ground it – while maintaining some semblance of the 'causality' that is needed to justify the rejection of Being. Under this view, Nietzsche would say that 'causality' is conceptually mistaken in believing that there are discrete 'events' ('cause,' 'effect'), and instead argue that all of the “centers of force” are in actuality attracting and repelling each other constantly and simultaneously. This approach also has an advantage in that one can claim that it grounds 'radical Becoming' in the empirical sciences. However, as Green points out, Spir had already foreseen this possibility and argued effectively against it;<sup>59</sup> explaining that “such a theory must, in the end, collapse into one in which becoming is seen from the perspective of being.” [Green 2002, p.80]. Green continues, arguing “it is impossible to *think* of a force as something individual – when one thinks of a force, one is always thinking of a *relationship* between changes according to necessary laws, that is, a causal relationship (1:266-67)” [ibid.]. A Boscovichean may disagree, and assert that 'centers of force' force are individuals with verifiable characteristics. For example, the 'centers' interact in pairs, “according to an oscillatory law which determines their relative acceleration” [Whitlock 1996, p.215]. However, if your concept of force has a certain, determinate unification of qualities which is always the same – such that a 'center of force' is a 'self-identical thing' – then your concept of force is not an expression of Becoming. Rather, it is an alternative conception of Being [Green 2002, p.78-80] – one which has more in common with Kant's A1 conception than Nietzsche's 'radical Becoming.'

Therefore, whether Nietzsche takes up the naturalistically respectable “chain version” of causality or the radical “telescoped version,” he still finds himself struggling to avoid being sucked back into Being. In fact, Nietzsche finds himself in this struggle only at the very top and the very bottom of his metaphysical

picture of the universe: the top being the intellectual world of concepts and judgment, the bottom being Nietzsche's version of the subatomic level of reality – the smallest, most fundamental level of the empirical world. At the conceptual level, Nietzsche's "error theory" struggles to justify why empirical objects are contradictory and cannot be thought. At the subatomic level of the "will," his metaphysics struggles to conceive 'causality' without Being. This 'pincer attack of Being' threatens his 'radical Becoming' from both sides – hence the apparent vacillations in Nietzsche's position on these topics.

More importantly for our purposes, all of Nietzsche's positions regarding causality and judgment can be traced back to two things: a) his acceptance of the reasoning behind the 'fundamental antinomy,' and b) his divergence from Spir's conclusions. In other words, Nietzsche's philosophical development is part of a continuous thread, one which can be traced back to the 'fundamental antinomy,' which in turn can be traced back to Kant's Antinomies, which in turn can be traced back to Spinoza. In response to this thread, Nietzsche developed in such a way that he and Spinoza share a remarkable number of similarities with regard to their metaphysical pictures of empirical reality – similarities which tend to align with Kant's antinomial Antithesis positions.

### *II-C1. The Antithetic Alignment: Nietzsche's and Spinoza's 'Broad Alignment' with the Antitheses*

GREEN often refers to Nietzsche's metaphysical position as an "antithetic" view of reality. What Green means by this is that Nietzsche's metaphysics broadly aligns with the Antithesis arguments from Kant's Antinomies – particularly the fourth Antithesis, which denies the existence of an unconditioned being. This is intriguing, because Boehm argues convincingly that Spinoza broadly aligns with the Antitheses. If both claims are true, then we would expect that Nietzsche's metaphysics and Spinoza's would share a quite a few similarities – despite the fact that Spinoza claims that the appearance of Becoming is only an aspect of Being, and Nietzsche argues the opposite is true. We would also expect that both Spinoza's and Nietzsche's metaphysical positions are compatible with most (if not all) of the Antithesis positions. As we shall soon see, both Boehm's and Green's claims – along with the expectations which follow from them – are indeed the case. We will begin by comparing Spinoza's Being and Nietzsche's Becoming to the four Antithesis positions themselves, to see if both thinkers can be said to 'broadly align' with them.

It must be noted – first of all – that although the first three Antitheses are best understood in terms of the A1 conception (and thus as Being), the face value of each position can be construed as either Being or Becoming. Only the fourth Antithesis is explicitly anti-Being – forcing Spinoza to side with the Thesis position in the fourth Antinomy (as we discussed in Section I). The second thing to note is, regarding the first Antimony, it is unclear whether or not Nietzsche is capable of fitting with *either* position. *Prima facie*, he should reject the world's creation – although Eternal Recurrence could possibly affirm the creation of the world by simply arguing that the creation itself recurs. His stance regarding eternity is ambivalent – since he denies the existence of any eternal Beings but affirms that Recurrence and Becoming itself could exist eternally. However, he unequivocally denies *infinity*. "Nietzsche's new world conception," Whitlock convincingly argues, "is defined by *finite force*. This completely inverts the metaphysics of Spinoza. *Infinite force*, a necessary postulate for Spinoza, entails infinite novelty [...] infinite extension and other remnants of theology. Finite force entails finite novelty, [...] and finite space. Finite, *but without the material atoms*, was the new perspective Nietzsche sought and found in fragmentary form in Boscovich's theory" [Whitlock 1996, p.207].<sup>60</sup> As such, Nietzsche could never align with the first Antinomy's Antithesis view.

Like Spinoza, Nietzsche's view aligns with three of the four Antithesis positions. This is sufficient to claim that they both broadly align with the Antitheses.

Since Nietzsche's position does not fit with the first Antithesis and Spinoza's position does not fit with the fourth, if they can be said to share an 'antithetic alignment,' it must be with regard to the second and the third. The second Antithesis can be broadly summarized as a rejection of atomism, monadology, or any cosmology in which everything we experience is a composite-being constructed out of fundamental, smallest-possible, simple beings which – when aggregated or combined together – compose every other thing in existence. Spinoza, as we have stated numerous times, rejects the existence of "parts" – and thus he maps onto the second Antithesis's cosmology. Nietzsche similarly maps onto the second Antithesis due to his numerous rejections of the existence of atoms, things-in-themselves, and 'doers' behind 'deeds' (cf. *BGE*, "Prejudices of Philosophers," 2, 17. *Genealogy*, "First Essay," 13. *Twilight*, "Reason' in Philosophy," 3, 5; "Four Great Errors," 3, 8). Due to his rejection of Being (singular), Nietzsche rejects beings (plural). The third Antithesis, as we saw above, rejects the notion of free will (or the 'causality of freedom') on the grounds that there is only *one* kind of causality – natural causality. As demonstrated in Section I, Spinoza conceived of 'natural causality' as mechanistic causality, and he denied the possibility of free will via an argument from the PSR. For Spinoza, these arguments are clearly and consciously linked. In Nietzsche's case, the connection between causal reasoning and the denial of 'free will' is not so clear. However, due to Nietzsche's commitment explaining reality via "logical form in reasoning (*HA* 265) and [...] logically consistent, if extremely compressed, arguments" [Green 2002, p.55], we argue that Nietzsche is indeed dedicated to the same kind of metaphysical/psychological continuity as Spinoza.

Nietzsche does deny 'free will' both repeatedly and emphatically in his published works (see *BGE*, "Prejudices of Philosophers," 21. *Genealogy*, "First Essay," 13. *Twilight*, "Four Great Errors," 7, etc.) – but the reasoning given usually has nothing to do with causal reasoning. His usual approach is to argue that metaphysicians have tried to inject 'free will' into the world like spiders injecting venom into a victim's blood; their particular poison being *ressentiment* and the desire to punish.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, as stated above, Nietzsche's picture of causality is unclear, and he often vacillates between two pictures of how causality operates. However, contrary to common belief that Nietzsche's philosophy was strictly anti-metaphysical, Nietzsche makes a concerted effort to ensure that his psychological studies do align with his metaphysical commitments. For example, in *Twilight*'s "Four Great Errors" [§7], Nietzsche argues that "Becoming has been deprived of its innocence when any being-such-and-such is traced back to [free] will, to purpose, to acts of responsibility" [Kaufmann 1954, p.499]. The reason Becoming is "innocent" is because it, like the humans agents it governs, was never 'free' to "do otherwise," and is therefore blameless. It is determined by innate drives which apply as absolutely to the smallest quanta of force as to human psychology. In this sense, Nietzsche – like Spinoza – fulfills all criteria for what Kant calls "pure empiricism": the principle "of granting only philosophical knowledge acquired by naturalistic principles; that is, by the standard of 'possible experience' (A468/B496)" [Boehm 2014, p.86] – such that "we observe a perfect uniformity in manner of thinking, and complete unity of maxims, [...] applied not only in explanation of the appearances within the world, but also in the solution of the transcendental ideas of the world itself, in its totality" (A465f./B493f.) [Boehm 2018, p.499]. In Spinoza's case, this 'unity of maxims and manner of thinking' stems from his conception of substance and the *conatus* doctrine; in Nietzsche's, from 'radical Becoming' the "will to power."

Yovel makes the same observation in his article, “Nietzsche and Spinoza: Enemy Brothers.” There, Yovel notes that one of the consequences of Nietzsche’s and Spinoza’s mutual dedication to the principle of ‘immanence’ (given his particular usage of that term) is an “adherence, in their theory of man, to a strict naturalistic monism. For both philosophers there is a single natural principle active in man that constitutes his individual existence (as it does everything else in nature). This principle is not a static being but a dynamic thrust, striving, or desire; as such, it is also the unique principle underlying all the affects, drives, and diverse forms of human behavior. Spinoza calls it *conatus* [i.e., the striving for self-preservation]; Nietzsche, ‘will to power’” [Yovel 2018, p.546]. Although there are a number of differences between the two concepts – for example the *conatus* doctrine’s emphasis on permanence and self-identity, and the “will to power’s” emphasis on flux and self-overcoming [ibid., p.549] – they are much alike in that Nietzsche and Spinoza applied them equally to physical entities as to human psychology [ibid., p.546-48]. As Yovel puts it, “Nietzsche [...] sides with Spinoza’s anti-Hegelian view that humans have nothing special that distinguishes them ontologically from the rest of being, to which they are assimilable” [ibid., p.548]. This sort of “uniformism,” as Yovel calls it [ibid.], is exactly what Kant means by “pure empiricism” [see *I-A*].

To put it briefly, Nietzsche’s position fits with the third Antithesis because his denial of ‘free will’ is motivated by “pure empiricist” principles – i.e., the rejection of any divisions between psychology and natural causality. In addition, Nietzsche rejects ‘free will’ for the same metaphysical reasons that he rejects the atom, and Being itself. Thus, Nietzsche – like Spinoza – operates fully in the spirit of the Antitheses as Kant describes them. A consistent line of reasoning can be traced through Nietzsche’s positions, just as the A1 conception can be traced through the Antinomies. Although Nietzsche is not as near-flawlessly consistent as Spinoza (few philosophers are), he still attempts to provide a logically and metaphysically cohesive picture of reality – such that the same laws apply equally to the highest concepts of thought as to the most fundamental explanations of causality. Indeed, whenever Nietzsche takes up the notion of the ‘will to power,’ he assigns a kind of “primitive psychology” to metaphysical nature of the universe itself; such that ‘causality’ and ‘psychology’ are united by a single theory [cf. Bailey 2013, p.144-46]. (Spinoza achieves a similar effect with his *conatus*, and the compatibilism of Thought and Extension.) Therefore, we have a secure basis for the ‘antithetic alignment’ between Nietzsche and Spinoza. We have not only demonstrated that they both map onto the second and third Antitheses, but that they also share a commitment to Kant’s notion of “pure empiricism,” which is the beating heart of the Antitheses.

Before we continue on to our discussion of Nietzsche’s and Spinoza’s compatibility with each other (and, by extension, the compatibility Green’s theory with Boehm’s), it is worth noting that a truly robust demonstration of the notion that Nietzsche and Spinoza broadly align with the Antitheses would be able to prove that Nietzsche’s and Spinoza’s metaphysical positions do more than agree with the face-value of an Antithesis position’s commitments. It should be able to prove that both Spinoza and Nietzsche would agree with the entailments which go along accepting an Antithesis position as well. Here, we will prove that our theory is able to do just that – and we will begin by reexamining the Antitheses.

## *II-C2. The Antithetic Alignment: Antithesis Entailments and Green’s Compatibility with Boehm*

AS an example, let us take Kant’s first Antinomy, which argues for and against the creation-and-finitude of time and space (Thesis, or A2) and the eternality-and-infinity of time and space (Antithesis, or A1). If we take up the Antithesis position, then we accept there can be no absolute time or space. This is due to

the fact that, according to A1 – upon which the Antithesis is based – the unconditioned is conceived as the *entire series taken as a whole*. As a result, the unconditioned has no absolute or fixed location within the series – for it simply *is* the series. Moreover, because A1’s conception of space is infinite, it is infinitely divisible. Therefore, there can be no absolute unit of measure, no absolute distance between one member of the series and any other member – or between conditioned beings and the unconditioned’s location. Only in the A2 conception – upon which the Thesis is based – does the unconditioned have an absolute, fixed location within the series as *the highest member of the series*; and because its cosmology is finite, it can support a conception of reality which contains an absolutely determinate number of divisions in time and space. Thus, only A2 can give sense to questions “of *where* or *when* the world – understood as the totality of relations between things – occurs” [Green 2002, p.64]. A1, on the other hand, must conceive space and time in relativistic terms.

Now let us look at the same problem again – this time from the perspective of the fourth Antithesis. Unlike the first three Antitheses – which Boehm convincingly argues are best understood as expressions of the A1 conception – the fourth Antithesis is nihilistic. It rejects the existence of any unconditioned or necessary beings anywhere. It could be either finite or infinite – the fourth never specifies. Yet, unlike the Thesis positions, the fourth Antithesis must always be conceived as infinitely divisible – even if it is finite. Since there are no absolute beings, there can be no absolute relationships – that includes spatial-temporal relationships. As such, all distances between objects are relative, and space can be arbitrarily divided in an infinite (or at least an *indefinite*) number of ways – and each of these ways will be equally “true.” Thus, despite their dramatically different metaphysical conclusions, the first three (A1-based) Antitheses and the nihilistic fourth Antithesis are remarkably similar in their relativistic views empirical reality [cf. Green 2002, p.73]; and we are still entitled to speak of a generalized “antithetic view.” It is in this sense that we can claim that Spinoza and Nietzsche share an antithetic view of reality. Additionally, if we take Green’s explication of the entailments which accompany an antithetic view seriously, we see that Spinoza’s and Nietzsche’s metaphysical worldviews are remarkably similar – and absolutely what we would expect of philosophers who espouse an antithetic view.

First, philosophers attached to the second Antithesis (which denies the existence of atoms – or any other kind of smallest-possible ‘simple’ beings) or to the fourth Antithesis (which denies the existence of necessary, unconditioned, self-identical ‘beings’ of any sort) would both be inclined to argue that a finite ‘thing’ is constituted by its relationships to other ‘things.’ Nietzsche makes this exact claim several times in his notes (*KSA* 9:11[36], 9:12[17]; *WP* 557-58, 560, 583). While Spinoza does argue there is a substance beneath these relations, he denies the existence of ‘parts’ [E1p15n] – that is, *self-identical finite things*. In addition, Spinoza argues that a finite thing is less “perfect” (i.e., less real) to the degree that its existence is not defined solely by one of the fundamental properties of substance (i.e. Attributes) [E1p11, E2d6, E4-pref., E5p40]. Unlike Leibniz, for whom the fundamental and finite parts which compose all things in the universe (monads) are absolutely real and self-identical, Spinoza argues that – beyond their mutual participation in the Attributes of substance – finite ‘things’ only exist due to the external interference of other ‘things’ (i.e. causes). Indeed, as Spinoza puts it himself in the *Ethics*: “whatever perfection or reality those things may have which are produced by external causes [i.e. finite ‘things’], [...] they owe it all to the virtue of an external cause, and therefore their existence springs from the perfection of an external cause alone and not from their own” [E1p11n; Gutman/White 1949, p.50]. As a result, finite things are defined by

external causes – that is to say, by their relationships to other things. In fact, one could argue that “imperfection” is best understood not as a “lack of reality” or “lack of existence,” but as “the degree of existence which is defined solely by relationships to other ‘things.’” [Cf. Green 2002, p.71-73].

Second, given the antithetic view’s relativistic conception of finite ‘things,’ it follows that it should have a relativistic view of time and space. As discussed above, both the A1 conception and the nihilistic “third option” of the fourth Antithesis view time and space in a relativistic sense. Under A2’s absolutist conception of the unconditioned, space is absolute, and is “usually understood as the view that space is a single unconditioned substance, in reference to which empirical objects are of a determinate size. But it is equally possible to argue that space consists of numerous indivisible space-atoms. The size of something would be unconditionally determined by reference to the number of space-atoms out of which the object is constituted” [Green 2002, p.73]. On the other hand, the infinitistic conception of A1’s unconditioned is infinitely divisible – as is the purely ‘conditional unity’ the fourth Antithesis espouses. “If space is infinitely divisible,” Green argues, “then there cannot be a *unit* of space in reference to which things can have an unconditioned size. To claim that space-atoms can be infinitely divided is to claim that the totality of spatial relations could be infinite in size or exist on the head of a pin, once again, to say that there is no unconditional answer to the question of what size anything is” [ibid.]. Nietzsche, because he rejects Being, embraces the fourth Antithesis’s conception of reality; i.e., reality as an infinitely divisible and conditional unity. Spinoza – because he affirms that reality is a single, unconditioned substance, and denies the existence of ‘parts’ – rejects the notion that reality can be divided *at all* [E2p13]; at least, not insofar as it is conceived adequately [E2p11c, E2p32-35]. To conceive the infinity of reality as divided, fractionated, or finite, is to conceive it in a “mutilated and confused” manner – i.e., inadequately [E1p8n1, E2p35]. This applies to both time and space. In fact, Spinoza explicitly states that all conceptions of duration involve ‘inadequate knowledge’ [E2p30-31]. As such, there can be no entirely adequate or absolute conception of finite time or space. Both necessarily contain some degree of inadequacy, and thus contain some degree of relativism. Once again, despite Nietzsche’s and Spinoza’s many metaphysical differences, their pictures of empirical reality are striking similar.<sup>62</sup>

Thirdly – and finally – since the antithetic view abandons absolute time and space, it necessarily abandons absolute movement along with it. Without a measurement with respect to absolute space, “it is not merely impossible to say what size anything is but also whether anything moves. We can know that A moves in relation to B, but if B itself is moving, A may in fact be standing still” [Green 2002, p.73]. There cannot be any absolute motion. Rather, there is only “a generalized movement that cannot be attributed to anything. Since Nietzsche takes the antithetic position and denies that absolute space exists, we shouldn’t be surprised to discover that he rejects the idea of nonrelational movement (*WP* 562). Nevertheless he argues that to *think* of things as moving we must falsify this antithetic reality and assume the existence of unconditional movement” – that is, in accordance with A2 (cf. *KSA* 9:6[433]) [ibid., p.73-74]. Spinoza’s metaphysical reasoning is, as usual, quite different from Nietzsche’s; and yet the conception of empirical reality which results from his reasoning is much the same. While he argues that the proportions of motion and rest which constitute a ‘body’ are “fixed proportions,” which will remain “fixed” unless they ‘suffer’ from external interference [E4p39] – these proportions, like time and space, can be adequately conceived only as ‘part’ of the infinite causal chain of an Attribute [E2p13lem1-3]. To conceive motion as ‘finite’ is to conceive it inadequately. As such, just as no unit of space or time can ever be absolute, neither can any

finite motion through finite space. Finite time and finite motion are “exhausted by the processes between things” – processes for which no absolute speed can be determined [Green 2002, p.74]. The same is true for Nietzsche’s purely relational motions (*HA* 19; *D* 117; *KSA* 7:19[140 & 153], 9:6[439], 9:11[281]; *WP* 487, 545, 563) [ibid.]. Therefore, for both thinkers – insofar as they are considering the empirical world, at least – motion, time, space, and even objects, are conceived in a relativistic, antithetic sense.

From these examples we can conclude that despite their fundamentally different ontologies, Nietzsche and Spinoza draw remarkably similar conclusions regarding the nature of empirical reality. Indeed, this compatibility between the Nietzschean and Spinozistic worlds of experience reinforces our interpretation of Nietzsche’s philosophical lineage, and the claim that Boehm and Green were – independently of each other – pointing to a Nietzsche-Spinoza connection through the Antinomies. This interpretation is even further strengthened if we note that Green’s own explication of what an antithetic view entails makes it impossible to embrace the received view of the Antinomies – i.e., that Leibniz represents the Antithesis positions and Newton the Thesis positions. Green himself accepts this view, which is understandable (it is the “received view” after all) [Green 2002, p.64, 66, 73, etc.]. However, by his own lights, an antithetic view entails the position that empirical ‘things’ are entirely composed of their relations to other ‘things’<sup>63</sup> [ibid., p.72]. Leibniz, however, not only embraces the existence of atomistic ‘monads’ (the very definition of a cosmology based on simple, smallest-possible, self-identical beings), he also rejects the notion that a monad has any interaction whatsoever with other monads. The only thing that a monad can interact to is the divine plan or program designed and orchestrated by God. (In fact, it was this aspect of the Leibnizian monad which Goethe rejected in his own use of that term.)<sup>64</sup> These positions are the opposite of Green’s explication of the antithetic view. Note that these inconsistencies are nowhere near the heart of Green’s argument. However, they do imply that those who accept Green’s theory have twice as many reasons to embrace Boehm’s.

And so concludes our discussion of the ‘antithetic alignment,’ a descriptive account of the remarkable similarities between Nietzsche’s and Spinoza’s philosophies, which I believe to be the most elegant of the accounts so far devised. What’s more, although this account is not entirely immune to the charge that the qualities in Nietzsche’s thought which are so similar to Spinoza’s developed without Nietzsche being directly exposed to Spinoza’s works, and thus developed somewhat coincidentally, it can at least mitigate the impact such charges by appealing to the ‘antinomial through line.’ Although Spinoza had no direct influence on Nietzsche’s decision to spurn Being – the decision which brought Nietzsche into alignment with the fourth Antithesis, and, by extension, into alignment with Spinoza – the fact remains that, without the influence of Spinoza’s philosophical legacy, Nietzsche would have likely never even been presented with the choice. Without Spinoza, there would be no Antinomies. Without the Antinomies, there would be no ‘fundamental antinomy’; and without that, Nietzsche would have likely become a fundamentally different thinker from the man we know today. In brief, although the historical and descriptive elements of our account [i.e. the ‘antinomial through line’ and ‘antithetic alignment’] are not directly connected – as far as we know – they do share the same touchstone [Kant’s Antinomies], the root of which is Spinoza. Again, we are not claiming that either Spinoza or the ‘antinomial through line’ were the sole historical sources of Nietzsche’s philosophical development. We are merely claiming that they were significant influences; and the similarities which resulted from them are too remarkable to ignore. They *demand* to be accounted for. I sincerely believe this to be the best next step in that direction.

### II-D. Conclusion: The ‘Kantian Bridge’ and Nietzsche Studies

IN SUMMATION, Nietzsche’s philosophy is – to a significant extent – the result of Spinoza’s philosophical legacy. The aspect of this legacy we have focused on in this essay is the ‘antinomial through line’ (though there may well be other aspects which are relevant to Nietzsche’s development).<sup>65</sup> We traced this legacy from Kant’s Antinomies, through Spir’s ‘fundamental antinomy,’ to Nietzsche’s views of ‘causality’ and cognition [“error theory”], of Being and Becoming, of ‘doer’ and ‘deed.’ Though the relationship between Nietzsche and Spinoza being explored here is less like the relation between bloom and root and more like the relation between tsunami and butterfly wings – the number of causal steps between the one and the other is small enough that perhaps we should be less surprised when (by chance) Nietzsche responds to this influence by becoming remarkably similar to the through line’s ‘first cause.’ Indeed, perhaps it should not surprise anyone at all that the Antinomies – the philosophical artifact which Spinoza did so much to shape, and which did so much to shape Nietzsche [albeit through the lens of Spir] – should serve us so well as the measuring-rod by which their many striking similarities and irreconcilable differences are brought so sharply into focus. This measuring-rod-like quality of the Antinomies with regard to Nietzsche’s and Spinoza’s respective philosophies is the core of the ‘antithetic alignment’; and the complex interplay of ‘through line’ and ‘alignment,’ of genealogy and comparison, of necessity and coincidence, is what we have been referring to as the ‘Kantian bridge.’ The great strength of this bridge is its elegance – which it derives from its descriptive and historical elements all sharing the same touchstone.

There are several ways in which the Kantian bridge can contribute to the discussion surrounding the Nietzsche-Spinoza connection, but the primary way is that it allows us to deepen, clarify and unify the best accounts of this connection in the literature. For example, Yovel’s account in “Enemy Brothers” makes the same observation ours does regarding a shared dedication to “pure empiricism.” (He refers to it as an adherence to “a strict naturalistic monism” [Yovel 2018, p.546] and physical/psychological “uniformism” [ibid., p548].) We deepen this concept by connecting it with Green’s observations on what such a world-view entails [see II-C2], and by locating a historical explanation for how this similarity came to be [see II-C1]. Indeed, Yovel observes quite a few of the same characteristics in Nietzsche’s thought that we have noted – e.g. Nietzsche’s rejection of self-identity [ibid., p.549], his rejection of objective truths [ibid., p.550-552, 556-559], his questioning of logic [ibid., p.554-556] – characteristics which he claims (correctly) distinguish Nietzsche’s thought from Spinoza’s. Aside from expanding upon and historically locating these observations, we clarify Yovel’s account by more precisely categorizing what makes them distinct. Yovel accounts for the differences in their positions as two different approaches to immanence [ibid., p.540-544]. Our account more precisely categorizes these approaches to immanence as an ‘A1-antithetic view’ and a ‘nihilistic-antithetic view.’<sup>66</sup> Finally, our account’s historical elements (i.e., the ‘antinomial through line’) allows us to unify these insights with the insights of those who argue that Spinoza had a more direct impact on Nietzsche’s philosophical development.

Many scholars have noted that Nietzsche ‘discovered’ Spinoza near the end of his middle period, immediately prior to the invention of his most noteworthy coinages (*amor fati*, Eternal Recurrence, the ‘will to power’) [cf. Brobjer 2002, p.77-78, 83, 87; Whitlock 1996, p.201-03]. Whitlock, especially, argues convincingly that a careful reading of Nietzsche’s notes indicates that he was attempting to invert Spinoza’s metaphysics [ibid., p.201, 207, 211]. The ‘antithetic alignment’ provides some support to this theory,



given that Spinoza's position aligns with the first three antinomies, and Nietzsche's with the last three. (This would be doubly convincing if it could be shown that Nietzsche aligns with the first Thesis, given that Spinoza aligns with the fourth Thesis). Also, Whitlock notes that Nietzsche was re-reading Spir around the time of his most intense engagement with both Boscovich and Fischer's volume on Spinoza, and that at times he refers to them in the same notes – notes in which he was beginning to develop his doctrines of Eternal Recurrence and the 'will to power' [Whitlock 1996, p.208]. This implies that Spir (and, by extension, the 'antinomial through line') may have played a role in the birth of Nietzsche's mature philosophy, and could help us to better understand what exactly his mature philosophy is and how it came to be. This means that the 'Kantian bridge' may enable us to collect all aspects of the Nietzsche-Spinoza connection (descriptive and historical) under the roof of a single theory.

If this lead (and others like it) prove to be fruitful, then what we have been referring to here as the 'Kantian bridge' may be but a smaller piece of a larger picture. One which could provide a unified theory of Nietzsche's philosophical genealogy in relation to Spinoza. One which could track Nietzsche's personal development from his youth [Goethe, Hölderlin, and Emerson], through his early periods [Spir, Rée, and Heine], to the metamorphosis near the end of his middle period [Fischer's Spinoza, Spir, and Boscovich], and beyond. One which could make sense of his seemingly contradictory (and often undeservedly harsh) statements about the philosophy and personal character of his "precursor." And even should all of these projects yield no fruit, they will still be fruitful in that they will contribute to an often underappreciated aspect of the Nietzsche-Spinoza problem: methodology.

It has been claimed by some that "Spinoza was the most important and influential modern philosopher for Nietzsche, excepting only Schopenhauer" [Brobjer 2008, p.77]. However, while this claim may be easy to say (and convincing to hear), it is difficult to prove – and there seems to be no consensus on how we should go about proving it. Many (most famously Yovel) have gone the route of direct philosophical comparisons between Nietzsche and Spinoza. While I do believe this approach can be fruitful, there is some truth in Brobjer's charge that – because Nietzsche never actually read any of Spinoza's works – such comparison's are "simply irrelevant" [ibid.]. In his own book, Brobjer [2008] analyzes the potential influence of the books we know for a fact Nietzsche *did* read. While tremendously helpful, it is like most reference books in that it provides a plethora of leads and no clear narrative of Nietzsche's development. The influence of Brobjer's work has created interest in finding just such a narrative while at the same time grounding it in books we *know* Nietzsche was reading. On the whole this is a good thing, yet it may be too restrictive. For the approach seems to assume that the best (or *only*) way to influence a philosopher is to write or be cited in a book they have read.

In this essay we have attempted an entirely different approach – a *genealogical* approach – which, to my admittedly incomplete knowledge, has never been rigorously applied to the Nietzsche-Spinoza problem. We have grounded, as Brobjer demands, each of our historical case studies in materials that were read (or at least highly likely to have been read) by the particular individual being discussed – thus securing the empirical veracity and verifiability of our claims – while at the same time searching for a common link or thread which can be traced through all of the individual cases. In this particular instance, it was the 'antinomial through line.' Here, Spinoza influenced Nietzsche *not* by being the author of a book he had read (or being cited or discussed or analyzed or critiqued in a book he had read), but by being the first of the falling dominoes in a chain reaction of philosophical inspiration. Spinoza inspired Kant's Antinomies,

which inspired Spir's 'fundamental antinomy,' which inspired Nietzsche's 'radical Becoming.' In addition to this genealogical analysis we applied a comparative analysis (the 'antithetic alignment') which, far from being "irrelevant" in my view, deepens and clarifies our understanding of both the philosophical ancestor the descendants. The comparative element, although it is not directly linked to any materials which the individuals we are studying have read, is still relevant because they are tied to the historical through line. We are using the central concept of our historical though line (in this case, the relation to the Antinomies) as a lens through which we can interpret the "real-world" value or relevance of the historical connection. Again, to my (admittedly incomplete) knowledge, this kind of two-prong approach has not been applied to the Nietzsche-Spinoza problem before now. It is my hope that our approach, more than our answers, will be adopted and developed to create philosophical genealogies and comparisons which are accurate and illuminating.

## NOTES

- 1) An exception to this rule is Jonathan Israel, who observed that throughout his pre-critical period and the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant had been conducting a "silent war against Spinoza (something modern Kant specialists are often curiously blind to)" [Israel 2011, p.707]. However, even those who would agree with Israel have noted that he does not sufficiently substantiate his claim [Boehm 2014, Preface §7, p. xxiii]. Another, more substantive exception (for our purposes at least), is Omri Boehm – whose work deals specifically with interpreting and defending Kant's critical project in the light of Spinozism.
- 2) Nietzsche's interactions with Kant, in his notebooks as well as his written works, are as extensive as they are intricate [Brobjer 2008, p.3, 36-38; cf. Bailey 2013, p.134-135]. Brobjer places Kant on a list of six thinkers who were the most important philosophical influences on Nietzsche's development [Brobjer 2008, p.3]. He explains that "with the exception of Schopenhauer and Plato, Kant was the philosopher to whom Nietzsche referred to most often by far" [ibid., p.36]. In his young and early periods [1844-69 and 1869-75 respectively] Nietzsche held Kant in tremendously high esteem; but "after that period he became Nietzsche's main philosophical enemy" [ibid.]. Equally worth noting are his comments on Kant himself. In his early period, when he held Kant in high esteem, Nietzsche wrote in a letter to H. Mushacke [Nov. 1866], "Kant, Schopenhauer, and this book by Lange – I do not need anything else." Whereas in his late period, his opinion of Kant was the perfect opposite of his earlier esteem, and he referred to Kant as "the worst concept-cripple there has ever been" [*Twilight of the Idols*, "What the Germans Lack," §7]. The level of passion in both sentiments makes it clear that Kant was very important to Nietzsche, whether he was thinking of him as a friend or as an enemy. (It is also worth noting that Nietzsche's break with Kant more or less coincides with the time of his intellectual crisis and traumatic break from Wagner and Schopenhauer in 1876.)

- 3) Nietzsche's first-hand knowledge of Kant appears to have been very slight (perhaps even nearly nonexistent). The only original work by Kant that scholars are confident Nietzsche read is the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (*Critique of Judgment*) – many deny that he read any of Kant's works besides this one. Janz, however, has argued that Nietzsche's "dialogue with Kant is so strong and so detailed" that scholars should be far more cautious in ruling out the possibility that he read Kant directly. Brobjer provides some evidence to support Janz's position – but, he is careful to indicate that this evidence is generally suggestive, and that most (if not all) of Nietzsche's knowledge and quotations of Kant can be potentially explained through his extensive readings of the secondary sources alone. [See Brobjer 2008, p.36-39. See also Janz 1993, Part 1, p. 199, 504.]
- 4) Nietzsche was particularly well versed in Neo-Kantian philosophy – an interest, first kindled by his engagement with Schopenhauer, which ignited a very passionate period of research and struggle lasting about a decade [Bailey 2013, p.135]. (Brobjer observes that "much of Nietzsche's understanding and discussion of Kant were done from a Schopenhauerian perspective" [Brobjer 2008, p.32], and Nietzsche "hardly ever even mentioned Kant without mentioning Schopenhauer" [ibid., p.58].) These readings not only would have made Nietzsche fluent in the understanding of Kantian philosophy current in his day (if not a genuine expert in the subject), they would also have made him sensitive to the challenges of adapting this understanding to the modern world, especially the rapid progress and ascending status of the physical sciences [Bailey 2013, p.135-136].
- 5) As Brobjer puts it, "in the secondary literature, it has been claimed that Spinoza was the most important and influential modern philosopher for Nietzsche, excepting only Schopenhauer. [...] There is probably no other philosopher for whom Nietzsche so explicitly considered his predecessor. Spinoza is also frequently mentioned and discussed in Nietzsche's writings – approximately one hundred times – both with high praise, such as, for example, of him as a 'genius of knowledge,' 'the purest sage,' and, with severe criticism, calling his philosophy 'this masquerade of a sick recluse,' and labeling him as inconsistent and naive. [...] And yet [...] Nietzsche never read Spinoza!" [Brobjer 2008, p.77]. He then argues that, while it is "almost impossible to prove or to be certain that someone has not read a certain book or author," there simply is no proof that he ever read or owned any of Spinoza's works [ibid., ch.5, n.82]. (He was sent a copy of the *Ethics* in 1785 by one of his favorite book vendors, but he returned it [ibid., p.79; cf. ch.5, n.92].) Most of Nietzsche's references to Spinoza's thought can be traced back to the second volume of Kuno Fischer's *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie* (which was entirely about Spinoza) [ibid., p.77], thus we can be confident that most of his knowledge came the several times he read this volume (although he also encountered discussions of Spinoza and Spinozism from numerous other sources throughout his lifetime [ibid. 72-82]).
- 6) See Brobjer 2008, p.58-59. See also Bailey 2013, p.136, 141-142; and Green 2002.
- 7) Yirmiyahu Yovel is, to my knowledge, the first to address Nietzsche's perception of himself in relation to Spinoza [see Yovel 1989/2018]. However, his work is more of a comparative analysis of the major themes in their respective philosophies than an attempt to analyze Nietzsche's view of Spinoza; and since Nietzsche never read Spinoza, the value of such comparisons is somewhat diminished, for they can never escape the charge that they are merely describing coincidental similarities. (Still, I would not go as far as Brobjer and say that such comparisons are "simply irrelevant" [Brobjer 2008, p.77].) A more direct engage-

ment with Nietzsche's vacillating opinion of and frequent attempts to distance himself from Spinoza can be found in Andreas Urs Sommer [see Sommer 2012]; but though his work is often very insightful, on the whole I feel that he over-emphasizes the unfairness in Nietzsche's treatment of Spinoza, and he is often too quick to claim that Nietzsche is merely afraid of being mistaken for or overtaken by his famous "precursor" – true as that may be to an extent – at the expense of a more perceptive reading of Nietzsche's motivations. While there are several other interesting readings which attempt to find that more nuanced understanding [see Wiesmann 2013], I believe there are certain key insights that their interpretations are missing. First is the one this essay is built upon: namely, the antinomial through line. When combined with the observations of those who have carefully studied the philosophical and scientific materials Nietzsche was reading at the time of his engagement with Kuno Fischer's volume on Spinoza [see Whitlock 1996], it produces a broader picture – one that helps to track the development of Nietzsche's philosophy as a revolution with and reaction against Spinozism, an attempt to reach greater heights than even his famous precursor. Second, the hostility and contrariness of Nietzsche's statements about Spinoza can indeed seem baffling and undeserved, and it is certain that his critiques of Spinoza often miss their mark – but, interpreters cannot be too quick to assume that he simply misunderstood Spinoza's position. On the contrary, I believe he understood the metaphysical implications of Spinozism only too well – particularly regarding the concept of "self-preservation," which inherently implies that the ultimate expression of 'power' (i.e. Spinoza's God) is to be infinitely creative and yet essentially changeless. (This is not to say that Spinoza is incapable of explaining change in the natural world; I am only arguing that the essence God, the ultimate expression of power, is by Spinoza's lights infinitely and eternally the same.) Nietzsche, for whom the true expression of 'power' is *change*, would have found Spinoza's concept to be metaphysically intolerable – an enemy to be defeated by any means necessary.

8) See Note 1.

9) Kant: "To this [transcendental] idealism is opposed transcendental realism, which regards space and time as something given in themselves (independent of our sensibility). The transcendental realist therefore represents outer appearances (if their reality is conceded) as things in themselves [Dinge an sich selbst], which would exist independently of us and our sensibility and thus would also be outside us according to pure concepts of the understanding" ["Fourth Paralogism," A369]. (Quoted from *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, "Kant's Transcendental Idealism," §1.1) Boehm summarizes the purpose of the Antinomies in this way: "The Antinomies are supposed to show that transcendental realism refutes itself, that it gets tangled in contradictions. For that purpose, Kant constructs what he takes to be [...] the most consistent versions of transcendental realism, hoping to show that they conflict with one another" [Boehm 2012, p.30].

10) Examples: "If we take space as real, we accept Spinoza's system" [cf. V-MP/Dohna (AA 28:103)]. "[Spinozism is the] true conclusion of dogmatic metaphysics" [Refl. AA 18:436]. "[I]f space is taken to be a thing in itself, Spinozism is irrefutable – that is, the parts of the world are parts of the Deity, space is God" [ML2 AA 28:567]. "Those who take space as a thing in itself or as a property of things are forced to be Spinozists, i.e., they take the world as the embodiment of determinations from one necessary substance" [V-MP-K3E/Arnoldt AA 29:132]. Cf. KpV AA 5:102.

11) See Note 11.

12) Kant: “In the assertions of the antithesis we observe a perfect uniformity in manner of thinking, and complete unity of maxims, namely a principle of pure empiricism, applied not only in explanation of the appearances within the world, but also in the solution of the transcendental ideas of the world itself, in its totality.” (A465f./B493f.) [Quoted from Boehm 2018, p.499.]

13) There are many reasons why Leibniz does not fit with Kant’s notion of “pure empiricism,” but for now we will focus on one (which will discuss more fully later). According to Leibniz, God and the world are separate and different in nature. (Compare to Spinoza, for whom the universe and God are One.) By his lights, only God is truly perfect, and thus only God is truly infinite. Therefore the universe cannot be infinite, but is merely indefinite – meaning its borders may not be known or knowable, but they do not extend infinitely [Boehm 2018, p.487-488 & fn.28]. (Again compare to Spinoza, for whom God is infinite, and thus the Universe – which is the same thing as God – is also infinite.) This means that God and the Universe are, for Leibniz, governed by different principles – and therefore, Leibnizian metaphysics does not meet the stipulation that the ‘uniformity of thinking’ and ‘unity of maxims’ must be applied “not only in explanation of the appearances within the world, but *also in the solution of the transcendental ideas of the world itself, in its totality*” [see Note 12 (my italics)].

14) Boehm is particularly fond of a quote from Bertrand Russell – that Leibniz “fell into Spinozism whenever he allowed himself to be logical,” hence “in his published works [...] [he] took care to be illogical” [Boehm 2014, p.71]. It is also worth noting that there is a history in German philosophy of associating the Leibnizians with Spinozism. For example, Christian Wolff was driven out of his university position because his enemies accused his philosophy of being a backdoor to Spinozism (Wolff being a great champion of Leibnizian philosophy) [Israel 2001, p. 544-52]. Jacobi’s slogan that all philosophy must end in Spinozism and fatalism – adopted from Lessing’s reported remark that “there is no philosophy other than Spinoza’s” [cf. Lord 2011, p.21] – seems to take a more extreme version of this position: that every rationalist project inevitably succumbs to Spinozism. Kant, as we will show later, seems to have agreed with Jacobi’s more extreme view to a certain extent.

15) Kant: “I do not see how those who insist on regarding time and space as determinations belonging to the existence of things in themselves [e.g., Leibniz, Wolff, Mendelssohn – O. B] would avoid fatalism of actions; or if (like the otherwise acute Mendelssohn) they flatly allow both of them [time and space] to be conditions necessarily belonging only to the existence of finite and derived beings but not that of the *infinite and original being* – I do not see how they would justify themselves in making such a distinction, whence they get a warrant to do so, or even how they would avoid the contradiction they encounter when they regard existence in time as a determination attaching necessarily to finite things themselves, while God is said to be the cause of this existence but cannot be the cause of time (or space) itself.” (KpV AA 5:102) [Quoted from Boehm 2014, p.82-83; *Kant’s Critique of Spinoza*.] According to Boehm, “Kant’s point is that if one is committed to viewing space and time as divine attributes, one is committed to viewing them as infinite and eternal. Hence Leibniz’s denial of Spinozism, relying on the indefinite alternative [of the infinite/indefinite distinction (Note 25)], holds only by denying the claim that space and time, which are properties of things, are also attributes of God. Kant dismisses this denial as arbitrary and inconsistent” [ibid., p.83].

16) The “infinity” and “eternity” of the world are crucial elements of Spinoza’s metaphysics.

17) “Note also the term *Schöpfungstheorie* (‘creation theory’),” Boehm says. Both Leibniz and Wolff, being Christian thinkers, endorsed *creatio ex nihilo* – that God created the universe out of nothing. Thus, by using the term ‘creation theory,’ Kant is also referring to the Leibnizian-Wolffian theories. By claiming that Spinozism is more consistent than creation theories – so long as they adopt the Leibnizian view that “outer appearances [...] exist independently of us and our sensibility” [Note 9], as the “effects of a supreme cause” but never as a ‘part’ of it (KpV AA 5:102) – it reinforces Boehm’s argument that Kant was of the mind that Leibnizian thinkers were aping agreement with Christian doctrine out of “shrewdness” rather than “sincerity” – that an honest unpacking of their position commits them to some form of Spinozism [Boehm 2014, p.84-85].

18) Quoted from Boehm 2014, p.76-77, *Kant’s Critique of Spinoza*.

19) See Heimsoeth, “Zeitliche Weltunendlichkeit und das Problem des Anfangs,” p.286.

20) It should be noted that this is the same argument that was used by Wolff and Mendelssohn to refute Spinozism, not realizing that Spinoza does not admit the existence of “parts” in his metaphysics.

21) Kant argues elsewhere that there are some arguments that make sense in mathematics but not in metaphysics and vice versa. For example, Kant argues in the first Antinomy that while the whole-part axiom is an empty ‘Subtilität’ where mathematics is concerned, it is vitally important to metaphysics (A511-5/B369-43). On the other hand, Kant argues where metaphysics is concerned, “the mathematician can by his method build only so many houses of cards” (A727-38/B755-66). (This is most likely a veiled swipe at Spinoza’s *Ethics* [Boehm 2018, p.484-85].) So for anyone who has ever heard of Hilbert’s Hotel and bristled, muttering that an “infinite hotel” could never be “full,” know that Kant agrees with you; at least where metaphysics is concerned.

22) PSR (Principle of Sufficient Reason): the belief that absolutely everything that is or occurs must have a reason, cause, or ground for its existence (i.e. a ‘sufficient reason’ for being). A central feature of transcendental realism.

23) Newton’s conception of ‘empty containers’ is the idea that time existed prior to the creation of the world, and that space exists beyond it [Boehm 2014, p.73; cf. Kant A430/B458-63].

24) I.e., Al Azm’s *The Origins of Kant’s Arguments in the Antinomies*.

25) Boehm: “The *indefinite*: conceived as the negation of the finite. This conception consists in the unceasing potential to add, for any given magnitude, an additional unit. This conception therefore has no actual size and is not a conception of an actual infinite measure. The *infinite*: conceived as an actual infinity, the absolute, or the biggest possible actual measure” [Boehm 2014, p.75 (my italics)].

26) Boehm 2014, p.74; ch.2, n.15. Cf. Leibniz, *New Essays*, p.151.

27) Leibniz: “It would be a mistake to try to suppose an absolute space which is an infinite whole made up of parts. There is no such thing: it is a notion which implies a contradiction. [...] [T]he true infinite, strictly speaking, is only in the *absolute* [God], which precedes all composition” (*New Essays*, p.157f.). [Quoted from Boehm 2014, p.74].

28) As an example, Boehm cites W. Walsh’s *Kant’s Criticism of Metaphysics*, also M. Grier’s *Kant’s Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion* [Boehm 2014, ch.2, n.8].

29) We will be skipping over the second Antinomy because (as far as I know) Boehm has not yet covered it. However, it is easy to see how Spinozism could fit as neatly into the second's Antithesis as it does into the first and third. The second's Antithesis position argues, against the atomistic Thesis, there are no composite beings composed out simple parts because there are no 'simple' beings anywhere. This can easily be construed as a Spinozist position. Spinoza himself denies the existence of "parts" – there is only the One (i.e. God, or substance), and every "individual being," or "part" of this substance is merely a modification of the One. In a sense, all of reality is 'simple' by his lights. However, this cannot be the way that Kant conceived of the second's Antithesis, because – as we have already noted – Kant did not consider the possibility that Spinozism may be conceived as being devoid of "parts." This is the reason the Antinomies fail to undermine Spinoza's position when properly construed.

30) Boehm observes that Kant's argument regarding time can be applied "almost interchangeably" to space [Boehm 2014, ch.2, n.11].

31) Another factor to bear in mind, which we do not have space to address, is the insidious influence of antisemitism in the reaction against Spinozism. In his article on the relationship between Spinoza and Hegel, Paul Franks demonstrate that the confluence of antisemitic historians (who had been attempting to prove that Jews were actually Orientals and not true Europeans) and the 'discovery' of Kabbalah by the Latin speaking world led to a peculiar strain of Spinoza-criticism. In it, an attempt was made to explain Spinoza's philosophy and "solve the conundrum of Spinoza's Jewishness" (for it was assumed that the two must be linked) by interpreting him as a sort of Kabbalist [Franks 2018, p.513.]. "It was argued in particular," Franks continues, "that both Spinoza and the Kabbalah were committed to the principle that 'nothing comes from nothing,' rejecting the orthodox Judeo-Christian view of *creatio ex nihilo*" [ibid., p.514]. Out of this reading grew an interpretive tradition which continued to be developed and drawn from well into Kant's time [ibid.] – most notably by Jacobi, for whom the linchpin of his understanding of Spinoza was the "nothing comes from nothing" principle. Many years later, Jacobi's explication of this understanding, and particularly the attention he drew to the formula "determination is negation," would become central to Hegel's critique of Spinoza as well [ibid., p.521-522]. In keeping with this antisemitic, Oriental-Jewish connection, it should be noted the event which triggered the Spinoza-centered campaign against Wolff was a lecture he gave in 1721 on the 'Practical Philosophy of the Chinese' [Israel 2001, p.544]. As he eulogized ancient Chinese philosophy, Wolff made the mistake of comparing some aspects of Confucian philosophy to his own teachings, "while simultaneously admitting the atheistic tendencies in Chinese thought" [ibid.]. Before the 1721 lecture, Wolff's enemies had already decided for themselves that Wolff's doctrine was committed to the "absolute necessity of things" and "apt to foment atheism" – both of which were frequently associated with Spinozism. After the lecture, they decided it was time to make their move against Wolff; and when they did, they drew upon the commonly perceived similarities between Spinozism and classical Chinese thought (a connection first noted in Bayle's *Dictionnaire*) in order to denigrate Wolff as a crypto-Spinozist [ibid., 544-545].

32) According to Boehm, Jacobi sent Hamann a copy of his book, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza* (the very book that ignited the *Streit*), and then asked him to deliver it to Kant. "In the book, Jacobi accuses not only Lessing but also Kant of Spinozism, writing, for example, that Kant's discussion of space in the *Critique of Pure Reason* was written 'ganz im Geiste des Spinoza' – fully in Spinoza's spirit." [Boehm 2018, p.484].

Jacobi would walk back these comments in the second edition of his book, saying “that the Kantian philosophy is not accused of Spinozism, one need not say to any sensible person” [quoted from Franks, *All or Nothing*, p.91; cf. Lord 2011, p.62], but not before Kant was forced to respond to the threat of being implicated in Spinozism first.

33) In a letter to Jacobi, Kant wrote that “contrary to [his] inclination,” he “was requested by various people to cleanse [himself] of the suspicion of Spinozism” [Kant to Jacobi, 30 August 1789, C 11:76–7]. Though it possible that Kant’s praise of Jacobi’s critique of Spinozism was sincere (to an extent) [ibid., 11:75–6; cf. Lord 2011, p.61–64] – and it is certain that Kant believed Spinozism to be deeply mistaken [cf. Boehm 2018, p.501] – his desire to “cleanse” himself of Spinozism reflects his wariness of the potentially damning political implications of proximity to Spinoza.

34) Despite his own Christian faith, Goethe – a dyed-in-the-wool Spinozist – would affectionately refer to Spinoza as “the atheist.” For example, in a letter to Jacobi (May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1786), Goethe writes, “I hold more and more firmly to the atheist’s [i.e. Spinoza’s] reverence for God.” [WA, iv, VII, 214]

35) According to Richard Popkin, Bayle was “an expert at describing and criticizing philosophical and theological theories,” and that his *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (a widely renowned biographical dictionary which also critiqued religious and philosophical positions) was “a monument to the dialectical skills of Bayle. The one article in which this seems to fall apart is that of Spinoza. Each time, in this long article in which Bayle attempts to describe Spinoza’s view, he quickly becomes incoherent. This happened so much that people told Bayle that he did not understand Spinoza’s theory and that he should get somebody to explain it to him. In the second edition of the *Dictionnaire* in 1702, Bayle describes sitting down with a disciple of Spinoza and going over the text of the *Ethics* line by line. Then, when Bayle came to explicate it, the same thing happened – Spinoza’s theory became incoherent. This is, in fact, Bayle’s criticism, that there is no way of stating atheism coherently. He uses his dialectical skill to demonstrate this over and over again.” [Popkin 2004, p.117]

36) See A727-38/B755-66 [cf. Boehm 2018, p.484].

37) According to Aaron Garrett, Spinoza wrote three geometrical works [Garrett 2018, p.18]. *Ethics*, Spinoza’s magnum opus, is famous for its use of the geometrical method. It was written in geometrical form from start to finish – as was his earlier work, *Descartes’ Principles of Philosophy*. Spinoza’s *Political Treatise* was not; however, Garrett takes it as a “broadly geometrical” work on account of TP 1.4, “where Spinoza asserts that he will deduce from human nature in ‘the same unfettered spirit as is habitually shown in mathematical studies’” [ibid., p.18, fn.1].

38) Heinrich Heine was one of the great eulogizers of Spinoza and Spinoza’s influence in Germany. He said of Spinoza, “There is a peculiar, indescribable fragrance about the writings of Spinoza. We seem to break in them the air of the future” [*Religion and Philosophy*, p.68]. He credits Spinoza’s works with the transformation of Germany into “the fertile soil of pantheism,” which had become “the religion of our greatest thinkers, of our best artists” [ibid., p.79]. However, like Kant he did not think highly of Spinoza’s mathematical bent: “We also find in Spinoza, as in Descartes, a mode of demonstration borrowed from mathematics: this is a grievous fault” [ibid., p.68]. It was on account of this “grievous fault” that Heine praised Goethe as “the Spinoza of poetry,” proclaiming that “The doctrine of Spinoza has escaped from its



chrysalid mathematical form, and flutters about us as a lyric of Goethe” [ibid., p.137]. (Goldstein 2018, p. 638-639.)

39) For reference: Kant was born in 1724; the *Critique of Pure Reason* was originally published in 1781; the *Streit* lasted between 1785 and 1789.

40) Boehm: “Henry Allison writes, ‘[Kant’s] prime concern was to avoid the Spinozistic implications of the identification of God with the sum total of reality’ [...]. Paul Franks similarly writes, ‘it is true that Kant talks at first of the *omnitudo realitatis* as if it were identical with the *ens realissimum*, which might suggest a Spinozist construal. But Kant explicitly revises his formulation, indicating that the *omnitudo realitatis* is grounded in God, so that God is not to be identified with the sum-total of all reality’” [Boehm 2012, p.42; cf. A578f./B606f.].

41) Boehm goes on to point out that “this is something that Kant himself sees and insists upon when writing about Spinoza” [Boehm 2012, p.42]. In one passage, Kant compares and contrasts Spinozism with Pantheism in this way: “Pantheism still has Spinozism as a special kind [...] [For] Pantheism is either one of inherence, and this is Spinozism, or one of the aggregates [...] Spinoza says: the world is inhering in God as accidents, and so worldly substances are his consequences, and in itself exists only one substance [...] *In Spinozism God is the ground of everything that is in the world. In Pantheism he is an aggregate of everything that is in the world*” (AA 28:794–795) [Boehm’s translation and emphasis; 2012, p.43].

42) There are two ways to A1’s unconditioned: either in a) the Pantheistic way (i.e. as the aggregate of all things), or b) the Spinozistic way (i.e. as the ground within which all things inhere) [see Note 40]. Both, by definition, must contain the entire cosmological series as a whole. However, as Kant says himself, “the supreme reality must condition the possibility of all things as their ground, not as their sum” (A578f./B606f.). Therefore, the Pantheistic way is conceptually insufficient to truly conceive of A1’s unconditioned, which must serve as the *ground of all possibility* for its cosmological series – it is not enough to merely *contain* it. Thus the only option left is the Spinozistic way – that is, conceiving A1’s unconditioned as a being that is both immanent in and ontologically prior to the cosmological series which it grounds.

43) Kant: “The *conceptus originarius* of Being in general, which is supposed to be the ground of all concepts of things, is a concept of the *ens realissimum*. All concepts of negations are derivative, and so we must first have real concepts if we want to have negative ones. The embodiment [*Inbegriff*] of all realities is considered also as the stock [*Magazin*] from which we take all the matter for the concepts of all beings. Philosophers name “evil” the formal, and “good” the material. This formal can mean only the limitation [*Einschränkung*] of all reality, through which things [*Dinge*] with realities and negations, i.e. *finite things are produced*. All difference between things is thus a difference of form ... All *conceptus* of *entia limitata* are *conceptus derivativi* and the *conceptus originarius* for our reason is that of an *ens realissimum*. If I deduce the existence of an *ens realissimum* from its concept, this is the way to Spinozism” (AA 28:785-786) [Boehm’s translation and emphasis; Boehm 2012, p.43]. As for the reason why Spinoza would deduce the existence of the *realissimum* from its concept, Spinoza was influenced by the ontological argument for the existence of God, from which his own philosophy follows as an especially elaborate example [Scruton 1986/2002, p.38-39, 45-48].

44) Of course the term *nihilism* had not yet been coined by the time the first *Critique* was published. That would not be until the *Streit*, when Jacobi raised the alarm about Spinozism being the ultimate end

of all philosophy, and nihilism being the ultimate end of Spinozism [Boehm 2014, Pref. §1; cf. Lord 2011, p.21]. “His critique of Spinoza,” B. Lord writes, “represents a critique of philosophy as such. [...] Jacobi’s purpose in writing the dialogue is not to attack Spinozism, which he takes to be the paragon of philosophical consistency. Rather, it is to criticize all philosophy grounded on reason on the basis that it, like Spinozism as its most consistent example, falls inevitably into atheism and fatalism” [ibid.]. Based on what we have said so far, it seems clear that there is a fair amount of agreement between Jacobi’s stance and Kant’s. Kant agrees with Jacobi not only with regard to Spinoza’s superior consistency (and that all transcendental realists inevitably collapse into it), but also (to some degree) with Jacobi’s premonition of nihilism as a result of transcendental realism. The conceit behind Kant’s Antinomies is that each of the antinomial positions (Thesis and Antithesis) represents an actual transcendental realist position; and as such, the fourth Antithesis – which rejects the existence of any ultimate reason, cause, or ground (an absolutely nihilistic position) – must be thought of as a legitimate transcendental realist position. Recall now that both A1 and A2, the generators of the first three Antinomies, are housed under the fourth’s Antinomies Thesis, which collapses in the face of the nihilistic Antithesis – implying that neither has the power to resist nihilism without collapsing in Kant’s opinion. Although the similarity between Kant and Jacobi’s positions should not be overstated, it seems safe to say that by the first *Critique*, Kant was already onto Jacobi’s line of argument regarding nihilism – he simply failed to name it.

45) This is not terribly surprising, if one recalls the numerous times that Kant – the single greatest influence on Spir’s thinking – associated Spinozism with the Ideal of Pure Reason, the *ens realissimum*, and with any thinker who took time/space to be a thing-in-itself. If Spir had read Kant’s works beyond the first *Critique*, he would have been exposed to an increasing number of arguments that transcendental realists are forced to conceive of Being along the lines of Spinozistic substance. Furthermore, Spinoza was a direct influence on Spir’s thinking as well [Brobjer 2008, p.71].

46) It is, in fact, a matter of contention as to whether or not Spinoza’s metaphysics can be couched in terms of “laws,” scientific or otherwise [see Schliesser 2018].

47) *BGE*, “On the Prejudices of Philosophers,” 15, 21. Cf. *TI*, “‘Reason’ in Philosophy,” §4.

48) Goethe. “Doubt and Resignation” (“Bedenken und Ergebung”). *Morphologische Hefte*, 2<sup>nd</sup> volume. (Quoted from Eckart Förster’s “Goethe’s Spinozism,” in *Spinoza and German Idealism*.) Goethe was also concerned with the metaphysical nature of causality, and how his empirical, scientific studies were to be understood in relation to his Spinozistic convictions. He elaborates the problem in a fascinating passage: “This difficulty of uniting idea and experience presents obstacles in all scientific research: the idea is independent of space and time while scientific research is bound by space and time. In the idea, then, simultaneous elements are closely bound up with sequential ones, but our experience always shows them to be separate; we are seemingly plunged into madness by a natural process which must be conceived of in [the] idea as both simultaneous and sequential” (Goethe, *Scientific Studies*, p.33) [ibid.].

49) The title for this subsection is taken from the titles of its two primary sources: Tom Bailey’s article “Nietzsche the Kantian?” [Bailey 2013], and Thomas Brobjer’s book *Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context* [Brobjer 2008].

50) Nietzsche’s discovery of Schopenhauer at twenty-one “was followed by a period of extensive readings in Neo-Kantianism, lasting some ten years or so” [Bailey 2013, p.135]. (See Notes 2, 4 & 5.) It was

from authors such as Spir, Lange, Zöllner, Überweg, Otto Liebmann, Heinrich Romundt, Kuno Fischer, and Eduard von Hartmann that Nietzsche formed his image of Kant [Brobjer 2008, p.36, 58; cf. Bailey 2013, p.136]. Moreover, these Neo-Kantians were “among those whose writings taught him about philosophy and how to philosophize (and how not to do it)” [Brobjer 2008, p.3].

51) Table 3: Alphabetical Listing of Nietzsche’s Philosophical Reading [Brobjer 2008, p.243-258]. See also Green 2002, p.46; and Schlechta/Anders 1962, p.122.

52) Brobjer: “Nietzsche’s overall intellectual development is divided into four periods: [1] young (1844-69), [2] early (1869-75), [3] middle (1875-82), and [4] late (1883-88). This is the conventional division that Nietzsche himself used and for which there are many good reasons [...]. However, [...] other divisions are possible. The argument could be made, with some justification, that in almost all essentials, Nietzsche’s thinking was consistent throughout his development, with no major changes. Another more reasonable view is the claim that Nietzsche, due primarily to the influence of Schopenhauer and Wagner, had a marked prometaphysical period during 1869-75 [2], which he broke with fairly radically during 1875-76 [3a]; that *Human, All Too Human*, 3 vols. (1878-80) [3b] constituted a reaction and overreaction to his first position; and that it is with *Dawn* (1881) [3c] that we can see the emergence of his own distinct philosophical positions, which he then further developed [in *Gay Science* (1882) {3d}, and finally in *Zarathustra* (1883-85) onward {4}].” [Brobjer 2008, p.5].

53) For reference: “[...]”

1900: Nietzsche dies in Weimar on August 25. [...]

1901: [Nietzsche’s] sister publishes some 400 of his notes, many already fully utilized by him, in Volume XV of the collected works under the title *Der Wille zur Macht*. [...]

1904: [Nietzsche’s] sister integrates 200 pages of further material ‘from *The Will to Power*’ in the last volume of her biography, *Das Leben Friedrich Nietzsches*. A completely remodeled version of *The Will to Power*, consisting of 1067 notes, appears in a subsequent edition of the works in Volumes XV (1910) and XVI (1911).” [Kaufmann 1954, Chronology, p.23].

54) Green explains this by asking us to think of a meaningless word like “frob,” around which “one has developed certain associative tendencies” [Green 2002, pg.56]. Because there is no such thing as a “frob,” there is nothing wrong with affirming the existence of “frobs” and denying their existence at the same time [ibid.]. If one denies the existence of absolutely real or discrete “things,” as Nietzsche does (and, to some degree, Spinoza does as well), then in a sense all “objects” of empirical judgment are some sort of “frob.”

55) It is worth noting that Nietzsche frequently makes a point of rejecting the ‘I,’ ‘doers,’ atoms, Being, substance, and ‘free will,’ all at the same time [GM, “First Essay,” §13]. He likens the desire to locate an ‘I’ behind a ‘thought,’ a ‘doer’ behind a ‘deed,’ a ‘substance’ beneath phenomena, or a Being beneath Becoming, to a misguided attempt to separate “the lightning from its flash.” For “there is no ‘being’ behind doing, effecting, becoming; ‘the doer’ is merely a fiction added to the deed” [ibid.].

56) Green likens this problem to the problem Kant has in explaining evil – “that is, the problem of why responsible action is not always moral action” [Green 2002, p.69]. He further notes, “in a suggestive passage, Nietzsche links the two problems [...] (WP 579). Error and guilt are deviations from being. The question for believers in being, such as Kant and Spir is: How is it that something is in its essence being wills its own deviation from being? How it is possible?” [ibid.]

57) William Ramsey wrote a very interesting article on this topic in response to Plantinga's critiques of philosophical naturalism ["Naturalism Defended," Ramsey 2002]. The main thrust of the article is that it is very difficult to convincingly argue that "error" could prove to be consistently more advantageous than perceptual/conceptual accuracy, from an evolutionary perspective. This is the kind of argument Nietzsche must be able to respond to, if he wants to claim that the universe must produce minds that falsify reality. In fact, Nietzsche often describes our species' evolution as a compounding series of advantageous errors (*GS* 110).

58) See *HA* 16; *KSA* 9:6[441]; *WP* 555. [Cf. Green 2002, p.72].

59) Cf. *Spir* 1877, 1:266-67, 2:92-94, 2:112-13; 1873, 2:81-82, 2:97-98, 2:111-12; 1869, 165-67.

60) Cf. *KSA* 9, 11[213 & 269 & 305]; 10, 24[18]; 11, 36[15]. Cf. *FW* 109.

61) It should also be noted that Nietzsche's rejection of the atom is usually given for psychological reasons – despite the fact that he has a working metaphysical reason to reject it as well [*BGE*, "On The Prejudices of Philosophers," §2, 12, 17].

62) In fact, they seem to agree on another intriguing point: to the extent that we conceive of finite objects, determinate points in space, or empirical objects in general – we falsify reality.

63) "...in favor of their being exhausted by the relations between objects (the Leibnizian or antithesis position..." [Green 2002, p.64]

64) As David Bell puts it, "Goethe's use of monadistic terminology in such contexts does not permit us to conclude that he shares the metaphysical implications of the monadistic theory, any more than his use of the term 'entelechy' allows us to call him Aristotelian. Indeed, other utterances about the monad reveal a conception very different from the hermetic entity postulated by Leibniz; like Herder, he could not accept that such monads could not interact with their environment (see *Maximen und Reflexionen*, Nos. 391, 392, p. 76). Even in 'Vermächtniß' the third line, enjoining adherence to 'Being,' seems out of place among the other wise Leibnizian ideas, and recalls instead the monism of Spinoza" [Bell 1984, p. 160].

65) This work is one part of a greater project: to trace the various subterranean paths of Spinoza's legacies and how they have manifested themselves in Nietzsche's development. In an upcoming work, an attempt will be made to demonstrate that Kant's conception of the Intuition was reinterpreted by the Romantics in light of Spinoza's 3<sup>rd</sup> Kind of Knowledge. This came to be very influential not only for the European Romantics but also for American philosophers, particularly Ralph Waldo Emerson, who then had a tremendous impact on Nietzsche – particularly his preference for intuition above logic, as expressed by his heroic, intuitive 'free spirits' who hate to *deduce* where they can *guess* [*Ecce Homo*, "Why I Write Such Good Books," §3].

66) My main point of difference with Yovel is his use of the word 'immanence.' By his usage, that term refers to "the negation of all transcendence" by a desire to embrace *this* world, the "immanent world" – a world which "constitutes the overall horizon of being and the sole possible source of value," and yet is "devoid of an inner or outer purpose" [Yovel 2018, p.540]. While I agree that both Nietzsche and Spinoza *are* committed to such a principle, I disagree that this is an entirely sufficient definition of 'immanence.' In my view, 'immanence' also refers to the concept of 'Being' – e.g. the unconditioned which must be 'immanent'

to the series which it grounds. When we use the term ‘immanence’ in this sense, as I do, Nietzsche must reject it. This is part of the reason I think it more useful to categorize the differences between Nietzsche and Spinoza as one of the two types of ‘antithetic views,’ rather than (as Yovel does) different approaches to ‘immanence.’ (Note: both types of the ‘antithetic view’ – A1 and nihilistic – fit with Yovel’s use of the term ‘immanence.’) For an interesting exploration of the term ‘immanence’ as it relates to both Nietzsche and Spinoza (which examines and in some ways challenges Yovel’s usage of the term), see Andreas Urs Sommer’s 2017 paper, “Nietzsche: An Immanentist?”

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## REFERENCE KEY

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### Spinoza:

- TP*      *Political Treatise (Tractatus Politicus)*  
*TTP*      *Theological Political Treatise (Tractatus Theologico-Politicus)*  
*E*        *Ethics*

<sup>^</sup> Naming Convention: [*Ethics*][book#][Element][element#][Sub-Element][sub-element#].

Example: E1p8n1 = [*Ethics*][Book 1][proposition][8][note][1]

Other Abbrev.: app = "appendix"; c = "corollary"; a = "axiom"; d = "definition"; pref = "preface"; lem = "lemma"

### Kant:

All quotations from Kant's works are from the Akademie Ausgabe. The first *Critique* is cited by the standard A/B edition pagination, and other works by standard siglum AA vol:page. *Gesammelte Schriften* Hrsg.: Bd. 1-22 Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Bd. Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, ab Bd. 24 Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Berlin 1900ff.

Unless otherwise noted, English translations from the *Critique* are taken from N. Kemp-Smith's translation, *Critique of Pure Reason* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

Nietzsche:

<i>PTG</i>	<i>Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks</i>
<i>HA</i>	<i>Human, All Too Human</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>Daybreak</i>
<i>GS</i>	<i>The Gay Science</i>
<i>BGE</i>	<i>Beyond Good and Evil</i>
<i>GM</i>	<i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i>
<i>TI</i>	<i>Twilight of the Idols</i>
<i>WP</i>	<i>The Will to Power</i>