PANTHEISM, PANENTHEISM, AND ECOSOPHY: GETTING BACK TO SPINOZA?

by Luca Valera and Gabriel Vidal

Abstract. Many authors in the field of Environmental Philosophy have claimed to be inspired by Spinoza's monism, which has traditionally been considered a form of pantheism because nature and God coincide. This idea has deep normative implications, as some environmental ethicists claim that wounding nature is the same as wounding God, which implies a resacralization of nature. In particular, we will focus on Arne Næss's Ecosophy (or Deep Ecology) to offer a current relevant example of the pantheist (or panentheist) worldview. However, a new demarcation distinguishes pantheism from panentheism; in the latter, nature and God belong together but do not fully coincide, as in pantheism. Nevertheless, whether Spinoza is a panentheist, pantheist, or neither has yet to be fully determined, as well as whether his doctrine serves as a proper foundation for an ecology that attempts the aforementioned resacralization of nature. This article attempts to clarify these issues.

Keywords: ecosophy; Haeckel; Naess; panentheism; pantheism; Spinoza

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An excellent way to understand the current paradigms of pantheism and panentheism is to consider some contemporary philosophies that have tried to deepen these paradigms. Among the most relevant in the current philosophical and scientific debate is the ecological vision of the world inaugurated by Ernst Haeckel (1866) with the *Generelle Morphologie* and systematized at the philosophical level by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss, father of the Deep Ecology movement and ideologist of *Ecosophy*.

The aim of this article is to clarify whether the cosmology that underlies a particular form of philosophy of ecology—such as Arne Næss's ecosophy or deep ecology[1]—is pantheistic or panentheistic. Moreover, through this article, we will try to define if this cosmology is inspired by Baruch Spinoza, as the same Næss (1977) states. In this sense, through this article,

Luca Valera is a Professor at the Department of Philosophy, Universidad de Valladolid, Valladolid, Spain, and Adjunct Researcher at the Bioethics Centre, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago de Chile, Chile; e-mail: luca.valera@uva.es.

Gabriel Vidal is a PhD student at the Department of Philosophy, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago de Chile, Chile; e-mail: gtvidal@uc.cl.

we attempt to clarify the cosmology of deep ecology while simultaneously solving a problem in Spinoza scholarship with regard to the relationship between the parts and the whole.

In this sense, the pantheistic—or better, panentheistic, as we will see—worldview offered by Spinoza, according to the intuition of Næss (2010), can find a consistent vision of the relationships between the different living beings in the ecosystem on the basis of the famous expression "*Deus sive Natura*." This formula has traditionally led to the interpretation of Spinoza as a pantheist, as Deleuze's (1988, 110–11) relevant interpretation stresses: "In the *Ethics* the identity of God and substance entails that the attributes or qualified substances truly constitute the essence of God, and already enjoy the property of self-causation. The naturalism is just as powerful no doubt, but in the *Short Treatise* it is a 'coincidence' between Nature and God, based on the attributes, whereas the *Ethics* demonstrates a substantial identity based on the oneness of substance (pantheism). There is a kind of displacement of Nature in the *Ethics*; its identity with God has to be established, making it more capable of expressing the immanence of the *naturata* and the *naturans*." However, as a result of a recent delineation of the relationship between God and Nature, a new distinction has emerged—that is, that of panentheism—which has also led to a rethinking of which of these two categories (pantheism or panentheism) Spinoza truly belongs to.

To achieve the aforementioned aims, that is, to clarify the cosmology of deep ecology (or ecosophy) and to deepen the relationship between the parts and the whole in Spinoza, we will address four specific points in the following: (1) The recognized need in environmental ethics for a pantheistic or panentheistic cosmological foundation; (2) the reasons for the success of Spinozian philosophy for such a foundation; (3) the explanation of the various belonging relationships that occur in the ecosystem(s); and (4) a tentative answer to the question: is the ecolosophical worldview pantheistic or panentheistic?

Environmental Ethics, Pantheism, and Panentheism

Environmental ethics—and its associated branch of the philosophy of ecology—emerges from the issue of the dangerousness and harmfulness of human beings with respect to nonhuman species and, more generally, with respect to the environment. A common starting point for paradigms of environmental ethics is that human beings are responsible for having damaged—and for continuing to damage—nature. The famous four laws of ecology drafted by Barry Commoner (1971) precisely express this guilt on the part of human beings, who very often voluntarily violate the behavioral indications that emerge from nature itself. Thus, in most cases, human actions are detrimental to the ecosystem[2]. A further step taken by

Forrest (2010, 470) is noteworthy: not only do we damage the ecosystem but also "when we humans destroy the natural world we are wounding God." Such an idea implies the coincidence of God with the natural world—or the ecosystem. The question that arises here is the following: what is the kind of coincidence between God and the natural world?

This question leads us to reconsider the distinction between pantheism and panentheism and to discuss the symmetrical (or asymmetrical) relationships between God and the finite ways in which God manifests Godself. Indeed, "pantheism and panentheism are comparable, but to the extent panentheism conceives of God as an entity distinguishable in certain respects from the universe itself, it is considered here to be in the same general category as traditional theism. One succinct example of panentheism's concept of God is offered by David Ray Griffin: 'God is essentially the soul of the universe. Although God is distinct from the universe, God's relation to it belongs to the divine essence'" (Grula 2008, 161). If panentheism, then, conceives God as partially distinct from the natural world – thus implying asymmetrical relations between God and the finite modes—pantheism, on the contrary, stresses the perfect superposition between the two entities, which would originate perfectly symmetrical relationships. Following Grula (2008, 160) again, "The definition of pantheism I use here is: the doctrine that God is not a personality or transcendent supernatural being but that all laws, forces, manifestations, and so forth of the self-existing natural universe constitute an all-inclusive divine Unity." What is mostly emphasized, then, in the pantheistic perspective, is the intimate unity between God and the natural entities (or Nature as an organic whole), but the characterization of this unity is not much elaborated. Indeed, Levine (1994, 132) argues: "The pantheist's ethic, her environmental ethic and her ethics more generally, will be metaphysically based in terms of the divine Unity."

Although it is true, on the one hand, that the representation—described in rather general terms, as we have emphasized—of the intrinsic unity between God and the finite modes has constituted the theoretical basis of the philosophy of ecology, on the other hand, this same characterization has generated a great deal of confusion, precisely because of its structural imprecision. The aforementioned Levine (1994, 122) states: "The belief in a divine Unity, and some kind of identification with that Unity, is seen as the basis for an ethical framework (and 'way of life') that extends beyond the human to nonhuman and nonliving things. The divine Unity is, after all, 'all-inclusive.' It is, I shall argue, not accidental, that pantheism is often taken to be inherently sympathetic to ecological concerns." The problematic that Levine himself leaves open concerns exactly the sort of identification between God and infinite beings. We will return to this point later, trying to explain what kinds of relationships are present in the Unity that is God.

One point that is surely unquestionable, however, is the mostly pantheistic (or panentheistic, depending on the analysis we will provide in the following sections) inspiration of environmental ethics: "Among religious viewpoints, pantheism is uniquely qualified to support a foundation for environmental ethics. […] Pantheist ethics has as its goal a closeness with nature […]. It is a closeness based not upon imitation, but upon reverential communion" (Wood Jr. 1985, 157–61). In this sense, it could be argued that ecology[3] itself consists, in its essence, of "the recognition that all beings are modifications of one Substance. Harold Wood links this view of ecology to pantheism, which he defines as 'the doctrine identifying the Deity with the various forces and workings of nature'" (de Jonge 2016, 103).

The aforementioned confusion with reference to the mutual belonging between God and finite beings is probably generated in the epistemological status of environmental ethics itself: being this considered a branch of *applied ethics* (Valera, Leal, and Vidal 2021), it renounces discussing fundamental ontological and cosmological issues to focus on the application of meta-ethical principles or preestablished norms. In this sense, in environmental ethics, the pantheistic worldview is assumed without discussing it, especially with reference to a certain unity of the cosmos: "It may seem that pantheists can claim that ethics and an approach to ecology should be kept separate from, or that they are separate from, the more general pantheistic view that asserts the existence of a divine Unity. A kind of 'separation between church and environment' might be proposed. However, I doubt that such a separation is possible. The pantheist, like the theist or atheist, takes the nature of reality as determinative of ethical requirements. Since Unity is predicated upon some evaluative consideration (e.g., the divine Unity being constituted on the basis of 'goodness'), value is a focal point for the pantheist and a principal concern. This situation in regard to pantheism is not too different from the one for theism. For the theist, ethical requirements and evaluative concerns of all sorts are connected to God's alleged goodness, and overall nature" (Levine 1994, 133).

Finally, there is a certain "implicit deductivism" of the basic ethical norms of environmental ethics based on a pantheistic worldview, without this being clearly explained or defined. The intrinsic value of natural entities, anti-anthropocentrism (or bio or eco-centrism, depending on the paradigms), anti-classism, decentralization, and the rights of living beings are good examples of such fundamentally pantheistic nonjustified ethical norms. For a better understanding and elaboration, then, of the norms or precepts instituted in environmental ethics, it is necessary to deepen the cosmovision that sustains it. Therefore, the analysis of the Spinozian perspective that shapes the ecological worldview seems to be a more than necessary step.

Spinoza and Ecosophy

Spinoza is commonly accepted as the classic paradigm for understanding the cosmological foundation of environmental ethics. Arne Næss himself recognizes, on different occasions, Spinoza's philosophy as the most adequate total vision for the foundation of ecosophy (Næss 1977, 1983a, 1992). However, it cannot be claimed that the entire Spinozian philosophy is adequate for ecosophical purposes (Lloyd 1980; Gamlund 2011; Kober 2013): if his overall metaphysical vision constitutes an adequate and "harmonious" paradigm for interpreting the various relations of interdependence and coownership among living beings, the same can§not be claimed for his ethics. In fact, Spinoza's ethics itself has been considered not very "environmentally friendly" (Houle 1997), focusing too much on human interests (anthropocentric) and too little on respect for animals and nonhuman entities. If we consider, in fact, that the theoretical basis of any commonly accepted environmental ethics is anti-anthropocentrism (Baird Callicott 1984), Spinoza's ethics would not meet such minimum requirements.

Thus, ecosophy is considered to be Spinozian exclusively because of its generally pantheistic metaphysics (or worldview), without a deeper look—in fact, Taylor (2001) simply defines deep ecology influenced by Spinozian pantheism as "a new form of mysticism." Almost alone, Næss undertakes to search for the substantial relations between the two systems of thought (ecosophy and Spinoza's "total view"), delving into the various substantive aspects of Spinoza's *Ethics*, from the characterization of freedom as self-realization, to the process of identification (Næss 1975), to the possible attitudes toward nature (Næss 1983b). In this sense, Levine (1994, 126) is right when he affirms that "whether or not Spinoza provides a suitable metaphysical basis for an environmental ethic depends, in part, on whether his metaphysics and ethics are acceptable. For that reason alone, one might be suspicious of grounding an environmental ethic in Spinoza's philosophy. It is, by all accounts, obscure in many places and most certainly wrong in some of its fundamental contentions—for example, its monism." What remains of Spinoza, once again, is simply his general pantheistic outlook: "But leaving Spinoza's particular system aside, it is often supposed that pantheism, *if it were 'true,'* could offer a more suitable basis for an environmental ethic, and perhaps for ethics generally, than the Judeo-Christian tradition, or some nonreligious alternatives such as utilitarianism, contractarianism, Kantian views etc." (Levine 1994, 126–27). It is worth noting here, as Næss (1983a, 684) does, that the word that best describes Spinoza's cosmology is "panentheism": "The characterization of Spinoza as a 'pantheist' is often interpreted in the direction that he identifies God with the universe or the world. Therefore, a better term for his view is panentheist ('God in all')." God is in all finite modes (the

natural world, the ecosystems, and the smallest living beings), but he does not coincide with them because he is more than the sum of all their parts.

In this sense, Næss's panentheism—in full consonance with Spinoza's—adequately explains the relations of mutual belonging between living beings and Nature, which functions as a principle of Unity—and not of reduction of the parts to a single being (i.e., monism) (Barnhill 2001, 82)—and connection between subsystems (Diehm 2003): "Spinoza's God in Næss' Ecosophy T is now called *relational net*, but remains all-encompassing and all-substantiating. Both systems view individual beings as the sheer manifestation of a universal wholeness, a vague supernatural will, who arts mysteriously and in secrecy. Spinoza's naturalistic pantheism—or, better, panentheism—is utilized in the context of Ecosophy T to create a cosmic Self that includes 'not only men, an individual human, but all humans, grizzly bears, whole rainforest ecosystems, mountains and rivers, the tiniest microbes in the soil and so on'" (Protopapadakis 2009, 192). Thus, Næss constantly refers to Wetlesen (1978, 32) to explain the relation between God's self-subsistence (*causa Sui*) and the participation of the finite modes in the nature of Godself through God's freedom: "Spinoza's philosophy should therefore be considered panentheistic rather than pantheistic. However, in so far as a human being cognizes itself and other modes through their first cause and sees that this is an immanent and free cause, and that it is infinite, eternal, and indivisible, he feels and experiences that this cause is totally present in itself, and equally present in the parts and in the whole of itself, and consequently he participates in its freedom." Since such participation is not immediately comprehensible—and is not clearly explained either in the texts of the most renowned thinkers of environmental ethics or by Næss himself—we will devote the following sections to it.

Before doing so, however, it is necessary to delve slightly deeper into Spinoza's worldview, as well as into contemporary interpretations of his pantheism (or panentheism).

Spinoza: Getting Back to Eleatic Monism

Shortly after Spinoza's death, the grandiose descriptions of substance, conceived as inseparable, indivisible and, above all, one, led many interpreters to see his philosophy as a revivification of Eleatic monism (Melamed 2015, 69), usually attributed to Parmenides: for him, only Being is real, while diversification and movement are illusions, since they are modes of nonbeing. Therefore, Being would be a kind of perfect, inseparable, indivisible, static, and homogeneous sphere. By the advent of German idealism, this way of looking at Spinoza had become the standard interpretation, so that Hegel, in a praise and criticism of the philosopher of substance, goes so far as to assert that his philosophy is acosmist (Hegel 1955, 284–85):

Spinoza is as if intoxicated by the idea of God, so that everything that is particular is considered to be derivative, secondary, and illusory entities that are almost phagocytized by divine substance—that is, the cosmos is completely deposed. Hegel, indeed, denies that there is any pantheism in Spinoza, for there is no cosmos. As an ecofeminist, Grace M. Jantzen (1997, 280) rightly points out, Hegel does not consider Spinoza to be an atheist. Quite the contrary, there is too much God in his doctrine: everything is swallowed up in an undifferentiated oneness, an abyss where cosmos disintegrates. Therefore, Spinoza's system is an acosmism where neither pantheism nor panentheism can take place.

This way of interpreting Spinoza corresponds to a particular way of conceiving the relationship between substance and modes (i.e., particular entities). Spinoza inaugurates the *Ethics* by affirming that everything *is conceived by itself* and *is by itself*, or else, *is through something else* or *conceived through something else* (Spinoza EP1A1–7). That which is conceived and is by itself is precisely the substance, and that which is conceived and exist through another are precisely the modes. It cannot be otherwise, then: the modes are conceived and exist through substance, and not vice versa. This means that between substance and modes, there is an asymmetrical relationship: substance does not require modes, but modes do require substance in order to exist (Melamed 2015, 9). Apparently, from this follows the illusory and derivative character of modes, leading to the denial of diversification and multiplicity.

The Reality of Modes, Diversification, and Individuality

However, according to contemporary research, this interpretation of Spinoza relies on an error. It confuses the ontologically dependent character of modes with their lack of reality and illusory character. The mistake is to assume that being "ontologically dependent" implies being "unreal" (Nadler 2012). Moreover, although the relation of dependence between substance and mode is asymmetrical, Spinoza also claims that infinite modes necessarily follow from substance. It belongs to the essence of a substance to produce infinite effects (Melamed 2012, 208). That is, the flow of *Natura Naturans*, the creative nature, into *Natura Naturata*, the created nature, is not only necessary, but also inevitable; in other words, it is part of the essence of God to produce infinite things. Even though the substance could exist without its modes—given its ontological independence—without them, it betrays its own essence. This turns the initial argument of acosmism on its head: not only does God necessarily produce the diversity of entities, but without that diversity God is not completely faithful to God's own essence.

Indeed, Spinoza gives us two criteria for the individuation of particular entities, which keep emphasizing their reality and which are known

as Spinoza's "physics." The first is ratios of motion and rest: "Axiom I. All bodies are either in motion or at rest. Axiom II Every body is moved sometimes more slowly, sometimes more quickly. Lemma I. Bodies are distinguished from one another in respect of motion and rest, quickness and slowness, and not in respect of substance" (Spinoza, EII A1, A2, L1). As seen, the passage not only indicates the existence of bodies but also the way in which they are distinguished from each other. The second criterion is that entities that concur in causing the same effect constitute an individual (Melamed 2010, 85–87). In both cases, individuation occurs, but it seems that such criteria are rather unrestricted. Indeed, here we may find a slippery slope that contributes, if only apparently, to the accusation of acosmism and the illusory character of the modes. If it is the case that those are the only criteria of individuation for Spinoza, it happens that all things in even remote or trivial causal connections constitute individuals at various and very unrestricted levels of evaluation. It suffices that we merely give a plausible case of a causal relation between entities to consider them an individual. However, this again does not deny the reality of modes: at worst, it gives them a fluid and unstable individuality, which, on the contrary, simply adds to the diversity and dynamism of modes. However, even this instability of the modes seems to have a counterbalance in Spinoza (EIII P7), through the idea of the *conatus*: "The endeavour, wherewith everything endeavours to persist in its own being, is nothing else but the actual essence of the thing in question […] wherefore the power of any given thing, or the endeavour whereby, either alone or with other things, it acts, or endeavours to act, that is, the power or endeavour, wherewith it endeavours to persist in its own being, is nothing else but the given or actual essence of the thing in question."

This shows that not only do bodies exist individually, but also that each thing strives to persevere in its being. Furthermore, one can infer the connection between *conatus* and ratios of motion and rest by comparing Parts II and III of the *Ethics* in such a way that it follows that "*conatus* is, essentially, the effort of an individual mode to resist the potentially dissipating influences of external constrictors that could alter the harmony of motion characteristic of such an individual, as far as the individual as a whole is concerned" (Gabhart 1999, 615).

Thus, *conatus* is to be understood as the effort that a thing exerts to maintain or persevere in its being, and this is nothing more than the very essence of the thing itself. However, in Spinoza's case, this essence does not refer to that which is common to a diversity of things, for it is not a formal unity that brings together a certain multiplicity in a unity, but rather, it is the case that each individual mode possesses an essence that is unique to it (Soyarslan 2013, 28).

Everything seems to indicate that not only the particular bodies are real, but they also individually strive to continue to exist and not to dissipate, in

accordance with their own essence. Particular entities possess both a certain activity and an individual stability, quite contrary to Eleatic Monism or Hegel's acosmism. Instead, it seems that Schelling's interpretation could offer a more accurate view of Spinoza, since he views nature as an infinite becoming and substance as an active force that is inherently productive (Schelling 2004, 202).

Back to Pantheism or Panentheism: The Relationship Between the Parts and the Whole

What has been shown in the previous section allows us to dismiss acosmism, in which there is no room for pantheism (or panentheism). However, this still does not indicate that Spinoza is, in fact, a pantheist or panentheist or that his worldview is compatible with those doctrines. There is, indeed, a necessary flow from the indivisible and unique substance to the modes, divisible, diverse and dynamic. However, this does not mean that the relationship between the substance and the modes satisfies the demands of pantheism or panentheism. Indeed, it could be the case that the substance is transcendent or that it is separate from the cosmos. The formula *Deus sive Natura*, however, still indicates to us that the relationship between the substance and the modes is such that it can be thought of as a conjunction, as two elements that come together and are interchangeable.

This allows us to see why it makes sense that Spinoza's philosophy is a source of inspiration for both pantheism, where God and the world coincide, and panentheism, where God and the world coincide, but God has ontological prevalence. The interpretation where God is immanent to the world comes from the fact that the modes necessarily follow from the substance, so *Natura Naturans* and *Natura Naturata* belong together and are not dissociable (Næss 1975, 62). However, it is necessary to clarify what this belonging means if we want to rigorously connect pantheism or panentheism to the Spinozian worldview. The relationship between the substance and the modes could be such that it diverges or has no relation whatsoever with what pan- or panen-theism hold.

It makes sense, then, to explore some possible ways of conceiving the relationship between the substance and the modes in Spinoza. They are: (1) Inherence: in this case, the modes inherit in the substance, in the same way that a predicate inheres in a subject in the case of a logical proposition. Or also in the same way in which an object possesses properties (Carriero 1995; Nadler 2008). (2) Identity: modes and substance are the same. The distinction is only a *logical* distinction but not a *real* distinction. This interpretation seems to be compatible with pantheism (Della Rocca 1993). However, it is highly unlikely that this is the case, since Spinoza clearly indicates that the modes are affections of substance, which even assumes that they have the character of an accidental property (Schmidt 2010, 82).

This not only rules out identity but also reinforces the idea of the lower ontological status of the modes. (3) Material constitution: in this case, mode and substance are in a relation of constitution, in the same way that in a bronze statue, the statue and the bronze, being distinct, cohabit the same space (Wasserman 2018). As it is a symmetrical relationship, since the cohabitation of space is not competitive, it seems to be compatible with pantheism. However, material constitution is precisely a purely material relationship, whereas substance is an entity whose extension is only one of its infinite attributes, so it is not only a material entity, the other attribute being thought, for example, in resonance with cartesian *res cogitans* (Spinoza EID6). The modes, being modifications of substance, are also modifications of those attributes, not only of the material (Spinoza EIIp6), so it is unlikely that this is the relation between substance and mode since it excludes the rest of the attributes of substance. (4) Composition: in this case, the relationship between substance and modes is that of a part and the whole they compose, the substance being the whole and the modes the parts (Guigon 2012, 183).

It is possible to see beforehand that some of these relationships are symmetrical, while others are asymmetrical. This evidently shows that some of these models are more compatible with pantheism or panentheism: while symmetrical relationships seem to be a favorable interpretation for pantheism, asymmetrical relations seem to be more compatible with panentheism.

However, the kind of relationship that interpreters have favored and analyzed most is composition, given that Spinoza's doctrine has been considered a type of monism, in which, in one way or another, unity is attributed to reality (Schaffer 2010). Spinoza's thought would then be both pantheistic (or panentheistic) and monistic (Melamed 1933, 162). According to Schaffer, there are four fundamental ways of attributing cardinality to reality. They are: (1) Existence monism, which affirms that there is only one concrete thing, which is precisely the doctrine of acosmism. (2) Priority monism, which states that there is only one fundamental thing that is divided into parts and that the whole has priority over the parts. (3) Existence pluralism, which argues that there is only a diversity of parts. (4) Priority pluralism affirms that although the parts constitute a whole, the parts have ontological priority over the whole.

In light of what we developed above in disproving acosmism, and likewise what is suggested by Schaffer (2010, 69), it seems to be an appropriate reading to place Spinoza in the ranks of priority monism: Spinoza claims that there is only one fundamental thing—that is, the substance—whose affections produce diverse secondary modes. Substance is the whole that modes compose, and substance has priority over modes. If we take this reading, it is evident that Spinoza would be a panentheist and not a

pantheist, for although God and world cobelong, it is God that has ontological and explanatory priority.

However, it seems that the issue of composition in Spinoza may not be so easy to settle, as Schmaltz (2021, 135) points out: "There is an apparent antinomy at the heart of Spinoza's ontology. On the one hand, there is the thesis, fundamental to his monism, that God, the one substance of which everything else is a mode, is absolutely indivisible and therefore completely devoid of parts. On the other hand, Spinoza himself suggests that he endorses the antithesis that finite modes are 'parts' of Nature as an infinite whole. In contemporary terms, Spinoza seems to argue both that 'God or Nature' (*Deus sive Natura*), as indivisible, is mereologically simple and that this being is mereologically complex insofar as it is composed of parts." If this is the case, it seems that Spinoza is sustaining, at the same time, existence monism and the existence of diversity, which is a patent contradiction.

A possible solution proposed by Guigon (2012, 184–85) to this problem asserts that Spinoza's monism is unique, and this peculiarity is not picked up by Schaffer's distinctions. He introduces, indeed, two relevant distinctions and qualifications: (1) There is a weak and a strong kind of priority monism. Weak priority monism asserts that there is only one fundamental entity and strong priority monism maintains the same but also adds that the whole has priority over parts. It is necessary to contrast these distinctions with the fact that Spinoza rejects that substance is composed of parts because, contrary to strong priority monism, the philosopher adheres to the Aristotelian doctrine (Spinoza, EIP12–13) that the parts have priority over the whole. In this sense, it is compatible with strong priority monism. (2) Weak priority monism refers only to the cardinality of the fundamental world but remains neutral with regard to the nonfundamental world, which makes it compatible with existence pluralism, that is, the idea that the world consists of a multiplicity of entities. Spinoza precisely recognizes this by admitting the diversity and plurality of modes, so he is also an existence pluralist.

Finally, Guigon introduces a weak priority pluralism, which affirms that there are many fundamental entities, and strong priority pluralism, which adds that the parts are prior to the whole. As we said above, Spinoza adheres to the doctrine of the priority of the parts, so his thought is incompatible with priority pluralism insofar as the latter concedes that there is only one fundamental entity. On the other hand, it is partially compatible with its strong version only in regard to the relationship between the parts and the whole.

In sum, all this produces a unique version of the cardinality of the world, proper to Spinoza, which Guigon calls substantial monism: with respect to the cardinality of the basic world, it is a weak priority monism; with respect to the cardinality of the nonfundamental world, it is an existence

puralism; insofar as it presumes that parts are prior to the whole, it is strong priority pluralism. That is, there is a single substance, a plurality of derived modes, and the relationship between the substance and the modes is not a relationship of parts and whole because it would imply that modes are ontologically prevalent.

Unfortunately, this solution still leaves unresolved what the relationship between substance and modes is if it is not one of composition, even though it offers an important clarification with respect to the cardinality of the different realms of existence proposed by Spinoza. Moreover, he still maintains the perplexity that modes are indeed in substance but without being part of it. It seems at least curious to assert that something is in something else, without this founding a compositional relation.

What is to be gained by positing the different distinctions we have introduced? It seems that we have only encountered new perplexities. What is gained, however, is that through these new aporias and even in this perhaps eccentric substantial monism, a fundamental issue has invariably remained. Both Schaffer's proposal—that is, priority monism—and Guigon's proposal—that is, substantial monism—maintain an inevitable asymmetry between substance and modes, which is incompatible with pantheism but, on the other hand, fully coincides with panentheism. In sum, this points to the fact that, however complicated Spinoza's classification for cardinality of the world and the specificity of the substance-mode relation may be, it remains true that Spinoza is rather a panentheist, as the father of deep ecology argues. In addition, this aporia seems perfectly compatible with what McFague (2014, 23) suggests for panentheism: "Being a panentheist means one cannot have God without the world or the world without God, although it doesn't tell you how they are related. What this model does is 'complicate the question' and insist that conversations about God not be dismissive of either God or the world."

In this sense, McFague allows us to recognize Spinoza as a panentheist. Even though the explanation of the movement that brings from *Natura Naturans* to *Natura Naturata* remains unclear, we are still able to hold their interdependence[4].

Indeed, Spinoza is a philosopher of singularity and diversity in a way that seems to be very appealing for environmental thinkers. However, as Rubenstein (2018, 53–54) rightly points out, there is a slippery slope in Spinoza's panentheism: "Far from identifying the creator with creation, Spinoza provides us with a 'complete differentiation' of them; in short, the statement 'God is all things' does not mean that the two are equivalent, but that God is the ground of all things as consequents. God exists independently of the finite modes, whereas the modes exist only by means of God."

In this scenario, the substance would be related to modes only as their essence, making the relationship between them merely reductive. This

means that modes are reduced to substance, "which tends to designate a single and nonrelational core of being" (Rubenstein 2018, 51).

However, the word "essence" may be a misleading element here, as for Spinoza essence is not a common substratum for many things, rather, every particular thing has its own essence (Martin 2008, 489). In this sense, we need to understand the relationship not as a reduction but as an expression: "'God is all things' does not mean that God is the compendium of all things—some massively aggregated All. Nor, again, does it mean that God is every or any particular thing. Rather, it means that all things are expressions and modifications of an essentially dynamic, and therefore relationally inessential, divinity; that all things both reflect and compose the God-or-nature that expresses, enfolds, and inhabits all things" (Rubenstein 2018, 57).

This leads us to a very inspiring idea: all things represent the unfolding of divinity, and every particular thing, humans, living beings, are expressions of divinity. This, again, seems to match exactly Næss's endorsement of Spinoza as a philosophy of radical immanence of God in particulars (Næss 2005, 288).

Conclusion: Is the Ecosophical Worldview Pantheistic or Panentheistic?

Having clarified problematized Spinoza's thought with reference to the relationship between whole and parts, we can return to the initial question of this article, which is: is the ecosophical worldview—generally understood—pantheistic or panentheistic? Is there a relationship of identity between whole and parts or mutual belonging in the ecosophical worldview? The answer to this question obviously has both cosmological and ethical value, as it can guide our decisions regarding the intrinsic value (or lack thereof) of natural beings (Stephano 2017). Hence, it can orient our valuations and actions toward them. Indeed, as Houle (1997, 420) highlights, "the resacralization of the natural world—the recognition and love of trees and sky as God rather than as creations of an absent God—is seen as a key route to the respect and protection of those elements of nature."

If it is true that the great paradigms in environmental ethics—and, more specifically, we refer to the works of Arne Næss as the eminent representative of that field of research, and to his successors, such as, for example, George Sessions (1977)—refer to Spinoza as their basis and theoretical foundation, it is worthwhile to understand whether Spinoza's "panentheism" is compatible with the ecosophical worldview. When Glasser (2005, xiv), describing Næss's work, states that he believes in "the ultimate unity and interdependence of all living beings, while maintaining their individuality," to what forms of relationships between modes and substance is

he referring? Surely, to a relationship of composition, in which the relationship between substance and modes is that of a part and the whole they compose, the substance being the whole and the modes the parts. On the other hand, Guigon's substantial monism also well describes Næss's view with reference to cardinality: there is an asymmetry between part and whole, or better yet, between subsystems and system—and the parts (or subsystems) are ontologically prior with respect to the whole (or system).

This explains Næss's difficulty in naming finite modes as "parts" of the whole (Diehm 2003): the ontological priority of living beings with respect to the whole also determines their independence. This is particularly relevant for the human being. One sentence of Næss's can confirm at least a part of our hypothesis: "God is revealed *in* something, namely, all being, with which he is *not* conceptually identical. On the other hand, God is not *apart* from all being" (Næss 1983a, 684). The mutual belonging of God and the modes does not imply, thus, for Næss, a perfect coincidence, since, at the same time, living beings—among them, the human being in particular—determine their essence through the force that moves them. This is the essence of panentheism (Jacobsen 2005, 39), which Næss—consciously or not—embraces, reinterpreting Spinoza. In this, the Spinozian doctrine of *conatus*—which Næss (1975, 96) deepens and reinterprets as the doctrine of self-realization (Guilherme 2011, 68)—guarantees a certain independence of finite modes with respect to the whole. Moreover, since living beings strive for their own self-increase or self-perfection (Mathews 1988, 351), there is an active participation (much more than Spinoza's "*perseverare in suo esse*") in the substantiality of God. All this would be fully compatible with Spinoza's substantial monism, in light of the aforementioned Guigon's interpretation.

If our hypotheses are true, then we can affirm with Næss that the ecosophical cosmological vision would be panentheistic and not pantheistic. A sentence from Chryssavgis (2017, 282) explains with great clarity what the fundamentals of such a cosmology would be: "Process theology has in recent years revived the concept of panentheism—the notion that God includes or incorporates the world, while not being exhausted in or effaced by the world. The inherent danger of panentheism is that God, being almost identified with Creation, may cease to evoke adoration and wonder." In fact, following the ideas suggested here, Næss's ecosophy totally excludes any reverence for (or, rather, worship of) Nature, since *Deus sive Natura* is not an entity that can be loved aside from the intellectual love of Spinozian fashion. It also lacks a personal identity. The "resacralization of nature,"[5] then, does not require the existence of God in the form of the divinity (or divinities) of traditional religions.

Is the whole philosophy of ecology panentheistic, then, as presented by Spinoza and explained by Guigon? Not exactly. We claim that ecosophy assumes this background, but there are exceptions

worthy of note in the different approaches in the field of philosophy of ecology.

The most interesting among them, perhaps, is that of the father of ecology, that is, the aforementioned Ernst Haeckel (Levit and Hossfeld 2019). In fact, Haeckel (1866, II, 286–87) himself writes, with reference to the foundations of the discipline he himself founded: "The theory of evolution explains the housekeeping relations of organisms mechanistically as the necessary consequences of effectual causes and so forms the monistic groundwork of ecology." In fact, Haeckel's ecology arises from the Darwinian theory of evolution and is nourished by it (Stauffer 1957). With Haeckel, we arrive at the development of a "monistic doctrine of evolution (*monistische Entwickelungslehre*)": "At the core of the monistic worldview was the unity of God and nature, where God is understood as a 'general causal law' recognizable by the means of science" (Levit and Hossfeld 2019, R1277). Haeckel was surely inspired by the scientific and religious ideas circulating in his time that are well represented by Goethe and Fechner (Jacobsen 2005, 107–10). He develops his paradigm of ecology from both Darwinism and Spinoza (Jacobsen 2005, 109), who he interprets as a pantheist (Haeckel 1894, 4, 80). It is, however, a radical monism in which there is no distinction between spirit and matter, but rather "the latter is only a part of the former (or *vice versa*): both are one" (Haeckel 1894, 4). According to Haeckel (1893), Spinoza (with Bruno and Goethe) formulated the "most perfect system of pantheism," since they perpetuate the ideas of "cosmic oneness" and of "connection of […] spirit and matter—or […] of God and world." Such ideas sustain, at the same time, the Haeckelian cosmological and naturalistic religious vision, so much so that we could define his monism as "an evolutionary and pantheistic natural theology" (Kleeberg 2007). Thus, Haeckel's pantheism "must support a monist view of God and the world" (Wood 1985, 152). As Haeckel (1900, 20) himself writes, "the extramundane God of dualism leads necessarily to theism; and the intramundane God of the monist leads to pantheism."

We thus find a radically different way of interpreting Spinoza's *Deus sive Natura* from Næss's one: although both Næss and Haeckel are inspired by the cosmology of the Dutch philosopher, the reconstruction of the relationships between God and modes can lead to both a pantheistic and a panentheistic worldview, as we have observed. As we argued in this article, the difference lies above all in the interpretation of the mode/substance relationship and of cardinality (and, hence, to the form of monism that is supported). In relation to this point, it seems to us that the panentheistic option manages to restore greater complexity than the pantheistic one.

Therefore, it is worth emphasizing one last point, which we have suggested several times throughout this article: the difference in the interpretation of Spinozian cosmology is not merely a "theoretical" or cosmological matter, or rather, it does not end there. The choice between pantheism and

panentheism "is more than a mere theory. It has tremendous practical and ethical implications" (Thomas and Thomas 1941, 125). A number of current concerns in ecology are good examples of these possible implications.

Finally, ecosophy, which is based on a certain worldview (Valera, Leal, and Vidal 2021), would have to start from these considerations if it wants to find a convincing and consistent theoretical foundation.

Notes

1. Næss (1973, 99) defines ecosophy as "philosophy as a kind of wisdom" that refers to our relationship with other beings in our universe. He claims that his proper philosophy of ecology—more than deep ecology—is ecosophy T, where "T" stands for Tvergastein, that is, the place where he felt most realized (Næss 2010b).
2. Clearly, we have generalized with respect to the role of human beings in ecological issues. It is not true that the role of the human being is necessarily destructive. As the same Næss (1984, 8) claims, this question is merely related to human maturity: "In criticizing the 'homocentrism' or 'anthropocentrism' of the shallow ecological movement, we are pointing to an image of man as an immature being with crude, narrow and shortsighted interests. It is an image well-suited to the kind of policies dominant today." This immaturity relies on a superficial, narrow, and selfish view of human nature: the mature human being does not destroy nature, because he/she would be destroying him/herself.
3. We are aware of the ambiguity of the term "ecology," since it may represent a science, a worldview, a philosophy, an ideology, and so on (Valera 2013, 27–41). In this regard, in the following sections we will mainly focus on Arne Næss's ecosophy, which explicitly considers Spinoza's cosmology as a possible foundation of his worldview.
4. Mcfague (1993) explains this more deeply by means of a beautiful metaphor in which Nature is God's body, developing an ecological theology.
5. If this is what one can call the process of endowing the natural world with intrinsic value.

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