

**BARUCH SPINOZA'S CONCEPTION OF FREEWILL AND DETERMINISM:
A PHILOSOPHICAL EXPOSITION**

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Abstract

The freedom of the will appears to have no place in an unalterable and necessary chain of causation in Spinoza's ethical system. Furthermore, cause, reason, and nature are all closely identified in Spinoza's philosophy: cause is reason, reason is cause, and causation is the same as essential causality. Can man then exercise his free will when choosing a course of conduct without interference or one that is not imposed upon him? The purpose of this work is to clarify Baruch Spinoza's conception of freewill, often known as freedom of the will and determinism. The method adopted in this work is exposition, wherein, as it is being exposed, Spinoza's ideas about free will and determinism are made clear. Findings show that Spinoza defends determinism and opposes the notion of free will, proving that the functioning of our minds and bodies is same. In accordance with Spinoza, the unity of nature and God is the single uncaused substance that is real and the essential effective cause of everything else. This research work therefore seeks to provide relevance to his views to reintroduce this idea into society given that modern man tends to distance himself and decline to take responsibility for actions done, which is sure to raise the responsibility question.

Keywords: Baruch Spinoza, Freewill, Determinism Man, God.

Introduction

The debate over free will and determinism has existed for as long as there has been humankind, and even before Baruch Spinoza, these two interconnected problems were discussed and contested in many philosophical eras. It is a given that the purpose of philosophy nowadays is no longer to explain the world, but to alter it and offer answers to some unresolved issues. Spinoza joined the discussion of these concerns to offer his perspective on the repeating wave of unsettling issues that had preoccupied philosophers before him. As was previously said, among the

numerous topics of discussion in the ancient Greek era, the issue of free will and determinism was never given a place of honor. This came forth as a result of the idea that fate determines human behavior.

After being influenced by René Descartes' writings, Spinoza, a young adult who began philosophy on his own, tackled the problem of free will, which he views as a mere illusion because man is a modified version of an external factor that controls his acts and actions. The conflict between determinism and free will is more ontological than moral in character. He accepts that there is only one thing in reality, which is either God or nature. Deus ex Natura is a concept that shows up as cognition and extension. Therefore, everything else is only a manifestation or alteration of the material. Spinoza maintains the determinism of man and all things in the universe, while viewing free will as an illusion.

This essay will attempt to construct an expository assessment of Spinoza's view and notion of freewill and determinism, bringing it to light as one of the contemporary issues that shrewd men are concerned pulse, as to whether he is really seen as one whose actions, decisions, and executions of such are already determined and there is no room for free will.

The main goal of this essay is to provide a philosophical exposition of Spinoza's ideas of free will and determinism, which will help to strengthen the self-evidence of man's purpose in relation to ultimate reality, whether as a free agent capable of making decisions without interference or as one whose decisions and actions are already predetermined.

Spinoza's Conception of Determinism

In accordance with the theory of determinism, the universe's established natural rules govern everything and ensure that everything functions as intended. These laws are essential to and inevitably determine these. The preceding law is always followed by the consequence. Hence, Baruch Spinoza held the belief that God's decree and providence, derived from his everlasting law, entirely determines man's actions in the cosmos as part of nature. This belief is reflected in his theological political treatise. In his ethical writings, Spinoza held the view that the concept of God's essence must necessarily exist, and that all things equally flow from his divine nature in an infinite number of ways.

As a result, man lacks willpower and is instead forced to accept decisions over which he has little to no control. However, Spinoza did not take into account the views of his forebears or later contemporaries. Instead, he placed man in the perspective of God's nature. Spinoza believed that man was a finite entity created in the domain of "natura naturata," a part of nature or of God. The active source of all comes from God, who is eternal, and his boundless essentialities. This is the case since he inevitably contains the concept of both his and everything else's essence. Then, God behaves in accordance with the inherent law of his nature.

Thus, for Baruch Spinoza, who wrote about ethics, everything in God follows logically from the idea of his divine character. Thereafter, there are an infinite number of things and infinite numbers of methods. Therefore, he cannot be forced to behave by anything other than himself. This implies that God has countless other ways to accomplish things. As a result, we claim that everything logically follows from the same necessity. It can be stated the same way that a triangle's three angles are equal to two right angles, which is how triangles have always been. In other words, a triangle's fundamental shape is formed by two right angles.

The divine nature similarly has an endless variety of impacts. As the angles of a triangle are the same thing as a triangle's essence, so are things in the world in connection to God. This is so because every particular item is only a different way that God's characteristics are expressed, or a different way that God's attributes are modified. According to Spinoza, who held this perspective, nothing that occurs in nature can be attributed to any of nature's vices (Spinoza, 2001:110). When he asserts that people must make a decision on whether to turn toward God or away from God, Stumpf acknowledged this Spinoza viewpoint (Stumpf, 1994:147).

Everywhere, nature is constant and the same. Therefore, there are limitless traits and infinite methods in divine nature. Each of these arises because everything that is in God cannot be done or even dreamed of without him. Everything complies with God's laws alone. Man's characteristics are a result of his connection to nature. Every mode that exists inescapably and inexorably must originate from either the absolute nature of God or from some characteristic that has been altered by an alteration that existing inevitably. It follows that nature must necessarily govern man. By doing this, man acts in accordance with God's nature, which is devoid of free will and choice.

In accord with Spinoza, none of his forebears have decided the kind and power of consequences or what the mind is capable of; instead, he thinks that they have written many great things to guide man's life. Spinoza does not share mainstream views on determinism. He argued against several philosophers, including Descartes, who supported or validated the relationship of mind and body, which is the idea that the mind may affect how the body moves. Because if the mind has control over the body, man has already shown this by virtue of the fact that he thinks, which unquestionably and obviously demonstrates that he does. He understands that his nature, or entire essence, is that of a thinking substance.

His mind, which is wholly apart from his body and from which he thinks, would continue to exist even if his body did. Because it chooses to make certain motions, the mind thus has control over the body. Spinoza contends that everything is a product of nature and follows logically from either the rules of nature or the laws of God in opposition to this. So, we operate only in accordance with God's will. The mind must be determined as a result.

Furthermore, as God's acts are governed by the laws of his own nature, he is not acting with "freedom of the will" because even God cannot change His own nature because it is what it is and must be. Consequently, God is internally determined but free from eternal compulsion. According to Lawhead, nothing could have been created by God in another way or in a different order than how it has been created. To think that the world could have been different from what it is would suggest that God's nature could have been different from what it is, which would be nonsensical given that Spinoza has already demonstrated that all things necessarily follow from God's given nature. Spinoza asserts that there is no contingency in nature because of this (Lawhead, 2002:249).

Spinoza's Concept of Causality

It is very useful to remember that Baruch Spinoza rejected the idea that nature has a final cause. He states unequivocally that everything in nature develops out of some form of necessity and with the highest degree of perfection. According to him, the idea of a final cause indicates the perfection of God since if God seeks or begs for something, it implies that He inherently desires or wishes for what He does not have. This idea, albeit ludicrous, goes against God's fundamental nature.

In light of this, Spinoza asserts that "Nature has no goal in view, and the final causes are merely human figments." In addition, Omoregbe pointed out that Aristotle divided the theory of causes into four categories: the material cause, the formal cause, the efficient cause, and the final cause.

The stuff or material used to create a thing is known as its material cause; the form or pattern of a thing is known as its formal cause; the source or the agent responsible for bringing a thing into existence is known as its efficient cause; and the end goal, or the reason for which a thing is being created, is known as its final cause. Aristotle was a teleologist, according to Omoregbe, who believed that everything was meant for and progressing toward a specific goal (Omoregbe, 2006).

Spinoza's Notion on Human Freewill

After establishing the nature of good and evil, truth and untruth, as well as where the wellbeing of a perfect man resides or consists, Spinoza thinks it is important to consider whether we achieve this wellbeing voluntarily or as a result of necessity. In order to do this, Spinoza felt that it was imperative to find out what the will is, as defined by those who believe in free will, and whether it can be distinct from desire. According to Spinoza, desire is the inclination that the soul has towards an object that it chooses to be good. As a result, before our desires turn toward an object outside of ourselves, we have already internally decided that it is good, and this affirmation, or, more generally, the ability to refuse, is known as the will.

The question of whether our affirmations are made voluntarily or necessarily, or if we can make any affirmation or denial regarding a subject without some outside force driving us to do so, is central to Spinoza's view of free will. Spinoza continued by indicating that anything that cannot be explained by itself or whose existence is unrelated to its essence must necessarily have an external cause, and anything that is intended to produce something must necessarily cause that thing to be produced. It must therefore follow that every separate act of wanting one thing or the other, and every separate act of affirming or denying one thing or the other, of a thing must also be separate acts.

As a result, Spinoza understands the notion of a cause as something that cannot be free and holds the view that results come from some external source. Spinoza continued to reason, and perhaps he noticed that the solution may not be for those who are used to occupying their minds more with things of reason than with

specific things that actually exist in nature, leading them to mistakenly believe that something of reason is real rather than that it is merely a product of human reasoning.

For Spinoza, man has that volition now. He creates in his soul a general mode that he calls will (free will), just as he creates the idea of man from this man and that man. However, because he fails to adequately distinguish between the real and the thing of reason, he begins to believe that the things of reason are things that actually exist in nature. He believes that he is the root of several problems as a result. Thus, according to Spinoza, the will is merely a mode of thought, a product of reason, and not an actual object; as a result, it is incapable of causing anything because nothing arises from nothing. The will is just a product of the mind; it is not a product of nature (Spinoza, 2001:125).

Spinoza evaluates the idea that knowledge is essentially passive; it is consciousness of the essence and existence of things in the soul, such that it is never we who affirm or deny something about a thing, but rather the object itself that affirms or rejects something about itself in us. Some people won't confess this, perhaps out of respect for Spinoza, as it seems to them that they are perfectly capable of denying anything different from what they know about the object. But this is only because they are unaware of how the soul perceives the object without or in addition to the words used to represent it.

Spinoza argued that man lacked free choice and was merely a limited aspect of nature operating in accordance with the immanent and exclusive cause of all things, God. Nature exhibits a rigid, unchanging order that cannot be disregarded. Man must therefore follow the natural order of things and cannot deviate from it. Thus, acknowledging the eternal principles and behaving in accordance with their precepts constitutes man's recognition of his free choice. (Spinoza, 2001).

When something arises from its own nature alone and is motivated to act only by itself, it is said to possess free will. Spinoza views the will as a faculty of affirmation or denial, not as a desire; that is, as a faculty by which the mind affirms or rejects that which is true or false, not as a desire by which the mind pursues something or shuns it.

Donceel holds that the intellect directs the will on this. The intellect is aware that beings desire truth in this way. Since goodness as such is the criterion by which man judges his will, the object of the will has the same extension as the intellect that directs it (Donceel, 1967:384).

We would realize that everything that occurs, regardless of how happy or awful it may seem to us, was absolutely predestined. Without a doubt, Okogbuo maintained that human will is free under all circumstances and that, even though we can cast doubt on some instances of freedom, we know that we cannot, in fact, cast question on all instances of free will (Okogbuo, 2007:53).

The effect of free will is evident, according to Lawhead, who noted that free will, like contingency, is an illusion based on a lack of understanding of the divine nature and how the entire system logically follows from nature. In addition, people are tricked into thinking they have free will because they believe they are aware of and mindful of their own choices and are unaware of the factors that influence those actions (Lawhead, 2002).

Let's assume the hypothetical situation where we have always desired to learn the violin. We get the impression that we made the decision to take this action in an impulsive and arbitrary manner. But according to Spinoza, we were ignorant of the factors that first gave rise to that desire in us, which is why we, like the stone, had this false conviction. Spinoza supports his claims in light of this:

Men are led to believe that they are free or have free will. In the mind, there is neither absolute nor free will; instead, the mind is influenced by a cause, which in turn is influenced by another cause, which is influenced by yet another cause, and so on and so forth (Spinoza, 2001:40).

Additionally, it appears that free will has no place in an absolute and necessary hierarchy or when Spinoza, in his ethical writings, holds that everything in nature is created with the utmost perfection and eternal necessity. The idea of "decision" as a suitable depiction of "free choice" is rejected by Spinoza. So, in his view, a choice was made conceivable when there was another option available to man. In order for our scientific knowledge to be complete, or for our ignorance to be expressed, this is an essential indicator.

Human decisions are neither random nor unmotivated; for Spinoza, the notion that decisions are capricious is a myth based on un-knowledge. So "will" and "decision" is necessary. Will is eternally caused and in no way capable of supporting the concept of "free choice" because it is not a free cause, only a necessary or restricted cause. Only God can decide if the will exists and act. Therefore, it vehemently rejects the idea that "free will" equates to anything that is causeless or uncertain. Human conduct can neither be characterized as arbitrary nor accidental because causes, not behaviors, determine behavior. Thus, it has a global application. The idea of "free choice," whether it is understood in terms of will or decision, is precluded by necessity.

No other way or order than what has actually happened could have been used by God to bring things into being. So, man was forced to act as he did since no other course of action or decision was available. Spinoza therefore believed that since man derives his entire existence from God, he is not free but rather determined. People's perspectives on the human being in regard to being either determined by nature or embedded with free will are fundamentally influenced by Spinoza and his ideas of free will and determinism. And Lawhead affirms the following in line with Spinoza's concept:

Meaningful interactions will be hampered by the kind of detached disinterest that could make us carefree. His ethical approach doesn't apply to those who have interacted with families, friends, or other social obligations; it is best suited for genders that live in seclusion and are celibate. If we believe that everything is predetermined to be the way it is, will we be inspired to fight for justice and actively try to alter the world for the better (Lawhead, 2002:254)?

However, it is clear that God and man are the two central figures in Spinoza's conception of free choice and determinism.

Human Actions: A Modification of God

It is important to understand that Spinoza held the philosophical position that everything in the universe, including human behavior, is a manifestation of God. The term mode, in my opinion, is the modification of substance or that which is in another item through which it is also imagined, according to Spinoza's definition

of mode (Spinoza, 2001:24). God creates the world therefore in the same way that he creates himself, i.e., by necessity and power of his own essence. Here, everything is mathematically demonstrated to flow directly from the divine nature.

As cause and effect are not distinct from one another, neither are God and the world. The manifestations of God's qualities make up the world. Everything in the world is predetermined, and everything moves in line with necessity. God's essence determines the ways that cognition and extension manifest in the world. The requirement of divine essence to exist and function in a certain way governs everything.

Baruch Spinoza amended the concept to include coercion or outward force that coexists with an internal necessity of action; even though it could sufficient to claim that the world is a necessity of God's nature. He did not include that God supported free choice as a result. God is free in a unique sense because, even though he had to create the exact world he did, he was not coerced into doing it by outside forces; rather, he was forced to do it by his own nature. This is not to say that God could have created a different kind of universe. However, because they are compelled to exist and act in accordance with God's substance, of which humankind is a mode, individuals are not truly free.

Since nothing could have been created in any other way than how it was created, all of God's qualities have been fixed from all of time. Everything we encounter is merely a signal of a God-given quality or a way for a certain, purposeful individual to display a God-given quality.

Spinoza's Denial of Free Will

Some interpretations of the phrase "free will" were rejected by Baruch Spinoza. To this aim, he rejected the notion of "free choice," by which he meant the prospect that a man might have decided to behave otherwise than he actually did. In addition, he rejected any "will" or "desire" claim that would have supported a plausible claim of free will. For Spinoza, there can be no chance, spontaneity or uncertainty in nature. Man's conception of free will itself is an illusion brought on by a lack of information.

Man imagines himself to be free, but he is constrained by the confused perception that results from having insufficient knowledge. As a result, he erroneously attributes the adjective "free" to an alleged phenomenon of choice that is caused and believes themselves to be free insofar as they are aware of their volitions and desires. This simple phrase, which lacks any notion to go along with it, reflects Spinoza's adamant disagreement with those who contend that human activities are dependent on the will. The will is just a certain way of thinking, just like the intellect.

Whether the will is believed to be infinite or finite, it nonetheless needs a cause to condition its existence and actions. The will is also related since God must condition it in order for it to exist and behave in a certain way. A sufficient account of human activities only results from our having a clear and comprehensive understanding of what causes behavior. As a result, describing human behaviors in terms of the will exposes our ignorance. In a similar vein, Spinoza disagreed that "decision" provided a sufficient justification for "free choice." It is impossible for a decision to cause itself.

Thus, Spinoza insists on maintaining that everything happens for a reason and with the highest degree of perfection. Man's will is not free in the way that he falsely believed; rather, this artificial understanding of free will that Spinoza rejected is the result of ignorance and a lack of knowledge because nothing in nature is predetermined or uncaused. Lawhead expressed his opinion on this by saying that everything in nature is predetermined by the need for the divine nature to exist and behave in a certain way (Lawhead, 2002:246).

Additionally, as stated by Spinoza, "We strive to continue existing by the force and growth of any passion, but by the power of external causes compared with our own power" (Spinoza, 2001:168). Thus, both "will" and "decision" is necessary. Will is merely a necessary or constrained cause; it is not a free cause. The concept of "free choice" cannot be effectively supported by will because it is externally induced. Spinoza argued that free will had an infinite range. Given that God could not have created the world in a way or an order that differs from what he actually accomplished, man could not have acted in a manner that was contrary to what he actually did.

Evaluation of Baruch Spinoza's Conception of Freewill and Determinism

Spinoza is convinced that God or nature created the universe, and we may thank him for that because he made an effort to provide men with direction through his writings so that they could avoid experiencing dread, anxiety, and misery. He stated in his ethics that "We do everything by the will of God alone." as a result. It also has this adventure that it educates us in achieving our maximum satisfaction, in addition to offering the soul any kind of rest. Rely only on your knowledge of God. This makes it difficult to comprehend how everything that occurs is consistent with nature (Spinoza, 2001:29).

Spinoza also made the case that people can only be free and at peace with themselves if they behave in a way that is consistent with nature and as prescribed by it. He did not concede the existence of human freedom of the will until after mankind had failed to realize that all that occurs is consistent with nature. Nothing outside of God, according to Spinoza, exists since he is fully and thoroughly embodied in everything he has made. God is manifest in nature, in his opinion. The same reality is known by different names- god and nature. Thus, Spinoza is a relativist in the sense that he believed that nothing is good or bad in and of itself but only in and of itself in connection to something else; this compatibility approach is also apparent in his muddled answers to the subject of free will.

It is clear from Spinoza's deterministic perspective that he belonged to the Stoic and Descartes school of metaphysics. Spinoza can be said to have drawn inspiration from Cartesian thought. The idea that because everything is governed by natural laws and necessity rules, individuals are not free and we will only experience emotional emancipation when we understand this.

Lawhead, referencing Spinoza, supports this claim by saying that when we are freed from the illusion of contingency, we will no longer feel wholly dependent on our circumstances and will be in charge of our life. Though reason can only operate within the confines of our nature to offer us a limited amount of control over our life, we can never have complete free will or freedom of the will (Lawhead, 2002:252).

Meaningful interpersonal relationships would be hampered by the same detached and indifferent attitude that may make us carefree. If we believe that everything is predetermined to be the way it is, will this inspire us to fight for justice and actively try to improve the world?

The issues with determinism and free choice, however, were not addressed by Spinoza. We believe that man's incapacity to find a solution to the issue appears to be rooted in his attitude to inclusive reality. For if all occurrences in nature are predetermined, man is essentially unable to change them. He limited everything to the realm of nature or God, which is not only round but also sterile. He also made roughly consistent deductions from conceivable axioms and statements with intellectually defensible reasoning, but without any existential import or pragmatic endorsement. It is improper for him to begin with the concept of God since one cannot discover God or truth via conceptualizations of concepts alone; one must first understand the subject before moving on to the affirmation of God. Spinoza repeatedly stressed the superiority of essence over existence as a result. However, as being is the act of essence, this is not possible. If God controls every action a man takes, this simply means that man and God are on a par. While we all think that man has power, God is completely different since he is an endless being that is perfect and unchangeable.

However, 'being' is neither unchanging nor limitless. Due to the fact that infinite entities cannot share his existence, they also cannot be either of their formal or material components. "No," since the existence of infinite beings is a continuing existence, in contrast to the existence of finite beings, which is incorporated into their nature as a distinct potency.

We can deduce that Spinoza's concept of free will or freedom of the will and determinism may not be pragmatically applicable if we dwell on this because we cannot perceive ourselves as being determined by the forces of nature. Man has transcended nature and is no longer subject to the laws of what is beneath him thanks to the power that was given to him by God. Man cannot control or subdue natural forces if they are determined by nature or other external causes.

However, it's impossible to entirely ignore Spinoza's ideas because, with free will, a person responsibly participates even in the predetermined events of the world. We can see that Spinoza's philosophy advises how we should act in relation to things that are within our power or control and do not come naturally to us. However, it's equally intriguing to learn that Baruch Spinoza holds that by following this idea, there won't be any free will because everyone will be able to

"freely do whatever things are best." Even while this makes some logic, it is challenging to explain how such a concept of free will functions.

Conclusion

Considering the numerous justifications offered for determinism, it appears that we only have a theoretical determinism and not a real-world one. This is due to the fact that those who support determinism do so implicitly or directly themselves. An illustration of this is when disobedient children and offenders are punished and good deed performers are rewarded. Thus, it demonstrates that man is accountable for any action he decides to take and carry out.

In spite of all the influences he experiences in life, it is true that man is still free, accountable for his deeds, and in control of his course of action. As a result, after carefully and thoughtfully analyzing Spinoza's views on human free will and determinism, as well as their benefits and drawbacks, we affirm in unison with Thomas Aquinas that "man is a being embedded with freewill though limited." On the basis of Aristotle, virtues are found in the middle; as a result, since man is a finite and limited being, he can only exercise a certain amount of free will.

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