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Spinoza's Actualities

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Spinoza's metaphysics is often said to be "necessitarian," mainly based on EIP16⁽¹⁾ (and its corollaries, such as EIP29 and EIP33). There is a controversy⁽²⁾, however, as to whether Spinoza is a "strong" necessitarian in the sense of endorsing the thesis that the actual world is the only possible world⁽³⁾, or whether he is a mere determinist (or "weak" necessitarian). The main focus of the debate is on the existence of multiple or infinitely many possible series compatible with what are necessarily produced and determined. In the first section of this essay, I show that both sides of this controversy have difficulties reconciling their interpretations with the principle of sufficient reason (PSR), to which Spinoza is clearly committed. Then, in the second section, I propose an alternative interpretation of Spinoza's metaphysics, in which all of the infinitely many possible series are actualized in the sense of following from the nature of the substance. In this sense of actuality, the range of the actual corresponds to that of the possible. But Spinoza's system contains another kind of actuality, i.e., "enduring," which can be interpreted as an indexical actuality discussed by David Lewis. As a result, "actuality" has two distinct meanings in Spinoza's system. In the last section, I illustrate how such an interpretation solves some

problems for commentators of Spinoza, especially the problem of the inconsistency with the PSR.

I.

In Spinoza's system, the substance and its attributes have necessary existences in the strongest and metaphysical sense, i.e., they exist eternally⁽⁴⁾. From the absolute nature of a given attribute "immediate infinite mode" is produced (EIP21), and then "mediate infinite mode" from this immediate infinite mode (EIP22). These infinite modes have necessary existences transferred from the attribute through such a production relation⁽⁵⁾.

This "modal transfer principle," however, doesn't hold for finite modes or ordinary things⁽⁶⁾. For, "what is finite and has a determinate existence [i.e., finite modes] could not have been produced by the absolute nature of an attribute of God," and "it also could not follow from God, or an attribute of God, insofar as it is affected by a modification which is eternal and infinite [i.e., infinite modes]," so "it had, therefore, to follow from, or be determined to exist and produce an effect by God or an attribute of God insofar as it is modified by a modification which is finite and has a determinate existence [i.e., other finite modes]. He then concludes that finite modes collectively form a large body or series consisting of nothing but finite modes.

Considering this argument in *Ethics*, it appears reasonable to conclude that while the substance, attributes, and infinite modes possess fully necessary existences, the finite modes do not inherit the necessity of their existences from them. In light of such textual evidence, Curley (1969) posited a weak necessitarian interpretation. He identified attributes and the infinite modes with the general laws of nature and argued that EIP28D implies the existence of an infinite number of possible series of finite things that are compatible with such general laws of nature. He then proceeded to conclude that, in the absence of a determining factor, which particular series among them is actually realized is a purely contingent fact within Spinoza's system⁽⁷⁾.

This conclusion, however, conflicts with Spinoza's commitment to the principle of sufficient reason (PSR). The PSR is a principle that to every "why" question about a fact, there must be a sufficient answer, or that there is no "bare fact." Spinoza's commitment to the PSR is clear from EIAx1, EIAx2, EIDef5, and EIP11D2, to name a few⁽⁸⁾. Thus, if there is a multiplicity of possible series,

the PSR dictates that there must be sufficient reason as to why this, and not other, series is actual, contrary to Curley's interpretation. Indeed, Curley and Walski (1991) claim that in Spinoza, the actuality of a particular series is inexplicable in principle, and in that sense, the PSR is restricted⁽⁹⁾. On the other hand, Della Rocca (2003) argues that the commitment to the PSR forces Spinoza to deny the plurality of possible series of finite modes and embrace strong necessitarianism⁽¹⁰⁾. In summary, any gap between (metaphysical) actuality and possibility cannot be consistent with the full-blooded PSR.

This inconsistency has motivated the strong necessitarian interpretations of Spinoza. The most important and influential among them is Garrett's (1991, 2018). According to Garrett, in EIP28D Spinoza denies only the possibility that a particular finite mode is produced from a divine attribute in isolation, i.e., independently of other finite modes ("following absolutely"), but allows finite modes to be produced *relating to one another as distinct parts of an infinite series* ("following as determined")⁽¹¹⁾. According to Garrett, this infinite series consisting of finite modes is the mediate infinite mode⁽¹²⁾. Spinoza mentions as the example of mediate infinite mode "the face of the whole universe (*facies totius universi*), which, however much it may vary in infinite ways, nevertheless always remains the same" (letter 64). And just below these lines Spinoza refers to EIIL7S⁽¹³⁾, where he argues "we shall easily conceive that the whole of nature is one Individual, whose parts, i.e., all bodies, varying infinite ways, without any change of the whole Individual." Garrett, then, seems to argue as follows: since a whole series of finite modes constitutes the mediate infinite mode, and mediate infinite modes are produced from the absolute nature of a divine attribute, each finite mode necessarily exists⁽¹⁴⁾.

But adopting this part of his interpretation alone doesn't solve the inconsistency with the PSR. On the one hand, "the face of the whole universe" as a mediate infinite mode is a kind of individual, as described in EIIL7S. Spinoza thinks of a complex individual as supervening on smaller individuals composing it, as the following definition suggests:

When a number of bodies, whether of the same or of different size, are so constrained by other bodies that they lie upon one another, or if they so move, whether with the same degree or different degrees of speed, that they communicate their motions to each other in a certain fixed manner,

we shall say that those bodies are united with one another and that they all together compose body or Individual, which is distinguished from others by this union of bodies.⁽¹⁵⁾

Therefore, the relation between the mediate infinite mode and finite modes comprising it is a supervenience relation: *the mediate infinite mode supervenes on finite modes*. Yet generally the existence of a supervenient does *not* entail the existence of particular things on which it supervenes⁽¹⁶⁾. Moreover, in EIIIL7 and letter 64, this supervenience relation is said to be immune to all changes of finite modes, which are admissible under the laws of nature. Hence, even though the mediate infinite mode as an infinite individual is necessarily produced and supervenes on an infinite series of finite modes, this doesn't determine which series of finite modes realize the mediate infinite mode. It is, thus, impossible to single out a particular series for actual production by resorting to the necessity of the production of mediate infinite modes. On the other hand, if one insists that the existence of the mediate infinite mode entails the existence of a particular series of finite modes, one will just move the problem to a similar problem as to the necessity of a particular mediate infinite mode: "why is that mediate infinite mode necessitated?" For, in this case, other possible series of finite modes in question would be seen as other possible mediate infinite modes.

To the question, "why this but not other particular series is produced/necessitated," Garrett replies that there is an implicit requirement about God's production that he should produce the most perfect series among several possible series of finite modes, and therefore the particular series of highest completeness is necessarily produced⁽¹⁷⁾. Still, it seems impossible to find, in Spinoza's system, such a "Leibnizian" concept of completeness, let alone a set of criteria for evaluating completeness of the series which uniquely determines the most perfect one⁽¹⁸⁾. Furthermore, attributing to Spinoza the view that God produces the best among the possible alternatives makes him a "selectionist," who maintains that God singles out by some consideration and produces the best among many possible alternatives, but it is the position he criticizes⁽¹⁹⁾.

Consequently, the necessitarian interpretation alone cannot give a sufficient answer to the above question as to the production of a particular series and avoid the collision with the PSR⁽²⁰⁾. In other words, with respect to the PSR, it is no good restricting the range of the possible in order to fill the gap between

actuality and possibility. In the next section, I will propose an interpretation free from the difficulty with the PSR, in which *all the possible series* of finite modes follow from the substance.

II.

Now, given that most of the “necessitarian” propositions in *Ethics* (EIP29, EIP33, etc.) rely on EIP16 for the proof of parts concerning the necessity of particular things, we focus on EIP16 to understand Spinoza’s theory of modality⁽²¹⁾.

EIP16: From the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes (i.e., everything which can fall under an infinite intellect).

EIP16D: This proposition must be plain to anyone, provided he attends to the fact *that the intellect infers from the given definition of any thing a number of properties [proprietas] that really do follow necessarily from it (i.e., from the very essence of the thing)*; and that it infers [the] more properties, the more the definition of the thing expresses reality, i.e., the more reality the essence of the defined thing involves. But since the divine nature has absolutely infinite attributes (by EIDef6), each of which also expresses an essence infinite in its own kind, from its necessity there must follow infinitely many things in infinite modes (i.e., everything which can fall under an infinite intellect), q.e.d. [my italics]

To begin with, what are here said to be produced are modes⁽²²⁾. As can be seen from the italicized passage, Spinoza here equates the relationship between the divine nature and the modes produced from it with that between essence (*essentia*) and property (*prorietas*)⁽²³⁾. Compared to the essence of a thing, which determines what it is to be it, its property doesn’t constitute a part of its definition, but necessarily follows or derives from its essence (*TdIE* 95–96)⁽²⁴⁾. Therefore, he regards the relation between the substance and its modes as an inevitable derivation such that given the substance, each mode is also necessarily given, in the same way as each property follows from a given essence.

The quote says that the produced modes are “infinitely many things,” “everything which can fall under an infinite intellect,” and they are also called “everything (*omnia*)” in EIP17S. Considering that his use of “infinite” has the

connotation of being the whole no part of which is deprived or denied⁽²⁵⁾, it is safe to say that the range of modes said to be produced in EIP16 is a sort of totality. But the totality of what? To determine it, we need to examine other texts in *Ethics*, where EIP16 is referred to.

EIIP45D and its Scholium read:

EIIP45D: The idea of a singular thing which actually exists necessarily involves both the essence of the thing and its existence (by EIIP8C).

EIIP45S: By existence⁽²⁶⁾ here I do not understand *duration*, i.e., existence insofar as it is conceived abstractly, and as a certain species of quantity. For I am speaking of *the very nature of existence, which is attributed to singular things because infinitely many things follow from the eternal necessity of God's nature in infinitely many modes (see EIP16)*. I am speaking, I say, of *the very existence of singular things insofar as they are in God*. [my italics]

Thus, “the very nature of existence,” or “the very existence of singular things insofar as they are in God,” which is attributed to singular things when “infinitely many things follow in infinitely many modes,” as said in EIP16, is identical with the “existence” in EIIP8C and distinguished from the “duration(*duratio*).” In other words, all things that are said to be produced from divine nature in EIP16 are the same as those that have the “existence” in the sense of EIIP8C, i.e., “the very existence of singular things insofar as they are in God.”

EIIP8C reads:

From this it follows that so long as singular things *do not exist, except insofar as they are comprehended in God's attributes* [A], their objective being, or ideas, do not exist except insofar as God's infinite idea exists. And when singular things are said to exist, not only insofar as they are comprehended in God's attributes, but *insofar also as they are said to endure [durare]⁽²⁷⁾* [B], their ideas also involve the existence through which they are said to endure. [my italics]

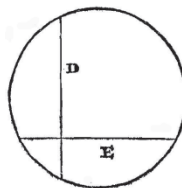
Spinoza here discusses two kinds of existence of things and their ideas, especially the parallelism between them. The first of them (A) is the existence “insofar as they are comprehended in God's attributes,” which I shall call *the existence or actuality proper*. The other (B) is the existence “insofar also as they are said to endure,” call this *the durational existence or actuality*. Then, the existence

attributed to modes through the production in EIP16, that is, what he says is not “duration,” but “the very existence of singular things insofar as they are in God,” must be the existence proper.

This reading of EIIP8C as contrasting the two kinds of existence is attested by the fact that the texts of EIIP8C and EIIP45S explicitly refer to “existence (*existentia*)”⁽²⁸⁾. Some commentators, however, believe that what is contrasted here is not the two kinds of existence, but the essence and the (actual) existence of finite modes, and that in (A) of EIIP8C Spinoza writes only about the essence of them⁽²⁹⁾. This interpretation is not only at odds with the text, but also, if EIP16 and EIIP8C are read as related in the above way, entails that EIP16 is entirely unrelated to the existences of finite modes, but only to the essences of them. This renders the existences of finite modes out of the range of God’s necessary production in EIP16. Thus, such an “essence only” interpretation of EIIP8C inevitably introduces the genuine contingency about the existences of finite modes into Spinoza’s system⁽³⁰⁾ and violates the PSR. Hence, such a reading is untenable, especially with regard to the PSR.

Then, what is the existence proper? Especially what is the scope of it? To see it, look to the scholium following EIIP8C.

..... the circle is of such a nature that the rectangles formed from the segments of all the straight lines intersecting in it are equal to one another. So *in a circle there are contained infinitely many rectangles that are equal to one another*. Nevertheless, none of them can be said to exist except *insofar as the circle exists*, nor also can the idea of any of these rectangles be said to exist except *insofar as it is comprehended in the idea of the circle*. Now of these infinitely many [rectangles] let two only, viz. [those formed from the segments of lines] D and E, exist. Of course their ideas also exist now, not only insofar as they are only comprehended in the idea of the circle, but also insofar as they involve the existence of those rectangles. By this they are distinguished from the other ideas of the other rectangles. [my italics]



Here, the content of EIIP8C is explained using a theorem in geometry, to the

effect that triangles made up of line segments intersecting in a circle are similar. The divine attribute is compared to the circle, while finite modes with the existence proper to the infinitely many rectangles contained in it. These rectangles, which “exists only insofar as the circle exists,” can be certainly said potential or possible, in contrast to those actually written⁽³¹⁾. Yet, as for in what sense they are potential, there are two popular interpretations, the “temporal interpretation” and the “modal interpretation,” as I shall call. The former says that these “possible things” are modes that don’t exist now but did or will exist at some point⁽³²⁾. The latter says that they are all modes that God can produce, that is, everything possible in the sense of being consistent with the laws of nature⁽³³⁾. According to the modal interpretation, the range of things with the existence proper, i.e., what is said to be produced in EIP16, corresponds to *all possible modes* or, more explicitly, *all possible series of finite modes*, whereas this isn’t entailed by the temporal interpretation.

The temporal interpretation has several serious problems. First, it amounts to claiming that the infinite pairs of lines that form the “infinitely many rectangles” in EIIP8S are potential in the sense of being written in the past or future⁽³⁴⁾. But there is no textual evidence that Spinoza thought that each of them would be actually written at least once at some point. And it implies a rather implausible interpretation on Spinoza’s concept of eternity, which identifies it with mere “endless time”⁽³⁵⁾. In addition to these problems, it doesn’t cohere with EVP29S, where Spinoza writes again about the two kinds of existence by referring to EIIP8C through EIIP45, as follows:

We conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them *to exist in relation to a certain time and place*, or *insofar as we conceive them to be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature*. But the things we conceive in this second way as true, or real, we conceive under a species of eternity, and to that extent they involve the eternal and infinite essence of God (as we have shown in IIP45 and P45S).
[my italics]

Here he describes two kinds of ways to recognize actuality. As is clear from the description “to be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature,” the latter way of recognizing actuality in EVP29S is to recognize

things as having the existence proper in EIIP8C. It is also identified with conceiving them “under a species of eternity,” whereas “eternity” is a concept contrasted to duration⁽³⁶⁾. Then, it is plausible to regard the former way of recognizing actuality, i.e., conceiving things “to exist in relation to a certain time and place,” as the recognition of the durational existence, i.e., conceiving them to “endure(*durare*).” This reading is also supported by the use of the term “time(*tempus*),” which is often juxtaposed with “duration.” Hence, the contrast between the two kinds of actuality in EVP29S corresponds to that between the two kinds of existence in EIIP8C. It can, thus, be seen that the temporal interpretation of EIIP8S can hardly be said to be faithful to the text because it interprets the existence, which is set against existence “in relation to a certain time and place” and said to be conceived “under a species of eternity,” as existence at a certain time in the past or future.

Therefore, only the modal interpretation remains. Accordingly, the scope of things that have the existence proper in EIIP8C, i.e., modes that are “produced from the necessity of God’s nature” in EIP16, is that of all modes that God can produce, i.e., all that are consistent with the general laws of nature. The infinite or multiple series of finite modes, the matter in question of the previous section, are all produced from the necessity of the divine nature, which makes the range of the actual identical with that of the possible⁽³⁷⁾. Let’s briefly illustrate this conclusion in accordance with the structure of the divine production that Garrett and Giancotti describe⁽³⁸⁾. From each attribute constituting the essence of the substance, first, is produced the immediate infinite mode, in which the laws of nature are inscribed⁽³⁹⁾ (EIP21), followed by the mediate infinite mode (EIP22). The mediate infinite mode of a given attribute is the totality of infinite series of finite modes that conform to the laws of nature (EIP16)⁽⁴⁰⁾, and within it, finite modes are causally related to one another⁽⁴¹⁾ (EIP28). In this way, each finite mode becomes actual in the sense of the actuality proper in EIIP8C.

I would now like to look at what led Spinoza to this view. Recall, first, that in EIP16D, the relation between the divine nature and modes produced from it is equated with that between essence and properties. This relation is a kind of logical derivation, as is clear from the following passage: “from God’s supreme power, or infinite nature, ... all things, have necessarily flowed, or always follow, by the same necessity and in the same way as from the nature of a triangle it follows, from eternity and to eternity, that its three angles are equal to two right

angles”(EIP17S). Such a logical model of production leads to the claim that “Whatever we conceive to be in God’s power, necessarily exists” (EIP35), i.e., that the range of God’s power is identical with that of production by God. This indicates what motivates Spinoza to believe that every possible thing is produced from the divine nature. For, according to him, the production by God is the exhaustive demonstration of God’s power; therefore the omnipotence of God is nothing else but the fact that what he produces exhausts all possibilities. In other words, for Spinoza, it was necessary for God to produce all of the possible in order for him to be omnipotent.

In fact, he criticizes the “selectionistic” model of production, where God chooses and creates only one among various possible alternatives, that proponents of it “are forced to confess God understands infinitely many creatable things (*creabilia*), which nevertheless he will never be able to create” and thereby deny the omnipotence of God⁽⁴²⁾. And, he says, he himself demonstrates in EIP16 that “from God’s supreme power, or infinite nature, infinitely many things in infinitely many modes, i.e., all things, have necessarily flowed” and “in this way, at least in my opinion, God’s omnipotence is maintained far more perfectly⁽⁴³⁾”. Hence, for Spinoza, to allow something possible not to be produced is to deny the omnipotence of God.

Now, the above interpretation may avoid the inconsistency within the text, but it is at odds with the common usage of the term “actual,” which usually is not taken to exhaust all possibilities, especially when it is thought there may be multiple possible series of things or events. It is not nonsense at all to talk about something not “actual.” A coherent view of modality might well be expected to take some care of this intuition. Indeed, in Spinoza’s system, there is another concept of actuality corresponding to this mundane sense of actuality, namely the durational actuality we saw in EIIP8C, to which I will turn in the next section.

III.

To proceed, I will first analyze this concept of durational actuality from the epistemic point of view, and then go on to the inquiry about the metaphysical nature of it as the content of a certain kind of cognition. Let’s begin by reviewing EVP29S. As we saw in the previous section, the two ways of conceiving actuality

of things distinguished in EVP29S correspond to the recognitions of the two kinds of actuality: the former way in EVP29S, namely to “conceive [things] to exist in relation to a certain time and place”, corresponds to the recognition of their durational actuality, and the latter way in EVP29S, namely to “conceive [things] to be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature”, corresponds to that of their actuality proper. The latter is identified with to conceive things “in terms of their eternal aspects.” Such a recognition “belongs to the essence of reason” and corresponds to the third kind of knowledge⁽⁴⁴⁾. Considering that the second kind of knowledge concerns just general properties⁽⁴⁵⁾, it is reasonable to think that the other recognition in EVP29S corresponds to the first kind of knowledge, namely imagination⁽⁴⁶⁾. In fact, Spinoza writes that time is a mode of imagining⁽⁴⁷⁾. Thus, the former recognition in EVP29S, i.e., the recognition of durational actuality of things, can be safely identified with imagination. Then, one may expect that a close examination of the epistemic nature of imagination sheds light on the nature of the durational actuality or “enduring” as its content.

Imagination is defined as follows:

EIIP17: If the human body is affected with a mode that involves the nature of an external body, the human Mind will regard the same external body as actually existing, or as present to itself[*sibi praesens*], until the body is affected by an affect that excludes the existence or presence of that body.

The affections of the human body whose ideas present[*repraesentant*] external bodies as present to us, we shall call images of things, even if they do not reproduce the figures of things. And when the Mind regards bodies in this way, we shall say that it imagines. (EIIP17S)

As is clear from the phrase “as actually existing,” the content of imagination is the actuality of an external body. The mechanism by which it occurs is said to be the human body’s being “affected with a mode that involves the nature of an external body.” This can be paraphrased in the light of EIIP16, the immediately preceding proposition, as “the human body’s being affected by an external body” and Spinoza uses the term “affect(*afficio*)” to represent causal interactions among bodies⁽⁴⁸⁾. Thus, imagination is the recognition of actuality that is acquired by

causal interactions between the human body, i.e., the epistemic subject, and external bodies, i.e., the epistemic objects.

Moreover, imagination as such a recognition of actuality refers to two objects⁽⁴⁹⁾:

EIIP16: The idea of any mode in which the human body is affected by external bodies must involve the nature of the human body and at the same time the nature of the external body.

“The idea of any mode in which the human body is affected by external bodies” is the same as the idea of the affections of the human body in EIIP17S, that is, imagination. The above description: “the idea involves the nature of the human body/the external body,” can be rephrased as “the idea is an idea of the human body/the external body⁽⁵⁰⁾.” Thus, the imagination involves, in its epistemic content, the reference to not only the external object but also the human body, the epistemic subject. Such a reference to the epistemic subject is prominent in the description of the content of imagination as “the human Mind will regard the same external body ... as present to itself [*sibi praesens*]” Therefore, the actuality of the external body which is recognized in imagination, i.e., its durational actuality, is equal to its being present to the subject. Hence, it inevitably involves reference to the subject.

There is another evidence for interpreting the durational actuality as involving such a reference. In EIIP8C and EIIP8S, it is presupposed that the fact that a singular body in Extension and the corresponding idea endure, i.e., have the durational actuality, is not directly derivable from their existence only insofar as they are comprehended in God’s attributes or insofar as God’s infinite idea exists. Furthermore, since the mind has the power of conceiving things under duration only to the extent that it endures (EVP23S), ideas merely comprehended in God’s infinite idea can’t conceive the durational actuality of things or the fact of their enduring. Thus, the durational actuality or enduring cannot be conceived by God insofar as being infinite, but only by finite epistemic subjects (minds)⁽⁵¹⁾. This attests that the actuality as enduring essentially involves the relation to the finite subject. For if a thing’s having such an actuality weren’t to hold relative to the subject but be an absolute fact or one holding *per se*, then there would be facts beyond the knowledge of God insofar as infinite, therefore

beyond the range of necessary production by God⁽⁵²⁾. This leads to the denial of God's omniscience and violates the PSR by introducing the real contingency about durational existences of things into Spinoza's system⁽⁵³⁾.

To escape from this impasse and to fully understand the nature of Spinoza's concept of durational actuality as enduring, it is helpful to consider what is called "the indexical analysis of actuality" proposed by David Lewis⁽⁵⁴⁾. The crux of Lewis' analysis is that "actual" is an indexical term, a term whose reference essentially depends on some features of the context of utterance:

I suggest that "actual" and its cognates should be analyzed as indexical terms: terms whose reference varies, depending on relevant features of the context of utterance. The relevant feature of context, for the term "actual," is the world at which a given utterance occurs. *According to the indexical analysis I propose, "actual" (in its primary sense) refers at any world w to the world w.* "Actual" is analogous to "present," an indexical term whose reference varies depending on a different feature of context: "present" refers at any time t to the time t... (Lewis 1970 pp. 184-85) [My italics]

He continues "at any world w, ... the predicate 'is actual' designates or is true of w and whatever exists in w⁽⁵⁵⁾." According to his analysis, then, "X is actual" means that it belongs to the same world as the subject (or the utterer) does. Moreover, He defines for things to belong to the same world, i.e., to be worldmates, as for them to be spatiotemporally related⁽⁵⁶⁾. Hence, the indexical analysis of actuality interprets "X is actual" as meaning that X is spatiotemporally related to the subject. According to this analysis, thus, actuality is an indexical concept, a concept whose content can be fully determined only with reference to the subject or utterer.

I've already shown that the durational actuality in Spinoza is identified with being present to a given subject and that it essentially involves the reference to the subject. Such an actuality can be attributed to an object only insofar as referring to a given subject and relating it to the subject so that it is present to the subject. Therefore, it is plausible to interpret for a thing to be actual in the sense of the durational actuality as for it to have some kind of relation or proximity to the subject. And this is to say that Spinoza's concept of the durational actuality is an indexical concept in a quite similar way to Lewis's indexical analysis

of actuality. According to the both concepts of actuality, whether something is actual varies depending on relevant causal features of the environment around the epistemic or linguistic subject⁽⁵⁷⁾⁽⁵⁸⁾.

Lewis's analogy between the indexical actuality and the presentness gives a supplementary argument for the indexical interpretation of the durational actuality or "enduring" in Spinoza. For, the concept of "enduring" has a temporal aspect, i.e., an aspect as a kind of presentness. In this section, I have so far used the verb "endure(*durare*)" to refer to the durational actuality. However, when it is used in the nominal form "duration(*duratio*)," it often means a certain temporal extension, namely the period that a given thing endures. "Duration" in this sense is defined in EIIDef5 as "an indefinite⁽⁵⁹⁾ continuation of existing". Thus, such "duration" of a singular thing can be seen to form a part of the sempiternal world in the same way as the spatial extension of a singular thing is a part of the infinite world.

The series of such durations corresponds to the B-series in the contemporary (post-McTaggart) theory of time⁽⁶⁰⁾. In that series, each event is ordered by the relation of "before," "simultaneous," and "after," but there is no absolute present (also absolute past or future). If the properties of absolute present, past and future, i.e., A-properties, are added to the B-series, it becomes the A-series. In the A-series, all events are assigned to either the past, the present, or the future, and, as time passes, what was in the future transitions to the present, and then to the past. According to the position that only the B-series exists (B-theory), the notion of the "present" can be reduced to "simultaneous with or temporally proximate to a given (finite) point of view." On the other hand, for the position that insists on the reality of A-series (A-theory), "present" is a property which events or time points have and which changes over time.

Spinoza sometimes writes as "[t]he Mind can neither imagine anything, nor recollect past things, except while the Body endures⁽⁶¹⁾" (EVP21). In passages like this, he uses the term "enduring(*durante*)" to mean something beyond merely having a certain temporal extension (*durationem habere*⁽⁶²⁾). To make sense of the passages above, one must read that "enduring" as involving some sort of presentness. Then one natural question: "Is this 'present' A-theoretical one or B-theoretical one?" If one is committed to the reality of

the absolute present as an A-property, one must inevitably be committed to the idea that the objective state of the four-dimensional world, i.e., which events or time point are present, changes as time passes. However, such a metaphysical change accompanying the notion of absolute present is inconsistent with Spinoza's system. For Spinoza maintains that the substance and its attributes are immutable⁽⁶³⁾ and also that the mediate infinite mode in Extension or "the face of the whole universe", i.e., the infinite individual consisting of all bodies, doesn't change at all while its parts are varying infinite ways⁽⁶⁴⁾. But if the fact about which bodies are present is a fact about the real property of the divine attribute or "the face of the whole universe" and it changes as time passes, it means that the attribute or "the face of the whole universe" changes after all. Therefore, it is quite natural to interpret the presentness involved in "enduring" as the B-theoretical presentness or the temporal proximity,⁽⁶⁵⁾ which has no determined extension without any reference to a finite subject. This means that "enduring" as a temporal concept is an indexical concept. This supports the interpretation of it as a fact of being present to a certain subject, especially, in the modal aspect, as a kind of indexical actuality.

The interpretation proposed above ascribes to Spinoza two kinds of actualities with fundamentally different natures. Namely (A) the actuality of things as a part of "everything" necessarily produced from God's nature, i.e., the actuality proper, and (B) the indexical actuality, which is conceived through imagination, as having a kind of relation (or proximity) to a subject, i.e., the durational actuality⁽⁶⁶⁾. It is worthwhile to note a few about the features or consequences of this interpretation. First, the relation of the durational actuality to the actuality proper is never one of "narrowing". Since the durational actuality is an indexical or relational concept, something can have or lack it only relative to a given finite subject. Thus, until a finite subject is fixed, there is no definite subclass of all possible modes, namely all modes actual in the sense of the actuality proper, which consists of modes with the durational actuality. Second, according to this interpretation, if something is merely possible, i.e., possible but not actual, it is so only with reference to a given finite subject or from a given finite point of view. For nothing possible can lack the actuality proper and something can be said to lack the durational actuality only relative to a given finite subject.

Finally, the distinction between the actuality proper and the durational actuality corresponds to the polysemy of “actual” Lewis points out. He says that the term “actual” has a meaning as a “blanket term” that includes everything within⁽⁶⁷⁾. In this sense, “everything is actual” is analytically true. On the other hand, we often think of “actual” that it is not self-evident for its scope to be identical with the totality of things. For him, this kind of actuality is an indexical concept⁽⁶⁸⁾. It can be easily seen that Spinoza’s actuality proper corresponds to the usage as a blanket term, while durational actuality to the non-blanket usage with a limited scope. Thus, this establishes a parallelism between the general frameworks of Spinoza’s and Lewis’ metaphysics⁽⁶⁹⁾.

IV.

With this in mind, let us finally return to the problem surrounding the PSR, i.e., its supposed inconsistency with almost all interpretations of Spinoza’s modal metaphysics. In addition to it, there is another problem about the absence of “compossibility” in Spinoza’s thought, which few interpretations even try to solve.

Before going into a discussion of consistency with the PSR, it is worthwhile to note the curious absence of the concept of compossibility in Spinoza. He maintains that from the divine nature necessarily follows “everything(*omnia*)” (EIP16, EIP17S). It is obvious that this “everything” contains nothing self-contradicting or internally impossible, such as round square. But how about things contradicting each other or impossible, such as the world’s tallest man with dark hair and the world’s tallest man with red hair? This problem of compossibility, i.e., for which set of things it is possible to coexist with one another, is a typical and traditional problem in the modal metaphysics. We can find an argument about it, for example, in the following quote from Leibniz:

Now, since *there is an infinity of possible universes in God’s ideas, and since only one of them can exist*, there must be a sufficient reason for God’s choice, a reason which determines him towards one thing rather than another. (*Monadologie* 53; Leibniz (1989) p.219) [my italics]

That is, (internally) possible worlds are not compossible with each other. Nevertheless Spinoza never focuses on this issue in his metaphysical writings.

Most conspicuously, as Carrireo(1991) points out, he does not take up any point concerning compossibility even in the (hypothetical) debate with “selectionists” in EIP17S, where Spinoza and his opponents discuss whether God can bring it about that all the things that he understands exist⁽⁷⁰⁾. Why wasn’t it a problem for Spinoza?

First, as seen in the above quote from the Leibniz, the problem of compossibility concerns whether it is possible for things to be made actual together, i.e., co-actualizability. Therefore, based on the above interpretation, the problem of compossibility in Spinoza is twofold, depending on the types of actuality. Compossibility or co-actualizability is not a problem for the actuality proper, because the actuality in this sense is not a (“selectionistic”) sort of concept that applies only to a limited part of an infinity of possible things and their possible combinations. Rather, it is the actuality in the sense that when a circle exists, infinitely many rectangles “exist” or are “actual”. When considering such a trivial sense of actuality, the compossibility (or co-actualizability) of things is the same as the internal possibility of each thing, i.e., the possibility of a thing in itself, thus there is no unique problem of compossibility⁽⁷¹⁾.

Furthermore, as for the durational actuality, compossibility does not constitute any serious issue for Spinoza’s metaphysics, either. Since for a thing to be actual in the sense of the durational actuality was to be in a certain relation (proximity) to the subject, for two things to be compossible (co-actualizable) in this sense means that it is internally possible that they simultaneously relate (or are being proximate) to the subject. “Relation” here is equivalent to being present to a given subject, as we saw above. For the purpose of illustration, let’s assume that this relation is a causal relation of “being perceived through the right eye of the subject”. Then, for two things’ being compossible in this sense means that they are able to be simultaneously perceived through the subject’s right eye. If one were to identify the compossibility with such a co-right-eye-cognizability, the two sides of the same coin, for example, wouldn’t be compossible. And the fact that the head and the tail of the coin are not compossible in this sense doesn’t imply at all that they are not able to “exist together” in the absolute sense (rather their coexistence is necessary for the existence of the coin). Likewise in the context of discussing whether God can create all things he understands, it completely doesn’t matter whether some things understood by God can be in causal proximity to a given finite subject. Therefore, with respect to the durational

actuality, compossibility is not a fundamental issue of the modal metaphysics. This explains why Spinoza doesn't take up the problem of the compossibility of things in his modal metaphysics.

Finally, let's see how our interpretation resolves the problem of the apparent inconsistency between the modal status of singular things and the PSR, which we saw in the first section. For this purpose, let us briefly look at van Inwagen's argument that the PSR implies the strong necessitarianism. Since I have already shown that the strong necessitarian interpretation cannot reconcile Spinoza's system with the PSR, if Inwagen's argument is valid, it follows that Spinoza's system inevitably violates the PSR. Hence, in what follows, I will point out that Inwagen's argument has a non-Spinozistic supposition and see how Spinoza's system can be reconciled with the PSR.

Inwagen's argument is as follows⁽⁷²⁾: suppose that the PSR holds and there are more than one possible worlds. It is exactly one of them, say @, that is the actual world. Due to the PSR, there must be a sufficient answer to the question: "Why is @ the actual world?" Let S be the conjunction of propositions constituting such an answer. First, S is true in @. This is because S must be at least true to be a sufficient explanation of the fact, but "S is (simply) true" is nothing more than "it is true in the actual world" and @ is the actual world by the assumption. Second, S must not be true in any possible world other than @. For, if there is a non-@ world where S is true, S being true is not a sufficient condition for @ to be in the actual world, because S is true but @ is not the actual world in that non-@ world. But for S to be a sufficient reason for the fact that @ is the actual world, it must at least be a sufficient condition for it. Putting the above together, S is true exactly in @. Hence, S implies the truth of all (and only) propositions that are true in @. A proposition S of this nature is, after all, nothing else but the proposition that @ is the actual world, or at least equivalent to it. However, it is the very fact S must explain, and S can't be a sufficient explanation for itself. Therefore, if the PSR is presupposed, there must be only one possible world.

The above argument has a hidden assumption about the actuality. It is the assumption that only one of the multiple possible worlds has the property of being "actual" and a world's having such a property is a metaphysical fact for which the PSR demands the reason. This conception of actuality is quite similar

to Leibniz's idea cited above⁽⁷³⁾. In so far as actuality is understood in such a way, i.e., as a real property attributable to just some fragment of all possible things, the PSR logically demands the reason that the given fragments are actualized. Then, one needs some criterion by which the actualized fragment is distinguished from the other possible things, such as completeness of worlds. But this is exactly the "selectionistic" model of production that Spinoza rejects in EIP17S.

In contrast, according to my interpretation of Spinoza, the question: "Why are only some things actual?" is divided into two kinds of questions corresponding to two kinds of actuality. If "actual" is taken in the sense of the actuality proper, such a question doesn't arise because everything possible is produced by God in this sense. On the other hand, if it is taken in the sense of the indexical, durational actuality, i.e., "enduring," it becomes a question that, if not nonsense, can be answered trivially. For, in that case, one who asks "Why is this series actual?" is asking for a reason why the indexical property is ascribed to a particular thing. Thus, this situation is analogous to one where someone asks, "Why is today January 6?" The latter question, if it is true, can be answered (at least from the B-theoretical perspective) just by the definition of "today" and the fact it is uttered on the date. Thus, it is not a question about the temporal aspect of reality. Similarly, the former question about actuality is not a question about the modal aspect of reality. As Inwagen acknowledges, the question: "Why is this series (or world) actual?" about the indexical actuality is simply an incoherent one⁽⁷⁴⁾. It is not a factual question which the PSR demands an answer to. Therefore, for Spinoza, the question: "Why are only certain things actual?" is nothing more than one which can't be raised in the first place or which can be given only a trivial answer, so doesn't threaten the consistency between his system and the PSR.

In this section, I've tried to deal with two recalcitrant problems in the interpretation of Spinoza's system: one about the absence of the concept of compossibility and the other about the inconsistency with the PSR. Since my interpretation attributes two kinds of actuality to Spinoza's system, both problems are respectively broken down into two subproblems about two kinds of actuality. Once thus divided, each of the four problems can be shown not to arise at the first place or to be irrelevant to any metaphysical issues, and thus poses no serious threat to Spinoza's metaphysical system.

V. Conclusion

Let's wrap up. In this essay, I have proposed the interpretation which reads two kinds of actualities into Spinoza: (A) the actuality proper, namely the comprehensive metaphysical actuality whose range is identical with that of the possibility in the sense of being consistent with the laws of nature, and (B) the durational actuality, namely the indexical actuality which concerns the relation of things to a given finite subject. Not only does this interpretation coheres well with Spinoza's text and his anti-selectionist metaphysics, but it also sheds light on the problem of compossibility and that of the consistency with the PSR, which vexed previous interpretations of Spinoza's necessitarianism.

Notes

- (1) In this essay I use the following conventional abbreviation for the reference to *Ethics* [E]: P for *Propositio*, D for *Demonstratio*, S for *Scholium*, Ax for *Axioma*, Def for *Definitio*. For the references to Spinoza's works I rely on Spinoza (1925) [Gb. below]. As for translation, I basically follow Curley's (1986, 2016) but make some corrections, which are marked by brackets.
- (2) The most prominent one is between Curley and Garrett: Curley (1969), Garrett (1991), Curley&Walski (1999), Garrett (2018).
- (3) Here, I will discuss the "strong necessitarianism" only under this definition, and not under other such as "all that is actual is also necessary" or "all that is possible is also actual".
- (4) EIP11, EIP19, EIDef8.
- (5) EIP23, EIP21D. For the clear explication of this "modal transfer principle," see also Newlands (2018) 1.2.
- (6) EIP25C.
- (7) Curley (1969) pp.101–104.
- (8) Cf. Della Rocca (2008) pp.4–5, n.2.
- (9) Curley&Walski (1999) pp.258–259.
- (10) Della Rocca (2003) p.87.
- (11) Garrett (1991) pp.196–199, Garrett (2018) pp.126–129.
- (12) Ibid.
- (13) Scholium of Lemma 7 after EIIP13S.
- (14) Garrett (1991) p.196, Garrett (2018) pp.128–129.
- (15) Gb. II 99–100.
- (16) For example, when I am writing this sentence with my computer right now, the visual image of this sentence is supervening on the display of my PC. But the existence of that image doesn't entail the existence of this display (it may be printed). For Spinoza, too, the existence of a complex individual doesn't entail the existence of particular smaller ones constitutive of it: "If, of a body, or of an Individual, which is composed of a number of bodies, some are removed, and at the same time as many others of the same nature take their place, the Individual will retain its nature, as before, without any change of its form"(EIII4). cf. Garber (1994) pp.53–54.

- (17) This is the response he calls “fuller” (Garrett 1991 p.197, 2018 p.140-2).
- (18) Koistinen (2003) pp. 291-295.
- (19) EIP17S. cf. Ibid.
- (20) For a similar diagnosis see Huenemann (2018) pp.122-124.
- (21) See, for example, Curley & Walski (1999), Garrett (1991, 2018).
- (22) “[E]xcept for substances and modes there is nothing”(EIP15D).
- (23) Garrett (2018) pp.132-133.
- (24) Garrett (1991) pp.201-202.
- (25) “[B]eing finite is really, in part, a negation, and being infinite is an absolute affirmation of the existence of some nature” (EIP8S1). cf. Bennett (1984) pp. 76-77.
- (26) Within EIIP45D, the word “*existentia*” is used only in the first sentence.
- (27) Curley (1986) translates this “*durare*” as “have duration.” But, to make clear the distinction between “*durare*” and “*durationem habere*,” I use “endure” for the former, “*have duration*” for the latter.
- (28) Yakira (1994) p.164, Akiho (2019) pp.229-232.
- (29) For instance, Koistinen (1998), Garrett (2009).
- (30) For an attempt to read the genuine contingency about existences of singular things into Spinoza in this way, see Martin (2010).
- (31) All of the interpretations listed below agree on this point.
- (32) Wolfson (1934) pp.29-30, Koistinen (1998) pp.74-75, Matsuda (2009).
- (33) For example, Curley (1969) pp.103-4, Curley&Walski (1999) n.17, Garrett (2009) pp.285-287, Miller (2001) pp.804-805, Renz (2013) p.209, Ueno (2009) pp.14-17, Kashiwaba (2009/2010), Kurokawa (2013), Akiho (2019). Especially, Curley, Curley&Walski, Garrett, Miller, and Renz explicitly regard the modal possibility as the consistency with the laws of nature.
- (34) Kashiwaba (2009/2010) pp.41-43.
- (35) cf. Ibid.
- (36) See EIDef8 and its explanation where he writes eternity “cannot be explained by duration or time.”
- (37) This interpretation corresponds to the “Many” interpretation within Huenemann’s (2018) list (p. 121).
- (38) Garrett (2017) pp.127-129, Giancotti (1991) pp.106-107.
- (39) TTP 7. cf. Giancotti (1991) pp.111-112, n.22.
- (40) Given Spinoza’s nominalistic tendencies, it may be thought that in order to give the laws of nature their own place in *Natura Naturata*, it is required the production of all possible modes consistent with the laws of nature as abstract laws. cf. Yovel (1991) pp. 82-85.
- (41) The finite modes insofar as they have the existence proper (i.e., eternal existence) are causally related to each other: “...our Mind, insofar as it understands, is an eternal mode of thinking, which is determined by another eternal mode of thinking, and this again by another, and so on, to infinity; so that together, they all constitute God’s eternal and infinite intellect” (EVP40S).
- (42) Gb. II 62.
- (43) Ibid.
- (44) EIIP40S2.
- (45) EIIP38, EIIP40S1,S2.
- (46) EIIP40S2.
- (47) Letter 12.

- (48) For example, see EIIAx1 after EIIL3C.
- (49) Della Rocca (1996) pp.47–49.
- (50) Spinoza writes of that kind of ideas “ideas which we have of external bodies [*ideae, quas corporum externorum habemus*]” (EIIIP16C2). cf. Ibid. ch.3 n.9.
- (51) Renz (2013) extracts from EIIP8C the claim that God, insofar as infinite, doesn’t have a knowledge of the actuality as enduring (pp.209–210). she concludes from this that such a knowledge is a kind of indexical knowledge.
- (52) In EIP16, the range of necessary production by God is identified with that of things “which can fall under an infinite intellect.”
- (53) Martin (2010) argues from the fact that the infinite intellect doesn’t recognize durational existences of finite modes that durational existences of them are not directly produced by God insofar as infinite, but purely contingent (pp. 42–52). In such an argument, he assumes that the fact that a finite mode endures or has the durational existences holds absolutely, not relative to any finite subject.
- (54) Lewis (1970) pp.184–187, Lewis (1973) pp.84–91, Lewis (1986) pp.92–96.
- (55) Lewis 1970 p. 185.
- (56) “things are worldmates iff they are spatiotemporally related” (Lewis 1986 p.71)
- (57) To regard the durational actuality as indexical is never to regard it as a nonreal or imaginary product. According to the above interpretation, the claim that an object has the durational actuality involves the reference to three items: the object, the subject, and the causal relation between them. Since these are what are said in EIP16 to be produced from God and a causal relation between such things, the claim is entirely factual.
- (58) The “relation” for Spinoza is perhaps a kind of causal proximity, but it’s hard to determine the detail of it based on the textual evidence.
- (59) As he writes in the explanation following the definition “I say indefinite because it cannot be determined at all through the very nature of the existing thing, nor even by the efficient cause,” this “*indefinitus*” doesn’t mean metaphysical indeterminacy, but just that the duration of a thing can be determined only when things other than it and its efficient causes are taken into account.
- (60) McTaggart (1908). For the B-series-like nature of the series of duration in Spinoza, see Savan (1994) pp. 6–7, and Huenemann (2018) p. 119.
- (61) *Mens nihil imaginari potest neque rerum praeteritarum recordari nisi durante corpore.*
- (62) cf. EIP21D.
- (63) EIP20C2.
- (64) EIIL7S, Letter 64.
- (65) For a similar claim, see Huenemann (2018) p.119.
- (66) Kurokawa (2013), too, ascribes the same two kinds of actualities to Spinoza. He focuses on the way we recognize them, calling the actuality proper “intellectual actuality” and the durational actuality “experiential actuality” (pp. 115–117). Giancotti(1991) also points out that in EIIP8C, EIIP45S and EVP29S two forms of existences or actualities of finite modes are distinguished (pp. 108–109).
- (67) Lewis (1986) pp.97–101.
- (68) Ibid.
- (69) Hess (2011) compares Spinoza’s and Lewis’ metaphysics and notes that the difference between their metaphysics is only at the semantic level (as opposed to the “metaphysical level”) (pp. 89–90). However, he overlooks the fact that *imaginatio* plays a sort of semantic role in Spinoza’s system.

- (70) According to Carrireo (1991), an example of positions criticized by Spinoza here is found in the argument of Domingo Bañez about the impossibility of creating an infinite number of angels, where the compossibility is not an issue due to the special nature of the creatures (n.68). But what is more important is the fact that the consideration of the compossibility of things is also absent in Spinoza's general metaphysical thought.
- (71) In the above quote, Leibniz attributes a thin sense of actuality (reality) of "God has an idea of it" to all possible worlds. It is only with respect to the thicker actuality that compossibility matters. See also *Monadologie* 43–44.
- (72) van Inwagen (2015) pp.164–166.
- (73) *Monadologie* 53. Garrett (2018) takes an interpretation, quite similar to this conception, that there is a plurality of possible worlds in the sense of being consistent with the laws of nature, of which only the most complete series is necessitated by God (p. 142).
- (74) Inwagen (1980) p.404.

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Spinoza's Actualities

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Spinoza's metaphysics is often said to be "necessitarian," mainly based on EIP16 (and its corollaries, such as EIP29 and EIP33). There is a controversy, however, as to whether Spinoza is a "strong" necessitarian in the sense of endorsing the thesis that the actual world is the only possible world, or whether he is a mere determinist (or "weak" necessitarian). The main focus of the debate is on the existence of multiple or infinitely many possible series compatible with what are necessarily produced and determined. In the first section of this essay, I show that both sides of this controversy have difficulties reconciling their interpretations with the principle of sufficient reason (PSR), to which Spinoza is clearly committed. Then, in the second section, I propose an alternative interpretation of Spinoza's metaphysics, in which all of the infinitely many possible series are actualized in the sense of following from the nature of the substance. In this sense of actuality, the range of the actual corresponds to that of the possible. But Spinoza's system contains another kind of actuality, i.e., "enduring," which can be interpreted as an indexical actuality discussed by David Lewis. As a result, "actuality" has two distinct meanings in Spinoza's system. In the last section, I illustrate how such an interpretation solves some problems for commentators of Spinoza, especially the problem of the inconsistency with the PSR.