

# Dimensions of Economic Virtue

An Underlying Approach  
to Geo-Mutualism

This is dedicated to my siblings, Shawn and Tracy Schnack

## Introduction

**M**ETAPHYSICS HAS LONG been an attempt to scrape at the fundamental principles that govern the world around us. Its findings have long played a role in political economy, especially applied by way of ethics, which is largely the matter of adjusting one's behavior to one's metaphysical beliefs.

*Dimensions of Virtue Economics* takes a few simple principles of metaphysics and ethics and applies them to political economy. The approach is a form of dialectical monism, called *dualistic pantheism*, and the suggested political-economic outcome is one of a *panarchic geo-mutualism*. These terms will be further defined as we continue forward, but, in short, dualist pantheism is the view that God and the Universe are synonymous, and is understood by us primarily in terms of twos; and geo-mutualist panarchism is the view that people properly have a right to fair access to land and money, and should be able to choose the system of law under which they live.

The first chapter of this book deals with “The Underlying Approach” I take to these views. I will outline the manner of assessment which will be used throughout the book. This method of assessment is based in the metaphysical and ethical considerations of great thinkers like Parmenides of Elea, Aristotle, Baruch Spinoza, William James, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, to name a few.<sup>1</sup> Their approaches, which I consider to be “middle of the road,” will be applied to those of the extreme in some respect, such as Kant or Mill, whose values—one deontological and the other consequentialist—conflict to some extent. The approach, later applied to political economy, will be one of synthesis and complementarianism, rather than division or conflictarianism.

In order to discuss political economy, one has to have a basic grasp on “The Foundation, Means, Factors, and Returns of Political Economy.” The second chapter deals with just that. I will outline the three factors of classical production (land, labor, and capital) and name three correlating means for their existence (property, rights, and credit), before announcing their returns. This chapter will conclude with matters of economic circulation.

In chapter three, “Tensions in Political Economy,” an ideological analysis is taken. This chapter asks, “What are the dimensions of political economy?” In asking this question, it is the first to introduce the first two chapters to one another. The dimensional polarity, as outlined in chapter one, will be applied to the factors of production in the second by way of ideology. Four dimensions of political economy are named and assessed: economic, political, historical, and metaphysical. Passed syntheses are also named and analyzed.

It is in the fourth chapter, “Untying the Knot,” that the first two chapters meet in length. In this, passed syntheses are found to fall short of proper allocation, historical traits of “good governance” and a healthy economy are named, and the resolution of a new economy, in line with our metaphysical approach, is introduced.

In “A Sketch of the Inner Workings of Utopia,” the fifth chapter, the new economy is detailed. The new economy will be one which lives up to the standards of our metaphysical and ethical concerns. It will resolve the conflict between crime and government, left and right, monarchy and democracy. It will do this through various forms of competition, cooperation, and cooptation.

The final chapter, “A Day in the Future Society,” will illustrate an economic narrative which takes place under the conditions outlined, demonstrating the superiority of such a system.

The book will end in a conclusion, which will include a short summary and words of encouragement toward the future construction of such a society.

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<sup>1</sup> While I certainly hope to encourage a reading of these thinkers, I will not be covering them in detail in this book.

# Chapter 1

## The Underlying Approach

EVERYONE APPROACHES EXISTENCE in their own way, and according to their own beliefs and prejudices. Whether they are familiar with it, or are in touch with it, or not, everyone applies their system of thought— whatever it may be—to the world around them. This method of analysis and resolution of issues is one’s *underlying approach*. One’s underlying approach is the way one understands and reacts to the world.

The more we concern ourselves with our own underlying approach, the more we can maintain consistency in our thinking. While, if taken too far, this can lead one to rigidity-unyielding, if kept within its bounds, on the other hand, it can lead to quite fruitful results, without defense mechanisms which keep one from growing.

In this chapter, I provide the underlying approach to the rest of this book. I ground my underlying approach in a form of dualistic pantheism, which has been coupled by a compatibilist approach in regard to ontology, epistemology, and ethical views. Metaphysics lay the groundwork for ethics in the first chapter, and the ethics are then applied to political economy throughout the rest of the book. You will better understand this jargon as you continue forward.

“Metaphysics” is provided as the first section, which is divided further into “God” and “Dimensional Polarity and the Spectrum Between.” The second section is entitled “Ethics,” in which I discuss “Ethical Dimensions” and, what I call, “The Perennial Ethic.” Each section, and the chapter as a whole, has a conclusion at its end.

## Metaphysics

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METAPHYSICS HAS LONG BEEN an attempt to unlock the workings of existence. Be they in the East or in the West, humans have found themselves intrigued by their own presence in the Universe and have gone through great lengths to explain it. Metaphysics is the study of existence.

Two portions of metaphysical study include *ontology*, the study of being, or *what is*, and *epistemology*, or the study of *knowledge*, or how truth is understood. Metaphysics often attempts to discover or explain the underlying principles that are physically unknown, but are, for purposes of practicality, quite “real.” For instance, the realms of thought, emotions, and other matters of mind, and their interactions with the physical world, are often a concern to the metaphysicist. Other topics within the scope of metaphysics include dynamics that relate to cosmogony, eschatology, teleology, and more; matters relating to origins and finality.

Metaphysics, though housing varying views, is the foundational knowledge, or at least the attempt toward one. Just as the technology for skinning animals or weaving cloth sets the foundation upon which one may learn to sew, metaphysics precedes (at least classical) physics. *Meta*, in fact, means *before*, so *metaphysics* means *before physics*. Metaphysical concepts, unlike physical concepts relating to textiles, should apply in all circumstances to maintain any validity. In this way, the rules of metaphysics are applicable to all other forms and disciplines of knowledge.

In this section we will take a look at a particular form of metaphysics that I relate to *dualist pantheism*. Dualist pantheism is the view that God and the Universe are one and the same, and that the Universe expresses itself in a number of tiered polarities. In other words, *God is everything*, but *everything is fundamentally expressed according to twos*. We will begin with God, before taking a look at the dimensional polarity in which God is expressed to, or understood by, us mortals.

## GOD

**D**UALIST PANTHEISTS RECONCILE many opposing views in their system of thinking. Dualist pantheism has been chosen as our model for metaphysics because it is the best for merging the truths of many, oftentimes hostile, patterns of belief.

Pantheism reconciles atheism and theism by suggesting that the Universe itself is God. The Universe is understood as a self-generating,<sup>2</sup> infinite, and perfect being. This being expresses itself (the whole) to us (the parts) by way of two attributes, which are here attributed to the real, or physical, and the ideal, or mental.

Dualist pantheism appeals to truths from both realists and idealists, and neutralizes each in necessity. *Idealists* are those who believe the Universe is determined primarily by thought (“mind before matter”), while *realists* are those who believe the Universe is determined primarily by physics (matter before mind). *Necessity* suggests that there is only one way things can be. Since reality and ideas can both be understood to have a presence, necessity includes realism and idealism. Necessity includes both physical and mental position.

To the pantheist, God is the Universe, “the thing in itself,” a completely necessary being which has nothing outside of its own bounds, is self-determined, and which encompasses and permeates everything within itself. Dutch philosopher and pantheist, Baruch Spinoza, suggests, “Whatsoever is, is in God.”

Everything except God, “the thing in itself,” is contingent upon something else for its existence, and is determined by something other than itself (to varying degrees) for life or motion. God, the Universe, is self-determined, having nothing external to its own being to set it into motion. Because of this, God is free. Baruch Spinoza, for instance, father of the Enlightenment, and famous pantheist, suggests that,

That thing is called free, which exists solely by the necessity of its own nature, and of which the action is determined by itself alone. On the other hand, that thing is necessary,<sup>3</sup> or rather constrained, which is determined by something external to itself to a fixed and definite method of existence or action.

And that,

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<sup>2</sup> In one sense. In another, God is completely still, ever-present, and unchanging. This is the fact of the whole, while the parts within (us), who are also unchanging but unaware of it, may understand it in terms of the change we experience. In this case, as we seem to be generated by our parents, God can be understood to be self-generated.

<sup>3</sup> Spinoza is rather confusing with his terminology here. In other places, he suggests that God “necessarily exists” as an uncaused cause, and that there is no other way for God to be than how God is. I believe the contradiction in Spinoza’s language, here, to be in relation to describing substance-as-substance. Spinoza’s ultimate position, as I understand it, is that God is both free and necessary, because what God wants, is. In other words, God’s freedom is necessary, and necessity, for God alone, is self-determined.

[...] God alone exists by the sole necessity of his nature [...], and acts by the sole necessity of his own nature, wherefore God is [...] the sole free cause.

Even humans, the best example of free will on our scale, are dependent on food, sunlight, shelter, and water for survival, and many other things for a happy existence. God—the Universe (or aggregate multiverse, if you must)—is self-determining and fully free.

As God is the only self-determining and free cause (since the Universe produces everything, and nothing produces the Universe except for itself), and all other things are dependent on God for causation, we must look to God alone for governing principles which we may universally apply to all forms of knowledge. Some of these are found in the realm of sciences such as physics, while others, like value, are best approximated by faith and individual pursuit, the studies of which exist largely outside the realm of empirical science, and depend on a more rational or intuitive, *a priori*, understanding.

We exist within God, but we also want to unite with God. This seems strange, but God, here, is to be understood in three senses: a) as the *cosmos*, or the Universe in its *present* condition (with a history from the cumulative *past* alone), b) as the *telos*, or *end* of the Universe, and c) as the *kosmos*, which is the Universe in *past*, *present*, and *future* tenses simultaneously. The *cosmos* (present) exist in the *kosmos* (eternity), but we in the present separateness and plurality of the *cosmos* wish to unite in the singularity of the *telos* (future). Ken Wilber explains *kosmos* vs. *cosmos*:

[T]he Pythagoreans introduced the term “kosmos,” which we usually translate as *cosmos*. But the original meaning of *Kosmos* was the patterned nature or process of all domains of existence, from matter to mind to God, and not merely the physical universe, which is what both “*cosmos*” and “*universe*” mean today.

Now, don't become confused: “*Cosmos*,” “*kosmos*,” and “*God*,” in this respect, have differing applications:

To the naturalistic pantheist, or the physicalist pantheist, God represents the objective world of matter, which we have witnessed in the past and currently witness in the ongoing present (to the degree it has not degraded or been destroyed in the past). To this pantheist, *God* is *cosmos*, or “stuff.”

To the idealist pantheist, such as those interested in emanationist theologies, God represents the subjective world of thought, which we witness now but realize in the future (the return to “The Source,” for instance). To this pantheist, *God* is *telos*, “purpose,” emergence, or novelty (that is, new things, future things coming into or affecting our present). The Source. Many naturalistic pantheists are uncomfortable describing such views as pantheism, and instead would like to regard them as panentheism, a related view which suggests that the Universe is not God, but is, instead, *in* God. I think this is often unfair, and does not look at the actual ontological position of many of these views, which can be interpreted as a form of monism.

The dualist pantheist, such as myself, will suggest that physicalist and idealist monism are merely two perspectives of the same thing. Dualist pantheism embraces both. To the dualist pantheist, God represents the *absoluteness* of the Universe, everything that occurs in thought and in physical form. To the dualist pantheist, *God* is *kosmos*, or “stuff, its history, and future.”

| <b>Belief</b> | <b>God</b>    |
|---------------|---------------|
| Physicalist   | Cosmos        |
| Idealist      | <i>Telos</i>  |
| Dualist       | <i>Kosmos</i> |

In one sense, that of the realist, or physicalist, God is given a sort of soft objectivity; God is the physical world which surrounds us in the present, and has surrounded us in the past. In the sense of the idealist, God is given subjectivity, in that God is seen as a stage of consciousness, or super-consciousness, that the Universe approaches or develops into. In the final sense, that of the dualist, God is given absoluteness, as God includes the physical world as we have experienced and are experiencing it, as well as the spiritual, or ideal world, as it will be experienced in the future. God is the Universe in its entirety.

The objectivist position understands God to be the Universe as it currently exists. This is pretty much the view of atheists, with an added esteem and reverence for nature. It is pantheistic because it is a form of *presentism*, which suggests that the present is all that truly “exists.” By being the present alone, God isn’t limited, as the future doesn’t really exist, and the past has existed only previously (according to this view), but has since ceased to exist.

The subjectivist position sees God not so much as the Universe itself, but rather as the point of unity, or full realization, of the Universe. It is pantheistic in a sense, suggesting any amount of reality which exists does so as part of God’s being, but that God is a stage of consciousness of the Universe. In other words, all that we understand to be real is a part of God, but is not fully God. This view can be seen in the neo-Platonic tradition, Hegelian teleology, or in the works of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, for instance. This view is often considered to be a form of *emanationism*. Emanationism is the view that God is the Source of being, and since God is generally seen as absolute being in these views, the drifting from God is the process of “decoming,” toward non-being. Becoming is the process of approaching divinity. As God is being, and there is no true non-being (nothing doesn’t exist), there are only degrees of divinity. One may be saturated in a point of fullness, or may drift far away from the Source, to feel emptiness and separation, the closest as can be to a taste of non-being, a taste of nothing.

The necessitarian, absolutist, or dualist pantheist is concerned with the *being* of God, while the other two are more interested in the processes within, those of the *decoming*— as in the realist, whose Universe is governed by the entropy of materialism—, and the *becoming* of humanity and the Universe, and its synthesis with God, as is seen in the beliefs of the idealist. Spinoza, a dualistic pantheist and necessitarian, suggests that,

Things could not have been brought into being by God in any manner or in any order different from that which has in fact obtained.

This *necessitarian* philosophy, which denounces indeterminism (effect without causation) in its entirety (except for God, of course, to some extent), echoes, in some ways, the Parmenidean view of the unchanging monad. According to Parmenides, an ancient Greek philosopher from the city of Elea, the Universe is unchanging, having no motion or development. It is, instead, a monad, having no beginning, end, or boundaries. Any motion which is perceived by humans is simply an illusion, a partial experience of a whole which cannot be fully perceived, though it can be understood on some level. This view is called *eternalism*. These views, eternal and necessary, are held by the dualist, or absolutist.

Here we have three views of God. In one view, that of Parmenides and Spinoza, God is that which exists past, present, and future. God is *kosmos*. For materialists, God is what we have now. God is cosmos. For thinkers like Hegel or de Chardin, God is something to be approached or unfolded from the cosmos. God (or at least the Cosmic Christ) is *telos*.

While the thought of Spinoza and Parmenides tends toward the absolute, they make great attempts to explain the subjective within. Hegel’s approach is rather subjectivist, but explains objectivity as arising from the unfolding of history. The positions of all of these great thinkers are

correct in some manner. The realist sees the world from the objectivistic perspective of nature as-is, concerning themselves primarily with physics, suggesting humanity should learn to live alongside these demands of nature. The idealist takes the subjectivist view of humanity, whose goal it is to unite with God, in order to have eternal and increasing happiness, or contentment, in the future. The dualist, or necessitarian, understands human agency as a conduit between these views.

The dualist pantheist understands God’s perspective as being objective (absolute), while understanding our own, fragmented perspectives, to be subjective. As the Universe (God) evolves, it goes through expansions and collapses. As it expands, seemingly breaking apart (entropy), subjective consciousness develops in the fragments. This consciousness is experienced as will, want, desire, need, lack, incompleteness. The process of fulfillment is the process of completion, or collapse, and the return to singularity, which is an objective perspective in which all share the perspective of *the All* (God) and none other. In this manner, while we may be *in* God (*kosmos*), we do not share the perspective *of* God, having present subjectivity (cosmos). Our task, if we are to cease our suffering (wanting, needing, falling apart), is to unite with God (*telos*).

As pantheism is a rather perennial philosophy, which has been around for ages on end, and has often been repressed (as in the case of Giordano Bruno and Spinoza), it has expressed many of the tensions which have existed throughout the process of historical development, the tension between subjectivity and objectivity being one of those battles. While some pantheists decidedly lean to the subjectivist or objectivist approach, most pantheists, including all of those mentioned, make attempts toward fairness of analysis and toward the synthesis of forms of knowledge which are oftentimes considered to be at odds. Parmenides has his “way” of *aletheia*, or of objectivity, and that of *doxa*, or subjectivity. Spinoza settles the mind-body problem of Cartesian dualism with his neutral monism, suggesting both mind and body are attributes of an underlying substance which ultimately unites them. Hegel goes through great lengths to synthesize object and subject in his vision of the absolute.

|                   |                   |  |
|-------------------|-------------------|--|
| <b>Parmenides</b> | <b>Truth</b>      | <b>Aletheia</b>                                |
|                   | <b>Experience</b> | <b>Doxa</b>                                    |
| <b>Spinoza</b>    | <b>Truth</b>      | <b>Substance</b>                               |
|                   | <b>Experience</b> | <b>Attribute<br/>(Extension, Thought)</b>      |
| <b>Hegel</b>      | <b>Truth</b>      | <b>Absolute</b>                                |
|                   | <b>Experience</b> | <b>Conditioned<br/>(Subjective, Objective)</b> |

It is my view that Parmenides is correct when he asserts that there is a way of subjectivity and objectivity, and Spinoza when he suggests that the attributes of mind and matter are the expressions of one underlying substance. Parmenides and Spinoza like to focus on this aspect, but without ignoring the other aspects entirely. They want to understand God as a thing which produces subjective and objective experience. Hegel, while recognizing also that God is the absolute, was more interested in understanding God as “subjective spirit” than the other two. He wanted to see the world largely in terms of consciousness or thought becoming objective. Both sides recognize the subjective and objective aspects of reality, but they are interested to differing degrees in these

aspects, and approach them from opposite ends. Hegel, actually a proponent of Spinoza's, refers to the synthesis of objectivity and subjectivity as *Absolute*. For Spinoza, this was *Substance*.

|                      |                                 |                                |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Spinoza/Hegel</b> | <b>Substance/Absolute</b>       |                                |
|                      | <b>Extension/<br/>Objective</b> | <b>Thought/<br/>Subjective</b> |

The underlying principle here is the uniting force of God. God is the single all-encompassing being which unites the subjective and objective worlds of thought and extension, allowing for change to (seem to) occur in an unchanging Universe.

### DIMENSIONAL POLARITY AND THE SPECTRUM BETWEEN

**S**PINOZA SUGGESTED that God, or substance, had two attributes of which we were aware, and which he associated with thought and extension, or body and mind. Likewise, the attributes expressed a large number of modes. In reconciling the attributes of thought and extension into substance, or God, Spinoza laid to rest Descartes's mind-body dilemma, but held onto his dualism to a certain extent as well. Spinoza's view is one of dualist, neutral, or dialectical monism, a sort of *attribute dualism*. This means Spinoza reconciles mind and matter, a polarity, into a single substance.

Duality is a constant theme in philosophy; Spinoza is not alone. Another pantheistic view which expresses dualist tendencies is Hermeticism. Hermeticists often refer to their pantheistic God as *THE ALL*. In *The Kybalion*, a predominant source of the Hermetic outlook, dualism is expressed as polarity. Three Initiates, the book's authorship, suggest,

[T]he Principle of Polarity embodies the truth that all manifested things have "two sides"; "two aspects"; "two poles"; a "pair of opposites," with manifold degrees between the two extremes. The old paradoxes, which have ever perplexed the mind of men, are explained by an understanding of this Principle.

[...]

[P]assing on to the Physical Plane, [the Hermetic teachings] illustrate the Principle by showing that Heat and Cold are identical in nature, the differences being merely a matter of degrees. The thermometer shows many degrees of temperature, the lowest pole being called "cold," and the highest "heat." Between these two poles are many degrees of "heat" or "cold," call them either and you are equally correct. The higher of two degrees is always "warmer," while the lower is always "colder." There is no absolute standard-all is a matter of degree. There is no place on the thermometer where heat ceases and cold begins. It is all a matter of higher or lower vibrations. The very terms "high" and "low," which we are compelled to use, are but poles of the same thing-the terms are relative.

[...]

And so it is on the Mental Plane. "Love and Hate" are generally regarded as being things diametrically opposed to each other; entirely different; unreconcilable. But we apply the Principle of Polarity; we find that there is no such thing as Absolute Love or Absolute Hate, as

distinguished from each other. The two are merely terms applied to the two poles of the same thing. Beginning at any point of the scale we find "more love," or "less hate," as we ascend the scale; and "more hate" or "less love" as we descend this being true no matter from what point, high or low, we may start. There are degrees of Love and Hate, and there is a middle point where "Like and Dislike" become so faint that it is difficult to distinguish between them.

Polarity is expressed in every mode that exists, be it a mode of physicality or one of mental construct. This is naturally so, because all things which exist do so as dimensions, and, by general rule, dimensions have two poles: the three spacial dimensions have up-down, left-right, and front-back; sub-physical "dimensions" include density and pliancy, flexibility and stiffness, quiet and loud, dark and light, and such; the dimensions of thought have value relations in a similar manner, good-bad, smart-stupid, love-hate, pretty-ugly, fun-boring, etc.

Everything that physically exists is a part of the electromagnetic spectrum, which, like all spectrums, has two ends. Everything is also composed of heat, and is governed by the laws of thermodynamics, which express extremes of hot and cold, syntropy and entropy. Everything physical is part of a spectrum of existence, which extends between two opposites.

The concept of polarity applies just as well to philosophy and other modes of thinking. In ontology, the study of being and its processes, polarity is expressed as idealism and realism, the world of thought and that of physicality. To the idealist, thought governs the material world, while, to the realist, it is the material world which governs thought. In epistemology, the study of knowledge, polarity is expressed in subjectivist and objectivist interpretations of knowledge. It is reconciled in the absolute.

The poles of opposition, regardless of their subject matter, compensate for one another. If one side of the dichotomy grows, the other suffers: If I move left, I am less right, if I grow in intelligence, I decrease in ignorance, if I move further in space I move slower in time. This relationship is called *complimentarity* and is related to *relativity*. The relationship of relativity leads to clashing views of reality, unless one remains open to others' perspectives.

## SECTION CONCLUSION

**G**OD IS ONE, but is expressed to us in a multitude of twos, giving the world, as we understand it, a tiered duality. The underlying truth, however, is that God is an undivided whole, which incorporates all aspects of existence, subjective and objective, mental and physical. While God exists at all times, and *is* all times, we do not experience God *as God* (all as "the All"), or as *kosmos*, but instead this experience is one of presence, the current state of nature, or of teleology, being ideas rooted in the future. In this way, God is *kosmos*, our current experience is rooted in cosmos, while unity of perspective with God is *telos*. God is found to be immanent (within the world), transcendent (outside of present being), and absolute (all of the above). The immanence of the cosmos, according to realism, and the transcendence of *telos*, in accord with emanation, leads to a duality of perspective, best realized as a necessary and ultimately monistic *kosmos*.

|                                  |                                      |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>God</b>                       |                                      |
| Substance<br><i>Kosmos</i>       |                                      |
| Attribute of Extension<br>Cosmos | Attribute of Thought<br><i>Telos</i> |

The duality of perspective does not just relate to God, but, as God composes all things, it relates to all things which exist. This can be understood as dimensional polarity, in which all elements of existence exist within and as a part of the spectrum between two poles. Dark and light, pleasure and pain, up and down: these all exist as degrees on a continuum, which ultimately has two poles of which we have never actually witnessed. In metaphysics, these two poles are expressed as ontological realism and idealism, and in epistemology these are the subjectivist approach of rationalism, and the objectivist approach of empiricism.

Dimensional polarity has a “give-and-take” relationship, in which the taking from one side is the giving to the other, and vice versa. As right is moved away from, left is approached, as happiness is strayed from, grief begins to swell.

## Ethics

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**T**HE MISSION OF ETHICS is to describe the means by which to engage in proper living, to live “the good life,” to be happy or to increase net happiness, to do what is “right,” “fair,” or “just,” or a number of related concepts relating to human well-being and contentment. Whether this is understood through Aristotle’s *eudaemonia*, Plotinus’s *henosis*, Epicurus’s *ataxaria*, Lao Tzu’s *wu wei*, Spinoza’s blessedness, the *gnosis* of the Gnostics, the categorical imperative of Emmanuel Kant, the *kevala jnana* of the Jains, the happiness of John Stuart Mill, or other forms of enlightenment or satisfaction, the aim of ethics is to enhance the life of the individual, or individuals, through the process of approximating the natural laws of the Universe with human behavior.

One cannot be contented if one is going against the grain. This does not mean that change from the past is impossible, but that change itself has a manner in which it naturally manifests, and to be happy, enlightened in various manners, etc. is to understand this and to work with it, to go with the flow, thereby allowing reality to shift effortlessly into a softer ideality, incorporating ideality into a new reality, and vice versa. One cannot stray too far into the ideal, neglecting the practicality of the real, or too far into the real, in which proper changes are hindered from happening, due to their prior non-existence.

In this section we take a look at the various dimensional polarities that exist in the modes of ethics, before deciding upon those ethics which best match the metaphysical foundation of dualist pantheism I have previously set forth.

### ETHICAL DIMENSIONS

**L**IKE ALL THINGS, ethics has dimensions of its own. As directions have up and down, left and right, forward and back, temperature changes by degree, volume changes low and high, it is also true that one’s behaviors can be individualistic or collectivistic, narcissistic or altruistic, hedonistic or ascetic, deontological or consequentialist. These ethical dimensions will be relevant to our discussion later in this book.

*Individualism* is an ideology which centers around the individual, and suggests that it is right for individuals to center their lives around their own well-being. *Collectivism* suggests that individuals should do what is right for people as a whole, often to the neglect of one’s own wants. Collectivism is generally associated with altruistic behavior, while individualism allows for more narcissism. Together, they act as directions toward the ends of a spectrum.

*Altruism* is the acting of one person in favor of another person, often at the expense of the actor, while *narcissism* is the acting in favor of one's self, often at the expense of others. There is, of course, a spectrum between, but these are the two poles of extremity. Altruism and narcissism are expressed in hedonistic and ascetic approaches.

*Hedonism* often expresses that immediate satisfaction is greatly important, and generally focuses on increasing net pleasure for the individual. In the case of some forms of ethical egoism— an extreme sort of hedonism—, and others of the sort, this includes acts of narcissism. *Asceticism*, on the other hand, often depends on the neglect of self, or of one's material desires, suggesting that one should only do what keeps themselves alive, or better the world at their expense. Many Jains and Hindus, and monk classes of many religions, express various forms of asceticism. All dualities are tendencies toward the ends of a spectrum.

The hedonist, who is concerned with more immediate satisfaction (whether it be instant or, at the very least, within a lifetime) is more inclined to *consequentialism*, or ethics governed by desirable consequences of the action, while the ascetic is inclined to *deontology*, believing behavior which avoids indulgence and which is in accord with prewritten rules will allow a purer sense of satisfaction in the future or in lives to come. I think you are beginning to get the hang of this...

One's ethics are often rooted in one's ontological and epistemological position, among other things. The hard realist, who approaches the world in an empirical manner, and has little faith in afterlife, if they are consistent, concerns themselves with the present, practicality, and immediate success. This being so, they are likely to be driven by consequentialist ethics, such as those of hedonism. The hard idealist, who approaches the world rationally or intuitively, believes the afterlife to exist, and, if they are consistent, concern themselves with getting there, focusing on long term goals rather than immediate satisfaction. This being so, they are often driven by deontologies which approximate methods to anticipate the *telos*. That is, they create rules of behavior that they believe reflect a means to get closer to ultimate satisfaction— often to be found outside of this life— in some form. The ethical rules of the rational-idealist are not meant to mirror physical reality so much as the consequentialism of the empiricist-realist, but, rather, to foretell rules of teleology.

Below is a table which shows the correlating relationships between various outlooks. Of course, not every individualist is a materialist, nor is every idealist ascetic, but if they were thoroughly polarized (which few are), these are the relationships they would hold. Most people, if not all, rather than being polarized in any one direction entirely, will balance one aspect of polarity with another. It is often the case, for instance, that those who claim to have materialist philosophies will have idealistic ethical norms. Many communists, for example, who are collectivists, are materialists (dialectical materialism), while fascists, who are individualists to an extreme, generally tend toward metaphysical idealism. While actually an inconsistency, such a position allows some balance, where there otherwise would be none to speak of.

|                    |   |  |
|--------------------|---|--|
| <b>Metaphysics</b> | <b>Realism<br/>Materialism<br/>Empiricism</b>                         | <b>Idealism<br/>Spiritualism<br/>Rationalism</b>               |
| <b>Ethics</b>      | <b>Individualism<br/>Hedonism<br/>Narcissism<br/>Consequentialism</b> | <b>Collectivism<br/>Asceticism<br/>Altruism<br/>Deontology</b> |

Just as all dimensions have two poles, and the direction toward one is the direction away from the other, the same rings true of ethical dimensions. A step toward hedonism is a step away from

asceticism, toward individualism away from collectivism, and toward narcissism from altruism, etc. This is the nature of dimensions, be they ethical or otherwise. This brings us to what I call the *perennial ethic*.

### THE PERENNIAL ETHIC

**A** PERENNIAL ETHIC is one which sticks around, or which has roots which dig to a deeper understanding of things. Where the ethical dimensions of individualism-collectivism, hedonism-asceticism, narcissism-altruism, etc. are expressions of metaphysical realism and idealism (etc.)— the two attributes of Spinoza’s substance, the double modes of Hegel’s “Absolute Spirit,” etc.—, orders of the perennial ethic tend toward their reconciliation in the monad’s absoluteness and substance, suggesting that truth comes in many forms, all correct and incorrect to varying degrees of extremity. The perennial ethic looks at the dualism and neutralizes it, unlike the polarized positions, which perpetuate conflicts and create division by picking sides.

First on the component list of perennial ethics is the necessitarian foundation. According to necessitarianism, ethics is a matter of what has happened, is happening, or will happen. In necessitarianism, there is no true possibility, only necessity. Everything is determined in one way or another (whether classically or teleologically).

Necessitarianism goes quite well with an eternalist ontology, because, while necessity may seem to allow for some crude exceptions to normative ethics, it also suggests a reason for which they occur. This reason is that they are necessary. Just as Spinoza suggests in his necessitarian ethic that

Things could not have been brought into being by God in any manner or in any order different from that which has in fact obtained.

... Parmenides suggests in his philosophy of eternalism that the way of *aletheia* sees that “it is and it is impossible for it not to be.” He suggests further that “This is the path of Persuasion, for it accompanies Objective Truth.” It’s important to remember here that Parmenides does not separate *doxa* into two, as Spinoza separates his attributes. When he suggests objective truth, this is not to be seen as a correlate to Spinoza’s attribute of extension, but rather to his substance, or perhaps better to Hegel’s absolute.

|                   |                     |                    |
|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Spinoza</b>    | <b>Substance</b>    |                    |
|                   | <b>Thought</b>      | <b>Extension</b>   |
| <b>Hegel</b>      | <b>Absolute</b>     |                    |
|                   | <b>Subjectivity</b> | <b>Objectivity</b> |
| <b>Parmenides</b> | <i>Aletheia</i>     |                    |
|                   | <i>Doxa</i>         |                    |

It’s important to note that objective truth here has two meanings. One, as is used by Parmenides, corresponds with Spinoza’s “blessedness,” and has a meaning which acts as a synthesis between thought based on extension and thought based on thought (thinking about thinking), while a common definition of objectivity— in contrast— regards to extension alone. That is, according to many views, a thought is objective when it relates to physical objects, while the objectivity that Parmenides is talking about in *aletheia* is ultimately an awareness of both pure thought and pure

extension. Parmenides suggests, in a way marrying subjectivity and objectivity of the extension-thought variety, that

Whatever can be spoken or thought of necessarily *is*, since it is possible for it to be,  
but it is not possible for nothing to be.

He reasons,

How could what-is be in the future? How could it come-to-be? For if it came-to-be,  
it is not, nor is it if at some time it is going to be.

This is an argument which mirrors the law of conservation of energy in modern physics. His argument is, essentially, “Something doesn’t come from nothing.” Still, this is not how we experience things in the world of *doxa*.

Parmenides’s reasoning, seeing thought as having absolute being in the monad, coincides quite well with Spinoza’s substance, which incorporates his attributes of extension and thought into one thing. Spinoza’s system, partly inspired by Parmenides, is dynamic, in that even his ultimately monistic view is softly dualistic, while the duality is compounded by itself. It can be seen here that the Universe works in a dialectical manner.

The *dialectic* has been described most famously by Hegel, but was used by people such as Plato, and Aristotle, who suggested Zeno of Elea as the method’s first proponent. In its most simplified statement, the dialectic proposes that change occurs in a manner in which an idea or situation presents itself, and which is opposed or contradicted by another idea or scenario, but which is ultimately reconciled in the combination of both ideas’ best parts. This is commonly stated in terms of thesis-antithesis-synthesis. Once the synthesis is reached, it plays the role of the next thesis, and the process continues.

| Dialectic |            |
|-----------|------------|
| Synthesis |            |
| Thesis    | Antithesis |

The metaphysical dialectic at play here is one of neutral monism, meaning that a soft duality is placed into the framework of a hard monism. This is here done by placing our thesis, say, realism, along with its antithesis, idealism, into a framework of attribute-dualism, which is ultimately reconciled into a synthesis of substance-monism. The soft ontological dualism of real and ideal is placed into the hard monism of eternal necessity. The two attributes—real and ideal—are placed into one substance.

It is here that the necessitarian ethic has something to offer us mortals. While, in the most absolute sense, the Universe is unchanging and motionless, it is also true that we don’t experience it that way. We experience change, and we experience it dialectically. As we hunger, the subject (thesis) assigns its object (antithesis) of satisfaction, which is only to be found in successful combination (synthesis). This is seemingly interrupted only by being part of a larger and more influential dialectic, in which it also takes part.

Necessitarianism demands, rather absolutely, that whatever *is* is ethical. That is, whatever occurs is what is *right* to occur. This includes the fact that feelings occur which are seemingly contrary to happenings, and which may ultimately change things. Because there is ultimately a layer of subjective duality placed atop this monistic approach, the manner in which to approach it is dialectically, as we see in the work of Spinoza. In other words, the manner out of Parmenides’s *doxa*,

and evolution of consciousness beyond Spinoza's attributes, is through the dialectic. Ethics takes itself to be the metaphysical project of mirroring the laws of nature with human action. Because nature is ultimately expressed as one large dialectic, a successful system of ethics, which will bring us unity with the divine, will mirror this. This is expressed quite well in the virtue ethics of Aristotle.

One of the best methods for ethically approximating a dialectical monism of the sort described, in my opinion, is found in Aristotle's virtue ethics, our second treatment of ethics. As the Universe is ultimately polarized, and expressed as a spectrum, with a thesis and antithesis on either end, and a synthesis between them and permeating them, Aristotle suggests that human action exists as a spectrum between two vices, with virtue found at the mean. As light and darkness exist on a spectrum, and to move toward the light removes the darkness, and as left and right compose a dimensional spectrum as well, with a move in either one way compromising the other, the same relations can be found between the vices. That is, a deficiency of light is an excess of darkness, the excessive motion forward is the deficiency of compensatory motion backward. Likewise, Aristotle suggests that vices exist within such a spectrum:

let us consider this, that it is the nature of [...] things to be destroyed by defect and excess, as we see in the case of strength and of health (for to gain light on things imperceptible we must use the evidence of sensible things); both excessive and defective exercise destroys the strength, and similarly drink or food which is above or below a certain amount destroys the health, while that which is proportionate both produces and increases and preserves it. So too is it, then, in the case of temperance and courage and the other virtues. For the man who flies from and fears everything and does not stand his ground against anything becomes a coward, and the man who fears nothing at all but goes to meet every danger becomes rash; and similarly the man who indulges in every pleasure and abstains from none becomes self-indulgent, while the man who shuns every pleasure, as boors do, becomes in a way insensible; temperance and courage, then, are destroyed by excess and defect, and preserved by the mean.

|                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Eudaemonia</b> |                    |
| Virtue of Balance |                    |
| Vice of Excess    | Vice of Deficiency |

Aristotle suggests that “excess and defect are characteristic of vice, and the mean of virtue.” The mean is naturally the synthesis of two extremes, being somewhere toward the middle. The mean of one and three is one-and-a-half, for instance. For Aristotle, the mean is the balancing point.

Lastly, and quite shortly, in our treatment of ethics, I would like to suggest pragmatism, as expressed by William James, as being quite compatible with necessitarian ontology and virtue ethics.

Pragmatism offers a sort of meta-ethics, which suggests that the value of a system of ethics can be found in its successfulness, or practical applicability. A pragmatist may suggest that an ethical system is valid so long as it achieves or approximates the desired results better than any alternative. Such a position has led people like William James to write positions which defend degrees of idealism, as can be found in his *The Will to Believe*, or *Mysticism*, while also remaining grounded in the real world.

In many ways, pragmatism is a middle ground between realism and idealism. Pragmatists assert that those ideals which are realistic are those which should be retained. It suggests, in a manner in line with necessitarianism, that those views which lead to failure are correct to be abandoned, but were also correct to be held while they were successful.

In a sense, necessitarianism suggests that while the world is correctly ordered as it is, this includes one's subjectivity and individual will, which composes part of existence as well, and oftentimes wants to change it. In this way, things are perfect as they are, but change is perfect as well, because the desire for future change exists in the momentary perfection of now, even if reached to from the future. This is reminiscent to the relationship of *kosmos* and *telos* described previously.

Pragmatism suggests that all ethical systems are ethical in their own time, while they may not have lasting ability. In this way, right can be both right and wrong, in the manner that God can simultaneously mean both God (*kosmos*) and unity with God (*telos* or *cosmos*, which are just portions of *kosmos*, and not the whole thing).<sup>4</sup> In the entirety of time, an ethical value is correct so long as it lasts, and should exist so long as it is effective, but it may not be the final destination.

## SECTION CONCLUSION

**E**THICS IS THE PROJECT OF HUMAN SATISFACTION, a project which comes in many forms, and has many dimensions. Some of these dimensions include the spectrum of individualism and collectivism, hedonism and asceticism, deontology and consequentialism, to name a few.

Generally speaking, shorter-term goals are oriented in individualistic and hedonistic philosophies, which are, if consistent (but unlikely so), backed by materialist metaphysics (or just physics, minus the meta-). Longer term goals are oriented in collectivistic and ascetic values, which often put the interests of others, or the group, above that of the individual. This is often backed by idealist metaphysics.

Ethics are best undertaken by approximating the laws of nature with our behavior. As the laws of nature are always successful, and ever have fruitful results, the approximation of those laws with human action leads to satisfaction. As the metaphysical foundation here supplied is one of neutral monism, this entails an ethic that will coincide with its properties and processes.

The first ethic presented is the necessitarian ethic, which suggests simply that whatever occurs is right to occur, and what doesn't occur is right not to occur. The Universe is perfect, according to this view. While the necessitarian ethic has been found to be true for the world of *aletheia*, we humans still have an experience which is rooted in *doxa*, and which must also be understood. Necessitarianism covers the monist aspect of neutral monism quite well, but must defer to other ethical systems when it comes to human practice.

Aristotle's virtue ethics work quite well to cover the dialectical aspect of neutral, or dialectical, monism. As the synthesis of the dialectic reconciles two extremes, so too does Aristotle's understanding of virtue reconcile the vices found to either side. As all dimensions of all spectrums have two poles, and are governed by conservation, or "give-and-take" operations, whereby taking from one is giving to the other, so too does this ring true of the vices. As white is the absence of black, foolhardiness is the absence of cowardice. As gray is the synthesis of white and black, bravery is the virtue between foolhardiness and cowardice.

So long as ethical systems are found to be helpful, they will be considered to be pragmatic.

## Chapter Conclusion

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<sup>4</sup> The relationship of *telos* to *kosmos* is like the relationship of handle to coffee mug. The mug includes the handle, but not the other way around.

**M**ETAPHYSICS IS THE STUDY of the Universe, its origins, aspects, and direction, on the most fundamental level. Metaphysics often, but not always, includes elements of theology, and greatly focuses on ontology, epistemology, cosmology, and other issues of foundational importance. In many ways, metaphysics—be they materialist, idealist, or dualist—lays the ground upon which all other forms of knowledge rest.

In the days of the church, all knowledge had to appeal first to *The Bible*, and today, in the age of the lab, all things must appeal to the measurement of scientists. It is not to the fault of anyone to look to what is known in one’s time of the Universe, for we all, somehow, spring forth from, and are governed by, its laws. The thesis has been set, its antithesis established, there is but one more step to take... have you paid attention thus far?

The Universe works dialectically. Ontologically, this can be seen as neutral monism, which is expressed theologically as dualist pantheism. Real and ideal interact and complement one another to compose a necessary whole. Ethically this is mirrored in virtue ethics and pragmatism. Because ethics is the project of mirroring universal laws with human behavior, and the Universe is dialectically neutral, virtue ethics and pragmatism, built upon a necessitarian understanding, provides the most stable foundation for which to build upon.

**Theology**

|                          |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Substance, <i>Kosmos</i> |                      |
| Matter, Cosmos           | Spirit, <i>Telos</i> |

**Ontology**

|                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Necessity, Being |                 |
| Real, Decoming   | Ideal, Becoming |

**Epistemology**

|           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| Absolute  |            |
| Objective | Subjective |

**Ethics**

|                    |                |
|--------------------|----------------|
| Virtue             |                |
| Vice of Deficiency | Vice of Excess |

Our approach thus far is as follows: God is ultimately substance, which extends past, present, and future. This substance is experienced as the matter of the present cosmos, and as it has been experienced in the past; as well as being experienced as the spirit, or ideal, of the future, or *telos*. That is, God is experienced in the present as physical objects which are oriented in the past, or as ideas, which are oriented toward the future. As physics is governed by the law of entropy, the real is the process of decoming; the ideal is the process of becoming, as it is in opposition to entropy. Necessity understands these are two parts of a whole, which is understood as eternal being. The study of the real tends toward objectivity and empiricism, while the study of the ideal tends toward subjectivity and rationalism. The study of the necessary tends toward absoluteness. Humans are best satisfied by balancing their behavior, and straying from the vicious extremes. Instead, they should reflect the balanced nature of the Universe in their behavior, and embrace both sides of reality as an integrated whole. This is reflected in virtuous and pragmatic behavior, which progresses in rhythm with the demands of time.

Thus is set the underlying approach for the rest of this book. As we proceed, we will analyze systems according to their place on the spectrum. We will look for dualities, and we will synthesize those dualities.

**PLEASE NOTE:**

**This is an unfinished work, presented only as sample material,  
and is subject to content changes.**