

It Could've Happened By Accident!: Spinoza's Substance-Mode Relations as a Double Immanence of Expression

I



This *Calvin and Hobbes* comic, though simple, raises metaphysical concerns pertaining to necessity and contingency with Calvin's exclamation, "It could've happened by accident!" These terms, 'necessity' and 'contingency' have plagued philosophers prior to even Parmenides. Few philosophers have been subject to as much scrutiny on the problem of freedom as Spinoza; nearly three-hundred years young and he continues to be a voice of authority and a philosopher of interest concerning necessity, contingency, and freewill, or rather a lack thereof. I can only speculate as to what Spinoza might have to say regarding Calvin's exclamation. Would Spinoza consider Calvin's falling in his chair a contingent or necessary act? Spinoza's views on freedom appear straight forward, for many might say without hesitation that Spinoza is a hard-line-determinist, leaving no space for contingency or freewill. However, upon closer inspection and careful consideration one might be able to find space in Spinoza's metaphysical schema for necessity and contingency. The question is certainly debatable, as contemporary and past

scholars have fallen on both sides of this quandary. For Spinoza the issue lies within the relationship between substance-modes, and if such a relationship allows for the possibility of freedom (human or divine). Specifically, I concentrate on whether Spinoza's definitions pertaining to substance, mode, and possibility are coherent with one another.

To accomplish this I break the argument into two major parts. First, I examine interpretations of Spinoza by scholars Richard Mason, Edwin Curely, Pierre Bayle, and Yitzhak Melamed. These interpretations differ over whether one ought to read Spinoza's substance-mode relationship as *de dicta* or *de re*. Though all these authors do not use the same terminology, I think in a general sense *de dicta* and *de re* capture the arguments. Second, I offer my own interpretation of Spinoza's metaphysics which invokes Philosophy of Religion scholar Daniel Barber's Deleuzian notion of immanence, which pushes back on the *de dicto/de re* distinction. I use Barber's theory of immanence to claim that Spinoza might be thought of as more of a compatibilist rather than a hard-line determinist or incompatibilist.¹

II

Before getting into the meat of Spinoza's metaphysics, it will be beneficial to briefly outline pertinent terms used throughout this essay. I will begin by addressing necessity and contingency.² A proposition which is contingent is one that is not necessarily necessary, and a proposition which is necessary is one that is necessarily necessary. However, as true as this statement might be, describing something by its negation does not always provide as much

¹ I am considering a compatibilist one who finds freedom and determinism to be compatible, and a hard line determinist one who find freedom and necessity as incompatible. Rather one could consider a hard line determinist as in incompatibilist.

² I relay on Alvin Plantinga's work, *The Nature of Necessity*, to describe these terms in detail.

meaning as one might like to the words ‘necessary’ and ‘contingent.’ A contingent proposition can be thought of as one which requires a prior causation or it is conceived through or by something else, whereas a necessary proposition is the cause of itself. For example a contingent proposition might go as follows:

(1) The Chicago Blackhawks won the Stanley Cup in 1934.

This proposition is contingent because another national hockey team very well could have won the Stanley Cup. This being said, the essence³ of the Blackhawks is not predicated by their having won the Stanley Cup in 1934. A necessary proposition, on the other hand might go as follows:

(2) $13 + 11 = 24$

This is a necessary proposition considering the proposition’s essence is predicated by its trueness. The very expression of $13 + 11 = 24$ is necessarily true because of its very composition. $13 + 11 = 24$ has the property of truth, whereas ‘the Blackhawks won the Stanley Cup in 1934’ has no such property. Another example of a necessary proposition is one which its falsehood is necessarily true. For example:

(3) $\sim(p \wedge \sim p)$

Plantinga describes these necessary truths as “broadly logical necessity,”⁴ but also describes more “homelier” examples, such as: no one is taller than herself, or green is a color. These propositions are true because of their very properties. The very statements, green is not a color or she is taller than herself, are completely absurd.

³ By essence I mean a property which a thing could not possibly lack.

⁴ Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1974,) 2.

The *meaning* of the words ‘contingent’ and ‘necessary’ are further clarified by explicating the phrases *de dicto* [about what is said] and *de re* [about the thing]. These modalities apply to propositions in which necessity is a property of the proposition itself. Plantinga offers an understanding of these two concepts in a context of modality as he writes, “There is a *prima facie* distinction, then, between modality *de dicto* and modality *de re*...contemporary philosophers who find the idea of modality *de dicto* tolerably clear, however, look utterly askance at that of modality *de re*, suspecting it a source of boundless confusion.”⁵ This does not seem to bode well for further argumentation on the matter, and might explain why philosophers on opposite sides of this debate over Spinoza’s metaphysics may be unable to come to any sort of conclusion. The distinction, or rather, the acceptance of one modality over the other, seems to be a matter of intuition.

The *de dicto* modality predicates, by what is said, the necessary truth of another claim that is purposed. Whereas, the *de re* modality predicates that which is being proposed necessarily possesses a particular property. Using these different modalities can determine the truth or falsehood of modal statements. For example:

(4) Paul believes he has been visited by a messenger from God.

(5) Paul does not believe that he has been visited by Jesus.

Little does Paul know, in this instance, that the messenger he was visited by was Jesus; however, read in a *de dicto* sense both statements (4) and (5) can be taken as true. On the other hand, proposition (5) read in a *de re* sense must be false. In the *de re* modality Paul cannot believe that

⁵ Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, 13. It should be noted that some Philosophers do not even take the distinction between *de dicto* and *de re* is, itself, false.

he was visited by a messenger, and not believe he was visited by Jesus when an essential property of the messenger he was visited by is that that messenger is Jesus.

Whether Spinoza is interpreted in a *de dicto* or *de re* modality determines whether his propositions and axioms are coherent with one another. If Spinoza is taken in a *de dicto* sense there are contradictions within his metaphysical schema, yet if his work is taken in a *de re* sense there is an opportunity to relieve Spinoza of this possible contradiction. Now that the terms, ‘contingent,’ ‘necessary,’ ‘*de re*,’ and ‘*de dicto*’ have been outlined I will continue forward to describe this potential paradox within Spinoza’s metaphysics.

III

Friedrich Nietzsche describes Spinoza’s *Ethics* briefly and harshly in his work “Beyond Good and Evil”. Nietzsche as he writes,

Consider the hocus-pocus of mathematical form with which Spinoza clad his philosophy--really ‘the love of his wisdom,’ to render that word fairly and squarely--in mail and mask, to strike terror at the very outset into the heart of any assailant who should dare to glance at that invisible maiden and Pallas Athena: how much personal timidity and vulnerability this masquerade of a sick hermit betrays!⁶

Though Nietzsche’s critique of Spinoza is certainly harsh, it highlights that the argument’s strengths and weaknesses are wrapped up in Spinoza’s “Euclidean” style rhetoric. To decipher Spinoza’s argument, whether one has intentions to uphold or dismantle it, one must examine his

⁶Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil, Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, Trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1968), 203. Upon a more careful reading, Kaufman points out that Nietzsche mentions in a note published postmortem in *Musarion* ed. 1920-29, vol. 14 p. 109, that, “My ancestors [are]: *Heraclitus, Empedocles, Spinoza, Goethe.*” Furthermore in *Human All Too Human*, Nietzsche’s final aphorism relays a journey to Hades where Nietzsche meets with “...Epicurus and Montaigne, Goethe and Spinoza, Plato and Rousseau, Pascal and Schopenhauer.” If Nietzsche like the great Odysseus did travel to Hades he would meet with those he built upon Epicurus and Montaigne, Goethe and Spinoza and those he wished to dismantle: Plato and Rousseau, Pascal and Schopenhauer. At this point in his career he had mad a decisive spilt from Schopenhauer, his former mentor.

initial axioms and propositions. Spinoza's argument, more so than most, hinges on the coherence of his *countless* propositions, axioms, and especially his definitions.

To begin, it is imperative to know what Spinoza means by substance and mode. Spinoza offers detailed definitions to these terms as one would expect from a "Euclidean" style prose. He writes,

(1) By substance I mean that which is in itself and is conceived through itself; that is, that the conception of which does not rehire the conception of another thing from which it has to be formed.⁷

Spinoza continues to say that there can only be one substance and that substance is infinite. Something which is self-causing requires that it is singular and infinite.⁸ A substance sounds much like a necessary proposition. A substance has within it the property of being necessarily true. On the other hand a mode, as Spinoza defines it, sounds closely related to a contingent proposition. He writes,

(2) By mode I mean the affections of substance; that is, that which is in something else and is conceived through something else.⁹

Modes are necessitated by something other than themselves. A mode, unlike a substance, cannot be the cause of itself. Modes are also intimately intwined with substance as they are the "affections" of substance. One could conceive of an affection of substance to be that the Blackhawks won the Stanley Cup in 1934, or John, a mortal man, exists.

⁷ Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics: Treatise on The Emendation of the Intellect and Selected Letters*, Trans. Samuel Shirley, Ed. Seymour Feldman, (Hackett Publishing Co., Indianapolis, 1992,)E1, Def. 3. p.31

⁸ Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*,E1, Props. 5, 8. p. 34-5.

⁹ Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics* E1, Def. 5, page 31. Spinoza tends to conflate the terms 'substance', 'nature', and 'God' together as one concept, that which is essentially necessarily. I will use the term substance for simplicity throughout the paper.

It appears at first glance that Spinoza's substance-modality relationship is fairly straight forward. There is an infinite singular substance, from which modes or differences in the world are conceived through. Substance must be necessary, yet it is questionable whether modes are necessary. Spinoza offers this proposition,

(3) Nothing in nature is contingent but all things are from the necessity of the divine nature determined to exist and to act in a definite way.¹⁰

This proposition states clearly that all things which happen, happen in a very particular and definite way. A proposition such as this does not seem to allow room for contingency. This is to say that modes such as 'John is born' or 'John mows his lawn at 9:00 am on a Saturday in 2015' are necessary truths. These modes could not have happened another way. John is born and mows his lawn at those particular times necessarily. That particular event and all other events necessarily happen. So, in this sense, the example of contingency, the Chicago Blackhawks won the Stanley Cup in 1934 is now a necessity. Spinoza continues this explanation of what appears to be an overwhelming sense of hard-line-determinism. The division between 'contingent' and 'necessary' blur into just necessity. Spinoza continues,

(4) Things could not have been produced by God in any other way or in any other order than is the case.¹¹

This proposition is even stronger than the last. The hard-line-determinism which Spinoza outlines appears to be so determined that even God, which Spinoza also calls, substance through out this work, has no freedom to act in any other way other than what "is the case." However, Spinoza later introduces seemingly contradictory claims.

¹⁰ Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, E1, Prop 29, page 51.

¹¹ Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, E1 Prop 33, page 4.

After Spinoza advocates for incredibly deterministic propositions, he posits, in his second set of axioms, what appears to be contingency. Spinoza after claiming the necessity of all things, now opens the door for the possibility that 'John is not born.' He writes,

(5) The essence of man does not involve necessary existence, that is from the order of Nature it is equally possible that a certain man exists or does not exist.¹²

Spinoza, having made this claim, has seemingly contradicted himself. I say seemingly because such a contradiction will stem from whether one interprets Spinoza in the *de dicto* or *de re* modality. How can it be that nothing can happen any other way that it does, or in other words, everything is necessary and nothing is contingent; yet also, the essence of man does not require necessary existence. How can substance be entirely necessary, yet any particular man does not exist necessarily? Spinoza, in part four of his *Ethics*, provides a definition of contingency. If Spinoza conflates the notions of necessity and contingency, then modes would conflate into substance. Edwin Curley and Pierre Bayle posit a critique of Spinoza which takes advantage of this supposed conflation of terminology. Spinoza needs the notion of contingency to express difference in the world. Spinoza writes,

(6) I call individual things *contingent* in so far as, in attending only to their essence, we find nothing that necessarily posits their existence or necessarily excludes it.

(7) I call individual things *possible* in so far as, in attending to the causes by which they should be brought about, we do not know where these cause are determined to bring them about.¹³

These claims relate back to (5) in which Spinoza puts forth the notion that modes have the possibility to be another way. In other words, there is the possibility of contingency. This is a

¹² Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, EII, Ax.1, page 63.

¹³ Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, E IV, Def. 3, 4, page 154. It should be noted that Spinoza does not make a point of difference between the terms 'contingent' and 'possible.'

fairly intuitive thought, or at least Curley and Bayle think as much. So, things like Augustus Caesar, the Taj Mahal, John, and The Blackhawks can exist separately as modes of substance.

This is where *de dicto* and *de re* modalities come into play for interpreting Spinoza.

Curley, who uses the *de dicto* modality, finds that Spinoza's claims pertaining to necessity and contingency are incoherent to the degree that Spinoza appears to want all truths to be necessary, yet other truths to be non-necessary. Yitzhak Melamed characterizes Curley and Bayle's similar arguments, "Curley advances three further arguments, originally presented by Pierre Bayle, that aim to show the absurdity of Spinoza's metaphysics."¹⁴ Melamed relays the argument from Bayle's *Dictionary*,

If all things were modes, or properties, of God, then God, the subject of all things, would have contradictory properties. When we attribute properties to things or persons, what we are really doing, according to Bayle's understanding of Spinoza, is attributing properties to God, insofar as the said things or persons are in God:

[According to Spinoza] one would speak falsely when one said, "Peter denies this, he wants that, he affirms such and such a thing"; for in actuality, according to [Spinoza], it is God who denies, wants, affirms.¹⁵

This is to say that substance possesses contradictory properties. Furthermore, Melamed offers an example,

According to Bayle, these opposite properties should be attributed to the one Spinozistic substance underlying all things, i.e., God. If, for instance, Napoleon loves honey, while Josephine hates it, and if both Napoleon and Josephine are modes of God, it will follow that 'God hates and loves, denies and affirms, the same things, at the same time.'¹⁶

¹⁴ Yitzhak Y Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics of Substance: The Substance-Mode Relation as a Relation of Inherence and Predication*, (Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 78, no. 1 2009,) 21.

¹⁵ Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics of Substance*, 22. Melamed comments, "In quoting texts from Bayle's Dictionary, I rely on the fifth French edition (Dictionnaire historique et critique par Mr. Pierre Bayle, Amsterdam: Compagnie des Libraries, 1734), and (mostly) on Popkin's English translation (1991)," 17.

¹⁶ Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics of Substance*, 22.

Intuitively, contradictory properties cannot be attributed to the same substance, i.e. *p and* $\sim p$, and if substance possesses contradictory properties then, as Curley and Bayle intend to show, Spinoza's metaphysics are absurd. However this is when one interprets Spinoza's substance-mode relationship in *de dicto* modality.

Richard Mason claims the absurdity of even interpreting Spinoza in a *de dicto* fashion. Mason states decisively, as he responds to Curley and Bennett, another opponent of Spinoza,

...it should be evident that we can make no sense of Spinoza's views in purely *de dicto* terms. Regrettably, this is not appreciated by two of his more rigorous recent commentators, Bennett and Curley. Bennett writes in *de dicto* terms throughout his chapter on necessity in *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*— about “the remarkable conclusion that there are no contingent truths,” about “Spinoza according an absolutely necessary status to a system of propositions...” about “a certain class of propositions all of whose members are absolutely necessary” and so on. Curley goes more openly down the same path, noting that Spinoza talks about “the necessity or impossibility of things, rather than truths,” but adding “...this need not prevent us from translating what he says into talk about truths and developing a general account of necessary truth that will accord with Spinoza's intentions.”¹⁷

Mason is a proponent of Spinoza's metaphysics being thought of in *de re* terms rather than *de dicto*. In a sense one ought to think of Spinoza's metaphysics as a description of how things are, rather than claims of what is said of a particular set of propositions. In this sense, Mason proposes that Spinoza should be considering to be persuasive rather than conclusive, and that Spinoza's notions of necessity, contingency, substance, and modes, are not “symmetrically

¹⁷ Richard Mason, *Spinoza on Modality*, (The Philosophical Quarterly 36, no. 144, 1986) 318, J. F. Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics* (Cambridge, 1984), 111-14, E.M. Curley, *Spinoza's Metaphysics: An Essay in Interpretation* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969,) 88.

interdefinable.”¹⁸ This is to say that Spinoza’s substance-mode relationship does not translate between *de dicto* and *de re* modalities, and furthermore Mason posits that Spinoza intends readers to understand his work as *de re*. Considering this untranslatability, Mason understands Spinoza metaphysics as also being fundamentally incompatible with present-day modal logic. He describes it as more of a “formulated version of mathematical physics.” He continues this point as he writes, “Underlaying this [symmetrically interdefinable] is Spinoza’s extreme *de re* approach. There is no workable sense to be made of any notion of necessity related to propositions or sentence in his system, despite the occasional reference to eternal or necessary truths.”¹⁹ This leads me to wonder whether or not the *de dicto/de re* distinction even characterizes Spinoza’s metaphysics well enough to actually describe what is happening, which Philosophers such as Hume and Moore have proposed, claiming that Spinoza’s project is faulty. The *de dicto/de re* distinction may not, in fact, characterize Spinoza’s metaphysics properly, yet I do not grant that, like Hume and Moore might think, Spinoza’s metaphysics is merely, in the words of Nietzsche, “hocus-pocus.” In the next section of the paper, I explicate how one might find further *meaning* of the substance-mode relationship by conceiving this relationship as one of immanence, and that Spinoza intended his readers to revel in the paradoxes within his framework.

IV

“...double immanence of expression is what expresses itself, and of what is expressed in its expression.”²⁰

¹⁸ Richard Mason, *Spinoza on Modality*, 341.

¹⁹ Richard Mason, *Spinoza on Modality*, .

²⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*. Trans. Martin Joughin, (New York: Zone, 1992) 180.

Now that the discussion concerning how to possibly understand Spinoza's metaphysical relationship between substance and mode has been briefly outlined, I can continue to draw further *meaning* out of this metaphysical framework. Looking back at Plantinga's comment about the argument between *de dicto* and *de re* as being one of intuition, it might be conducive to Spinoza's conjectures to describe the substance-mode relationship in a different light. While it is important to understand the consequences of the *de dicto/de re* distinction within Spinoza's argument as a foundational framework, I think, and to borrow a phrase from Plantinga, this distinction might be insufficiently enlightening. The consequences and paradoxes which Mason, Curley, and Bayle look to highlight or dissolve might be the very description of, for lack of a better phrase, 'the way it is' which Spinoza is attempting to describe. To draw more *meaning* out of the troubled substance-mode relationship, and how Spinoza is not a determinist but a compatibilist, I look to Daniel Barber's notion of immanence.

In examining Daniel Barber's Deleuzian interpretation of Spinoza's notion of relationality or modality, Barber works with the concept of immanence. He writes,

Immanence, then, is a two-way street, even as it maintains the possibility of distinguishing between cause and effect. The fact that effects remain in the cause just as much as the cause remains in itself means that the cause is affected by its effects. It is because of this affection that we say not only that effects are immanent to (or remain in) the cause, but also that the cause is immanent to (or affected by) its effects. The cause is not prior to its effects, for its essence is affected by what it effects, the cause is constituted by its effects.²¹

In other words, the 'cause' affects the 'effect' as much as the 'effect' affects the 'cause.' However, this is not to say that one should conflate the terms, 'cause' and 'effect' together, just

²¹ Daniel Barber, *On Diaspora: Christianity, Religion, and Secularity*, (Eugene, Or, Cascade Books, 2011,) 2.

as we did not want to conflate substance and mode together earlier. Cause and effect, as well as substance and mode, are still distinguishable within an immanent relationship, the key is to keep these notions distinguishable without positing a notion of transcendence. Though, once again describing the characteristics of immanence by saying it is not transcendent is true, yet it lacks *meaning*. So, what is immanence, and how does one make sense of this “two-way street?”

Immanence is a tricky term to describe and wield. To begin to unwind this notion I posit some overarching properties of immanence.

- (1) Immanence is properly nameless yet signified.
- (2) Immanence is both necessary and contingent.
- (3) Immanence is both substance and mode.²²

Immediately one is struck by the intense paradoxical properties of immanence, yet these paradoxical properties are essential to how Barber perceives Spinoza’s substance/mode (cause/effect necessary/contingent) relationship. Furthermore, properties (2) and (3) stem from property (1). This is to say that the real challenge with immanence is to describe that which is essentially nameless. Immanence has a tinge of ineffability to it. Barber suggests how one might deal with this paradox of named namelessness,

One the one hand, we can answer this question through expression: immanence is whatever is expressed. This is the diachronic aspect of naming immanence, for it affirms all things as equally expressing immanence, and insists that whatever emerges is also and equally expressive of immanence. On the other hand, there is the synchronic aspect of naming immanence, and it is this aspect that presents a greater difficulty.²³

²² I draw these properties out of Barber’s first chapter entitles, “Immanence: Namelessness and the Production of Signification. I concentrate on this section of his book *On Diaspora: Christianity, Religion, and Secularity*, because it is here that Barber fleshes out his theory on Spinoza and Immanence. The rest of the book, though very interesting as he discusses Spinoza’s historical context as representative of his theories themselves, is not as essential to the topic at hand

²³ Daniel Barber, *On Diaspora*, 5

Unfortunately since humans cannot bypass language and communicate with pure ideas, the nameless immanence must be named, or else any attempt to communicate this idea would be folly. The true folly comes from thinking by naming immanence as immanence, substance, God, or nature that this concept has been properly signified.

The true expression of immanence does not reside in the signification of it, but rather our inability to properly signify immanence. In this sense, Immanence is not only what Spinoza refers to as substance, but it is also the process of naming this immanence. Spinoza, as stated earlier, names substance, nature, and God. The opening quote by Deleuze to this section of the paper describes what Barber's is beginning to get after, the doubling of expression. He writes,

There is a doubling, in two senses: first, the purportedly proper naming of immanence as substance is doubled by the naming of 'God, or Nature'; second, this double of substance is itself doubled into God and Nature. Spinoza can be understood as making explicit, through this doubling, the necessity of signification—the necessity that is of naming that which is nameless.²⁴

This doubling of expression maintains Spinoza's notion that substance is necessarily existent, infinite and singular, but also allows for modes which are contingent without inevitably worrying about whether one could translate these notions from *de re* to *de dicto*. This notion is advantageous to Spinoza's substance-mode relationship considering that without substance there could be no affections, but this sense of prior is not temporal or causal, but rather as a way to perceive the relationship between finite and infinite beings as reciprocal. Barber further explains what he means, and I think this is a crucial part to in understanding immanence as a relationship. He writes,

²⁴ Daniel Barber, *On Diaspora*, 7.

This is to say that even as the names of God and Nature are contingent, occupying a specific function in the history of discourse inherited by Spinoza, the act of naming is not contingent. Even though the specific names that are put in play may be traced to the contingencies of a particular conjuncture, the act of naming itself remains necessary.²⁵

This is to say that what is essential and necessary is the process of signifying, yet what is signified and how it is signified is completely contingent. This applies directly to Spinoza's substance-mode relationship, though both terms he uses are completely contingent and are modes of what substance is improperly signifying; what substance represents is the necessary act, or expression of naming, whereas modes are the varies contingencies which are signified.

Barber's notion of immanence then opens the door for modes to act freely. To look back at what Spinoza dictates as a substance, "By substance I mean that which is in itself and is conceived through itself; that is, that the conception of which does not rehire the conception of another thing from which it has to be formed," we can now understand that as the act of signifying. When Spinoza dictates what a mode is, "By mode I mean the affections of substance; that is, that which is in something else and is conceive through something else," we can understand that as the significations conceived through the necessary act of naming. In other words what is necessary is that something is signified, not what it is signified as. This is to say that substance is nameless, yet named and necessary, however what it is named is contingent. This makes room for Spinoza to be a compatibilist. He may have is cake and eat it too. An analogy of Spinoza's metaphysics I find useful goes as follows: the substance may be thought of as a river, constantly flowing containing within it infinite eddies and whirlpools which are the infinite modes. The eddies and whirlpools are different from the river, but still a part of the one river. Where the eddies happen is not the necessity, but rather that they happen is necessary.

²⁵ Daniel Barber, *On Diaspora*, 6.

One might consider pushing back on the notion that paradoxes have no place in philosophical arguments. That possibly, to describe what a thing is, or to describe that which the thing is, is to describe that thing not conclusively, but persuasively. This strategy may involve seemingly paradoxical claims to, in a sense, describe accurately what is attempting to be described. Often times philosophers become caught up in making sure an argument is valid and sound, when in fact the validity or soundness of an argument actually detracts from describing, for lack of a better term, *the way it is*.

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