

The subject of this thesis is late Spinoza. It is necessary to consider the period around the year 1665 as a turning point in Spinoza's life (1632-1677). In this period he stops referring to his chef-d'oeuvre as the Philosophy and begins to name it Ethics. He also interrupts his work on the Ethics for five years in 1665 and composes the Theologico-Political Treatise, a democratic manifesto. In his early writings he devalorises the body and considers it as a passive principle. But in the Theologico-Political Treatise he shows that the bodily imagination and affects are the constitutive elements of human society. After 1665, he takes the body, and not the conscience or the cogito, as a model for conceiving what talking and acting means. The notion of a striving (conatus) and his distinction between activity and passivity replaces the traditional metaphysical theory of subject and subjectivity, which, according to Spinoza, succumbs to the psychological illusion of freedom and the theological illusion of finalism. Late Spinoza elaborated a very remarkable ontology of power, according to which power is active productivity. In the first part of the Ethics, Spinoza undertakes a thorough destruction of metaphysics, which leaves no room for any history of being. Causa sui cannot be an external justification of reality, because it goes beyond the opposition of contingency and fundament. This cause is the cause of all things equally as the cause productive of itself. The immanence of infinity is nothing other than the autoproduction of reality. God is no longer a supreme being of ontotheology. The concept of God's infinite power and the absence of sufficient reason cause infinite necessity to become the force and the power of being. But the identity of being and power relates not only to infinite substance but also to finite beings. The essence of finite things is a striving (conatusconatus), or, which amounts to the same thing, a power to act. The identity of essence and power entails that power is always an act. Potentia is active productivity. Spinoza's rationalism posits all-encompassing necessity only to affirm the absolute contingency of the necessary, which shows the non-theological and non-anthropomorphic character of this rationalism.