

**Forthcoming in Secular Studies:
Purism: An ontological proof for the impossibility of God**

*Primus

primus@purity.org

This article presents an ontological proof that God is impossible. I define an 'impossibility' as a condition which is inconceivable due to its a priori characteristics (e.g. a 'square circle'). Accordingly, said conditions will not ever become conceivable, as they could in instances of a posteriori inconceivability (e.g. the notion that someone could touch the sun without being burned). As the basis of this argument, I refer to an a priori observation (Primus, 2019), relating to our inability to imagine inconsistency (difference) within any point of space. This article aims to reduce material expressions of faith in God whilst highlighting the possibility that religious deities exist as 'demi-gods', possessing conditional, relative states of power – power which may be obtained or superseded by humans.

Keywords: A priori; Atheism; Beings; God; Impossibility; Inconceivability; Material; Ontological proof; Purism; Space.

*Primus holds a Bachelor of Psychology with Honors (*Griffith*) and a Masters of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism (*Macquarie*).

Purism: An ontological proof for the impossibility of God

The content of Thomas J. Coleman III and Robert B. Arrowood's (2015) *Only we can save ourselves: An atheist's 'salvation'* betrays its title; by page 14, the authors concede that "God is not ruled out of the equation, He is only an option" (Coleman & Arrowood, p.14). This article is an attempt to deny the conceptual possibility of God(s) through highlighting that their a priori characteristics are inconceivable. Consequentially, in this article I will attempt to advance the notion that the materials of all beings – whether deity or human – are mortal and that only mortals can save themselves from death (through technological progression). I will present an ontological proof for the impossibility of deities with absolute properties – God(s) – by demonstrating that they would be inconsistent with the concept of an absolutely consistent fabric, 'space,' which conceivably must be the basis for physical reality. I have previously (Primus, 2019) highlighted our a priori inability to conceive that the nature of space is anything other than consistent, and thus deterministic. This a priori argument – that space can conceivably only possess a single attribute: *absolute* consistency – will be briefly revisited in this text. After describing our inability to consider that the fabric of space is anything other than absolutely consistent, I define God(s) in accordance with the conceived nature of most classical theistic Gods: entities which are capable of being and/or wielding power *absolutely*, such that their power cannot be reduced or attained by natural entities (e.g. humans). I argue that two absolute entities – i.e. God and space – are conceptually irreconcilable at any point of space and time. I further pre-empt a theist counter-argument that God's spirit and "Kingdom" could be ethereal by nature and transcend space and time.

Before preceding to specifics within the discussion, I will emphasize three general points of the ontological argument. These three points aim to address recurring themes of initial

resistance that I encountered during preliminary discussions of the article with peers of varying beliefs and disciplines.

Firstly, readers should note that the inconceivability of a notion – one’s inability to imagine a particular concept – is a real and powerful force in the context of intellectual inquiry.¹ I have discussed the force of inconceivability in more detail elsewhere (Primus, 2019), though of relevance here is the caveat that the power of inconceivability is imposed as a passive force; it is only applicable for the duration and to the conceptual locale that one considers. I (Primus, 2019) use the analogy that inconceivability in the mind of one attempting to consider a notion is like a brick wall in the path of one attempting to run along a path: for the force of the wall to take effect and block the person’s advance, the person must (actively) run into it. The wall provides counter-resistance to the person attempting to move through it, though if a person avoids moving into the wall, it provides no direct force (it may indirectly ‘force’ them to change their path). Similarly, a person considering whether God is conceivable must consider the possibility of God deeply enough for the force to take effect; each time they consider the nature of space to the necessary degree of conceptual depth they will be forced to accept that they cannot also conceive of God. Alternatively, as per the runner who avoids the wall, so too may they avoid consideration of necessary conceptual depth. This is where theist debaters typically leave the discussion; they *want* to continue conceiving of the possibility of God and so they return to their superficial conception of God by disengaging from the argument. Similarly, readers will be able to avoid this force and continue believing that God is conceivable by avoiding the deeper-than-surface-level conception of God in this article.

¹ At least one theist (Beardsley, 2019) implicitly acknowledges this force, guised as the notion of logic, when he asserts that God’s omnipotence is not compromised by his conceivable inability to create “square circles”. In other words, the inability to imagine a square circle can be viewed as a universal metaphysical limitation which transcends even God’s omnipotence.

Secondly, the inconceivability of God lies within the conception of God *in conjunction with the concurrent* conception of an absolutely consistent space. Both God and a consistent space can each be conceived in isolation, as is evidently the case when various manifestations of God are conceived on a daily basis. The inconceivability of God, therefore, does not suppose our inability to merely imagine the symbol of ‘God’, nor does it suppose our inability to conceive (in isolation) that which the symbol of God represents: an entity of absolute power. Our ability to conceive of God, either as a creator separate from their creation or as an all-encompassing entity, whilst disregarding appropriate consideration of the properties of the conceivable external world – properties which are irreconcilable with God – allows us to superficially conceive that God is possible. The same phenomenon applies as observers conceptually sweep over Penrose’s ‘impossible triangle’ (Penrose & Penrose, 1958). Depicted below in two dimensions, the shape can superficially be conceived to exist as a three-dimensional possibility if a person considering the shape traces their focus along each face, reaching each of its three vertices (A, B and C) in isolation (i.e. one in any moment). Vertices A, B and C can conceivably each exist as three dimensional objects when considered in isolation, just as God is conceivable in isolation; it is only when we consider how all the various components of Penrose’s triangle together (e.g. each side and vertices A, B, C) that we cannot conceive of how it could be realized as a three dimensional object.

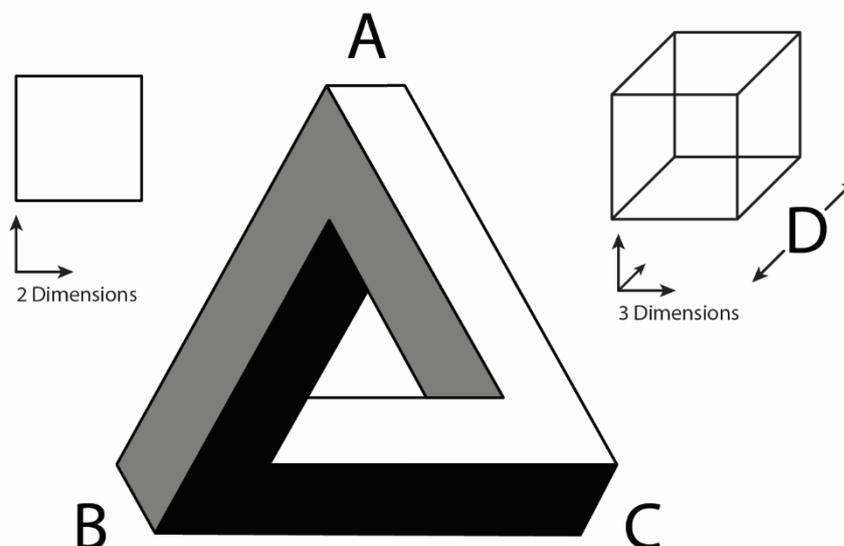


Figure 1. depicts a Penrose triangle, with vertices labelled A, B, C; it is conceivable that each vertex could exist as a three-dimensional object in isolation from each other, though not when each is considered interacting together. Alternatively, each can be conceived to interact together in two-dimensions, though this shape cannot be conceived in the context of a third dimension – D(epth).

Thirdly, the apparent consistency within the material of our world – which, I argue, we are forced to conceive each and every time we consider the nature of our fundamental material with sufficient conceptual depth – is not inherently obvious. There are, after all, only a minute number of universal truths that we can know for certain and – René Descartes aside – we typically do not spend a lot of time, if any, considering them in the course of our daily life. The consistency of space is one of these truths, though it is not immediately apparent. I was required to explain the concept of the inconceivability of inconsistency within space a number of times to most peers engaging in this argument before it became conceptually clear in their minds. I have tried to present the argument as clearly as I can in a few varying ways, though readers

may require a number of read-throughs before they grasp the concept. I implore readers not to run away from ‘the wall’.

I will now discuss what I (Primus, 2019) offer is the origin of our ability to know certainty: our inability to conceive of difference within space. In other words, I begin with the aspect of our world that we are forced to conceive when we consider the material of our world with sufficient conceptual depth. I will then attempt to reconcile this aspect with the notion of God – an entity of absolute power.

In a recent article (Primus, 2019) I make the a priori observation that every point of space must unvaryingly be conceived as absolutely consistent. This observation is based on the Inconceivability of Difference at Any Point In Space (which I abbreviate here as ‘IDAPIS’). This inconceivability will be summarily explained herein; however, I direct readers to my previous paper (2019) for an expanded discussion.

For the purposes of this article I define inconsistency as simply “difference” (Primus, 2019, p.8). This broad definition encapsulates all types of change (variation and/or limitation) across space or time. Consistency is therefore negatively defined as “the absence of any difference or change, across space or time” (Primus, 2019, p.8). In sum, absolute uniformity of space across time is consistency, whilst any deviation from this absoluteness is considered inconsistency. I adopt de Laguna’s definition of a point as “[a]n abstractive element in which no other abstractive element lies” (de Laguna, 1922, Def. XI, p. 454). By ‘space’ I refer to all types of spaces: physical and conceptual, of any ontological construction; I refer to the area of reality in its most radical inclusion. However, I am also specially referring to the nature of the fabric which is the basis for all these types of spaces, rather than the nature of the various forms and structures which are created from said space. A notable consequence of an absolutely consistent fabric of space is the requirement that difference at or *within* any individual point of said space is inconceivable. In other words, a consistent space necessitates that each individual

point of the infinite points both across and within itself (i.e. smaller points inside former points) are non-permitting of difference (i.e. variation or limitation). We do, of course, experience difference all around us in our daily life (e.g. the perception or conception that person A is different from their environment, B); these differences are the various forms and structures that I refer to above and the nature of these entities is, of course, not consistent. To simultaneously allow for these differences and an absolutely consistent space, I offer (Primus, 2019) that difference can conceivably occur *across* multiple points of space, but not *within* individual points of space. The terms *within* and *across* are emphasized because it should be further noted that they necessarily precede the terms *individual* and *multiple*, respectively. Here I emphasize that the conception of difference *across* space necessarily involves the conception of difference occurring at *multiple* (i.e. two or more) points of space; a difference, by definition, implies the involvement of at least two aspects (e.g. the one part that is unlike at least one other part). Alternatively, any attempts to conceive difference at points *within* (points of) space necessarily involves the imagination of *individual* (i.e. singular) points of space – the point at which two or more entities or differences are supposed to conceivably coincide (Primus, 2019). In other words, I argue that we can conceive that a point on the shirt of person A, whom is wearing a red shirt – point A – is different from a point on person B, whom is wearing a blue shirt – point B – and sitting *across* (space) from person A in a doctor’s waiting room. However, if we sit person A and B next to each other and conceptually ‘zoom *in*’ to investigate the space *within* the space which separates point A and B, at no point can we conceive that there is an individual point which embodies both red and blue (or any type of difference). Readers will find it impossible to imagine that two entities – for example, the ‘redness’ of point A, and the space that surrounds it, C – could coexist at a single point, without also being able to conceive two smaller points within said point – a point for each aspect of difference. Superficially, one might consider that person A and the surrounding space, C, are different from each other and are

therefore two separate entities. If one more-deeply considers the space between A and C, however, it is impossible, with conceptual magnification, to imagine a point where both remain as separate entities (i.e. the single point which embodies the difference – both aspects – of A and C). If one imagines the surface of A and the space of C as two separate entities it means one can zoom-in further until one reaches a single point, which will either be conceived as a singular entity or still as two separate entities. The latter conception indicates that one has not zoomed-in far enough because it is still not the single point at which they meet. If one conceptually ‘zooms-in’ and continues to imagine person A as separate from space C – and thus one still considers them as two separate entities – this indicates that the considerer is actually imagining two points, not one point; I ask them to conceive *the* (singular) point where the shirt of person A meets the surrounding ‘nothing’ of C – it must be a single point (Primus, 2019).

At first consideration this observation may appear as an equivocation which exploits the definition of a point as the smallest conceived entity at any moment. But this is rather a demonstration of our inability to imagine discrete differences when we conceptually ‘zoom in’ to the space which separates two different, discretely perceived or conceived entities. The necessary conclusion is that expressions of difference, as per space itself, can only *conceivably* exist continuously, across multiple points, rather than discretely, at or within individual points (whether or not they behave as such in physical reality is beyond the scope of this argument and indeed epistemological insight more generally; the force of this argument deals with the *(in)conceivability* of inconsistency within space). In other words, given appropriate consideration, we are forced to imagine the existence of a singular, continuity. Another way of considering the necessary continuity of space – whether embodying difference or not – is to attempt to conceive that space could be limited in nature rather than infinite. A limited space, which does not extend infinitely and indefinitely in each direction, would require the

conception of a difference at the point where space ends and something-other-than-space begins.²

Perhaps the most important implication of a consistent space is the requirement that all differences must be conceived to exist conditionally – not absolutely – as temporary properties (e.g. velocity, mass, direction, force). That is, if any point of the fabric of space itself cannot be conceived to embody difference, then the differences we observe must manifest themselves as fluid states (motions) of space (Primus, 2019). It is conceivably the absolute consistency of space which enables these properties to exist as relatively simplistic, passive structures (e.g. sub-atomic materials, atoms, molecules). It is the relative consistency of these passive materials which could plausibly allow for more complex and active entities to exist (e.g. cells, animals, humans, governments). In addition to the structures of reality, the consistency of all conceptual structures (e.g. laws of physics, truth, logic) might also be derived from the consistent nature of simple materials, and ultimately, the IDAPIS in relation to nature of space itself (Primus, 2019). In other words, the consistency of space provides predictability, reliability and stability within both the structures of reality, and the conceived structures within the minds of those observing reality. The conditional nature of all entities other than space – each conceivably existing as properties of space in motion rather than as absolutely existing properties – is noteworthy for the purposes of this article. If only space can be absolute, then each of these subsequent structures are mortal in nature; they owe their existence to natural, mortal processes; they can be created and destroyed.

² Beyond being unable to imagine this point of difference – and noting that any space could be conceived to embody anything (with the exception of difference at a point) or nothing – readers should also find it impossible to conceive of the something-other-than-anything-or-nothing which would extend beyond the limits of space.

I define impossibility as *a priori inconceivability*. That is, a condition which cannot be conceived on the basis that such would necessitate the conception of inconsistency – the presence of difference (i.e. variance and/or limitation) – within (a point or points of) space. I emphasize that it is the a priori nature of this inconceivability which renders it as a true impossibility, never to become conceivable across time and space. A square circle is impossible because such a notion will always be inconceivable. This notion of impossibility is independent from empirical (a posteriori) consideration. An impossible condition will not suddenly become possible to an observer who becomes ‘more knowledgeable’; if it is a true impossibility, one cannot subsequently ‘discover’ how a previously thought-to-be-impossible condition is or was actually possible. We can have certainty that ‘x’, in the equation ‘ $1 + 1 = x$ ’, equals ‘2’. It is impossible because it is inconceivable that ‘x’ could suddenly, at a future point in time or a distant point in space, equal ‘3’ (or any other number). We know this a priori because the equation ‘ $1 + 1 = 3$ (or any other solution other than 2)’ would require the conception of difference within points of space. That is, at some point we would need to imagine that two or more points of space are also, at the same moment, individual points of space (or vice-versa, if the solution is less than 2: that individual points of space are also, at the same moment, two or more points of space). Similarly, the Penrose triangle (Penrose & Penrose, 1958) is considered impossible rather than merely improbable because it is inconceivable, a priori, that it could ever be realized in three-dimensional Euclidean space. For the triangle to be realized in three dimensions, some of its points would need to permit difference within themselves (i.e. at various points along its frame, individual points would also concurrently need to be considered as two or more points, or two or more points of the triangle would need to be concurrently considered as individual points). If one has the cognitive faculties to understand the necessary conception of consistency within space (Primus, 2019), one has the faculties to understand the enduring (i.e. unconditional) nature of impossibility.

By contrast, we can conceive that no posteriori conditions should be deemed to be universally inconceivable, whether across time or space. There are too many philosophers to list here – though perhaps most famously, Plato, in his *Allegory of the Cave* – who have highlighted the largely veiled nature of the empirical world, which we appear to each view through our personal prisms. A posteriori conditions that would require an unusual change of space in an unusual period of time, such as a reindeer materializing in front of the reader, or a human touching the sun without being burned, may be highly ‘implausible’, ‘impractical’, or ‘improbable’; they may even be temporally or locally inconceivable (i.e. inconceivable to a person at a particular time or space), but we can conceive that they are not universally inconceivable. We know this because we can conceive, a priori, that any amount of change (difference) is possible *across* (though not *within*) any amount of space in any amount of time. This aligns with the well-known mantra ‘anything is possible’ that exists within contemporary popular culture (the correct mantra is perhaps ‘anything is possible *across* space, though only consistency is possible *within* space’). Accordingly, ruling-out all a posteriori events from the realm of impossibility merely requires the cognitive faculties to realize that any conception which involves the perception or conception of difference *across* (i.e. between two or more points of) space and time is possible. I offer that events which are of an infinitesimally small probability and yet which can conceivably be conceived should not be deemed impossible, and rather that the term is reserved for a priori inconceivability.

For the purposes of this article, I define a God in congruence with the minimum characteristics as shared by the Gods of classical theism (for examples, see Smith, 1958). A God is *an entity capable of exerting power (the degree of which being irrelevant to its classification as a God), whose power exists absolutely (i.e. intrinsically, as a nature which is unable to be reduced (e.g. degraded or destroyed), or (re)created/replicated, except perhaps by its own arbitration)*. Accordingly, I offer that there are two essential components to a God.

The first is that they must be capable of deliberately and independently exerting power, irrespective of their degrees of omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, or benevolence. This power must influence worldly states in some capacity, whether at the beginning of time, as the first cause, or throughout time. The second aspect of a God is perhaps the most crucial as it separates God(s) from other entities which wield power (e.g. humans): a God's power exists supernaturally as an unconditional phenomenon. Their power cannot be attained, nullified or reduced in any capacity, except by its own choosing.³ Therefore, neither the degree of omnipotence nor omnipresence of such power is relevant to this proof, nor is the nature of how God 'is', whether of spirit or other non-corporeal nature. Rather, the distinguishing feature of a God is that their power, however and wherever, affects the world and cannot be reduced or attained by mortals, due to its absoluteness.

The above two minimum requirements of a God should be intuitively accepted by classical theists on the basis that they are characteristic of each of their (classical) Gods. Ultimate power alone is insufficient: if a God's power were absolute in magnitude (i.e. the most powerful entity that one could conceive) and yet this power could be attained or reduced by mortals, then such "God" is more accurately a powerful mortal. Similarly, absolute (intrinsic, unconditional) existence alone is inadequate: a God must possess the ability to exert power. For this reason, Spinoza's (1677) passive and deterministic, pantheistic "God" does not 'qualify' as a God according to the definition herein. Although absolute (irreducible, intrinsic) in its nature, Spinoza's "God" is not a God because it cannot deliberately and independently exert power itself. Rather, it is the (passive) instrument by which (all) power is exerted.

³ A God which diminishes itself such that it no longer independently exerts power, and/or whose power is no longer wielded absolutely (i.e. it is reducible through factors beyond the will of the God) would no longer be a God.

Gods are impossible (inconceivable a priori) for the reason that space, which we must conceive as *absolutely* consistent – and thus omnipresent, across and within itself and time – is inconsistent with the *absolute* attribute of Gods; two or more *absolute* entities would require a difference at the point(s) where they would interact – an inconceivability as earlier demonstrated.⁴ As Spinoza (1677) realized, there can be only one absolute entity. It must be absolutely consistent (Primus, 2019) and, by extension, absolutely passive and determinable (Spinoza, 1677).⁵ This is the only conceivable fundamental property of space and its material entities, even if our contemporary a posteriori observation and knowledge cannot yet predict and fully understand many of their conditional properties (e.g. as per the apparent indeterminability of sub-atomic, human, and government bodies). “God” and “consistent space” could each be considered to be a ‘square’ and a ‘circle’ in the context of a ‘square circle’.

I predict that opponents of this argument will attempt to counter that “God” may not embody any state and rather their spirit influences the world through trans-corporeal, ethereal means. I reply that either God’s power has some metaphysical effect – as a creator in the beginning and/or as an arbiter throughout time – or it is not power and they are not, by definition, a God (as per Spinoza’s, 1677, pantheistic “God,” for example). That is, if a “God” can somehow – wherever, however – affect the conceivably necessarily consistent fabric within our material world, theists must attempt to conceive the point(s) between it and the “ethereal” effects of “God’s” intervention. Similarly, for the reason that we cannot conceive of where or how the space of this material world could end and something-other-than-space could begin,

⁴ Spinoza (1677) notes that two infinite substances would be impossible because they would be “absurd,” yet does not offer a reason for the absurdity. I agree with Spinoza’s observation and offer (Primus, 2019) that the IDAPIS is the underlying basis for Spinoza’s notion of ‘absurdity’.

⁵ Though both are deterministic and passive in their nature, Spinoza’s (1677) pantheistic “God” is said to possess “infinite attributes” and extend beyond the material world, whereas Purist space (Primus, 2019) is purely materialistic in nature and necessarily possesses but a single attribute: consistency.

we cannot conceive of how an ethereal God or their Kingdom (e.g. 'Heaven') could exist separate to (within or outside) this world. Rather, we can only conceive that the consistency of space must permeate through all of physical reality, be it of 'heaven' or earth. Accordingly, if theists should attempt to use the shrouded nature of the ethereal as an explanation for the inconceivability of God they are hampering their own efforts to conceive of how "Gods" and their "Kingdoms" could exist in conjunction with our world. That is, the blurring out or omission of a vertex of the Penrose triangle hinders rather than enhances our ability to conceive of all three in existence at once. Of course, those intellectually brave theists, such as Beardseley (2019), who do dare to concretely imagine Heaven are still defeated by the limitation of inconceivability. They cannot conceive of how a square circle could exist, either within or external to Heaven, and likewise they cannot conceive of how Heaven could exist within or external to this world. But at least they possess the courage to walk towards the wall.

This article has attempted to deny the conceptual possibility of God(s) – to 'rule them out of the equation' – through highlighting that an entity whose power exists absolutely is inconceivable when considered in conjunction with the consideration of the absolute nature of the material which conceivably must underly our world. I have offered that we can only conceive of space as absolutely consistent and, by logical necessity, omnipresent; we cannot conceive of difference *within* individual points of space, yet we can so conceive that difference exists *across* multiple points of space – the states of difference that we know empirically. The reason that we should believe that there is no God is same the reason that we should believe that space extends infinitely beyond any point of itself in every direction; it is the same reason that we cannot conceive of a square circle or a Penrose triangle. If God(s), a limited (non-absolute) space, a square circle or a Penrose triangle were possible, their conception would each necessitate a difference (i.e. >1) within individual (i.e. 1) points of space (i.e. $>1=1$). We

cannot conceive such because each of these events would require conception of an inconsistency within space.

The aim of this proof is to deter and reduce belief in (passive) faith-based salvation: the less-rational belief that salvation will occur through non-human demi-gods, and the wholly irrational belief that salvation will occur through ethereal entities (Gods), which are demonstrated to be inconceivable in this text. I hope that elected officials, community leaders, parents, and individuals seeking to make the world a better place, will be inspired by the realization that, at best, any “God” of any religion, can only be conceived as a very powerful ‘demi-god’, defined by their relative state of power; a condition that humans can potentially obtain or even supersede. This may promote more-widespread support for mortals gaining eternal life through their most rational means: becoming forever more ‘god-like’ through active, technological progression of their materials (i.e. bodies, tools, infrastructure). The logical conclusion is that not only is there the possibility for all humans and their materials to become demi-gods through the technological manipulation of their materials, but more soberingly, that this is the only conceivable method for eternal life and salvation. The notion that God(s) can save us from death or bestow “divine goods” upon us in an afterlife to compensate for the horrific nature of this world, is not merely improbable – it is impossible.

References

- Beardsley, J. 2019. Merciful Heaven: God's Love Confronts Horror, *Dialogue*, 62(1), 30–36.
- Coleman, T. J. III, & Arrowood, R. B., 2015. Only We Can Save Ourselves: An atheist's 'salvation'. In Bacon, H., Dossett, W., & Knowles, S. (Eds.), *Alternative Salvations: Engaging the Sacred and the Secular*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Penrose, L. S. & Penrose, R., 1958. Impossible objects: A special type of illusion. *British Journal of Psychology*, 49, 31–33.
- Primus, 2019. Purism: The inconceivability of inconsistency within space as the basis of logic. *Dialogue*, 62(1), 1–26.
- Smith, H. 1958. *The world's religions*, New York: Harper Collins.
- Spinoza, B. 1677. *Ethics*. E. Curley (Trans.), S. Hampshire (Intro.), 2005. Penguin Classics.