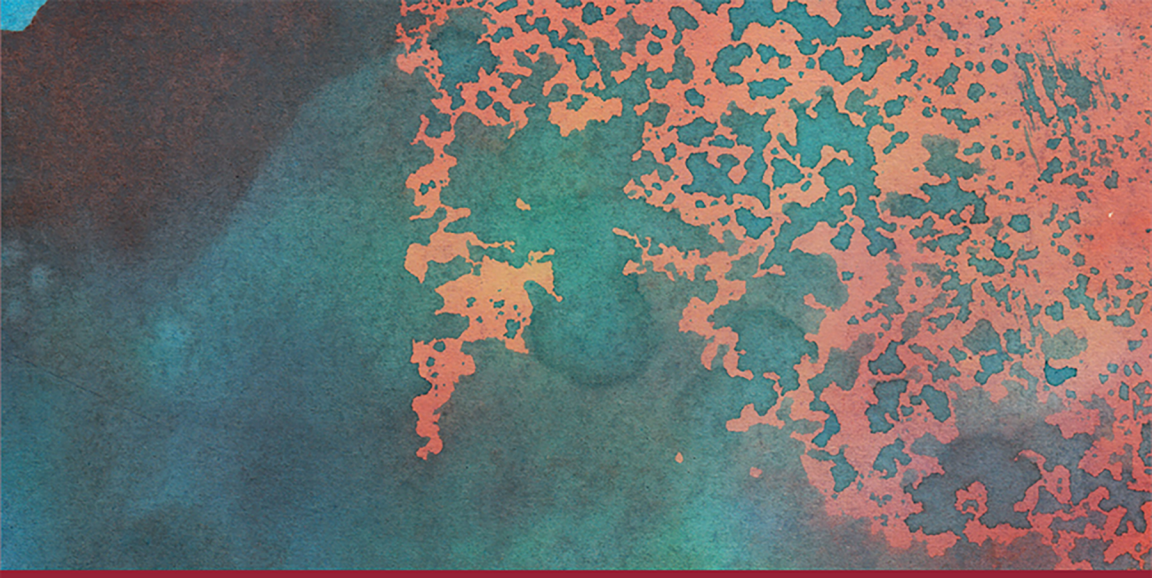
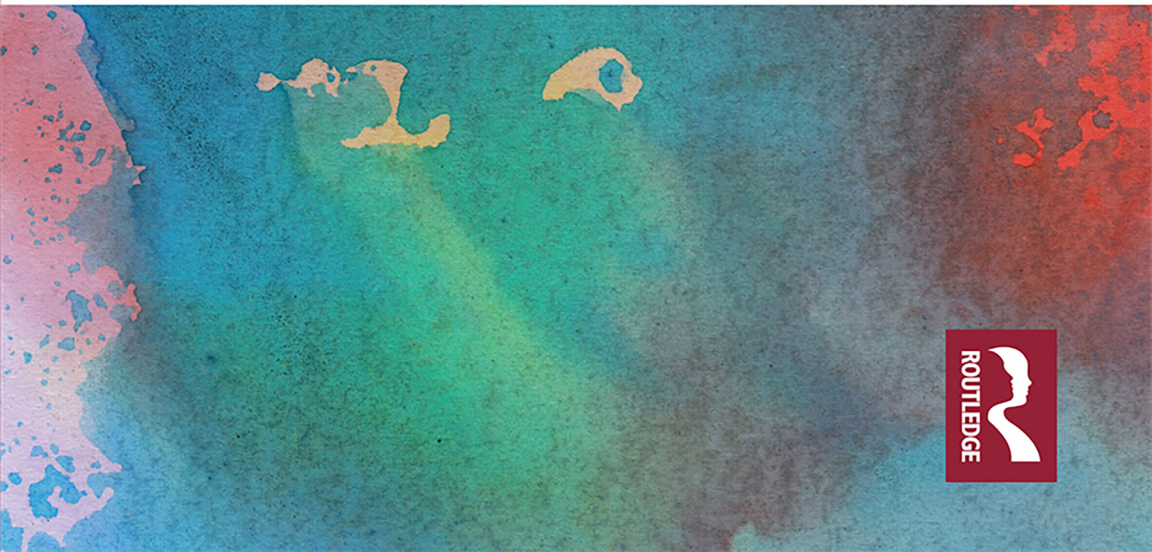


Routledge Studies in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy

FREEDOM, ACTION, AND MOTIVATION IN SPINOZA'S *ETHICS*

Edited by
Noa Naaman-Zauderer



Freedom, Action, and Motivation in Spinoza's *Ethics*

The present volume posits the themes of freedom, action, and motivation as the central principles that drive Spinoza's *Ethics* from its first part to its last. It assembles essays by internationally leading scholars, who provide different, sometimes opposing interpretations of these fundamental themes as they operate across the five parts of the *Ethics* and within its manifold domains. The diversity of issues, approaches, and perspectives within this volume, along with the chapters' common focus, open up new ways of understanding not only some of the key concepts and main objectives in the *Ethics* but also the threads unifying the entire work.

The sequence of essays in the book broadly follows the order of the *Ethics*, providing up-to-date perspectives of Spinoza's views on freedom, action, and motivation in their ontological, cognitive, physical, affective, and ethical facets. This enables readers to engage with a variety of new interpretations of these key themes of the *Ethics* and to reconsider their consequences both for other related issues in the *Ethics* and for the relevance of this work to contemporary trends in philosophy of action and motivation. The essays will contribute to the growing interest in Spinoza's *Ethics* and spark further discussion and debate within and outside the vast body of scholarship on this important work.

Freedom, Action, and Motivation in Spinoza's Ethics will be of interest to scholars and advanced students working on Spinoza and early modern philosophy.

Noa Naaman-Zauderer is Tenured Senior Lecturer in the Department of Philosophy at Tel Aviv University. She is the author of *Descartes: The Loneliness of a Philosopher* (Tel Aviv, 2007); of *Descartes' Deontological Turn: Reason, Will, and Virtue in the Later Writings* (Cambridge, 2010; paperback 2013); and of articles and book chapters on Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz.

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Abbreviations

Descartes's Works

AT	*Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, 12 vols. Paris: Vrin, 1964-1976.
CSM	*The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, ed. and trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, 2 vols. Cambridge University Press, 1985.
CSMK	*The Philosophical Writings of Descartes: The Correspondence*, ed. and trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch, and Anthony Kenny. Cambridge University Press, 1991.
Passions	*Les Passions de l'Ame* (*Passions of the Soul*)
Principles	*Principia Philosophiae* (*Principles of Philosophy*)

AT, CSM, and CSMK are cited by volume and page number. *Principles* is cited by part and article number, and *Passions* is cited by article number.

Spinoza's Works

C	*The Collected Works of Spinoza*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley, 2 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985, 2016.
CGH	*Compendium Grammatices Linguae Hebraeae* (*Compendium of Hebrew Grammar*)
CM	*Cogitata Metaphysica* (*Metaphysical Thoughts*), Spinoza's appendix to his *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy* (*Renati Des Cartes Principiorum Philosophiae, Pars I et II, More Geometrico demonstratae*)
DPP	*Renati Descartes Principiorum Philosophiae* (*Descartes's Principles of Philosophy*)
Ep.	*Epistolae* (Spinoza's Letters)
G	*Spinoza Opera*, 4 vols., ed. Carl Gebhardt. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1925.

KV	*Korte Verhandeling van God, de Mensch, en deszelfs Welstand* (*Short Treatise on God, Man, and his Well-Being*)
Letters	*Spinoza: The Letters*, trans. Samuel Shirley, Morgan, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995.
S	*Spinoza: Complete Works*, trans. Samuel Shirley, Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002.
TIE	*Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* (*Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*)
TP	*Tractatus Politicus* (*Political Treatise*)
TTP	*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (*Theological-Political Treatise*)

References to Spinoza's *Ethics* first cite the Part, and then use the following abbreviations:

ax	axiom
app	appendix
c	corollary
d	demonstration
D	definition
DA	Definition of the Affects
exp	explanation
le	lemma
p	proposition
post	postulate
pref	preface
s	scholium

Letters and S are cited by page number, and C is cited by volume and page number. G is cited by volume and page numbers, and sometimes by line number. KV and CM are cited by part and chapter number, TIE is cited by section number, TTP is cited by chapter and page number, TP is cited by chapter and section number, and CGH is cited by chapter number. Spinoza's Letters are cited by letter number.

1 Introduction

Noa Naaman-Zauderer

In volume 2 of his work *The Great Philosophers*, the German existentialist philosopher Karl Jaspers introduces what he takes to be the crux of Spinoza's philosophical project:

> The crucial problem is freedom. The contradiction in Spinoza seems unbridgeable. He denies freedom and asserts it. His whole philosophy is based on freedom. In thought and work and practice, his ethos aims at the promotion of freedom. The solution lies in the different meaning of freedom.
>
> (1974, 51)

Besides its emphasis on the pivotal role that freedom plays in Spinoza's philosophical ethos "in thought and work and practice," Jaspers's comment points to a duality in Spinoza's approach to freedom that may well be taken to bring to the surface a typical ambivalence in his attitude toward the new philosophical spirit of his day. Descartes – "the brightest star" of the intellectual heavens of the seventeenth century, to use Lodewijk Meyer's phrasing (G I 128/25, C1 226) – was the first modern thinker who advanced the merit of freedom as the highest virtue and the highest good for which we should strive as an independent end in both the theoretical and the practical spheres (Naaman-Zauderer 2010). Spinoza rejects the new ideal of the early modern era by dismissing the very idea of free will or free choice, and the related Cartesian view of human beings in nature as if exempt from its necessary laws by their godlike freedom of choice. Yet at the same time and with equal rigor, Spinoza follows his Cartesian predecessor in promoting freedom in his own peculiar sense of the term, making it the ground for the whole edifice of his *Ethics* as well as its ultimate goal. The difference in Spinoza's and Descartes's respective conceptions of freedom is thus as evident as their common conviction that freedom or activity is the highest of all human ethical goals in both the theoretical and the practical realms. The presence of these two opposing trends in Spinoza's approach to freedom resides in almost every work he has written but is most clearly and systematically manifest in the *Ethics*, his philosophical masterpiece demonstrated in geometric order (*Ethica Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata*).

Spinoza's *Ethics* is one of the boldest and most systematic attempts in the history of modern philosophy to confront the question of the encounter between the finite and the infinite. The account of freedom or activity that this work provides is perhaps the most prominent manifestation of this attempt. The present collection posits the themes of freedom, action, and motivation as the central principles that drive Spinoza's *Ethics* from its first part to its last. The infinite freedom or causal power of God *or* Nature that Part 1 of the *Ethics* establishes, as well as the ways in which this power manifests itself through its infinitely many modes, form the staple and the guiding principle of the rest of the work. As the brief preface to Part 2 indicates, the highest form of freedom or activity available to human beings, which Spinoza equates with blessedness, is the ultimate end to which the entire *Ethics* is directed. God's infinite activity or freedom is thus the sole and immanent ground not only of the necessity to which each singular thing is subject but also of the limited degree of freedom, activity, or causal power that constitutes each singular thing's actual essence.

The conception of the human mind as the idea of the human body that Part 2 of the *Ethics* provides sets the ground for a new understanding of the human affects and the nature of action in Part 3, in terms of the essential striving (*conatus*) of every singular thing to persevere in being. Spinoza's theory of the affects is the main locus of his account of human action and motivation. It explains how changes in the body's and the mind's power of striving – changes that form our emotional apparatus – shape our judgments of things as valuable to us and determine us to action. While clearly adhering to the new mechanistic science of his age, Spinoza's account of the affects breaks with the traditional passion-action dichotomy in various significant ways. The boundary separating active and passive affects does not overlap with the split between the mind and the body as in the Cartesian account of the passions. Given Spinoza's parallelism and the mind-body union, this division hinges on whether the change in the mind's and the body's power of acting is internally determined (in which case, it is an active affect or an action) or externally caused (and in this case, it is a passion). This account paves the way for Spinoza's ethical theory in Part 4, whose main focus is the analysis of the human bondage to passions – our lack of power to moderate and restrain the passions – and the relative degree of rational freedom we can attain by acting from the law of our own nature. Although human beings, as finite modes, can never be the causes of their own existence and are, as "part of nature," always acted on by external forces (4p2–4), we can, to some extent, be active or free – to the extent to which we produce effects that follow from and are explainable through our own essential power or striving alone, which is precisely the extent to which we act from adequate knowledge. The ethical dimension of human freedom leads to its equality with virtue as they both consist in

bringing about effects explainable through one's own power or nature alone. Part 5 of the *Ethics* begins with various techniques and means to enhance our rational freedom from passions; it then proceeds, in its last section, to the account of the mind's ultimate and highest form of freedom or blessedness – the culmination of the entire work.

On these grounds, it is surprising that the precise meaning of Spinoza's notions of freedom, activity, or action, as well as the pivotal role these notions play in his *Ethics*, have not been until recently at the forefront of the vast scholarly literature dealing with this monumental work. The last decade has exposed a growing interest within Anglo-American scholarship in Spinoza's conception of freedom and the human servitude to passions. Notably, the recent significant contributions of scholars such as Michael LeBuffe (2010), Matthew J. Kisner (2011), and Eugene Marshall (2013), among others, have enhanced our vision of Spinoza's thinking on these matters. Yet the issue is still relatively understudied; fundamental questions concerning the precise nature of these notions are still waiting to be addressed, and others remain highly controversial.

The present volume aims to fill this need. It brings together ten original contributions by internationally distinguished scholars who provide different, sometimes opposing interpretations of Spinoza's views of freedom, action, and motivation as they operate in each and every part of the *Ethics*, and within its manifold domains: ontology, epistemology, physics, action theory, moral psychology, ethics and meta-ethics, social philosophy, and finally the theory of the mind's ultimate freedom in the third kind of knowledge. The sequence of the chapters in this volume broadly follows the order of the *Ethics*. Each chapter develops its own cluster of issues but is at the same time integral to the general theme of the entire book. The main objective is thus neither to offer a comprehensive survey of Spinoza's view of freedom and activity in general, as operating in his entire corpus, nor to refer to all aspects of his *Ethics*. Rather, this volume provides a diverse array of up-to-date perspectives on the *Ethics* when read through the prism of Spinoza's views of freedom, action, and motivation in their ontological, cognitive, physical, affective, and ethical facets.

The common focus of the chapters in this volume is intended to enable readers to be engaged with a wide variety of new interpretations of these fundamental themes and to reconsider their consequences for other related issues in the *Ethics* and the threads unifying the entire work. We hope this multiperspectival orientation will shed a plurality of fresh and new lights on the issues at stake and will encourage further reflections on various passages within the *Ethics* itself. Moreover, some of the chapters in this volume prove the relevance of Spinoza's *Ethics* to contemporary trends in philosophy of action and motivation. Our aspiration is that this collection will contribute to the growing interest in Spinoza's *Ethics* and spark further discussion and debate within and outside the vast body of scholarship on this important work.

The special relevance of Spinoza's *Ethics* to present-day debates in philosophy of action is acutely manifested in Michael Della Rocca's "Steps toward Eleaticism in Spinoza's Philosophy of Action," the opening chapter of this volume. Della Rocca powerfully shows how Spinoza's philosophy of action undermines and eventually transcends the contemporary debate over the nature of action by rejecting its core and taken-for-granted presuppositions. Della Rocca's key insight, which he establishes throughout the chapter by a close reading of the relevant passages in the *Ethics*, is that Spinoza's treatment of action leads to what he calls "the Parmenidean Ascent," according to which "there are no differentiated actions and there is at most one action, the action that is – and is of – the whole." Della Rocca opens his chapter by articulating in the form of two main questions the explanatory demand that drives recent and contemporary debates over action: the first question concerns how actions are to be differentiated from non-actions, and the second concerns how actions are to be differentiated from other actions. Della Rocca identifies and considers two different types of answer given to these questions by current and recent philosophy of action, whose leading representatives are, respectively, Donald Davidson and G. E. M. Anscombe. Della Rocca then compellingly shows how both types of answer ultimately fail to address the explanatory demand they themselves posit. It is at this point that Spinoza's philosophy takes on its full relevance. In showing us how to challenge the presuppositions of the debate, Della Rocca argues, Spinoza opens the way for progress in the philosophy of action. Spinoza's account of action rejects the first guiding question – that of how actions are to be differentiated from non-actions – by denying one of its presuppositions, namely, that there are non-actions and that there is a distinction between actions and non-actions, whose basis is to be articulated. Della Rocca offers strong textual evidence suggesting that, for Spinoza, action is pervasive. Given that to be active or to act – even to act for a reason or with an intention, as Della Rocca argues – is simply to exert causal power, and given that a thing's causal power is identical with its actual essence, activity and being emerge as one and the same thing. God or substance itself is nothing but God's activity taken as a whole, and so everything – both God and its modes (inasmuch as they express God's power) – is an action, that is, an exhibition of some causal power. The pervasiveness of action in and of nature, Della Rocca argues, entails that non-action has no place in the world. He then goes on to explain how Spinoza rejects the second question as well – that of how actions are to be differentiated from other actions – by denying distinctions among actions as unintelligible and non-real. On his reading, regardless of whether an action is a complete (adequate) or partial (inadequate) cause of its effect, limited, differentiated actions cannot inhere in God and are therefore neither intelligible nor real. Della Rocca concludes that in rejecting both these questions, Spinoza makes a

"Parmenidean Ascent" that rules out distinctions between differentiated actions and between actions and mere events. Della Rocca closes his chapter with some reflections on interpretive controversies and methods of interpretation in the face of conflicting textual evidence and a diversity of strands within a single corpus or philosophical work.

In sharp contrast to Della Rocca's Parmenidean reading of action, though with a few surprising points of agreement, Matthew J. Kisner, in his "Spinoza's Activities: Freedom without Independence," offers an original interpretation of the nature of activity in Spinoza's *Ethics* when applied to human beings. Most scholars tend to assume that Spinoza defines human action and activity in terms of adequate causation, that is, as consisting in causal and conceptual independence. For Kisner, by contrast, Spinoza employs two distinct yet closely connected notions of human activity, of which only the first consists in adequate causation. Activity in the first sense, which forms Spinoza's definition of action (3D2), consists in being an adequate cause and thus in being the sole causal and conceptual source of a certain effect. Yet, according to Kisner, Spinoza's *conatus* theory allows for another notion of activity, which consists in one's essential striving to persevere in being (3p6, 3p7). In equating our striving with our actual "power of acting" (*potentia agendi*), Kisner contends, Spinoza recognizes that striving necessarily involves activity. Yet on Kisner's reading, Spinoza does not equate a thing's degree of striving or power with the extent to which this striving is productive or efficacious in bringing about effects *on its own*. Rather, a thing is active in the second, broader sense to the extent to which it exercises causal power, irrespective of whether this striving is causally and conceptually sufficient for the production of a certain effect and regardless of whether one's endeavor to produce the effect is successful. This leads Kisner to argue that, though being an adequate cause is itself a kind of striving, things can strive (and thus be active in the second sense) without being adequate causes when they are only partial causes of effects. Drawing on these two basic kinds of activity, Kisner goes on to show how Spinoza's other notions of activity, such as freedom, virtue, and perfection, are also bifurcated into two groups: those requiring activity of adequacy and those requiring only activity of striving. Whereas the common view regards a person's degree of freedom, virtue, and perfection as equivalent to this person's degree of causal and conceptual independence with regard to some effects, Kisner claims that these notions of activity all consist in striving and are therefore not restricted to such independence. For, besides activity of adequacy, human freedom, virtue, and perfection include other instances of striving to persevere and to increase one's power, which do not involve causal independence. This enables Kisner to show how activity in the broader sense includes cases of passivity and is therefore not identical with acting and with forming adequate ideas. Whereas acting and knowing consists exclusively in adequate causation,

activity of striving includes cases of passivity and allows for things to be passively active. Such passive activity occurs when a thing cooperates with other forces in bringing about effects or when it undergoes exogenous effects (as in passive joy and its variants). Kisner concludes by explaining the significant bearings of his reading on how we should view Spinoza's main ethical goals. Rather than independence per se, he says, it is activity of striving that Spinoza counts as intrinsically valuable, which includes instances of causal dependence.

The next two chapters concern Spinoza's account of the primary affects in Part 3 of the *Ethics*, with a special emphasis on the ways in which this account deepens our understanding of his philosophy of mind. In "Descartes and Spinoza on the Primitive Passions: Why So Different?," Lisa Shapiro situates Spinoza's account of the primary affects in its historical context in order to undertake the broader task of showing how taxonomies of primitive or primary passions highlight structural features of a philosopher's account of cognition or thought and how shifts in these taxonomies reflect substantial differences in a philosopher's conception of mind from that of his predecessors. Central to her discussion, specifically, is a puzzle in Spinoza's account of the primary affects – his shift from adopting Descartes's list of six primitive passions in the *Short Treatise* to the three primary affects he marks in the *Ethics*: joy (*laetitia*), sadness (*tristitia*), and desire (*cupiditas*). To explore the philosophical motivation behind this shift, Shapiro explores Spinoza's later account of the primary affects vis-à-vis Descartes's taxonomy of the primitive passions in the *Passions of the Soul*, which she, in turn, analyzes against the background of Descartes's diversion from the taxonomy of Aquinas. After having carefully examined the Cartesian and the Thomist taxonomies, Shapiro shows how the differences between the two treatments of the primitive passions reflect substantial differences between these philosophers' respective conceptions of cognition. According to Shapiro, whereas Aquinas's taxonomy indicates his conception of how cognition conforms to essential features of the objects in the world, the primitive passions within Descartes's taxonomy highlight essential structural features of our representations of the world, which are essential features of experience. Drawing on Denis Kambouchner's (1995) emphasis on how Descartes's enumeration of the passions follows our experience of them as actions of the mind (that is, as representations taken formally), Shapiro proceeds to inquire into the precise ways in which each primitive passion functions within Descartes's account of representation and thought, and how Descartes's shift from Aquinas's taxonomy reflects the change in his own conception of thought from that of Aquinas. Shapiro's careful analysis allows her to propose a new account of Spinoza's shift from the *Short Treatise* to his taxonomy in the *Ethics* in light of his critique of Descartes's conception of cognition. Here, she points to an essential difference between Descartes's and

Spinoza's approaches to consciousness within their respective notions of thought. While Descartes considers consciousness an intrinsic feature of thought, for Spinoza, thinking is intrinsically representational but is not intrinsically conscious. Shapiro's discussion sheds considerable new light on how this and other fundamental differences between the two conceptions of thought underlie Spinoza's dismissal of wonder as an affect and his denial of the primacy of love and hatred, and how each of the three affects he considers primary has a distinctive function and role within his own account of mind.

Whereas Lisa Shapiro focuses on how Spinoza's theory of the primary affects illuminates his view of the basic structure of thought, John Carriero, in his "Spinoza on the Primary Affects," concentrates on the way in which Spinoza's theory of the primary affects enriches our understanding of the mind's relation to the body. Carriero begins with an in-depth account of the *conatus* of the mind: what the mind's basic drive exactly is, what would count as a conflict among ideas or minds that would diminish or thwart each other's striving to persevere, and how the content and the quality of the mind's cognition is related to the body's power of acting. According to Carriero, a singular thing's *conatus* – whether a tree, a hurricane, or a human mind – is not simply an endeavor to remain in existence, as many have assumed (at least with regard to non-human beings), but instead a striving to maximize its own reality or power. This enables Carriero to explain Spinoza's transition from a characterization of the mind's *conatus* as a striving whose first and principal tendency is to affirm the existence of the body (3p10d) to its characterization as an endeavor to increase its own power of thinking. Carriero argues that through "affirming" the existence of the body, the mind acquires the subject matter for its thought and its unique perspective on the world. Carriero then proceeds to show how the body's passage to a greater causal power – which he further articulates in terms of the strength and flow of its *ratio* (and, in the case of human beings, in terms of the flow of motion in the brain) – is related to the mind's passage to a greater understanding of itself and the world that it cognizes through that body. On this basis, Carriero develops an original treatment of the nature and working of the three primary affects and of how they are embedded in the architecture of the human being. In particular, Carriero explicates the difference between *conatus* and desire through Spinoza's principle that the mind lacks an immediate cognition of its body itself, except through the ideas of the body's affections. Following Guéroult, Carriero argues that the mind's cognition of itself is not of the idea that the mind *is* (namely, the idea of the body *simpliciter*) but rather its cognition of the ideas that the mind *has* (which are ideas of the affections of its body). In desire, accordingly, what the mind is conscious of, according to Carriero, is not its own appetite or striving to persevere per se but rather particular affections or determinations of it. On his reading,

moreover, joy and sadness are not to be identified with the transitions themselves (increase or decrease) in the body's and the mind's causal power, as scholars usually assert, but instead with the affections that cause these transitions. Carriero closes his chapter by considering some implications of his reading for the understanding of Spinoza's distance from hedonism, his denial of the primacy of love and hatred among the affects, and his rejection of teleology.

In her chapter, "Affectivity and Cognitive Perfection," Lilli Alanen addresses difficulties in reconciling Spinoza's non-teleological, naturalistic account of the affects with the kind of self-emancipation he advances through adequate knowledge. To make Spinoza's moral psychology consistent with his ethical goals, as Alanen maintains, many commentators tend to commit him to an extreme rationalism or intellectualism that promotes the exercise of reason for the sake of understanding alone. For Alanen, by contrast, Spinoza's naturalism is to be read along Aristotelian lines as stressing, besides cognitive perfection, the practical role of reason and rational activity. To establish this, Alanen provides an analysis of the mind-body union and the role of the body in the mind's affectivity and activity. She considers, first, how an increase in the mind's knowledge of its body is related to an increase in the mind's knowledge of itself qua idea, given the conceptual independence between the attributes. For Alanen, as for Carriero, the key to understanding Spinoza's moral psychology and ethical theory is his two-dimensional account of the mind's *conatus*. Qua idea, as Alanen points out, our mind strives to increase its own power of thinking or understanding and thereby enhance its share in the infinite intellect of God. Qua the idea of an actually existing body, the mind's first and principal striving is to maintain and affirm the existence of its body, of which it is conscious only by sensing or imagining its affections. This distinction allows Alanen to provide new solutions to some interpretive puzzles concerning Spinoza's distinction between active and passive affects, which she analyzes first in relation to the mind-body union and then in relation to the mind alone. Alanen ultimately argues that Spinoza's ethical project draws on a related distinction between two senses of human action or activity. When referred to the mind alone – as in Part 5 of the *Ethics*, whose main objective is to show the way leading us to salvation – human actions consist in thinking or understanding per se. When referred to the mind as the idea of the body and thus to the mind-body composite, human activity includes practical action that requires concurring external causes that render us only partial (inadequate) causes of their effects. To the extent that our mind can be considered an adequate cause, Alanen concludes, its activity is restrained to the former sense alone and, to that extent, in the strict sense, it is not our activity but God's or Nature's. Yet we can still be agents in a relative sense, to the extent that our actions – of which we are only partial causes – conform with God's in being governed by reason.

In his contribution to this volume, "Deciding What to Do: The Relation of Affect and Reason in Spinoza's *Ethics*," Donald Rutherford elegantly complements Alanen's chapter by taking on the challenge of showing how and to what extent Spinoza's naturalistic theory of action can coherently sustain the normative dimension of his ethical theory and, in particular, how it can allow for the possibility of human beings to deliberately guide themselves to pursue the right way of living. Rutherford does this by proposing an incisive interpretation of Spinoza's treatment of the affects in terms of their cognitive, motivational, and evaluative features, and by showing how the theory of action and practical reason that this treatment implies meets the demands of his normative ethics. According to Rutherford, in dismissing traditional models of human agency and the idea of free will, Spinoza does not rule out the idea of deliberative practical reason but instead leaves room for an account of human beings as rational agents who deliberate about alternative courses of action and decide to act in pursuit of objects they represent as good. Spinoza's theory of the affects, as Rutherford interprets it, provides revisionary notions of decision (*decretum*) and will (*voluntas*) that play an effective role in the explanation of human action. On Rutherford's reading, Spinoza's peculiar notion of decision denotes a mental assent to the doing of an action that entails a commitment to pursue a certain course of action rather than another, in accordance with the object of one's desire. While Part 2 of the *Ethics* demonstrates that doxastic volitions – affirmations and negations – are nothing over and above what is already present in our ideas, the account of the affects in Part 3 of the *Ethics* focuses on the role of the will and decision in the determination of action and involves cognitive, motivational, and evaluative elements. In at least some instances, as Rutherford maintains, human action is accompanied by a decision – a commitment to pursue the object of a desire determined by an affect – provided that no competing action makes a stronger claim on us. Thus, the primary affect of joy involves the mind's affirmation of the body's increase in power, a striving to sustain that increase in power, and a normative judgment that this state and whatever promotes it is beneficial or good and is thus to be pursued. Rutherford closes his chapter by distinguishing two complementary roles that reason plays in the evaluation and determination of action. Qua abstract and universal knowledge, he contends, reason informs us in general of the kind of things that are good or bad for us, depending on whether they increase or decrease our power of acting. But to inform us of what we actually *ought* to do and to dispose us to act under the guidance of reason, the ideas of reason must generate desires in us by taking the form of active affects – adequate representations of changes in the body's power of acting – provided that no stronger countervailing desires deflect our behavior.

In line with the two previous chapters, Julie R. Klein's "Materializing Spinoza's Account of Human Freedom" proposes another reason to challenge the current understanding of Spinoza as a pure rationalist or intellectualist who views the pursuit of freedom and ethical perfection as a purely intellectual affair. Klein's chapter sheds light on the role of the body in Spinoza's account of freedom, with a further focus on the sociability and the political dimension of human cultivation, which she interprets as part of the material conditions of freedom. Klein begins with a discussion of Spinoza's break with the Cartesian ideas of free will, especially with the larger tradition of Christian metaphysical psychology, and its replacement with the *conatus* theory. She then offers an analysis of Spinoza's rearticulation of will, affection, determination, and action in terms of *conatus*, in both its mental and its material aspects, which enables her to show how his view has more in common with the non-dualistic medieval Jewish and Islamic Aristotelians than with Latin tradition and Christian metaphysical psychology. On this basis, Klein explores the destructive and constructive effects of our imaginative experience and its inevitable role in our cognitive and ethical growth. Given Spinoza's denial of transcendence and teleology, as she claims, sense experience and imagination do not inevitably lead to health, knowledge, or freedom, and human passivity, bondage, and inadequacy are as natural as activity, freedom, and adequacy. Yet, as Klein goes on to maintain, although imagined pleasures are real pleasures and may lead us to genuine goods and so to reason, these constructive imaginative desires still leave something to be desired – which is activity itself. While the *Ethics* provides practices and means by which we come to desire what is truly useful to us and enhance our power of acting, Spinoza views imagination as social, and hence political, rather than strictly individual. On these grounds, Klein shows how the identification of things that are genuinely useful is simultaneously epistemic, medical or scientific, and political. She shows further how the communicative structure of our imaginative affects, whose leading principle is imitation, shapes our desires for self-preservation and for enhancement of power. Klein closes her chapter with a survey of the various uses Spinoza makes of the term "salvation" (*salus*) in both the *Ethics* and his other works, with a special focus on its theological, political, and medical senses that include success of the commonwealth considered as basic biological well-being, security or safety, physical health, and well-being through philosophical knowledge. According to Klein, even in the last section of the *Ethics*, where Spinoza considers the mind "without relation to the body," his account of the mind's salvation, blessedness, and intellectual love of God does not deny the existence of the body but only leaves it out of consideration, in accord with the changing forms of our cognition. In associating salvation with *gloria*, Klein concludes, Spinoza invokes the medieval Jewish philosophical commentary tradition, according to which the paramount

state of intellectual activity is intimately integrated with bodily activity and the socio-political realm.

Another controversial aspect of Spinoza's theory of action and normative ethics concerns the metaphysical status of good and bad, and the role they play in the account of human motivation and action. The dependence of value judgments on human desires is most clearly articulated in Part 3 of the *Ethics*, where Spinoza famously asserts that "we neither strive for, nor will, neither want, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary, we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it" (3p9s). Although this and other related passages in the *Ethics* may seem to commit Spinoza to a subjectivist approach to values, according to which the good depends on our varying desires, later passages in the *Ethics* invite a more nuanced understanding of his view. In "Spinoza's Values: Joy, Desire, and Good in the *Ethics*," Steven Nadler supports a non-subjectivist reading of Spinoza's account of good and bad, and he sheds considerable new light on how good as a value relates to passion and desire in Spinoza's *Ethics*. According to the different versions of the subjectivist interpretation, as Nadler maintains, something's being good is nothing but a matter of opinion, a human "construction," an expression of desire. Nadler argues that, on the contrary, the evaluative qualities of good and bad are for Spinoza objective and (in a sense) mind-independent, albeit non-intrinsic and relational, features of things. Throughout the chapter, Nadler offers instructive distinctions between the variety of statements that Spinoza makes about good and bad in the *Ethics* and shows how they do not all apply to the same thing. Whereas some of Spinoza's statements concern the normative ethical question of what the goodness or badness of things actually is, other statements concern the meta-ethical question of what makes us judge something to be good, and yet others refer to the moral-epistemological question of how we come to know that something is good. On Nadler's reading, what makes something good in the most basic sense is not that it is the object of someone's desire but rather that it causes an increase in that individual's power of acting. Correlatively, something is bad if it is the cause of a negative affect in an individual, that is, of a decrease in that individual's power. And what makes something good in the truest and fullest sense of the term, Nadler argues, is that it so improves the power of an individual as to bring it closer to the ideal condition of its nature, which is – in the case of human beings – the "exemplar of human nature" (*naturae humanae exemplar*). Being good or bad is thus, according to Nadler, a completely relational feature, a function of the causal relationship a thing bears to something else. Thus, as all other law-governed relationships in nature, goodness and badness, though not intrinsic qualities of things, are nonetheless objective and mind-independent matters of fact. Nadler closes his chapter by showing how, on Spinoza's psychology of the affects, whatever causes joy in a

person is necessarily the object of that person's desire. Desire is thus *both* a necessary component of the objective state of affairs in which a thing's goodness consists for some person *and* the ground for that person's judgment about the thing's goodness. Yet what makes a thing good is that it causes an increase in one's power, even though it also causes in that individual a desire for it.

In discussing Spinoza's notions of freedom, activity, and action, most scholars tend to focus on the kind of freedom arising from reason, both theoretical and practical, and thus on Parts 3 and 4 of the *Ethics* and the first half of Part 5. What Spinoza calls "freedom of mind," which he identifies with blessedness, salvation, and intellectual love of God in the concluding section of the *Ethics*, has typically not been part of the discussion of his view of freedom. In "Spinoza on Human Freedoms and the Eternity of the Mind," Noa Naaman-Zauderer brings to focus this relatively neglected aspect of Spinoza's account of freedom – intuitive or intellectual freedom – which she views as categorically different from rational freedom and as deserving of separate treatment. To establish this reading, she first analyzes Spinoza's account of rational freedom in terms of adequate causation and then proceeds to show how the second and the third kinds of knowledge, on which the two kinds of freedom are founded, differ from one another in kind (*generis*) and not merely in degree, in both their objects and their intrinsic features. Naaman-Zauderer further shows how the difference between reason and intuition with respect to their objects is inseparably linked to categorical differences in their intrinsic features and procedures. Whereas reason, having common notions as antecedents, is conceptual in the sense that its objects fall under general kinds, intuition qua "cognition of singular things" is, according to Naaman-Zauderer, essentially experiential, non-conceptual, and non-inferential, having an immediate access to the unique essences of its singular objects. On this basis, Naaman-Zauderer proceeds to explain the distinctive character of intuitive freedom. She first shows how the experiential and non-conceptual nature of intuitive self-knowledge is crucial for the mind's sense of ultimate freedom while perceiving itself *sub specie aeternitatis*, and thus "through God's essence," and how intuitive freedom, blessedness, and intellectual love of God consist in the mind's ability to experience itself apart from the body with which it is united. Naaman-Zauderer proposes textual evidence indicating that this ability allows the mind to immediately experience its own essence or power of thinking not only as a finite share of God's infinite intellect, as in rational freedom, but also, in some sense, as united with the divine and hence as divinely free and eternal in the strict sense of 1D7 and 1D8, respectively. But given that God is the only being whose essence involves existence, how can a finite mind experience itself as divinely free and eternal without thereby incurring a state of error typical of the first kind of knowledge? The key to understanding this enigma, Naaman-Zauderer

argues, is Spinoza's invocation of the scholastic-Cartesian distinction between the formal and the objective reality of ideas. For Descartes, ideas differ from one another only in their objective reality, in accordance with the formal reality they represent, whereas in their formal reality, "there is no recognizable inequality among them." For Spinoza, likewise, as Naaman-Zauderer suggests, only when conceiving itself in its formal reality as a pure thinking activity and without relation to its object can the mind legitimately consider itself to be possessing the same degree of formal reality and activity as does God considered under the attribute of Thought. Thus, by releasing itself from the awareness of the body and the individual personality it imposes while conceiving itself *formally,* the mind legitimately experiences its own thinking activity as divinely real, eternal, and free.

Given Spinoza's anti-anthropomorphic conception of God *or* Nature and his theory of the affects, it is no surprise to find him insisting that, strictly speaking, God is not affected with any affect of joy or sadness, and that God neither loves nor hates anyone (5p17c). Nonetheless, the culmination of his *Ethics*, the notion of *amor Dei intellectualis*, does involve the idea of God's love of himself and of human beings. In "The Enigma of Spinoza's *Amor Dei Intellectualis*," Yitzhak Y. Melamed addresses this difficulty and considers various ways in which it may and may not be resolved. He begins with a careful consideration of various apparent inconsistencies in Spinoza's conception of divine intellectual love and then turns to discuss two possible preliminary solutions that one might be tempted to endorse. The first solution explains Spinoza's notion of divine love as a mere rhetorical gesture targeted at appeasing traditional readers; the second explains this notion as applying only to God considered as *Natura naturata* and not to God qua *Natura naturans*. Both solutions are lacking, according to Melamed, either because they fail to capture the important positive content that Spinoza seems to be conveying here or because they fail to sit comfortably with other important passages in the *Ethics*. To reach a more satisfactory account of Spinoza's theory of divine intellectual love, Melamed provides a close examination of Spinoza's definitions of the primary affects and then proceeds to reconstruct the characteristics of the complex affects. The passion of love, he maintains, turns out to be a state of the mind (and the body) that cannot be fully explained through one's own mind alone, a state by which one's mind passes to a greater perfection and is accompanied by the idea of a cause external to it. On this basis, Melamed goes on to elucidate the way in which Spinoza applies these affects to God in the concluding section of the *Ethics*. He shows how, in order to satisfy the "improvement condition" of love, as he terms it (i.e., the mind's passage to a greater perfection), Spinoza supplements the component of joy with an equivalent notion of blessedness. Yet in order for love to be applicable to God, as Melamed maintains, Spinoza stipulates a complete inversion

of the two remaining conditions of ordinary love – the explanatory dependence and the external causation conditions. Given that God's love is fully explained through God's idea or infinite intellect, this love is an action, not a passion. And given that the object of an intellectual love must be an internal cause, God's love is accompanied by the idea of himself as its cause. Melamed closes his chapter with a discussion of Spinoza's notion of "love of esteem" (*gloria*) – a species of joy accompanied by the *imagined* idea of oneself as its cause – and opposes it to "self-esteem" (*acquiescentia in se ipso*), which Spinoza defines in Part 3 of the *Ethics* as "joy accompanied by the idea of an internal cause" (3p30s) and which he later identifies with intellectual love.

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2 Steps toward Eleaticism in Spinoza's Philosophy of Action

Michael Della Rocca

1 The Unmet Explanatory Demand

The great and fundamental question in the philosophy of action is simply "What is action?" What is it in virtue of which such things as my singing the song "One" from *A Chorus Line* or my running across the street are actions and not mere events? Philosophy of action seeks to investigate the *nature* of actions, what it is that makes it the case that something is an action.[1]

Among the forms that this explanatory demand can take are two questions:

a What is it in virtue of which actions are differentiated from non-actions?

By "non-actions" I mean, *inter alia*, events, such as a ball's rolling downhill or a raindrop's falling, as opposed to actions, such as my splashing you with water. The second question is:

b What is it in virtue of which one action is differentiated from other actions?

Specific versions of this second question include: in virtue of what is an action of one type different from an action of another type? In virtue of what is an action mine as opposed to yours? And in virtue of what are certain actions of mine different from other actions of mine?

In recent and contemporary philosophy of action, there have been two broad and broadly different categories of answer to these questions, which seek to shed light on how actions can be differentiated in these ways. Thus, Donald Davidson and his followers adopt the so-called causal theory of action.[2] According to this approach, of which there are many varieties, actions are events that – while not intrinsically or by their very nature actions – achieve this status by virtue of causal relations of an appropriate kind to mental states, such as beliefs and desires, and intentions with certain contents. These mental states are seen as reasons for the action. For a causal theorist, actions are distinct from non-actions because only actions and not mere events enter into the

causal relations characteristic of actions. And actions are differentiated from other actions because of the different mental states that cause the different actions.

G. E. M. Anscombe takes a rather different approach. She and her followers do not or need not deny that actions enter into causal relations with mental states and with other events, but this understanding of action does not make causal relations central to what it is to be an action. Instead, items that are actions, intrinsically and by their very nature, are actions and are caught up in the life of an agent. On such a view, actions differ from non-actions not because of any extrinsic causal relations that the actions bear to mental states; rather, the actions differ from non-actions because they are inherently active, and the non-actions are not, and because the actions are, by their nature, such that it is appropriate to ask for what reason the action was performed. Similarly, actions are differentiated from other actions in virtue of the reasons that those actions may intrinsically manifest.[3]

While each approach has many proponents, each has also come in for substantial criticism. A key worry for a Davidsonian view is the famous problem of deviant causal chains, a problem raised by Davidson himself and many others, and one that (*pace* Michael Smith, Christopher Peacocke, et al.)[4] shows no signs of being resolved. The difficulty arises because an event's being an action is due to its standing in some causal relation to other items, such as beliefs and desires. The externality of this relation inevitably leaves room for unanticipated causal intermediaries between the relevant mental states and the event that is to be an action. Thus, to use an example offered by Harry Frankfurt,

> [A] man at a party intends to spill what is in his glass because he wants to signal to his confederates to begin a robbery and he believes, in virtue of their prearrangements, that spilling what is in his glass will accomplish that; but all this leads the man to be very anxious, his anxiety makes his hands tremble, and so his glass spills. (1999, 70)

For Frankfurt, Davidson, and many others, the causal theory of action – by relying crucially on external relations – fails to sufficiently unify reason and the caused bodily movement or event: these two items are thus, for the causal theorist, always in danger of falling apart in such a way that the event which occurs as a result of the reason is not rationalized by that reason. Thus, the causal relation is not sufficient for the occurrence of an intentional action and so cannot by itself provide a good explanation of intentional action.

The deviant cases arise because even given the reasons – the causes – it is conceivable that the effect does or does not occur. Here, we can see that the Davidsonian set-up presupposes something like a Humean

account of causal relations in which causes and effects are not conceptually connected and stand in external relations.[5] Take one of those conceivable situations in which the reasons are present, and yet the effect – the relevant action – does not occur. If this is conceivable, then it seems also conceivable that, in a situation in which the causes wouldn't normally lead to the relevant effect, there could be an event – e.g., a twinge of nervousness – that intervenes between the reasons and the relevant action – e.g., the spilling of the drink – and makes it the case that, as it were accidentally, the event that matches the reasons occurs and is indirectly (but deviantly) caused by the reasons. That is the recipe for deviance, and this recipe works in part because, on Davidson's broadly Humean picture of causation, causes and effects are not conceptually connected and are only externally related. Given this picture of causation, the possibility of deviance is unavoidable, and so the causal theorist's account of action is necessarily incomplete.

Perhaps for this reason, Davidson despairs of finding a way to patch up this gap in his causal theory and sees himself as forced to invoke a primitive, unanalyzed notion of "the right way" for beliefs and desires, and reasons more generally to cause an action.[6] Such a response is unilluminating for there is nothing more to be said about the right way other than that it is the way in which events must be caused if those events are to be actions. For the account of action to appeal to the right causal relation – i.e. to a causal relation that makes the event in question an *action* – is for this account to appeal to action in the course of characterizing action. This can hardly be seen as an illuminating way to address the explanatory demand – formulated, e.g., in questions (a) and (b) – concerning action itself. I do not have space to show this here, but, despite ingenious attempts by Peacocke, Smith, Peter Railton, David Velleman, and others to shore up the causal theory, the problem persists in its original form.[7]

Anscombe's view does not invoke external relations in the way that Davidson and his allies do, and so Anscombe does not face the deviant causal chain problem. However, her position, like Davidson's, ultimately threatens to be disappointingly unilluminating. For Anscombe (and other theorists who reject the causal theory of action), it is the nature of certain events to be actions.[8] Such a view tells us *that* certain events are actions, and it may even say which events are actions, but it does not tell us *how* these events come to have this special status. The view merely appeals to the nature of the events in question as part of the life of a practical agent, but it doesn't tell us *how* an event comes to be caught up in practical life in this way. Again, as in Davidson's case, the account of action fails to illuminate and fails to offer satisfactory answers to questions (a) and (b).

There is, of course, much more to be said about the complexity and the virtues of these two rival approaches to action. (I will explore such

matters in future work.) But I think we can see that there is reason to believe that the debate over the nature of action is at a kind of standstill, with each major side in the end failing to properly address the explanatory demand that drives the philosophy of action. My suspicion is that, in order for progress in the philosophy of action to take place, we must question and challenge the terms in which the debate over action in recent and contemporary philosophy is conducted. And I believe that – at least in one important strand of his thinking on action – Spinoza shows us how to challenge the presuppositions of the debate over action and how, as it were, to transcend this debate. To confirm this belief, I will show how Spinoza – instead of trying to answer the guiding questions (a) and (b) – simply rejects those questions.

2 The Alleged Distinction between Action and Non-Action

Let's turn to Spinoza's approach to question (a):

> a What is it in virtue of which actions are differentiated from non-actions?

Spinoza rejects this question because he denies one of its presuppositions, a presupposition made by Davidson, Anscombe, and nearly all other recent theorists of action, viz. the claim that there are non-actions, and there is a distinction between action and non-action. For Spinoza, in other words, action is pervasive, and there are no things that are not actions.

Spinoza's official definition of action – or, rather, his definition of what it is for us to act – specifies that we act insofar as we are the complete cause of some effect:

> I say that we act when something happens, in us or outside us, of which we are the adequate cause, that is (by 3D1), when something in us or outside us follows from our nature, which can be clearly and distinctly understood through it alone. On the other hand, I say that we are acted on when something happens in us, or something follows from our nature, of which we are only a partial cause (3D2).[9]

This definition may seem to leave much room for non-action: after all, with regard to changes of which I am only a partial and not the complete cause, Spinoza says that we are acted on and not active.

However, Spinoza employs both a strong and a weak sense of "action." 3D2 articulates the strong sense of the term. But Spinoza allows that, to the extent to which a thing approximates being the complete cause of an effect, then the thing is active. In other words, there are degrees of activity for Spinoza that are correlated with the degree to which a thing

approximates being the complete cause of some effect. Thus, for Spinoza, to the extent to which a thing exhibits causal power, it is active.

This commitment to degrees of activity does not yet give us the result that, for Spinoza, action is pervasive. To reach this result, we must add the claim that each thing exhibits at least some causal power. And this is precisely what Spinoza says in 1p36: "Nothing exists from whose nature some effect does not follow."

The pervasiveness of causal power and, thus, of activity is also expressed in Spinoza's famous *conatus* doctrine near the beginning of Part 3 of the *Ethics*. I cannot here embark on a full-blown discussion of this intricate doctrine, but because it will play important roles in this chapter, I would like to highlight aspects of this account that we will have occasion to revisit. For Spinoza, each thing strives (*conatur*) to persist or to continue in existence, i.e. each thing has some tendency to bring it about – or to cause it to be the case – that it continues to exist. Indeed, for Spinoza, this tendency or striving of each thing to persist is the actual essence of that thing (3p7).[10] Thus, for him, exhibiting some causal power or being active is the essence of each thing. To be is to be active.

This causal power that, according to 1p36 and 3p6, each thing exhibits is merely an aspect of God's activity. Anything that exhibits causal power, such as a human being, a rock, or a table, is a mode or state of God or substance.[11] Thus, a mode that exhibits causal power is at the same time a state whereby God itself exhibits causal power. This is precisely what Spinoza says in 1p36d (invoking 1p25c). After saying in 1p25 that God efficiently causes both the essence and the existence of things, i.e. that God acts in certain ways, Spinoza says in 1p25c that

> Particular things are nothing but affections of God's attributes or modes by which God's attributes are expressed in a certain and determinate way.

In 1p36d, invoking this corollary, Spinoza says that

> Whatever exists expresses the nature or essence of God in a certain and determinate way (by 1p25c), that is (by 1p34), whatever exists expresses in a certain and determinate way the power of God.

Each mode is an action (at least in the weak sense) because each mode is simply an aspect of God's activity.

I would also say that, for Spinoza, God or substance itself is nothing but God's activity (taken as a whole): there is no distinction between God's activity and God. To see this, consider Spinoza's claim that God's existence and God's essence are one and the same (1p20). Just as our actual essence is, as Spinoza indicates in 3p7, the exhibition of some causal power, so too God's essence (i.e. God's existence) is the exhibition

of causal power. Thus, in saying that God's essence is the same as God's existence, Spinoza is suggesting that God is nothing but God's exhibiting causal power or God's activity.

Thus, for Spinoza, everything – both God and modes – is an action (in at least the weak sense, according to which an action is the exhibition of some causal power). Given this pervasiveness of action in and of the world, non-action seems to have no place in the world. Each thing either is, or is an aspect of, God's causal power and God's activity. Nothing is a non-action. Action is pervasive.

Anscombe and Davidson deny, of course, that action is pervasive, and so, Spinoza would, to this extent, disagree with them. A further difference between Spinoza and Davidson (and other causal theorists) in particular is that, for Spinoza, each action is inherently active; each action is, as we saw, an aspect of God's power. That is just what it is to be a mode, as Spinoza indicates in various places including 1p25c, 1p36d, and especially 3p7. As we saw, it is Davidson's denial of the inherent activity of actions that leaves him open to the deviant causal chain problem. Because actions are inherently active, for Spinoza, his account of action seems to avoid this problem.

At the same time, Spinoza differs from Anscombe, in particular, in that Spinoza has something illuminating to say about what makes an action an action: an action is an action simply because it causes something. To act just is to cause, for Spinoza. This account promises to be a more illuminating account of action than Anscombe's, which, while agreeing with Spinoza that actions are by their nature active, can shed no light on the nature of action other than to say that it is of the nature of an action to be an action. Spinoza can go deeper and say that it is of the nature of an action to be a cause. He thus reduces action to causation in a way that Anscombe does not. Spinoza gives, as I will say (to use a phrase that both Paul Hoffman and I have used in a similar context)[12] a stripped-down account of action in terms of causation.[13] And, in the process, Spinoza rejects, as we have just seen, the crucial presupposition of Anscombe and Davidson, and most philosophers of action that there is a distinction between action and non-action.

But how can such a reductive account of action merely in terms of causation be successful? It might seem that with Spinoza's simple appeal to causation in characterizing action, he is leaving out the crucial aspect of action that Davidson and Anscombe, and a host of others seek to capture, viz. the fact that actions are typically done for a reason or with an intention, or because the agent regards something as worth pursuing. For both Davidson and Anscombe, though for different reasons, merely appealing to causal power does not capture what it is to act: they both appeal also to the reasons for action in their accounts of action. Anscombe states that in her account of action, she is investigating "what it is meant by 'reason for acting.'"[14] Davidson sees it as essential to being

an action that an action is intentional – performed for a reason – at least under some description of that action.

Spinoza would, however, certainly deny that his account of action fails to capture what it is to act for a reason. His stripped-down account of action is at the same time a stripped-down account of acting for a reason or with an intention, or because one sees that there is something worth pursuing. The crucial notion in this stripped-down account of acting for a reason (etc.) is, as before, the notion of causation.

To articulate this notion of acting for a reason, consider why, for Spinoza, we regard something as good or worthy of pursuit, a kind of regarding which is arguably fundamental to acting for a reason. For Spinoza, we regard something as good because we desire it. As Spinoza says in 3p9s:

> We neither strive for, nor will, neither want, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary, we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it.[15]

For Spinoza, regarding something as good depends on desiring it or striving for it or willing it. But what is it to desire, will, or strive for something? I will focus on striving because willing and desiring are defined in terms of striving. Willing is striving that is related to the mind alone (and not the body). Desiring is appetite together with consciousness of this appetite.[16] Appetite – and hence, desire – is defined as striving related to the mind and body together (3p9s).

Spinoza's notion of striving stems from the Cartesian notion of bodily striving or tending.[17] Descartes says, e.g., that bodies, insofar as they are simple and undivided, tend to remain in the same state and, in particular, to move in a straight line given that they are moving.[18] As Descartes stresses (in *Principles* III 56), such striving carries no psychological presupposition; it merely indicates that a thing will behave in a certain way in certain circumstances, not that bodies have any thoughts "from which this striving proceeds." Non-thinking bodies, as well as thinking minds, can strive for Descartes. The general account of striving at work in Descartes is this:

> *x* strives to do F if and only if *x*'s state is such that *x* will do F unless prevented by external causes.[19]

What it is for *x* to strive to do F is for a certain conditional claim to be true of *x*, viz. that, given *x*'s current state, *x* will do F unless prevented by external causes. Thus, e.g., if a body is moving, it tends to keep moving: it will continue to move unless prevented by external causes.

Spinoza, as I and others have argued, draws on the Cartesian notion of striving among bodies in order to fashion his own account of the

striving of things in general. My argument is based on his use of the notion of striving not only in 3p6 (which is remarkably similar to Descartes's claims about striving in bodies in the *Principles*) but also in the exposition of Descartes's views in Spinoza's *Descartes's Principles of Philosophy* (DPP).

For both Descartes and Spinoza, for a thing to strive in this sense is for it to exert some causal power. Thus, see Descartes's *Principles* II 43, where he explains bodily force in terms of the austere notion of striving or tending that I just described.[20] And consider Spinoza's talk of a thing's striving in terms of its opposition to other things (3p5 and 3p6d). Thus, for Spinoza as well as for Descartes, the striving of a thing is to be understood in terms of its causal power. Since willing and desiring are, as we have seen, just forms of striving, they too are to be understood in causal terms for Spinoza. In particular, to desire something is simply, for Spinoza, to exert some force in a given direction.[21]

Let's return to Spinoza's stripped-down account of acting for a reason. When we act for a reason, what happens is *not* that we do something because we regard that action as somehow good or worth pursuing. Rather, we do it because we desire or strive to act in that way. And, as we can now see from the account of striving in general, we desire that course of action because we are such that we will act in that way unless we are prevented by external causes, i.e., as we have seen, because we are exerting some force – some causal power – in a given direction. So, for Spinoza, it is not goodness or perceived goodness that drives our action; instead, we are driven by our current state to a certain action. As we are being impelled in this way, we may be aware of the direction of our tending, but we are typically unaware of the causes of this striving. Because of this ignorance of the true cause of our action, we may mistakenly regard the thought of the object toward which our striving tends as the cause of the action. In this respect, we are, for Spinoza, like the conscious falling stone in his fanciful example in letter 58 to Schuller. Spinoza begins by asking us to consider that:

> A stone received from the impulsion of an external cause a fixed quantity of motion whereby it will necessarily continue to move when the impulsion of the external cause has ceased. The stone's continuance in motion is constrained, not because it is necessary, but because it must be defined by the impulsion received from the external cause.
>
> (G IV 266, *Spinoza: The Letters*, p. 284)

Spinoza goes on to say:

> What here applies to the stone must be understood of every individual thing, however complex its structure and various its functions.

> For every single thing is necessarily determined by an external cause to exist and to act in a fixed and determinate way.
>
> (*Ibid.*)

Then Spinoza draws the analogy:

> Conceive, if you please, that while continuing in motion the stone thinks, and knows that it is endeavoring, as far as it can [*quantum potest*], to continue in motion. Now this stone, since it is conscious only of its endeavor and is not at all indifferent, will surely think it is completely free, and that it continues in motion for no other reason than that it so wishes. This, then, is that human freedom which all men boast of possessing, and which consists solely in this, that men are conscious of their desire and unaware of the causes by which they are determined.
>
> (*Ibid.*)

Spinoza speaks in a similar vein in 3p9s when he says that our action is not the result of our judging something to be good or worthy of pursuit.[22]

If our actions are blind in this sense – if they are not driven by our appreciation of what is good or beneficial to us – why, then, is it the case that, as Spinoza emphasizes in 3p12, our actions are all strivings for self-preservation and for increase in power? Without our awareness of what is good to direct us, how can it be anything other than a great and unacceptable coincidence that our actions tend towards our benefit?

Spinoza's answer – which cannot be explored here – ultimately appeals to the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR), the principle according to which the existence or the non-existence of each thing has an explanation.[23] The self-preserving nature of our actions is due to the fact that in order for an action to be *my* action, it must tend toward my preservation or the increase in my power of acting. For Spinoza, a being that did not act to preserve itself and that actively destroyed itself would violate the PSR. The notion of a being that does not tend toward its own preservation is, for Spinoza, unintelligible.[24]

Thus, Spinoza gives a stripped-down account of acting for a reason: acting for a reason is simply to be directed in a certain way by one's current state. In offering this stripped-down account, I want to explicitly embrace one of its conclusions, viz. that, for Spinoza, when it comes to acting for a reason, the actions of so-called rational beings like us and the actions of so-called non-rational beings like rocks and dogs are fundamentally the same. The conditionals of striving hold true of rocks and dogs as well as of us. Rocks and dogs strive, and, to the extent that they are conscious (and they *are* to some extent conscious, for Spinoza),[25] rocks and dogs thus desire certain things. Rocks and dogs thus have all the elements that go into our acting for a reason.[26] Spinoza thus

thoroughly naturalizes acting for a reason: everything plays by the same rules, even when it comes to acting for a reason, and so, for Spinoza, as I have argued, acting and acting for a reason are pervasive. This is exactly what we'd expect given Spinoza's famous naturalistic pronouncement in the preface to Part 3 of the *Ethics*:

> Nature is always the same, and its virtue and power of acting are everywhere one and the same, that is, the laws and rules of Nature according to which all things happen, and change from one form to another, are always and everywhere the same. So the way of understanding the nature of anything, of whatever kind, must also be the same, namely, through the universal laws and rules of nature.
>
> (G II 138/13–18)

In giving this stripped-down account of acting for a reason in Spinoza, I have not engaged directly with what might seem to be a relevant question prominently raised in much – and especially recent – work on Spinoza: does he allow for final causation anywhere in the world? This question is fraught, in part, because there is much diversity of opinion as to what is required and sufficient for final causation. The answer to this question depends on how ends (*fines*, *teloi*) are understood. If an end is merely the effect at which a causal process is aimed in the sense that it is the effect that will occur unless other things interfere with the activity of the cause, then, for Spinoza, *all* actions have an end, and final causation is pervasive. This is roughly the view of Paul Hoffman, who offers a reading of Aquinas in order to show that this weak conception of end is viable.[27]

However, if ends are taken in a more robust sense, according to which they are not only the outcomes (including anticipated outcomes) at which a process is aimed but also serve to explain or direct or govern those actions, then Spinoza, who holds that the outcomes of actions (including anticipated outcomes) do no explanatory work with regard to the action, would deny the presence of final causation anywhere in the world. Recall his claim that the judgment that something is good or worth pursuing does not explain why we act or strive to act. John Carriero, invoking more or less this robust sense of end, denies that Spinoza relies on final causation, and Jonathan Bennett's influential interpretation can be seen as in this spirit as well.[28]

Hoffman and Carriero thus disagree on an important point – whether Spinoza accepts or is committed to final causation – but this disagreement arises only in the context of a deeper agreement between them concerning the crucial point that, for Spinoza, striving (and desire and will) are to be understood in the stripped-down sense (a sense that is also to be found in Descartes's account of bodily motions). On this understanding of striving, what a thing strives to do is simply a function of its

current state. Hoffman thinks that such striving is compatible with real final causation, given an understanding of "end" as simply the outcome that a given process will have unless outside things interfere. Thus, Hoffman regards Descartes's view as compatible with final causation in the extended world and Spinoza's view as compatible with final causation throughout nature. Carriero invokes a more robust understanding of "end": ends explain or govern actions. In this sense of "end," neither Descartes (for the extended world) nor Spinoza (in general) accepts final causation.[29]

For the purposes of this paper, there is no need to adjudicate between Hoffman and Carriero on this point. All my interpretation requires is the point on which they (and I) agree, viz. that Spinozistic (and Cartesian) striving is to be understood in the stripped-down sense I have specified. And, in light of this agreement, I would like to raise a possible difficulty with Don Garrett's interpretation in his rich and influential paper "Teleology in Spinoza and Early Modern Rationalism" (1999). Hoffman and Carriero see Descartes (in the case of bodily motion) and Spinoza as roughly in the same position as far as final causation is concerned. However, Garrett sees Spinoza and Descartes as in significantly different positions on this matter: for Garrett, Spinoza accepts final causation in finite things in general, and Descartes (in the case of bodies) rejects it. But, I would say, given that Descartes's account of the striving of bodies is the model for Spinoza's account of striving in general, it is hard to see how Descartes can be treated so differently from Spinoza as far as final causation is concerned.

Putting aside the debate over the terms "end" and "final causation," we can return to our conclusions that, for Spinoza, to act is simply to cause; an action is simply a causing; and to act for a reason or with an intention is, again, fundamentally just to cause something. It is these conclusions that enable us to see that Spinoza thinks that action is pervasive and, contra Davidson and Anscombe, that there is no distinction between action and non-action. In denying this distinction, Spinoza – unlike Davidson and Anscombe – rejects a presupposition of question (a)

> a What is it in virtue of which actions are differentiated from non-actions?

and thus Spinoza rejects question (a) itself.

I will close this section with a reflection about Spinoza's method in his treatment of action. In reaching the results that, for Spinoza, all things are actions, and question (a) is to be rejected, I focused at a crucial point on his view in 1p25c, 1p36d, etc. that each mode is simply an aspect of the activity of God or substance. Because an aspect of a thing is metaphysically posterior to the thing of which it is an aspect, God's activity is metaphysically prior to the activity of finite things. Further and crucially for the methodological point I would like to make, to understand

the activity of finite things, Spinoza appeals to the activity of God (and, in fact, to the activity that is God). Thus, for Spinoza, God's activity is not only metaphysically but also epistemically prior to the activity of finite things. Spinoza thus turns the approach to the philosophy of action around: many contemporary and recent philosophers seek first to understand our actions and the actions of finite things, and then, on that basis, such philosophers seek to understand God's action or the action of the whole of nature, if they seek to understand God's actions or nature's actions at all. Thus, for example, Leibniz seeks to understand God's actions on the model of our actions. And most contemporary philosophers of action do not appeal to God's actions (or the actions of nature as a whole) at all in seeking to understand our actions. By contrast, Spinoza understands our actions and the actions of finite things in general on the basis of understanding God's actions. His general God-first ontology and epistemology thus structures his philosophy of action.[30] Not only does his way of rejecting question (a) turn on his God-first methodology; so too does his way of rejecting question (b), as we will now see.

3 The Alleged Distinction between One Action and Another

Even if there is no distinction between action and non-action, there might still be – as Anscombe and Davidson presume – a distinction between one action and another action. If Spinoza draws such a distinction, then our second question,

b What is it in virtue of which one action is differentiated from other actions?

arises in full force and demands an answer. As I mentioned, Davidson and Anscombe, and philosophers of action generally do not answer this question satisfactorily. Spinoza, though, is better off because he denies that, ultimately, there are distinctions among actions, and so – as with question (a) – he simply rejects question (b).

To see that he does, let's return to the distinction I drew between action in the strong sense, for Spinoza, and action in the weak sense. An action in the strong sense occurs when a thing is the complete cause of an effect. An action in the weak sense occurs when a thing is a partial cause of a certain effect. Focusing on action in the weak sense, I want to ask: what are such actions *in*? To understand the significance of this question, let me say a bit about Spinoza's notion of being in and its relation to the other central Spinozistic notions of causation and conception.

For Spinoza, each thing that exists is either in itself or in another (1ax1): it is not intelligible for there to be a thing that is not in something. The things that are in another Spinoza calls "modes" (1D5). That he uses the term "mode" indicates that for him, modes are in a substance

in the sense of inhering in it; they are like states or properties of substance. In general, inhering in a thing is a way of being dependent on that thing. Modes depend on a substance by inhering in it, and a substance's being in itself or inhering in itself (1D3) is a way of its depending only on itself in order to exist.[31]

Turn now to the relation between inherence, on the one hand, and Spinoza's conceptions of causation and conception, on the other hand. Much has been written of late by others as well as by myself about these connections.[32] Let me present some relevant highlights of Spinoza's position as I see it. First, for Spinoza, the in and conceived through relations are coextensive, that is, *x* is conceived through *y* if and only if *x* is in *y*. Spinoza defines a mode as a thing that is in another and is conceived through that other (1D5). And he defines substance as that which is in itself and is conceived through itself (1D3). As Spinoza stresses (1p4d), there is nothing in the world beside the one substance and its modes, so it follows that a thing is in another if and only if it is conceived or understood through that other.[33]

For Spinoza, causation is also coextensive with conceptual connection. To see this, consider, 1ax4: "the knowledge of an effect depends on and involves the knowledge of the cause." As Spinoza employs this axiom, it is clear that for him, if something is caused by a thing, then the first thing is conceived through or understood through the second (1p6c). He also makes clear that he accepts the converse: if one thing is conceived through a second thing, then the first is caused by the second (see 1p25d). Thus, for him, conceptual relations are equivalent to causal relations.[34]

With this sketch of the Spinozistic apparatus of causation, conception, and inherence, let's return to weak actions. First note that weak actions are, in some respects, passive; they are effects of causes distinct from themselves. Weak actions can only be modes, for Spinoza, given that weak actions are only partial causes of certain effects. As partial causes, weak actions are limited, so, they cannot be substances and must therefore be modes. As modes, weak actions must enter into a network of causal relations, a network in which the weak actions have both causes and effects (see, e.g., 1p28). Thus weak actions are, in some respects, passive, and they are caused by other such modes or weak actions.

Another crucial feature of weak actions is that, considered under the attribute of Thought, they are confused and inadequate ideas. Weak actions, as we just saw, are externally caused by other things. As Spinoza makes clear, a weak action, considered as a mode of thought, is an idea that is confusedly of a particular bodily state (viz. the bodily state that is parallel to the idea, according to Spinoza's doctrine of parallelism) and of the cause of that bodily state.[35]

With the passivity and confusion of weak actions in mind, consider, once again, the question: what are weak actions in? The weak actions

cannot be fully in any mode or collection of modes. Take a weak action apparently of mine, such as my thinking that there is a rock approaching me. This is a weak action because it is a partial cause of certain effects, such as, perhaps, my ducking. This weak action is, it might seem, in me to some extent, but it cannot be fully in me, and that's because the weak action is caused by – and thus, given the coextensiveness of the in and caused by relations, also to some extent in – external finite objects that cause the weak action (such as, perhaps, the rock). This is fine, but we still have not found what the weak action is fully in. After all, it is caused from outside both the rock and me. Indeed, no matter how far back we go in the chain of finite causes of the weak action, we will not arrive at an individual or collection of individuals that the weak action is fully in. Perhaps then, the weak action is fully in God. The reason that the weak action is not fully in any series of finite causes is that it seems to be caused by something infinite – in particular, it seems to be caused by God.[36] Thus the weak action seems to be in God, and since the weak action is certainly not caused from outside God – after all, nothing is outside God – it seems that the weak action is fully in God. Here, at last, we have found it: we have found what makes the weak action fully intelligible, what the weak action is fully in.

But just when we seem to have achieved this success, we can also see that none of this can be right, that the weak action cannot really be in God at all.[37] Recall that the weak action is both passive and, insofar as it is considered under the attribute of Thought, confused. However, no state – insofar as it is in God – can be either passive or confused. God is not at all passive for Spinoza, i.e. God is not causally affected by things outside God, since there is nothing outside God. Nor can anything in God be confused. Confusion cannot characterize ideas insofar as God has them because confusion is a result of passivity, and, again, God is in no way passive. Spinoza stresses that ideas, insofar as they are in God, are not confused, and they are, indeed, adequate.[38]

So, weak actions, as such, i.e. as passive and confused, are not in God; they cannot be states of God. Nor, as we have just seen, can they be fully in any modes. Thus, weak actions are not fully in anything, and so, they are not fully intelligible. Recall that, for Spinoza, it is not intelligible that there is a thing that is not in something. Weak actions thus literally have no proper place in the world. And because there are, strictly speaking, no weak actions, there are no distinctions among weak actions.

Thus, for Spinoza, genuine actions must be strong actions, i.e. actions that are complete causes of their effects, and if there are to be any distinct actions, the distinct actions in question must be distinct strong actions. But can there be distinct – and thus limited – strong actions, strong actions differentiated from and limited by other strong actions? Well, let's ask our familiar question: what is a strong action *in*? It is not in itself, given that it is limited: this limitedness depends (at least) on

something else, and so, the strong action must, to that extent at least, be dependent on, and so in, something else.

Can our strong action be fully in the collection of strong actions taken together? No, not fully, and this is because the collection of strong actions must include actions that are dependent on something else, viz. God. Can the strong action in question, then, be in God? Again, no, because nothing limited – as this strong action is – can be in or inhere in God. God is, of course, in no way limited. So, limited, differentiated actions, as such, are not in anything and thus are not intelligible and not real. We reach the result, then, that there is no distinction between any actions whatsoever, no limitation of one action by another. When it comes to action, there is at most one action, and since, as we saw, there are no non-actions for Spinoza, all that exists is, at most, one action. What is intelligible is not any distinct actions, but, at most, one action, action not within the whole, but action that is the whole.

Apart from the commitments stemming from Spinoza's notion of inherence, conception, and causation, there is evidence that – in at least certain strands of his thought – Spinoza takes precisely this kind of position. (I'll also highlight in the last section of this paper passages in Spinoza that seem incompatible with this interpretation.) Central to my "all is action" interpretation is that, for Spinoza, distinctions among actions are not real. In this vein, we find him saying in several places that distinctions in general (and thus distinctions among actions) are not real. Thus, he says in Letter 12 that:

> if we attend to quantity as it is in the imagination, which is what we do most often and most easily, we find it to be divisible, finite, composed of parts, and one of many. But if we attend to it as it is in the intellect, and perceive the thing as it is in itself, which is very difficult, then we find it to be infinite, indivisible, and unique.[39]

Also, in Letter 50, Spinoza famously says that determination is negation (*determinatio negatio est*). Since to be determined is to be limited, and since limitation presupposes multiplicity (at least, the multiplicity of the limited and the "limiter"), I understand him to be saying in Letter 50 that things, insofar as they are multiple and limited, are negations, i.e. non-beings, and thus not real.[40]

Also, in his discussion of the "free man" toward the end of Part 4 of the *Ethics*, Spinoza argues that there can only be inadequate cognition of evil, i.e. of a decrease in power of acting.[41] Since for him, truth and adequacy of ideas are coextensive,[42] it follows that any idea of a decrease in power of acting and the passivity that such decrease involves cannot be true. In other words, evil, decrease in power, and passivity are not real (or are not fully real). These passages point at least to the non-reality of any weak actions, which, as we have seen, are caused from outside

the agent and are thus passive. These passages also point to the non-reality of differentiated actions in general on the assumption – plausibly attributed to Spinoza – that for a thing to be differentiated from other things, it must be limited by certain things and, in that respect, passive.

Also, in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, section 13 points in the direction of such unity, oneness, or lack of differentiation in nature. There, Spinoza speaks of "the union that the mind has with the rest of nature [*unionis quam mens cum tota Natura habet*]" (G II 8).

These passages and the other considerations I have advanced indicate that Spinoza rejects distinctions among actions and thus rejects a presupposition of question (b):

> b What is it in virtue of which one action is differentiated from other actions?

Thus, just as he rejects – instead of answering – question (a), so too he rejects and does not answer question (b). Spinoza thus denies distinctions among actions, distinctions that are taken for granted in all or nearly all contemporary philosophy of action.

In taking this heterodox stand, Spinoza is once again relying on his God-first methodology when it comes to action. He rejects question (b) not by focusing on – and by treating as metaphysically or epistemically basic – human, ordinary actions but by focusing on – and treating as metaphysically and epistemically fundamental – God's activity, the action that is of God and that is God. Thus, we see again Spinoza's God-first philosophy of action in action.

4 The Parmenidean Ascent

On one interpretation, especially to be found in the work of G. E. L. Owen,[43] Parmenides – by wielding something like the PSR – challenges the intelligibility of the very notion of not-being and thus the notion of any distinction between one thing and another, i.e. any case of one thing *not being* another. I adopt this reading of Parmenides, and so, I believe that, for Parmenides, there is no non-being and no distinctions because non-being cannot be explained or even thought of. All that there is is, at most, the one being itself. In reaching this conclusion – in making what I call the Parmenidean Ascent – we regard certain distinctions as unintelligible, and, for this reason, we, as it were, rise above these distinctions. In making this move, we do not lose anything intelligible; rather, we come, finally, to a better appreciation of the reality that transcends the now-discredited distinctions among things.

What Spinoza does when he rejects questions (a) and (b), and sees action in his God-first, non-discrete way is make such a Parmenidean Ascent. These moves in Spinoza are thus steps toward Eleaticism in his philosophy of action. In rejecting questions (a) and (b), he elides the

distinctions in which actions are usually taken to be involved. Just as, for Parmenides, when we transcend the unintelligible distinctions between individual beings, the one being, the whole, remains as the only thing, and individual beings do not, so too when we, with Spinoza, transcend the unintelligible distinctions between individual actions or between actions and mere events, the one action remains, and individual actions (and events) do not. If we lose individual actions, we lose nothing intelligible because – as the Spinozistic argument shows – individual actions are not intelligible. Rather, in taking this higher perspective on the whole as one action – or rather a perspective on God or nature as pure act (*actus purus*), one might say – we are capturing reality more intelligibly than when we speak of individual actions or when we try to carve up the world into actions and events. This is Spinoza's Parmenidean Ascent with regard to action: we elide distinctions that actions are thought to involve, and, in so doing, we have not given up anything intelligible, and, indeed, we grasp reality better.

By thus focusing on the action of God or substance and by rejecting the questions that guide Davidson and Anscombe, and many other philosophers of action, Spinoza's thought points toward a reorientation of the philosophy of action. His philosophy of action embodies a way of avoiding – on principled grounds – the difficulties that beset these other conceptions of action, difficulties brought on by the problematic assumption, shared by Davidson and Anscombe, and their followers, of differentiated actions. Adopting the God-first methodology and denying the reality of differentiated actions – as Spinoza does – may be the only way out of the impasse that currently threatens the philosophy of action.

5 Strands

I close with candid observations about the textual support for this reading of Spinoza and, based on these observations, some reflections concerning methods for studying the history of philosophy.

As I emphasized, Spinoza's texts do not universally support my interpretation – or at least, that aspect of my interpretation according to which there are no differentiated actions, and there is at most one action, the action that is – and is of – the whole. At times, Spinoza seems to be committed to real, limited beings and thus to real, limited actions. For example, he seems to allow that there can be adequate ideas of finite things.[44] Adequate ideas are, as I have mentioned, true, and so, he is committed to there really being finite, limited things and thus, presumably, to finite, limited – i.e. to weak – actions. Further, his famous doctrine of parallelism – "the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (2p7) – seems to be an explicit statement that particular, distinct things are real.[45]

Such passages seem to be in conflict with the passages I have invoked (Letter 12, 1p15s, the free man passages, Letter 50, TIE sec. 13) and with the other Spinozistic commitments that support my Parmenidean reading of Spinoza. What are we to do in the face of such conflicts? I don't believe that the Parmenidean implications of the passages I have cited and the commitments I have derived from the texts can simply be explained away. Nor do I – generous person that I am! – think that the anti-Parmenidean implications of the passages on the other side of the ledger can be simply dismissed either.

So, again, what are we to do? I am only claiming to isolate a strand in Spinoza's thinking and to see how that strand opens up a new possibility for understanding action in a Parmenidean, radically monistic way. I don't see the need for me or for any other interpreter of whatever stripe to pronounce one side the winner or to regard certain texts as definitive and others as to be downplayed or ignored or even dismissed. In light of the conflict, it may be more appropriate simply to bring the various strands to light and to life, and to articulate their meanings and implications, meanings to which Spinoza was obviously sensitive.

It's worth noting that giving the laurel to one side or the other in this context is not something that Spinoza does. It's not as if, with regard to this topic, he offers a guide to his texts that explicitly shows us how to read the passages that are in apparent conflict. And even if he did, we would still have to worry or wonder about how to interpret that alleged guide. Since he does not – and perhaps cannot – definitively declare either the Parmenidean or the non-Parmenidean side the winner, why should we think that we are in a better position to do so?

This question leads to deeper metaphysical and epistemological questions. First, metaphysical: what is it for a side to be the winner, anyway? What is it for a position to be the position that Spinoza *really* holds? In light of his various conflicting claims, what could make it the case that he holds one position rather than another that he also states or implies? Even if he were to say to himself, in his heart of hearts as it were, "Despite some things that I may have said, *this* position is my official position," why should such an inner statement (whether or not we can know that he made it) carry any authority? Why should this be determinative of what Spinoza's view really is? The answer to this question is by no means clear.

And this talk about purported inner statements of Spinoza only makes more salient the epistemological question I would also like to ask: can we get at – come to know – what Spinoza really holds except by appealing to more texts and other data which, of course, are typically subject to rival interpretations, the dispute between which we (again) have no firm way to adjudicate?

I am not embracing specific answers to these troubling metaphysical and epistemological questions here, but given the potential and looming indeterminacies – both metaphysical and epistemological – it may be

better just to reveal the strands and their diverse meanings and implications than to impose an artificial unity on the text. Such unity must be in some respects unprincipled and arbitrary, and can only serve to obscure meanings that are genuinely in the text.

In the case of action, in particular, one benefit of the method of interpretation whereby the various strands in Spinoza's thought are kept alive and articulated is that this method provides us with a perspective from which we can begin to appreciate that – where others see, or are committed to, artificial, unprincipled, and arbitrary distinctions among actions and between actions and non-actions – there are, in fact, no differentiated actions. Ironically, perhaps, it is by separating strands in Spinoza's thinking – where others might seek to impose an artificial, unprincipled, and arbitrary unity on the text – that one arrives at a beautiful vista which enables us to reconceive the philosophy of action in a Parmenidean spirit. We thus avoid imposing on reality – as others seem to do – an artificial, unprincipled, and arbitrary differentiation of actions. Thus, an approach to the text that embraces differentiation of strands and avoids artificial unity in the text can lead to a view of action itself that embraces the unity of action and avoids artificial differentiation of actions.[46]

Notes

1 See, e.g., Velleman (2000a, 1), Setiya (2007, 24 n.8), Ford (2011, 95).
2 The *locus classicus* is Davidson (1980a).
3 The *locus classicus* is Anscombe (2000).
4 See, e.g., Peacocke (1979) and Smith (2012).
5 See, e.g., Davidson (1980c).
6 Davidson (1980b, 79).
7 See Peacocke (1979), Velleman (2000a, 2000b), Railton (2004), and Smith (2012).
8 See Stoutland (2011, 15–16).
9 Unless otherwise noted, all references to Spinoza's works are to the *Ethics*.
10 For some discussion of "actual" in Spinoza's term "actual essence," see Della Rocca (1996a, 188 n.26).
11 Here, I am endorsing the interpretation of Spinozistic modes as states or properties or aspects of God or substance, and I reject those interpretations of modes – such as Curley's – which see modes merely as caused by substance and not as properties (etc.) of substance. For discussion, see Curley (1991), Carriero (1995), and Melamed (2013, chapter 1).
12 See Hoffman (2009).
13 And what does causation amount to for Spinoza? The answer, I would say, is conceptual connection. We'll see some indications of this account of causation later in the paper.
14 Anscombe (2000, 9).
15 See also 3p39s and 3p2s (G II 143). This passage is nicely discussed in Carriero (2005, 139–140).
16 I will have a bit to say later about the basis of Spinoza's conception of consciousness.
17 Contra Hoffman (2009, 303), I regard tending and striving as equivalent for Descartes, as Descartes himself indicates in *Principles* III 57. See also Della Rocca (1996b, 195–196) and Garber (1992, 354 n.10 and 355 n.29).

18 See *Principles* II 37, 39. For a discussion of the phrase "simple and undivided," see Garber (1992, 212).
19 See Della Rocca (1996b, 195, 2008b, 146).
20 See Della Rocca (1999, 58).
21 In fact, consciousness – the other key notion in addition to that of striving in Spinoza's definition of desire is, I believe, also to be understood in terms of a thing's causal power. See Della Rocca (2008b, 117–118).
22 I am indebted here to Carriero's discussion (2005, 135–137). See also Carriero (2018) and Hübner (2018).
23 See 1p11d2.
24 See Della Rocca (2008b, 139). For ways of handling some obvious potential counterexamples, see Della Rocca (2008b, chapter 4).
25 See Della Rocca (2008b, 108–118).
26 For some discussion, see Hübner (2018) and her claim therein that "On Spinoza's account, every being will experience desire to some degree, just as every being wills and every being experiences appetition" (p. 362).
27 See Hoffman (2009, 2011).
28 Carriero (2005) and Bennett (1984, chapter 9). For some important criticisms of the workings of Bennett's interpretation, see Lin (2006).
29 There is much more to be said, of course, about whether Descartes allows for any end-directed activity in the realm of bodies, especially living bodies.
30 Melamed (2013, xv–xvii). In this light, we can see that Davidson and Anscombe treat human beings as paradigmatic agents in a way that Spinoza – with his God-first methodology – decidedly does not.
31 Again, I am endorsing the view of modes to be found in Carriero and Melamed and others.
32 Della Rocca (2008a), Newlands (2012), Melamed (2013, chapter 1), and Morrison (2013).
33 Part of this paragraph is taken from my paper "Striving, Oomph, and Intelligibility" (Della Rocca 2012, 60–61).
34 This paragraph was adapted from Della Rocca (2012, 56).
35 See 2p16 and its corollaries, and Della Rocca (1996a, chapter 3, 2008a, 37–38).
36 The weak action also seems to be caused by certain infinite modes which follow – directly or indirectly – from the absolute nature of God's attributes. But this intermediate step between God's attributes and the weak actions can be passed over here because the problem that I want to raise emerges more clearly from considering the apparent infinite cause, God.
37 Parts of this paragraph and of the previous one were adapted from Della Rocca (2008a, 48) and from Della Rocca (2012, 62).
38 See 2p36d and Joachim (1901, 114–115).
39 Ep. 12 (G IV 56/10–14). See also 1p15s (G II 59) for a very similar passage.
40 See also 1p8s1: "being finite is really in part a negation." Franks has a different reading of this sentence from letter 50. See Franks (2018).
41 For the connection between evil and decrease in power, see 4D2.
42 Letter 60, and 2p34, 2p41d, 2p43d, 3p58d, and Della Rocca (1996a, 109).
43 Owen (1960). For rival interpretations, see, e.g., the discussions in Curd (1998) and Palmer (2016).
44 See 2p40s2, 5p22, 5p31.
45 Melamed helpfully points to these and other parts of Spinoza's texts that are in tension with the kind of reading I have offered. See Melamed (2011, 211–213).
46 This paper is a much-changed descendant of papers that were presented at Tel Aviv University in May 2013, at the American Philosophical Association

meetings in December 2014, and at a meeting of the Spinoza Gesellschaft in Wittenberg in July 2016. The discussions on these occasions were wonderful and led to many improvements. I am especially grateful to Noa Naaman-Zauderer, Tom Vinci, and Eugene Marshall for their insights and encouragement.

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3 Spinoza's Activities

Freedom without Independence

Matthew J. Kisner

In Part 1 of the *Ethics*, Spinoza is concerned with various sorts of dependence relationships: the dependence of modes on attributes, of attributes on substance and, conversely, the independence of attributes from one another, and the independence of the one substance.[1] In articulating these relationships Spinoza relies on a toolbox of basic dependence concepts: causal dependence (the dependence of an effect on a cause), conceptual dependence (where the conception of one thing requires the conception of another) and inherence (the dependence of one thing being in another). Consequently, understanding Spinoza's claims about the various sorts of dependence requires understanding these more fundamental dependence relations, and how they structure the conceptual space of Spinoza's metaphysics. Much recent controversy revolves around the basic question of whether these dependence relations are supposed to be co-extensive, in other words, whether all instances of causal dependence, conceptual dependence and inherence, are also instances of all the others. While Curley has argued that they are, a number of dissenters argue that not all causation involves inherence, which significantly complicates Spinoza's metaphysics.[2]

This chapter aims to draw attention to an analogous set of issues in the subsequent parts of the *Ethics*, which turn to human psychology and ethics. There Spinoza's claims rest on a basic set of concepts that he regards as kinds of activity: striving, power, virtue, freedom, perfection, among others. Steven Nadler articulates a standard way of thinking about the relationship between these activity concepts:

> a number of terms in Spinoza are co-extensive and refer to the same ideal human condition. We can set up the following equation for Spinoza: virtue = knowledge = activity = freedom = power = perfection. Necessarily, the more virtuous a person is, the more knowledge he has, the more free, active and powerful he is, and the more he has achieved of human perfection.[3]

This chapter counters that Spinoza's various notions of activity, like his various notions of dependence, are not coextensive and do not refer to the same thing. In particular, Spinoza employs two basic notions of

activity: striving and being an adequate cause. While these notions of activity are closely connected, they are not coextensive because a thing can strive without being an adequate cause of an effect. I defend that Spinoza's various other activity concepts – virtue, perfection, reason and so forth – are pegged to one of these two basic notions of activity, so that Spinoza's activity concepts are bifurcated into two categories, which are not coextensive with one another. Indeed, the members of each category may not be coextensive with one another.

Because these basic activity concepts play a fundamental role in Spinoza's philosophical claims, this thesis has far-reaching implications. Most notably, the standard way of thinking mentioned above indicates that Spinoza's basic ethical concepts, such as freedom and virtue, are coextensive with being an adequate cause. Since an adequate cause is the sole cause of some effect, this reading implies that freedom and virtue amount to being a sole cause and, thus, to being causally independent and self-sufficient. I argue, in contrast, that human freedom and virtue are coextensive with striving, which does not require causal independence. On this reading, human freedom and virtue can include instances of causal dependence, which implies that Spinoza's ethics takes a more favorable view of human dependence, passivity and cooperation.

The first section of the chapter explains the two basic kinds of activity. The second section considers whether several other notions of activity are coextensive with or require either of these two basic kinds of activity. The third section considers how the activity of freedom is related to these other activities. The fourth and fifth sections examine the consequences of my reading for Spinoza's views of passivity and reason respectively.

1 Two Basic Kinds of Activity

How does Spinoza understand activity? Since things are active foremost when they act, we should begin by considering his view of action.[4] Spinoza defines "*agere* (to act)" as being an adequate cause: "I say that we act when something happens, in us or outside us, of which we are the adequate cause" (3D2). He defines "adequate cause," in turn, as follows:

> I call that cause adequate whose effect can be clearly and distinctly perceived through it. But I call it partial, or inadequate, if its effect cannot be understood through it alone.
>
> (3D1)

In other words, a cause is adequate if it is the sole conceptual basis for conceiving an effect. As many scholars have explained, Spinoza also holds that causation and conception are co-extensive.[5] In other words:

> x causes y, if and only if y is conceived through x.

In light of this biconditional, 3D1 implies that an adequate cause is not only the sole basis for conceiving some effect but also the sole cause of the effect. Given this explanation of an adequate cause, 3D2 defines acting as equivalent to being the sole cause of some effect or, in other words, being causally independent. It follows that we are active when we are an independent cause. I will refer to this kind of activity as adequacy-activity.

Spinoza countenances another notion of activity in his theory of *conatus* or striving. Striving is the power by which all things, including singular things or finite modes, "express, in a certain and determinate way, God's power" (3p6d). Spinoza identifies this power as the "actual essence" of all things (3p7) or, in other words, the essence of things that exist in space and time. He describes this essential power as striving to persevere in being (3p6), which includes both a kind of existential inertia, the power to persist in existence, and the power to resist powers that oppose or counter the thing's existence.

Striving should also be understood as an activity. In contrast to the Aristotelian view that essential powers are potentials or dispositions, which may be latent and unexpressed, Spinoza conceives of essential powers or strivings as necessarily expressed: "from the given essence of each thing [i.e. its striving] some things necessarily follow" (3p7d). In making this claim, he does not mean that a thing's striving is necessarily productive, that is, efficacious in bringing about certain effects, since he recognizes that a thing's striving can be overwhelmed by opposing powers. Rather, Spinoza means that a thing's striving necessarily exercises its causal powers toward bringing about certain effects.[6] It follows that striving is necessarily active for "activity" refers, at the most basic level, to causing, that is, exercising one's causal powers. Spinoza recognizes that striving necessarily involves activity when he equates our striving with our "power of acting [*potentia agendi*]": "the mind's striving, or power of thinking, is equal to and at one in nature with the body's striving, or power of acting" (3p28d). I will refer to this kind of activity as striving-activity.

What, then, is the relationship between these two ways of being active, between being an adequate cause and striving? Clearly, they are closely connected. Spinoza holds that an adequate cause brings about an effect from its nature: "we are an adequate cause . . . when something in us or outside us follows from our nature, which can be clearly and distinctly understood through it alone" (3D2). Since, as we have seen, Spinoza understands the natures of all things as their strivings (3p7), this passage claims that an adequate cause brings about an effect entirely from its striving. This implies that being an adequate cause is a way of striving, more specifically, striving independently, that is, striving in such a way that the effect comes about from the thing's striving alone. Thus, adequacy-activity is a kind of striving-activity. Nevertheless, we

must distinguish them as different kinds of activities because things can strive without being an adequate cause when they are partial causes of effects, as Spinoza makes clear in 3p7d:

> The power of each thing, or the striving by which it (*either alone or with others*) does anything, or strives to do anything – that is (by 3p6), the power, or striving, by which it strives to persevere in its being, is nothing but the given, or actual, essence of the thing itself. (emphasis added)

The passage claims that a thing strives when it "does anything" "with others" or, in other words, when it strives in cooperation with external things. In this case, the thing is striving-active, but it cannot be an adequate or sole cause and, thus, cannot be adequacy-active.

It is also important to note how these two notions of activity are conceptually distinct. The main difference is that adequacy-activity is fundamentally a relational concept: to say that something is or isn't adequacy-active is to say something about its relationship to other things, specifically, its causal dependence or independence from them, which is not the case with striving-activity. Because of this difference, the opposite of adequacy-activity is causal dependence and passivity, whereas the opposite of striving-activity, if it even has an opposite, is rather a lack of striving, inactivity.

I should mention another possible conceptual difference, which is merely apparent and specious. One might think that adequacy-activity is a categorical concept, whereas striving-activity is a scalar or incremental concept. In other words, whether something is a sole cause (and, consequently, an adequate cause) is not a matter of degree – it either is or isn't – whereas something can strive to varying degrees. This is not a genuine distinction between the two because, as I have argued elsewhere, Spinoza sometimes conceives of adequacy-activity as scalar: one can be a more or less adequate-cause.[7] In these cases, a thing's degree of adequacy is determined by its degree of causal independence, that is, the degree to which it causes an effect in relation to other causes: the more I bring about an effect from my own power, with less input from other causes, the more I am an adequate cause and the greater my adequacy-activity.

Nevertheless, this merely apparent difference points toward a real, second conceptual difference between the notions of activity: adequacy-activity is a threshold property, whereas striving-activity is not. A threshold property is one that only obtains when a thing has a certain amount of something. For instance, being a heap of sand is a threshold property because there must be a certain amount of sand present in order for an aggregate of sand to count as a heap. In the same way, a day only qualifies as a hot day when the high temperature crosses a

certain threshold. While Spinoza does not treat adequacy-activity as an all or nothing property, he does regard it as a threshold property: one must obtain some degree of causal independence before one qualifies as an adequate cause and, thus, as adequacy-active (since I have defined adequacy-activity as the activity of being an adequate cause). That being an adequate cause is a threshold property is evident from Spinoza's very distinction between adequate and inadequate causes (and relatedly between adequate and inadequate ideas), which would be rendered meaningless if any degree of causal independence were sufficient to make a cause adequate. Striving-activity, meanwhile, is clearly not a threshold concept: any amount of striving is sufficient to say that a thing strives and is striving-active.

Because of these conceptual differences, we can easily devise examples where one's striving and independence come apart. First, consider a case where one's degree of striving changes, while one's degree of independence does not. For instance, lifting a twenty-pound weight requires greater power and striving than lifting a ten-pound weight, but if one lifts both weights with the same degree of assistance from other things, then one's adequacy-activity is the same in both cases. Second, consider a case where one's striving increases, while one's degree of independence decreases. Suppose that I bench press a hundred eighty pounds, but a spotter helps me by lifting ten pounds of the weight. In this case, I strive more than in the case where I lift one pound by myself, even though my degree of independence has decreased.

The difference between these two notions of activity is also evident in considering the upper limit for both notions of activity. A thing achieves the greatest degree of adequacy-activity when it acts entirely from itself. So, imagine that I lift a paper clip entirely from my own powers – imagination is required here since it is not clear that one is ever able to bring about an effect entirely from her own powers. In this case, I have achieved the greatest degree of adequacy-activity, at least, with respect to that effect. However, we would not say that lifting the paper clip is the greatest degree of my striving-activity; in fact, it is not obvious that the concept of striving contains any notion of an upper limit since we strive open-endedly for greater power.

2 Spinoza's Activity Concepts

How do these two basic kinds of activity relate to Spinoza's other activity concepts? This section defends that Spinoza's activity concepts are bifurcated into two groups: those pegged to striving-activity – in other words, those coextensive with striving or requiring only the activity of striving – and those pegged to adequacy-activity. To make this case, let us consider the relationship between each of the two basic kinds of activity and Spinoza's other activity concepts, beginning with striving-activity. We have

already seen that a thing's striving is identical to its power of acting. Spinoza implies that striving also is coextensive with perfection when he repeatedly equates increases and decreases in our power of acting with increases and decreases in our perfection. For instance, he equates the state of "passing to a lesser perfection" with the state where "man's power of acting is diminished or restrained" (3DA3exp).

It also appears that our striving is identical with virtue: "By virtue and power I understand the same thing" (4D8). One might object that this definition identifies virtue with being an adequate cause, for it goes on to claim that virtue is man's power, "insofar as he has the power of bringing about certain things, which can be understood through the laws of his nature alone." However, this clause does not restrict a thing's virtue to being an adequate cause. Rather, it identifies virtue with the power by means of which we are an adequate cause. Since this power is our striving, the passage implies that any exercise of one's power is virtuous, regardless of whether one is an adequate cause; this conclusion is necessary to make sense of Spinoza's main claim that virtue and power are "the same thing." Thus, striving = power = virtue = perfection.

On the other hand, adequacy-activity is co-extensive with having adequate ideas. Establishing this point requires proving two conditionals: conceiving an adequate idea implies being an adequate cause, and, conversely, being an adequate cause implies conceiving adequate ideas. The first conditional obtains because Spinoza understands adequate ideas as ideas of which we are an adequate cause. The following is a relatively straightforward proof of this claim: Spinoza holds that adequate ideas represent the causal antecedents of their objects (2p24d), which are bodies (2p13s). According to his parallelism doctrine, ideas are identical to the bodies they represent (2p7s), which entails that adequate ideas represent not only the causal antecedents of their bodily objects but also their own causal antecedents. Since Spinoza holds that things are understood through their causes (1ax4), this entails that adequate ideas are conceived or understood through themselves. Finally, since conception and causation are co-extensive, the fact that adequate ideas are conceived through themselves implies that they are also caused by themselves. Consequently, when we conceive an adequate idea, our mind, which contains the idea, is the sole or adequate cause of the idea.[8]

Now, let us turn to the converse conditional: being an adequate cause implies conceiving an adequate idea. To understand the basis for this conditional, I must say a little more about the parallelism doctrine. It holds that every singular thing is expressed through each of God's attributes: under the attribute of Extension, a thing is expressed as a body, under the attribute of Thought an idea or mind, and so forth, for all of God's infinite attributes. Spinoza holds that each of these expressions is identical to the thing (2p7s) and, furthermore, that the causal relations

between the thing and other things, conceived under any one attribute, must be identical to the causal relations among the corresponding things, conceived under the attribute of Thought (2p7). According to this view, if some thing, such as a body, is an adequate cause of some effect, then the thing must be identical to a mind, which is an adequate cause of the parallel mental effect. Consequently, being an adequate cause implies causing an idea entirely from one's own power at the mental level – in other words, conceiving an idea entirely from one's own mind – which is equivalent to conceiving an adequate idea. Thus, being an adequate cause = conceiving an adequate idea.

Spinoza's theory of adequate ideas, in turn, plays a central role in explaining another activity concept: reason. Spinoza defines reason as having "cognition of the second kind," which conceives things through "common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things" (2p40s2). Since the common notions are necessarily adequate ideas (2p38), this definition identifies reason with conceiving certain kinds of adequate ideas. It follows that reasoning is the activity of conceiving adequate ideas and, thus, adequacy-activity. Of course, this does not imply that reasoning is disconnected from striving-activity. As I argued in Section 1, being an adequate cause – and by extension, conceiving adequate ideas – is a way of striving. Furthermore, Spinoza holds that we strive for increases in our power (e.g. 3p11–12). Since we increase our power through reasoning and understanding (4p26–28), our striving is directed to reasoning.[9] Nevertheless, reason is not identical to our striving since we can strive when we do not use reason, as I will explain in greater detail in the final section.

Although reasoning is a kind of adequacy-activity, it would be a mistake to suppose that reason is coextensive with adequacy-activity since it does not appear that conceiving adequate ideas implies reasoning; in other words, reason is only one way of conceiving adequate ideas. This is because reason appears to be different from the third kind of cognition, intuitive knowledge (*scientia*), which also consists in conceiving adequate ideas: "this kind of cognition proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things" (2p40s2). It is a disputed question precisely how reason and intuition are distinct since it is unclear whether cognitions of the second and third kind conceive different adequate ideas or the same adequate ideas in different ways.[10] But there is good reason to think that they cannot conceive entirely the same ideas since the third kind of cognition conceives the essences of things, whereas the second kind of cognition traffics in common notions, which do "not constitute the essence of any singular thing" (2p37). Consequently, if "reasoning" refers to cognition of the second kind, then it does not seem that all cases of conceiving adequate ideas are cases of reasoning.

3 Freedom

Freedom, the final activity concept I will consider, is particularly vexed. Spinoza's definition stipulates two conditions: a free thing (a) "exists from the necessity of its nature alone" and (b) "is determined to act by itself alone" (1D7). According to this definition, freedom is equivalent to being an adequate cause of oneself and of one's action and, thus, is restricted to adequacy-activity.

However, this definition does not fully capture Spinoza's understanding of freedom since it implies that only God is free, whereas Spinoza recognizes that there can be human freedom. This possibility is presupposed by the method of *Ethics*, which shows us the "way leading to freedom" (5pref). This possibility is explicitly recognized throughout Parts 4 and 5, where Spinoza primarily uses "freedom" and its contrast "bondage" to refer to human states. Consequently, there is a distinction between divine freedom, which is described by 1D7, and the freedom available to human beings.[11] This conclusion is supported by the *Political Treatise*, where Spinoza distinguishes "human freedom" from God's "absolute freedom," which involves satisfying the two conditions set forth in 1D7: "as he [God] exists from the necessity of his own nature, so he also acts from the necessity of his own nature; that is, he acts from absolute freedom" (TP II 7, S 286).

This discussion makes clear that divine freedom is adequacy-activity. But what about human freedom? Is human freedom restricted to being an adequate cause, or is human freedom equivalent more generally to the activity of striving, which includes both adequacy-activity and other instances of striving? Spinoza's most thorough explanation of human freedom is found in the same section from the *Political Treatise*:

> Now it is undeniable that man, like other individual things, endeavors to preserve his own being as far as in him lies. For if there could here be any possible difference [between man and other individual things], it would arise from man's having a free will. Yet the more free we conceived man to be, the more we were compelled to maintain that he must necessarily preserve himself and be of sound mind, as will readily be granted by everyone who does not confuse freedom with contingency. Freedom, in fact, is virtue or perfection; so anything that signifies weakness in man cannot be referred to his freedom. Therefore a man can certainly not be called free on the grounds that he is able not to exist, or that he is able not to use his reason; he can be called free only insofar as he has the power to exist and to act in accordance with the laws of human nature.
>
> (TP II 7, S 684–685)

This passage identifies human freedom primarily with striving: men are free the more that they endeavor to preserve their own being.

Furthermore, the passage identifies human freedom with "virtue or perfection," which are coextensive with striving, as I argued in Section 2. This identification of human freedom with virtue echoes the *Ethics*, where Spinoza describes virtue as the "true freedom of man" (4p73s). There is little in the passage to indicate that human freedom requires being an adequate cause. It does claim that human freedom involves reasoning and, thus, conceiving adequate ideas: man cannot "be called free on the grounds . . . that he is able not to use his reason." But this does not imply that human freedom is restricted to having adequate ideas. On the contrary, the passage is clear that human freedom also includes our general striving to preserve ourselves and to increase our understanding: "the more free we conceived man to be, the more we were compelled to maintain that he must necessarily preserve himself and be of sound mind." Furthermore, Spinoza's contrast between human freedom and divine freedom in this section of the text implies that human freedom, unlike divine freedom, does not require being a sole cause of one's own existence and actions. Thus, human freedom, for Spinoza, is striving-activity.

My interpretation of human freedom conflicts with a recent interpretation by Eugene Marshall, who argues that human freedom consists in attaining the second condition for freedom in 1D7: being an adequate cause of one's actions.[12] This view implies that humans are only free when they are an adequate cause of their actions and when they conceive adequate ideas. Marshall's interpretation is problematic, first, because it conflicts with the passages discussed in the previous paragraph, the only passages where Spinoza explicitly discusses the nature of human freedom.

A second problem stems from Spinoza's identification of political and ethical freedom. He claims that subjects institute and obey the state for the purpose of promoting freedom: "the purpose of the state is, in reality, freedom" (TTP XX, S 567). He claims that this mission requires the state to help people develop their power – their "mental and physical faculties" – and to steer them toward rational living "to keep men within the bounds of reason, as far as possible" (TTP XVI, S 531). As recent work by Justin Steinberg has argued, this indicates that political freedom amounts not to possessing civil liberties or an absence of government interference but rather to perfecting one's powers by acting from one's striving, which is the metaphysical self-determination that the *Political Treatise* describes as human freedom. Thus, the sort of freedom that figures in Spinoza's politics, the freedom that the state exists to secure, is the same freedom that is the goal of his ethics.[13]

Spinoza's identification of political and ethical freedom is problematic for Marshall's reading because Spinoza does not think that political freedom requires being an adequate cause. As I argued in Section 1, being an adequate cause and having adequate ideas are coextensive; having an adequate idea just means being an adequate cause, described under the

attribute of Thought. Yet Spinoza's politics holds that people can possess a degree of freedom even where they lack adequate ideas. In particular, he claims that citizens possess a degree of freedom from living in a state with laws that promote the common good, apparently regardless of whether the citizens possess adequate ideas:

> in a sovereign state where the welfare of the whole people, not the ruler, is the supreme law, he who obeys the sovereign power in all things should be called a subject, not a slave who does not serve his own interest.
>
> (TTP XVI, S 531)[14]

A third concern targets Marshall's view that humans are free when they meet the second condition in the definition of freedom, being entirely self-determined in action. This notion appears to be inconsistent with 1p17c2, which indicates that humans cannot meet this condition: "God alone is a free cause. For God alone exists solely from the necessity of his nature (by p11 and p14c1), and acts solely from the necessity of his own nature (by p17)." Admittedly, there is an ambiguity in the last part of the passage: God alone acts solely from the necessity of his own nature. This could be read as claiming either (a) that God is the only being that is capable of ever acting from his own nature alone (which is inconsistent with Marshall's view) or (b) that God is the only being that acts from his own nature all of the time, which (consistent with Marshall's view) allows that humans can act from their own nature alone some of the time. However, (b) is inconsistent with the main claim of the passage: God alone is a free cause. If humans could sometimes bring about an effect solely from their own nature, then humans could be a free cause. Furthermore, Spinoza's two main claims here – that God alone exists solely from the necessity of his nature and that he alone acts solely from the necessity of his nature – are intended to refer back to the two conditions for freedom in 1D7 and to deny that anything but God meets them.

This third concern raises a possible problem for my reading: 1p17c2 implies that humans cannot be entirely self-determining in action and, consequently, cannot be adequate causes.[15] Since being an adequate cause is coextensive with conceiving adequate ideas, my reading also implies that humans cannot conceive adequate ideas. This appears to be a problem since Spinoza explicitly claims that humans can conceive adequate ideas (2p38, 2p47), and doing so is a central part of his ethics. However, this is not a problem if we read Spinoza as claiming that humans can be adequate causes and conceive adequate ideas in a weaker sense of the term, which does not involve being entirely the sole cause of an effect, as God is. According to this suggestion, Spinoza uses the terms "adequate cause" and "adequate idea" equivocally when referring to God and to humans, just as he does with "freedom."[16] For human

beings, conceiving adequate ideas and being an adequate cause amounts to coming as close as is humanly possible to conceiving adequate ideas and being an adequate cause like God or, in other words, achieving the greatest humanly possible degree of causal independence.

The foregoing interpretation of human freedom is significant because it overturns a common conception of freedom as consisting in causal independence. This view is expressed by Robert Sleigh Jr., Vere Chappell, and Michael Della Rocca: "for one to be free in the performance of one's actions, those actions must not be determined by factors outside of oneself."[17] To be clear, my issue with the common view is not that it wrongly supposes that we are capable of God-like causal independence. Della Rocca and others who defend this view recognize that humans cannot attain the complete independence of divine freedom, so human freedom is always a matter of degree. Rather, my issue concerns the nature of human freedom. The common view supposes that human freedom is equivalent to causal independence, such that a person's degree of freedom is equivalent to their degree of causal independence. I hold, in contrast, that human freedom consists in striving and that a person's degree of freedom is equivalent to their degree of striving. While human freedom, in my view, includes the causal independence of being an adequate cause, to whatever extent humans are capable, human freedom is not restricted to such independence since we strive when we are a partial cause of effects.

This difference in interpretation has two important consequences. First, my view implies a different conception of not just human freedom but freedom generally. Human freedom and divine freedom must share some quality in virtue of which both qualify as kinds of freedom. According to the common view, this quality is causal independence. In Michael Della Rocca's words, "Spinoza defines freedom in terms of independence of external causes";[18] "freedom is "a thing's ability to act, to bring about changes on its own."[19] Since my view, in contrast, argues that human freedom consists of striving or power, it indicates that the shared quality – the essential quality of freedom – is being determined by one's essential power or, in other words, self-determination. This is different from causal independence because self-determination does not require being determined solely by oneself. So, although God's freedom does involve complete causal independence, God qualifies as free not because of his independence but rather because his essence is the source of his existence and actions. In Spinoza's words, "as he exists from the necessity of his own nature, so he also acts from the necessity of his own nature; that is, he acts from absolute freedom" (TP II 7, S 685).

Second, since Spinoza's ethics takes human freedom as an ethical goal, the common view implies that we should strive to become as independent as possible. According to my view, Spinoza does not uphold causal independence per se as an ethical goal. Rather, his notions of freedom

and virtue set the ethical goals of increasing our power or striving and thereby our self-determination, which involves both causal independence and dependence, as the next section will show in greater depth.

4 Activity through Passivity

The rest of the chapter considers the consequences of the foregoing reading for our understanding of Spinoza's philosophy, beginning in this section with his view of passivity. Without recognizing the distinction between Spinoza's two basic notions of activity, one might be inclined to identify our activity exclusively with acting and adequacy-activity. I will call this the "activity as acting view," or AAV for short.[20] My reading understands activity more broadly than AAV in two ways. First, AAV implies that things are not active with respect to some effect when they endeavor to bring about the effect but fail to do so. So, if I fail to complete this paper, then I was not active in writing the paper (though I may have been active with respect to whatever I did accomplish, say, writing a few paragraphs). According to my reading, in contrast, I am active because I strive to bring about the effect.

Second, my view allows for the apparently paradoxical claim that things can be active in cases when they are passive. According to AAV, this should be impossible. This is because AAV restricts activity to acting, and Spinoza defines acting and being passive in such a way that the two are mutually exclusive. He defines acting as being the sole cause, and he defines being passive as being a partial cause: "I say that we are passive when something happens in us, or something follows from our nature, of which we are only a partial cause" (3D2). My view, in contrast, does not identify activity exclusively with acting or, consequently, with causal independence. Rather, it recognizes striving as activity, and, as we will see shortly, Spinoza regards striving as often cooperative and consistent with passivity. Consequently, it provides for a broader conception of activity that includes cases of passivity.

Of course, a defender of AAV could hold that being an adequate cause, for Spinoza, may involve being a partial cause (and, thus, passive) to some degree. Such a defender would hold that adequacy comes in degrees and that some things possess a sufficient degree of causal independence to qualify as an adequate cause, even though they are not the sole cause. Such a thing is both an adequate cause (and, thus, adequacy-active) and a partial cause of the effect (and, thus, passive), if only to some small degree. However, even on this qualified view, AAV implies a fundamental conceptual incompatibility between activity and passivity. For AAV implies that being active fundamentally amounts to being causally independent, which implies that being passive and a partial cause does not count toward a thing's activity and, in fact, diminishes its activity, even if the two can be present at the same time. Since

my view, in contrast, understands activity to include striving, which is not conceptually connected to causal independence, my view does not see activity as conceptually opposed to passivity in this way.

What, then, are these cases of passive activity that are recognized by my view? They include most obviously cases of cooperation, where a thing works with external things to bring about some effect. But they also include more straightforward cases of passivity where a thing undergoes some exogenous effect. Spinoza repeatedly claims that things strive when they are affected in this way. A first passage is found in the physical digression, where Spinoza claims that anytime a body is affected by another, the resulting mode or effect is caused by the nature of both the external body and the affected body:

> All modes by which a body is affected by another body follow both from the nature of the body affected and at the same time from the nature of the affecting body, so that one and the same body may be moved differently according to differences in the nature of the bodies moving it.
>
> (2le3ax1)

Since Spinoza understands the nature of all things, including finite modes and bodies, to be their striving (3p7), this passage asserts that the striving of bodies plays some role in causing the effects that they undergo, which implies that bodies strive even when they are passive. It is important to note the breadth of Spinoza's claims here: the passage entails that all exogenous bodily effects are caused partly by the striving of the affected body. In light of Spinoza's parallelism doctrine, his claim in this passage applies to all exogenous states, including states of minds.

A second passage asserts that we strive when we conceive inadequate ideas:

> The essence of the mind is constituted by adequate and by inadequate ideas (as we have shown in 3p3). So (by 3p7) it strives to persevere in its being both insofar as it has inadequate ideas and insofar as it has adequate ideas.
>
> (3p9d)

According to Spinoza's conception of adequate ideas, an idea is inadequate in a mind when the idea is not an action of the mind or, in other words, when the mind is not the sole cause of the idea. It follows from this definition that inadequate ideas are caused at least partly by external things: "insofar as the mind has inadequate ideas (by 3p1), it necessarily is acted on" (3p3d). Consequently, Spinoza's claim in this passage, that minds strive in conceiving inadequate ideas, entails that minds strive to some degree when they conceive ideas passively. It is important to note

the scope of this claim: it applies to all conceptions of inadequate ideas by any mind and, thus, to all cases where a mind undergoes exogenous effects. Given Spinoza's parallelism doctrine, the passage implies that bodily states corresponding to these passive mental states also involve the striving of the affected thing. Thus, like the first passage, this passage indicates that all exogenous states of minds and bodies involve striving.

A third passage, or rather group of passages, asserts that the body's power of acting can be increased when we suffer exogenous effects: "the human body can be affected in many ways in which its power of acting is increased" (3post1); "our power of acting, therefore, however it is conceived, can be determined, and hence aided or restrained, by the power of another singular thing" (4p29d). Since Spinoza equates our striving with our power of acting, as I showed in Section 1, these passages entail that things can make a transition to a state of greater striving in being passively affected. Unlike the first two passages, the third does not imply that all exogenous states involve striving. Nevertheless, these passages make an important addition to Spinoza's view of passive striving for they indicate that a thing's degree of striving when it is passively affected depends on whether the exogenous effects help the thing to persevere in existence or, in other words, whether external things cause beneficial effects: the more beneficial a passive affection, the greater is one's striving and, consequently, the greater is one's virtue, perfection, and freedom.

Spinoza makes much the same claim in a final fourth group of passages, where he acknowledges the existence of the passion of joy (3p11s). For instance, Spinoza allows for various passions of love, which is a kind of joy (e.g. 3p16, 3p19, 3DA6, 3DA10, 3DA24). To understand the significance of these passages, it is important to understand the relevant definitions. Spinoza defines passions as affections in which we do not act: "if we can be the adequate cause of any of these affections, I understand by the affect an action; otherwise a passion" (3D3). This entails that passions are affections brought about partly by external things and, thus, exogenous affections. He defines joy, in turn, as "man's passage from a lesser to a greater perfection" (3DA3). Since Spinoza equates changes in our perfection with changes in our power of acting or striving, passive joy is basically a passive state where one transitions to greater striving. Thus, like the third group of passages, these passages imply that things can strive when they are passive and, furthermore, that they strive to a greater or lesser degree depending on whether external things assist or contribute to the things' striving.

One might be inclined to downplay the foregoing texts on the grounds that they commit Spinoza to the contradictory view that a thing can be simultaneously passive and active. Paul Hoffman nicely sums up the worry: "isn't it paradoxical of Spinoza to say that we act when we are affected?"[21] While this claim appears paradoxical, it is not, as others and I have argued elsewhere.[22] This is because a thing

can be simultaneously passive and active in cases where it is a partial cause of an effect in itself. For example, my stuffy nose is caused partly by something external, a virus attacking the lining of my sinuses, and partly by me: my immune system, white blood cells, and other bodily defenses. To use a non-biological example, the lighting of a match is caused partly by something external, the person who strikes the match, and partly by the match, which contains the flammable material that initiates the lighting. In these cases, the thing is both passive, because it undergoes an effect brought about by something external, and active, because it also contributes to this effect. So, when I experience a stuffy nose, I am simultaneously passive, because I undergo an effect brought about by a virus, and active, because the stuffy nose is also brought about by my bodily defenses. Since the thing is active and passive in experiencing precisely the same effect, it is active and passive simultaneously.

One might also downplay these texts on the grounds that they eliminate a hard distinction between activity and passivity, which would be problematic because Spinoza frequently makes use of this distinction, for instance, in distinguishing passions from active affects (3p1). However, these passages only show that *striving-activity* is consistent with passivity. The passages do not undermine the inconsistency of passivity and *adequacy-activity*: being an adequate cause means being a sole cause, which is at least conceptually inconsistent with undergoing effects from external causes. Consequently, on my reading, Spinoza is entitled to a conception of activity that is genuinely opposed to passivity, which is precisely the conception of activity that is operative in his distinction between passions and actions.

My claim that Spinoza conceives activity broadly to include cases of passivity has important implications for his ethics, to which I now turn. Since his ethical goals are ultimately kinds of activity, if AAV were true, then these ethical ends would amount to self-sufficiency, bringing about effects entirely from oneself, without cooperation or assistance from external things. On this basis, one might think that the goal of Spinoza's ethics is to act on the basis of pure reasoning, where one's thoughts and ideas are determined entirely from self-originating innate ideas.[23] Since my view, in contrast, understands our activity more broadly to include cases where we undergo exogenous effects – especially beneficial effects, whereby our striving is greatest – my view allows that these ethical goals consist partly in passive experiences. In this respect, my view supports recent work arguing that Spinoza has a relational conception of freedom and autonomy, where our freedom is partly constituted by our relations – including passive relations – with other things, particularly relations in which being passively affected increases our power of acting, such as the friendship of the virtuous and our relations with other members of the state.[24]

My claim also has consequences for understanding the value of passivity in Spinoza's ethics. While Spinoza claims that external things are the source of all harms (4p20s), he also emphasizes the potential benefits of being affected by external things: for instance, the friendship and guidance of virtuous people (4p35c1; 4p37s1), the stability afforded by a state (4p73; 4app14–15), the social and political conditions that favor freedom of thought and speech (TTP XX), the material conditions necessary for life (4p39; 4app27), and so forth. According to AAV, being affected passively in these ways has, at best, instrumental value in helping us to achieve self-sufficiency, whereas my reading argues that these cases of being passively affected, because they particularly exercise our striving, are constitutive of Spinoza's ethical goals of virtue and human freedom.[25] Since being passively affected in these ways is part of our virtue, it follows that these kinds of passivity have the same value as virtue, which has intrinsic value: "we ought to want virtue for its own sake, and there is not anything preferable to it, or more useful to us, for the sake of which we ought to want it" (4p18s; see also 4p22, 4p25).

There are two additional arguments to support my claim that being passively affected can be constitutive of our freedom and virtue (aside from the fact that he identifies these things with our striving and claims that we strive when we are passively affected). The first argument, which I have defended elsewhere, builds on Spinoza's claim that virtue has a practical component in the sense that it involves living in accordance with reason's dictates or commands (4p18s, 4p66s). Since Spinoza conceives of reason as trafficking in general and universal things, reason's practical dictates are also very general, for instance, urging us to promote our power or to benefit others, without specifying how (4p18s). If we are to live according to reason's dictates, then, we must determine how to implement them and apply them to particular situations, which requires examining the particular features of practical situations. Since we only represent these particulars through our inadequate ideas, and our practical decisions are determined by the volitional power of our various ideas, the inadequate ideas representing particular features of practical situations inevitably play some role in determining and motivating our decisions.[26] In support of this view, Justin Steinberg has recently argued that Spinoza leaves an important role for the imagination to play in applying and interpreting reason's practical guidance.[27] It follows that the virtue of living in accordance with reason's dictates is partly constituted by our striving when we conceive inadequate ideas and are passively affected.

The second argument builds on the notion that Spinoza understands individuals as constituted or defined by their relationships with others: if individuals are constituted by their relationships with others, then being self-determining or free involves participating in these relations and, consequently, being passively affected by others.[28] Spinoza conceives of

individuals as partly constituted by their relations in the sense that he identifies an individual's essence with its striving, which is partly constituted by the power or striving of other things. I will mention two reasons to think that our striving encompasses other strivings. The first is Spinoza's definition of individuals or singular things: "if a number of individuals so concur in one action that together they are all the cause of one effect, I consider them all, to that extent, as one singular thing" (2D7). According to this definition, when external things affect us beneficially, thereby joining their power to our striving to bring about our continued existence and increases in our power, we comprise the same individual, which implies that their striving is part of ours. The second reason is Spinoza's claim that the essence of individual things is their striving or power to persevere in existence (3p7). According to this view, any power that brings about the continued existence of a thing is part of its essence or identity. Since the power that brings about the continued existence of a thing can be an external thing (for instance, if one person saves another's life), a thing's individual essence can be constituted partly by the beneficial powers of external things.

5 Striving without Reason

This section considers a final consequence of my view. I have argued that the main concepts of Spinoza's ethics – virtue, perfection, power, and human freedom – are pegged to striving-activity, whereas reasoning requires adequacy-activity, to whatever extent humans are capable. Since striving-activity does not require being an adequate cause, it follows that we can strive and, consequently, achieve some degree of virtue, perfection, power, and freedom without using reason.

This conclusion is significant not only because it distances Spinoza from a strongly rationalist conception of ethics but also because it calls into question a common reading, according to which Spinoza equates reason with our mental striving, that is, our striving conceived under the attribute of Thought.[29] While I acknowledge that reason is an expression of our striving, and our striving is directed to increases in our power and, thus, to understanding, reason and striving cannot be equivalent since we strive when we are not an adequate cause and do not possess adequate ideas. The notion that Spinoza equates reason and striving is based on two very brief passages, both of which are found in the Preface to Part 5. Here is the first:

> Here, then, as I have said, I shall treat only of the power of the mind, or [*sive*] of reason, and shall show, above all, how great its dominion over the affects is, and what kind of dominion it has for restraining and moderating them.
>
> (5pref, G II 277/16–18)

The important point is Spinoza's apparent equation in the first line of the power of the mind with reason. Assuming that a thing's striving is identical to the power of its mind, expressed under the attribute of Thought, this statement also appears to equate our striving with our power of reason.

However, we have good reason to question this reading foremost because it flatly contradicts Spinoza's claim in 3p9 that the mind strives in conceiving inadequate ideas as well as the evidence showing that we strive in undergoing exogenous or passive effects where we are not the sole cause of effects and, consequently, cannot have adequate ideas or reason. Fortunately, there is an alternative reading of Spinoza's apparent equation in the passage which makes more sense in the broader context of the remark. The rest of the passage indicates that "power of the mind" refers not to our striving but rather to the power of the mind over the affects, which is the main issue discussed in the Preface. It makes sense for Spinoza to equate the mind's power over the affects with reason since his techniques for gaining control over the affects in Part 5 involve strengthening ideas of reason and employing them to change our affects.

The second text comes at the end of the Preface:

> Therefore, because the power of the mind is defined only by understanding [*intelligentiâ*], as I have shown above, we shall determine, by the mind's knowledge alone, the remedies for the affects.
>
> (5pref, G II 280/22–24)

Here again, if we take the passage at face value, it appears to equate our striving with reason: if we suppose that "the power of the mind" refers to our striving, then the passage appears to claim that our striving consists only in understanding, which Spinoza tends to identify with reason.

However, the passage also indicates that he is summarizing a claim that he has "shown above." To understand more precisely what he means, then, we need to examine the referent. Unfortunately, the referent is not clear for there is no other point in the *Ethics* where Spinoza argues that the mind's striving is identical to reason. He is clearly committed to claiming that reason, as conceiving adequate ideas, involves our striving, but this is not the same thing as claiming that we strive only when we use reason. Spinoza comes closest to making such a claim in 4p26: "what we strive for from reason is nothing but understanding." But this asserts only that understanding is the same thing as striving from reason or rational striving, which does not imply that all the mind's striving are instances of reasoning.[30]

Here again, it helps to consider the context. When Spinoza makes this remark, he has just concluded criticizing the notion that we possess a power of will, by means of which we can gain complete control over our affects, a claim that he attributes to Descartes and the Stoics. Given

this context, Spinoza is likely referring to his claim that the volitional power of the mind comes not from a faculty of will but rather from the power of our ideas (2p49). In this case, Spinoza is referring to the claim of 2p49c: "the will and the understanding [*intellectus*] are one and the same." According to this reading, the passage is claiming that the power of the mind is contained in the volitional power of our ideas and, thus, in the understanding rather than a distinct faculty of will. Thus, "understanding" refers not to reason but more broadly to the mind's power for conceiving ideas.

On the other hand, there is evidence showing that Spinoza recognized that we strive without reason. In addition to the texts discussed in the previous section showing that we strive when we are passive and, thus, when we conceive inadequate ideas, Spinoza explicitly recognizes that we can attain virtue in cases where we do not conceive adequate ideas. This is evident from examining an important line of argument that culminates in 4p20. In 3p28, Spinoza had shown that our striving is directed to what we imagine will bring us joy and away from what we imagine will bring us sorrow. In 4p19, Spinoza draws on this claim to characterize people's motivations. Since the affections of joy and sorrow are equivalent to cognitions of good and bad (4p8), it follows that people strive anytime they are motivated by cognitions representing good and evil, even when the cognition is inadequate. This point is somewhat obscured by the common translation of "*cognitio*" as knowledge in 4p19d, which suggests that we strive only where we are motivated in accordance with rational and adequate ideas of good and bad. However, since Spinoza admits three kinds of *cognitio*, the first of which consists of inadequate ideas (2p40s2), 4p19d entails that acting from even inadequate ideas of good and evil is an instance of our striving. 4p20 then concludes that this striving is virtuous: "the more each one strives, and is able, to seek his own advantage, that is, to preserve his being, the more he is endowed with virtue."

This conclusion is reinforced in the next few propositions (4p23–24), where Spinoza goes on to show that we attain a further, more specific sort of virtue when we are motivated by our adequate ideas. Spinoza describes this sort of virtue as "acting absolutely from virtue," which he equates with being motivated by adequate ideas or reason: "A man cannot be said absolutely to act from virtue insofar as he is determined to do something because he has inadequate ideas, but only insofar as he is determined because he understands" (4p23). Subsequent discussion makes clear that acting absolutely from virtue is tied to acting in the technical sense of being an adequate cause, as when one conceives an adequate idea: "only insofar as the mind understands (by 3p1 and 3p3), does it act, and can it be said absolutely to act from virtue (by 4p23). The absolute virtue of the mind, then, is understanding" (4p28d). Presumably, Spinoza introduces the notion of "acting absolutely from

virtue" to distinguish the virtue of being an adequate cause, as when one reasons and is motivated by reason, from the more basic virtue involved in striving in accordance with one's cognitions of good and bad, described in the previous propositions. In this way, he distinguishes two sorts of virtue, which map on to the two sorts of activity: basic virtue is the activity of striving, which occurs even in the absence of adequate ideas, while "true virtue" or "acting absolutely from virtue" involves the additional activity of being an adequate cause, as when we conceive and are motivated by adequate ideas.

6 Conclusions

In summary, Spinoza employs two basic conceptions of activity. The most fundamental of these is striving, in which a thing's nature or essence endeavors to bring about some effect. The other conception of activity, a form of the first, is the activity of bringing about some effect solely from a thing's striving, without the cooperation of external things. This distinction is easily overlooked because Spinoza defines "*agere*" or acting as the second kind of activity, being an adequate or sole cause. Since it is natural to conceive of acting as equivalent to being active, this definition may give the (mistaken) impression that we are active only when we are an adequate cause.

This distinction implies a further distinction between activity concepts that are coextensive with or require one kind of activity or the other. On the one hand, striving-activity is coextensive with virtue, perfection, and power or power of acting. On the other hand, adequacy-activity is coextensive with having adequate ideas. This latter activity is necessary for reason but is not coextensive with reason since we can have adequate ideas without reason through the third kind of cognition. Furthermore, divine freedom is coextensive with adequacy-activity, whereas human freedom is coextensive with striving-activity. Since striving-activity does not require being a sole cause, this conclusion challenges the common view that freedom consists in causal independence. Rather, freedom amounts to self-determination, which, in the case of humans, involves causal dependence and acting cooperatively with other things.

Recognizing these different kinds of activity leads to four important consequences. First, this reading provides a broader conception of activity for it implies that things are active when they strive and, thus, when they endeavor unsuccessfully to bring about an effect; when they are a partial cause of an effect; and when they are a partial cause of an effect in themselves or, in other words, when they are passively affected. Second, the reading changes our understanding of Spinoza's ethical goals, particularly virtue, perfection, and human freedom. Since these are coextensive with striving-activity, which does not imply causal independence, Spinoza's ethics does not regard independence per se as an ethical goal. Rather,

instances of causal dependence, including passivity, cooperation, and external assistance, are constitutive of our striving and these ethical goals. Third, this reading indicates that Spinoza assigns a greater value to passivity than one might think. Since being an adequate cause is inconsistent with being passive, if things are only active when they are an adequate cause, then passivity can only be valuable instrumentally, as a means to the end of being an adequate cause. However, since Spinoza equates striving with virtue, and we strive when we are passively affected, it follows that being passively affected is constitutive of our virtue, which implies that passivity has the same value as virtue: intrinsic value. Fourth, the reading shows that there is a distinction between reason and striving since one can strive without having adequate ideas.

Notes

1 Spinoza's *Ethics* is cited by part and proposition, as is standard. Translations generally follow *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, 2 volumes, trans. Edwin Curley. Translations of the *Theological-Political Treatise* (TTP) and *Political Treatise* (TP) generally follow Samuel Shirley, *Spinoza: Complete Works*. Where quoted passages are different (namely, 3p1, 1p17c2), translations are my own. This paper is greatly indebted to generous comments by Noa Naaman-Zauderer, Tom Vinci, Sanem Soyarslan, Eugene Marshall, Justin Steinberg, Andrea Sangiacomo, Keith Green, Martin Lenz, Christopher Frey, Aurelia Armstrong, participants at the 2014 Society for European Philosophy Meeting in Utrecht, and participants at a workshop on Spinoza on Relational Autonomy in Groningen in 2014.

2 See Curley (1988, 38). A central objection is that, on Curley's view, all effects must inhere in their causes, which implies that all causation arises from within a thing, thereby ruling out the possibility of transitive causation. See Jarrett (1977), Carriero (1995), Melamed (2009).

3 Nadler (2006, 256). See also Della Rocca (2008, 187), Soyarslan (2014, 241, n.19).

4 Throughout this essay, I will use 'action' in Spinoza's primary sense of the term to refer to the product of acting or being an adequate cause, although Spinoza often uses *agere* and its cognates in a weaker sense that does not require being an adequate cause. For instance, he describes sadness as an act (3DA3exp), even though we cannot be an adequate cause of sadness since it is necessarily externally caused. Furthermore, I will use 'action' as equivalent to 'act.' So, 'action' does not refer specifically to the sort of intentional, volitional action that we typically associate with human agents, though this sort of action may be covered by Spinoza's term. To avoid confusion, I will refer to intentional, volitional action with other terms, such as 'choosing,' 'deciding,' or 'living.'

5 In short, 1p6dalt indicates that Spinoza takes 1ax4 to show that if x causes y, then y is conceived through x. 1p25d indicates that he also takes 1ax4 to show the converse: if y is conceived through x, then y is caused by x. For more on this, see Jarrett (1978, 29), Della Rocca (1996, 11), Wilson (1999, 163 n.27), Melamed (2012, 367).

6 The tight connection between a thing's power and its causal efforts is evident in 1p34d, where Spinoza concludes that God's essence is power from the fact that God's essence is the cause of himself and all other things.

7 For more on this, see Kisner (2011, 40–44).
8 My conclusion here is widely accepted. For a more developed proof, see Kisner (2011, 27–28).
9 The notion that we strive through reasoning and for reasoning is evident in Spinoza's phrase *conatus intelligendi*. See Yovel (1999).
10 Scholars who think that the second and third kind of cognitions conceive different ideas include: Wolfson (1934, 162–163), MacIntosh (1972), Wilson (1996, 117–118), Della Rocca (1996, 85–86), Soyarslan (2014, 248). Scholars who think that they conceive the same ideas in different ways include Parkinson (1964, 167, 182), Delahunty (1985, 78–79).
11 This distinction is common in the literature. See Bennett (1984, 316–317), Nadler (2006, 235–236), Della Rocca (2008, 188–189).
12 See Marshall (2013, 149–150, 2014, 164).
13 For a defense of this claim, see Kisner (2011, chapter 11, 2012, 782–793), Steinberg (2009).
14 For a detailed defense of this claim, see Steinberg (2009, 44–47).
15 This claim has proven to be controversial. For dissenting views, see Steinberg (2011) and Marshall (2013, chapter 2). My view is also upheld by Della Rocca – "no action of a human being can be completely independent of external causes" (Sleigh, Chappell, and Della Rocca 1998, 1231) – and suggested by Nadler: "adequate knowledge of an abbreviated sort is available to human beings" (2006, 165). My argument for the claim, in short, is that Spinoza's definition of the mind as the idea of the body entails that all human ideas must, to some degree, represent one's particular finite body (1p15). Since all finite things depend on an infinite chain of causes (1p28), the human body and all ideas of it must ultimately have causes external to the body. Consequently, the human mind cannot be the sole cause of any of its ideas. In *The Spiritual Automaton*, Eugene Marshall replies that we are an adequate cause when we have adequate ideas because they are innate and, thus, derived entirely from an internal source (2013, chapter 2).
16 I defend this claim in Kisner (2011, 40–44).
17 Sleigh, Chappell, and Della Rocca (1998, 1231). See also Della Rocca (2008, 187) and Steinberg (2009, 41).
18 Sleigh, Chappell, and Della Rocca (1998, 1231).
19 Della Rocca (2008, 187).
20 AAV is defended by Viljanen (2011, 77–80): "x is active when an effect E is brought about by its essence alone; when this happens, x is the adequate, i.e. complete and sole, cause of E" (p. 77). Most commentators, however, do not accept AAV. For instance, Michael Della Rocca rules out AAV when he argues that Spinoza accepts a weak version of action, which does not require being an adequate cause. See Della Rocca (2003, 205–206). My definition of AAV is ambiguous between two versions of AAV. Both versions hold that human activity is equivalent to being an adequate cause, but they differ with respect to their view of what it means for humans to be an adequate cause. According to the strong version of AAV, being an adequate cause is equivalent to being completely causally independent. According to the weaker version, being an adequate cause, for human beings, is equivalent to being as causally independent as possible, which involves some inevitable degree of passivity. My arguments in this section apply to either version.
21 Hoffman (1991, 178). Spinoza's notion of passive joy is potentially problematic for other reasons.
22 See Kisner (2008). A version of this view is defended by Hoffman (1991, 177–179) and Rice (1999, 161–162). Rice argues that passivity and activity must be able to coexist, for Spinoza, because all states are passive in the

sense of being ultimately caused by external things. Hoffman also recognizes that states, for Spinoza, can be both active and passive, but he holds that this is only possible in cases where we conceive common notions, ideas that follow entirely from our own natures but are also contained in external things. My view, in contrast, claims that we can be both passive and active anytime an effect comes about through the cooperation of external things and our internal powers or striving. Hoffman considers this view but rejects it on the grounds that we only strive in conceiving adequate ideas (p. 177). However, the notion that we strive only in reasoning or conceiving adequate ideas is not well supported by the text and is inconsistent with Spinoza's claim that we strive even in conceiving inadequate ideas (3p9), as I will argue in the final section. For other explanations of how the notion of passive joy is not paradoxical, see Hoffman (1991, 177), LeBuffe (2009, 211–218), and Wartofsky (1973, 348).

23 Elements of such a view are found in Marshall (2013).
24 See Kisner (2011, 229–235) and Armstrong (2009).
25 For an example of the instrumental view, see Steinberg (2009, 41).
26 See Kisner (2011, 125–128 and section 9.2).
27 Steinberg (2014).
28 This notion of a relational individual is elaborated in Armstrong (2009) and Balibar (1997).
29 For example, this view is upheld by Hoffman (1991, 177) and Soyarslan (2014, 238–239). For a dissenting view, see Steinberg (2009, 41).
30 I should mention a final passage where Spinoza might be interpreted as equating understanding or reason with striving: "we act only insofar as we understand" (4p24d). However, since Spinoza is using "act" here in the narrow sense of 3D2, this passage only equates reason with being an adequate cause, not with striving.

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4 Descartes and Spinoza on the Primitive Passions

Why so Different?

Lisa Shapiro

The dryness of the lists that form the taxonomies of the passions seems to sap the life out of the emotions they catalog.[1] These taxonomies take phenomena that are fodder for the moralist as she paints a world as infused with emotions, grips our imaginations, and inspires us to lead better lives, and break them to pieces in the effort to getting to basic principles proper to the scientist. Nonetheless, there is something to be gained from considering these taxonomies. I aim to show that the primitive or primary passions (or affects, in the case of Spinoza) in particular tell us something about how a philosopher conceives of the structure of thought; if not categories themselves, they highlight the dimensions that structure our thinking, if not our mental representations. It is perhaps worth noting that this way of thinking about the passions moves away both from the common view that emotions are mere feelings, or impulses, and from the opposing view that emotions are judgments.

Motivating my discussion is a puzzle in Spinoza's account of the primary affects – his shift away from adopting Descartes's list of six primitive passions in the *Short Treatise* to the three primary affects in the *Ethics*. I lay out this puzzle in Section 1. In Section 2, I approach this puzzle by considering the taxonomy offered by Descartes of the basic or primitive passions. In considering Descartes, I will also briefly consider Aquinas's view since Descartes positions himself as rejecting the Thomist account. Doing so brings out that the basic passions highlight structures of cognition for these thinkers. In Section 3, I return to Spinoza and consider what light his pared down account of the primary affects can shed on his account of the human mind.

1 A Puzzle about Spinoza on the Primary Affects

In *Ethics* 3p11, Spinoza marks three of the affects as primary (*affectum primarium*). Most interpreters reflexively note that joy (*laetitia*), sadness (*tristitiae*), and desire (*cupiditas*) are, taxonomically at least, akin to Descartes's primitive passions, and the shift from "primitive" to "primary" does not seem problematic. Nonetheless, there are questions. Why these? In what sense are they primary? How do the other affects enumerated relate to these? These relatively fine-grained questions gain force in

considering Spinoza's relation to his predecessors, and in particular to Descartes.

In marking only three primary affects, Spinoza parts from Descartes, who, in his *Passions of the Soul*, lists six primitive passions: wonder, love, hate, joy, sadness, and desire. That Spinoza read the *Passions* is clear as he makes mention of it in the *Ethics*, in the Preface to Part 3 and most explicitly in the Preface to Part 5.[2] Moreover, in the early draft of the *Ethics,* the *Short Treatise*, Spinoza seems to follow Descartes quite closely. While he does not there identify any passions as primary, in Part 2, chapters 3–14, Spinoza offers an initial catalog of what he there calls passions (*Lydinge* [*Passien*]) in the context of explaining how they arise from opinion (or false belief) (KV II 3–14, G I 56–78). His enumeration closely follows that of Descartes: he begins with wonder, then moves to love, hate, and desire, followed by joy and sadness. Also like Descartes, he proceeds with a finer-grained enumeration, including esteem and disdain, and their variants (including legitimate self-esteem, humility, pride, and self-deprecation), as well as hope and fear (and their variants: confidence, despair, vacillation, strength of character, tenacity, emulation, cowardice, consternation, jealousy), as well as other passions (remorse and repentance, mockery and ridicule, love of esteem, shame, shamelessness, favor, gratitude, ingratitude, and longing).

The similarity between the enumeration of the *Short Treatise* and the enumeration in articles 53–68 of Part 2 of Descartes's *Passions of the Soul* is striking and undeniable. Descartes does not highlight the primitive passions as such in those articles – that enumeration begins with *Passions* art. 69, which asserts that there are only six that are "simple and primitive" (AT XI 380).[3] While Descartes promises to show how the other "particular" passions derive from the primitives, he is not entirely clear what the relation is between the primitive passions and the others. It can seem that the primitive passions mark out the basic ways in which objects "can harm or profit us or, generally, be important to us" (*Passions* art. 52, AT XI 372), whereas the particular passions involve fine-tuning those representational attitudes to particular kinds of objects. The account I develop in Section 2 suggests that there is more going on. Insofar as Spinoza does not highlight primitive or primary passions in the *Short Treatise*, it is hard to tell whether or not he would endorse Descartes's list of primitives or his way of distinguishing primitive from other passions at that point.

By the time the *Ethics* is written, Spinoza has shifted his enumeration to highlight three primary affects, from which the rest arise. We can rightly ask what drives the shift in his position. He does provide us with an explanation of why he dispenses with wonder as a primitive passion, or indeed as an affect at all:

> . . . when the image of the thing is new . . . the mind will be detained in regarding the same thing until it is determined by other causes to

> think of other things. So the imagination of a new thing, considered in itself, is of the same nature as the other [imaginations], and for this reason I do not number wonder among the affects. Nor do I see why I should, since this distraction of the mind does not arise from any positive cause which distracts the mind from other things, but only from the fact that there is no cause determining the mind to pass from regarding one thing to thinking of others.
>
> (3DA4exp)

Wonder consists of the mind's being stuck, as it were, on a particular imagining, on a representation of a singular thing, and not moving on to other ideas, and so does not merit being called an affect at all, for Spinoza. One might ask why being stuck on a single thought is reason to reject an idea as an affect, and I will return to consider why Spinoza denies wonder is an affect in Section 3. At this point, I simply note that his explanation of why he does not follow Descartes's views on wonder does not generalize to explain why he also ceases to follow Descartes in taking love and hatred as primary. So, the puzzle remains.

Spinoza's primary affects overlap significantly with the Stoic main emotions: pleasure, pain, desire, and fear.[4] One might try to explain Spinoza's shift away from the Cartesian taxonomy by his embrace of neo-Stoic views. On the face of it, the principal difference between the two taxonomies is that Spinoza's discounts fear as a primary affect, defining it rather as a species of sadness, "an inconstant sadness, which has also arisen from the image of a doubtful thing" (3p18s2). However, their thinking about even pleasure and pain needs to be reconciled as the Stoics take pleasure and pain to be beliefs, and Spinoza takes pleasure and pain to be the affects of joy and sadness "ascribed to a man when one part of him is affected more than the rest" and "related to the mind and body at once," that is, just as much physical states as mental states (3p11s). While it is uncontroversial that Spinoza was influenced by the Stoics in his account of the affects, there remains a puzzle about what in the Stoic model of emotions he found attractive and why he rejects the Stoic foregrounding of fear as a principal emotion. So, appeal to this Stoic influence does not really work as a solution to the puzzle of his shift to three primary affects.

As posed, these puzzles concern Spinoza's taxonomy of the affects, but the core issue is not about the taxonomy itself so much as it is about the philosophical motivation behind it. That Spinoza changes his taxonomy brings out the need for such an explanation. But given that he himself says next to nothing about this, it is hard to know how to proceed.

There is a long philosophical history of offering taxonomies of emotions, though only some single out a subset as primitive or primary, and of those, even fewer explain *why* that subset of passions is more basic than others. I propose to proceed by looking at the taxonomy that we

do know Spinoza considered and rejected: that of Descartes. While Descartes himself does not explain his reasons for assigning some passions primitive status, looking at his discussion and considering his divergence from his predecessor Aquinas is suggestive. By situating Spinoza's enumeration of the primary affects in the *Ethics* against this background, we can better understand just what role the primary affects play in his philosophical psychology.

2 Descartes (and Aquinas)

After laying out an array of passions in the early articles of Part 2 of the *Passions of the Soul*, Descartes both explains this enumeration and sets up his identification of six primitive passions as follows:

> Such is the order which seems to me to be the best for enumerating the passions. I know well that I am departing from the opinion of all those who have written about it before. But this is not without good reason. For they obtain their enumeration by distinguishing two appetites in the sensitive part of the soul, of which they name one the Concupiscent and the other the Irascible. And because I discern no distinction of parts of the soul . . . this seems to me to mean nothing except that it has two faculties, one of desiring and the other of being vexed. And because it has in the same way the faculties of wondering, loving, hoping, fearing, and thus of receiving each of the other passions into itself, or doing the actions these passions impel it to do, I fail to see why they wanted to refer all of them to concupiscence or anger.
>
> (*Passions* art. 68, AT XI 379)

Descartes does not so much justify what has preceded this article as mark Aquinas as his target. The argument seems to be that the Thomist distinction between the concupiscent and irascible passions turns on an assumption that there are different parts of the soul. Without that assumption, concupiscence (desiring) and irascibility (being vexed) are just like other passions, and there is no reason to privilege concupiscence or irascibility as organizational principles. While it is not clear that Descartes has properly understood the Thomist account, there are two points to highlight here. First, for Descartes, the indivisibility of the mind – there being no parts of the soul – is a core commitment, and one that constrains any taxonomy of the passions. We thus need to understand how his list of primitives is designed to satisfy this constraint. Second, and this is the point I will consider first, despite his assertion that he rejects the Thomist account of the passions, Descartes's list of primitives overlaps significantly with Aquinas's concupiscent passions (he adds wonder and rejects distinguishing

desire and aversion). While he does reject all of the irascible passions as primitives, we can still ask why Descartes preserves what he does of the Thomist account. To address this question, I will need to briefly consider Aquinas.

Most of the focus on Thomas's taxonomy of the passions has been on his differentiation of the passions by the formal features of their objects.[5] Concupiscent passions are all immediately felt pleasures and pains, whereas irascible passions all involve a kind of struggle and are experienced only after an intermediary passion. Thus, they are often understood as distinguished by the ease or difficulty with which we can acquire or avoid the good or evil that is their object. The concupiscent passions are further differentiated along three dimensions: by whether they are sensations of goods and evils, by the inclination to action they contain, and by whether their object is at a distance or possessed. So, love and hatred are sensations of the good and evil of an object, desire and aversion move us towards or away from the object that is loved or hated, and joy and sadness highlight the proximity or possession of either a good or an evil. The differentiation of the irascible passions follows similar lines. Hope and despair are contrary attitudes towards a good (or loved) object that is hard to acquire; fear and confidence are similarly contrary attitudes towards an evil (or hated) object that is difficult to avoid. All four concern some object in the future, and they presuppose a concupiscent passion (in particular, love or hatred through which we have sensed the value of their object) towards the object in the present. Anger is a response to an object that has caused our succumbing to an evil, that is, caused our experience of a negative concupiscent emotion, and as such seems to stand alone as depending upon information about the causal influence an object has on us.

Though Aquinas focuses on the different aspects of the formal features of objects, the enumeration of these features of objects also highlights our *cognitive access* to them in experience. First, love and hatred mark not only that objects are good or bad but also that we experience objects to have a particular value. Second, desire and aversion mark that objects either attract or repulse us and so, equally, that we experience being drawn to (or away from) objects whose value attracts (or repulses) us. And third, desire and aversion, along with joy and sadness, presuppose that valuable objects are situated in relation to us in space and time. Desire and aversion are premised on an object's being at a distance from us, while joy and sadness take objects to be present with us or separated from us. The irascible passions further articulate these aspects of objects and our cognition of them insofar as they are all concerned with objects situated at various degrees of remoteness and in the future, and so further demand that we situate objects relative to each other and to ourselves in space and time. Anger introduces a causal dimension to thought.[6]

Aquinas's taxonomy of the passions marks out both formal features of objects and our cognitive access to those features. In so doing, his account highlights his view of the fundamental features of our way of experiencing things, that is, of cognition: value, inclination to action, and situation in time and space.[7] If this is on the right track, then any revision to the most basic passions within a taxonomy should come along with a revision to the account of cognition.

Let me now return to Descartes. As I have already noted, he identifies six primitive passions: wonder, love, hate, joy, sadness, and desire. Five of these overlap with Aquinas's concupiscent passions. However, Descartes subsumes aversion under desire – aversion is simply a desire to avoid – and adds wonder as the first of the passions. Rather than focus on these differences, I want to test my hypothesis that a set of basic passions in a taxonomy highlight features of cognition by examining just how Descartes's primitive passions stand with respect to his account of cognition. In this regard, there is an important difference between Descartes and Aquinas. For Aquinas, cognition involves apprehending features of objects directly, whereas for Descartes, cognition involves representing objects. We should thus expect that, whereas Aquinas's taxonomy highlights features of objects in the first instance, the primitive passions within Descartes's taxonomy ought to highlight, in the first instance, features of our representations.

Descartes's introduction to his taxonomy squares with this point. In the *Passions of the Soul*, he prefaces his enumeration of the passions by noting that

> objects which move the senses do not excite different passions in us in proportion to all of their diversities, but only in proportion to the different ways they can harm or profit us or, generally, be important to us; and that the use of all the passions consists in this alone: they dispose the soul to will the things nature tells us are useful and to persist in this volition . . . This is why, in order to enumerate them, one needs only to investigate in order, in how many different ways that are important to us our senses can be moved by their objects.
>
> (*Passions* art. 52, AT XI 372)

His denial that a proper taxonomy of the passions ought to be determined by features of objects seems to be a pointed rejection of the Thomist taxonomic principle. Descartes suggests that the passions are all species of the primitive passions, which mark out the basic ways in which objects "can harm or profit us or, generally, be important to us" (*Passions* art. 52, AT XI 372). But it is not clear how the importance of things to us is supposed to serve as the organizing principle of his taxonomy.

Denis Kambouchner has noted the peculiarity of Descartes's initial enumeration of the passions, followed by his identification of a subset

as primitive.[8] It is neither a set of basic elements that can be combined with one another to give us more complex passions nor a set of simples which gain complexity through the introduction of a variety of factors (for instance, a temporal or a spatial dimension). Rather, Kambouchner notes, Descartes's enumeration of the passions follows our *experience* of them, not unlike the way in which the *Meditations* takes the experience of thinking as the starting point of its reconception of thought. If Kambouchner is correct, the primitive passions certainly highlight features of Cartesian cognition. The question remains which features they highlight, and how they reflect the central differences between the Thomist and Cartesian accounts of cognition.

Though Descartes introduces the primitive passions in a way that suggests that their status as primitives is either logical or taxonomical,[9] it would seem that he distinguishes them from one another through their proper dimension of importance. An initial survey of Descartes's primitive passions seems to confirm this expectation. Wonder tracks the rare and extraordinary, love tracks suitability, and hate tracks harmfulness. As the list continues, however, the principle of distinction becomes less clear, for desire, like love, involves the representation of things as suitable, as does joy, and sadness involves the representation of an evil, as does hatred. Thus, it cannot be that the enumeration of primitive passions is derived solely from a set of basic ways in which things are important to us. More explanation is required.

I suggested that Aquinas's taxonomy of the passions highlighted his conception of how our cognition conforms to essential features of the objects in the world: that they are good and bad, that they attract and repel us, and that they are situated in space and time. I want now to suggest that the primitive passions for Descartes are *primitives* not only because they reflect the different dimensions in which things are important to us but also because they too highlight essential features of our representations of the world, features that are not derived from features of objects; they highlight essential structural features of experience.[10]

What does it mean to say that the primitive passions highlight essential structural features of experience? Kambouchner's discussion of the primitive passions is again helpful as on his reading, the primitive passions are *psychologically* primitive insofar as they are ideas, that is, *formally*.[11] To bring out that the primitive passions ought to be taken formally, Kambouchner looks to the definition of love. For Descartes,

> love is an excitation of the soul, caused by the motion of the spirits, which incites it to join itself in volition [*se joigner de volonté*] to the objects that appear to be suitable to it.
>
> (*Passions* art. 79, AT XI 387)

On Kambouchner's reading, "the act of the soul that consists in "joining itself *de volonté*" to its objects itself constitutes an act of representation"

(1995, 248), one that immediately arises with the body's being in a physiological state. As Descartes explicates the phrase *de volonté*, it is "the consent by which we consider ourselves from the present as joined with what we love, in such a way that we imagine a whole of which we think ourselves to be only one part and the thing loved another" (*Passions* art. 80, AT XI 387). Considering ourselves as joined with another *just is* taking that other to be valuable or suitable to us. Joining ourselves willingly here is *just* the act, the willful ascription of value, to something, a thing that gets circumscribed as the thing it is in virtue of our situating ourselves in relation to it. In love, then, the movement of the spirits moves the will (that is, the soul) to ascribe value and thereby to define itself in relation to things. In so doing, it effectively defines things.

We can see from this account that, for Descartes, the object of love is not intrinsically valuable, as it is for Aquinas, but rather becomes valuable *to us* through our representation of it as joined to us. This account of love, thus, already reflects a central difference between the Thomist and the Cartesian accounts of mind. Kambouchner argues that Descartes's account of love generalizes to the other primitive passions so that, in each case, we find that the "unity of the act of the soul determines alone the unity of the passion itself" (1995, 250). Thus, again, the indivisibility of the Cartesian mind is central to Descartes's account of the primitive passions. Kambouchner's account also shows that love and hatred, as primitive passions, highlight two features of Cartesian thought: (1) the *activity* of our representing things as valuable in some way and (2) our representations of things as valuable involve situating ourselves in relation to others.

We are now in a position to compare Descartes's and Aquinas's accounts of love and hatred as primitive passions. For both, love and hatred involve the apprehension of things as good and bad, and an inclination of the will to act accordingly, but this is but a superficial similarity. For Aquinas, love and hatred track properties of objects, and the way they incline the will is not included in their definition. Descartes effectively reconceives of each of these elements. For him, love and hatred includes an act of will and so marks our apprehensions of good and bad as representations that we are *active* in creating. And moreover, our representations of value are not inert. They move us to join ourselves to (or to avoid) the object we love (or hate).

While Kambouchner's account helps in understanding the role of love and hatred as primitive passions, it falls short with respect to wonder, desire, joy, and sadness. He seems to maintain that what distinguishes Cartesian primitive passions are the particular dimensions of importance informing the representation constituting the act of the soul. However, we have already seen that this principle is insufficient to distinguish love from desire and joy, and hatred from sadness. We need to look to the features of cognition that these remaining primitive passions highlight for him and how those features are organized differently than they are in Aquinas's account.

Let me begin with wonder, which, for Descartes, is situated first among the primitive passions and is defined as "a sudden surprise of the soul which carries it to consider attentively those objects which seem to it rare and extraordinary" (*Passions* art. 70, AT XI 380). As such, it is the one passion that does not concern good or evil, and so, it does not move us to outwardly directed actions. Rather, it moves us to know the new and extraordinary thing before us, of which we have been up to that point ignorant, and to give it "great consideration." Wonder helps us in remembering things and "disposes us to the acquisition of the sciences" (*Passions* art. 76, AT XI 385).

Wonder highlights an aspect of Cartesian thought that is not an issue for Aquinas. On the causal resemblance account of representation held by Aquinas, there is a very straightforward way of explaining why it is we have one thought at the fore of our mind rather than another: it is simply a matter of features of the object itself. Some things simply are more attention-getting than others, and attention-getting objects simply come to the fore of our mind. Descartes, however, rejects this account of representation. As the Sixth Meditation proof for the existence of bodies makes clear, while it is the case that objects cause us to have ideas, it is not the case that objects imbue our ideas with properties of those objects – our ideas need not resemble their causes.[12] Since for him, ideas need not resemble their causes, Descartes needs to explain how some ideas come to the fore of our mind rather than others. Wonder at the very least highlights this demand on Cartesian thought. And we might also think that wonder provides the account Descartes requires, for wonder is our response to variations in our experience, new or unusual patterns in the way the world causally impacts on us: it is attention.

Let me now proceed to consider desire. Descartes, like Aquinas, takes desire as a primitive passion to highlight that we represent things within time. Descartes defines desire as "an agitation of the soul, caused by the spirits, which disposes it to will for the future the things it represents to itself to be suitable," and he continues,

> thus, we desire not only the presence of absent good but also the preservation of the present, and in addition the absence of evil, both what we already have and what we believe we might receive in time to come.
>
> (*Passions* art. 86, AT XI 392)

This definition explicitly invokes the present and the future, as well as the future-directedness of the actions arising from desire, and so highlights the temporal aspect of thought. Equally, the language of "'presence' and 'absence' suggests that the passion also highlights the spatial aspects of our representations. Descartes's initial characterization of

desire in *Passions* art. 56 also highlights these spatial and temporal dimensions of thought:

> All the other passions originate from the same consideration of good and evil, but to put them in order I distinguish times from one another, and considering that [these passions] incline us much more to face the future than the present or the past, I begin with Desire. For it is plain that it always faces the future – not only when one desires to acquire a good one does not yet have or avoid an evil one judges might occur, but also when one wishes only the preservation of a good or the absence of an evil, which is all this passion can extend to.
>
> (AT XI 374–375)

Thus, for Descartes, desire is properly a primitive passion because it highlights the way our representations are situated in time and, to a degree, in space.[13]

It also helps us to see how Descartes further reconfigures the Thomist account. For Aquinas, recall, desire did highlight the temporality of thought in his taxonomy of primary passions. However, for Aquinas, desire and aversion principally bring out how we are drawn to or repelled by objects. It makes sense that Descartes retains desire – a passion that builds a temporal dimension into its function – to highlight that aspect of thought. But it is important to Descartes's account that the mind is *active* in its representation of value, and this active representation contains within it the inclination to action. The passivity of desire's attraction (and aversion's repulsion) does not fit into Descartes's account, and love and hatred on the Cartesian account already incorporate our inclinations toward or away from things.

It remains to consider joy and sadness. Whereas, for Aquinas, joy and sadness serve to highlight the way in which we represent things in space, for Descartes, joy and sadness are passions defined by their representation of their objects as *belonging* to us. This point is emphasized in the initial and subsequent definitions of joy and sadness:

> The consideration of a present good excites joy in us, that of evil sadness, when it is a good or evil which is represented to us *as belonging to us*.
>
> (*Passions* art. 61, AT XI 376)

> Joy is a delightful excitation of the soul, wherein consists the enjoyment it has of the good which the impressions of the brain represent to it as its own.
>
> (*Passions* art. 91, AT XI 396)

> Sadness is an unpleasant languor, wherein consists the distress which the soul receives from the evil or defect which the impressions of the brain represent as belonging to it.
>
> (*Passions* art. 92, AT XI 397)

What is central to Descartes's account is not so much that we enjoy the good we now have (and so near us) but that we enjoy its being *ours*. Equally, we feel sadness insofar as we are part of something bad.[14] To consider something as belonging to us, we need to be able to distinguish ourselves from those things that are not us. Drawing this distinction involves self-awareness. If we think of the primitive passions as highlighting structural features of thought, for Descartes, joy and sadness seem to be highlighting the reflexivity in his account of representational thought, the way in which thought, for him, essentially involves the consciousness or awareness whereby that thought is my own. Throughout the *Meditations*, and elsewhere, he consistently uses this same language – that of 'belonging' – to characterize his essence. And what marks his essence is the conception of thinking evident in the *cogito*. There, the meditator establishes through his self-awareness that he is thinking, that is, the indubitability of the fact that he is thinking while he is doing so, that thinking is the attribute that constitutes him as the thing he is or that which properly belongs to him.

I hope that this survey is sufficient to have shown that it is at least plausible to think of taxonomies of primitive passions as highlighting structural features of a philosopher's account of cognition or thought. And moreover, I hope to have shown how shifts in these taxonomies reflect substantial differences in a philosopher's conception of mind from that of his predecessors. Descartes's shift from Aquinas's taxonomy of the concupiscent passions seems designed to reflect the changes in his own conception of thought from that of Aquinas. Descartes introduces wonder, and as the first of all the passions, because, unlike Aquinas, he denies that ideas represent what they do because they resemble their causes. He needs an account of how we attend to objects and then go on to represent them. Love and hatred, while they do still reflect that we cognize the value of things in relation to us for Descartes, also importantly highlight that those representations of things as valuable are *active* rather than a passive reception of the relational properties of things. This active representation of value allows Descartes to incorporate our inclination to act on our evaluations into the passions of love and hatred. For Aquinas, that inclination was highlighted in the passions of desire and aversion. On the Thomist account, desire (and aversion) also highlighted the temporal dimension of cognition, and Descartes preserves desire as a primitive passion to highlight the temporality of thought. He dispenses of aversion because that passion does not contain within it any distinctive dimension of thought. Joy and sadness are also shifted within the Cartesian system. Within Thomas's account, joy and sadness highlight a spatial dimension of cognition. For Descartes, joy and sadness, in concerning principally

whether or not a thing belongs to us, highlight the awareness or reflexivity proper to and defining of his conception of thought.

3 Spinoza Revisited

If I am correct that taxonomies of passions highlight structural features of cognition, Spinoza's shift from the *Short Treatise* to the *Ethics* is best understood through the lens of his critique of Descartes's account of cognition. As is well recognized, Spinoza's critique of Descartes's account of mind involves at minimum two key elements: (a) though Spinoza follows Descartes in recognizing there to be only efficient causal interaction between the world (conceived under the attribute of Extension) and our bodies, he wholly rejects Descartes's metaphysical dualism. For Spinoza, per 2p7s,

> the thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, which is now comprehended under this attribute, now under that; so also a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing but expressed in two ways.

With that rejection, Spinoza disavows the idea that body and mind causally interact. And (b) though Spinoza follows Descartes in taking all thought to be representational and in denying that representation is a matter of resemblance between thought and object, he also denies that there is any special activity proper to thought, and so, he bears a burden of explaining the source of the content of our ideas. In assuming this burden, he complicates Descartes's conception of thought as intrinsically both conscious and representational. An infinite mind – Nature understood under the attribute of Thought – is aware of the object of each and all of its ideas. However, in the case of a finite mind – a human mind – we can distinguish two senses in which an idea represents. The first sense is articulated through 2p13 and its scholium: "the object of the idea constituting the human mind is the body, or a certain mode of extension which actually exists, and nothing else." The claim here is that the object of an idea, understood metaphysically, is just that body which holds the parallel place in the order of things conceived under the attribute of Extension that the idea holds in the order of things conceived under the attribute of Thought. As the case of 2p13 makes clear, the idea constituting the human mind is not fully conscious of its object, the human body. The second sense, the more familiar epistemic sense, in which an idea represents is introduced in 2p17:

> If the human body is affected with a mode that involves the nature of an external body, the human mind will regard the same external body as actually existing, or as present to it, until the body is affected by an affect that excludes the existence or presence of that body.

As the scholium to the proposition clarifies, the object of idea in this epistemic sense is that of which we are aware or what we regard as present to us. My suggestion is that for Spinoza, the primary affects in the *Ethics*, and their relation to the other affects, are intimately intertwined with this distinction central to his account of mind, as well as with how that distinction emerges from his denial that the mind is intrinsically active and the demand that denial makes for an explanation of how thinking represents and how thoughts become conscious. His pared down list of primary affects – desire, joy, and sadness – should highlight dimensions of this explanation, as should the absence of wonder, love, and hatred as primary passions be consistent with it.

To flesh out this suggestion, let me begin with desire. Spinoza first introduces and defines desire at 3p9s:

> When this striving is related only to the mind, it is called will, but when it is related to the mind and the body together, it is called appetite. This appetite, therefore, is nothing but the very essence of man, from whose nature there necessarily follow those things that promote his preservation. And so man is determined to do those things.
>
> Between appetite and desire there is no difference, *except that desire is generally related to men insofar as they are conscious of their appetite*. So *desire* can be defined as *appetite together with consciousness of the appetite*.
>
> (3p9s, G II 147–148; first emphasis added, two others in the original)

Steven Nadler has noted that "it is odd for Spinoza to speak of desire as a species of affect . . . because desire, at least as it is originally defined (3p9s), really just is the power or striving itself whose transitions constitute the affects," and he goes on to suggest that there are only two primary affects – joy and sadness – for Spinoza.[15] Nadler's suggestion regarding the redundancy of desire in Spinoza's system is consistent with the way in which it is defined in the Definitions of the Affects at the end of Part 3: "Desire is man's very essence, insofar as it is conceived to be determined, from any given affection of it, to do something" (3DA1). Nonetheless, attention to 3p9s suggests that desire is something more than our essence for Spinoza there identifies appetite as the essence of man and distinguishes desire from appetite by the consciousness of appetite it involves.

The introduction of appetite and desire comes in reference to 3p9, which expressly applies the general notion of *conatus* – that the actual essence of a thing is its striving to persevere in its being (3p6 and 3p7) – to the human mind. The proposition itself highlights two features of the

human mind's *conatus* – that it strives in virtue of all its ideas (both adequate and inadequate) and that it entails consciousness of itself. The scholium of the proposition distinguishes three tightly connected concepts. Will is our striving referred to the mind alone. Appetite is our striving referred to mind and body together. And desire, as we have seen, is consciousness of appetite. As we have also seen, Spinoza further defines appetite as "the very essence of man, from whose nature there necessarily follow those things that promote his preservation" (3p9s). Insofar as appetite is the striving constituting our essence, we should, by 3p9, be conscious of it. Plausibly, insofar as our appetites move us to act to satisfy those appetites, we are conscious of them. But if we are conscious of our appetites, how are desires any different from appetites? The answer to this question can help us in understanding desire as a primary affect in Spinoza's system.

Spinoza here uses two distinct, though closely related, terms: *conscius* and *conscientia*. The former term is repeated in the proposition, its demonstration and scholium, but the latter term is only used in the definition of desire. *Conscius* connotes a knowing, that is, an awareness, of good and evil, that is in process. I take the use of that term in this proposition to indicate that *conatus* – striving to persevere in one's being – in humans provides the movement through which we distinguish good and evil *for us*. Insofar as its *conatus* is the actual essence of it as a thing, the human mind has an innate awareness (or knowing) of good and evil – it is conscious of its own striving to persevere. This point applies to both will and appetite. Desire, however, involves *conscientia*, the nominative and so the fixed form of the verb. *Conscientia* also involves an awareness of good and evil, but that awareness is articulated, or, we might say, it involves a self-awareness of our awareness of a thing as good.[16] So, when I have an appetite for an apple, I am aware of *an apple* insofar as it is good for me, and I am moved towards eating it. When I desire an apple, I not only am aware of an apple insofar as it is good for me and moved towards it, but I also am aware of my awareness of the apple insofar as it is good for me, for in desiring it, I assert that the apple is good and direct myself towards it.[17]

If this is correct, then appetite and desire each involve a kind of self-consciousness, which are nonetheless subtly distinct. Appetites reflect a consciousness of my essence – my striving to persevere in existence – simply insofar as my perceiving things as good (or bad) for me involves my distinctive perspective. In desiring something, that self-awareness goes beyond inhabiting a distinctive perspective to asserting that perspective, asserting that something is good *for me*. Despite claiming in the Definition of the Affects that "I really recognize no difference between human appetite and desire" (3DA1exp), Spinoza also there goes on to note that our awareness of our appetites can be more or less complete. Our desires

can leave obscure some parts of what we are striving towards. Spinoza's somewhat further explication of this point suggests that our desires, or consciousness of our appetites, are a result of how we are affected by things – both internal and external causes:

> For I could have said that desire is man's very essence, insofar as it is conceived to be determined to do something. But from this definition (by 2p23) it would not follow that the mind could be conscious of its desire, *or* appetite. Therefore, *in order to involve the cause of this consciousness*, it was necessary (by the same proposition) to add: *insofar as it is conceived, from some given affection of it, to be determined,* and so on.
>
> (3DA1exp; second emphasis added, first and third in the original)

Our appetites constitute our essence insofar as they just are our striving to persevere. Our desires also constitute our essence in the same way, but they also involve the causes of our being moved in the way we are. Spinoza suggests here that we are aware of the causes of our striving through the way we are affected. But of course, our awareness of our essence is incomplete or inadequate; we are only partially aware of our essence. So, our desire is our awareness of that *aspect* of our essence, our striving to persevere brought to our attention in virtue of the way we are affected by things (both internal and external).

In this way, desire is what is perhaps the central feature of Spinoza's account of mind – the distinction between our position in the world metaphysically speaking and our awareness of that position. However, with desire alone, we have little explanation of just how we come to be aware of that which we are aware. On Descartes's account of mind, there is no need for such an explanation: thought itself is a primitive and is intrinsically conscious. For Spinoza, while thinking is intrinsically representational, it is not intrinsically conscious. How, then, do we become conscious of that which we are conscious?

Joy and sadness provide the answer to this question. They explain how we become conscious of things and so self-consciously aware of our own position in the world. For Spinoza, joy is "that passion through which the mind passes to a greater perfection" or increases its power of thinking, and sadness is "that passion by which it passes to a lesser perfection" or decreases its power of thinking (3p11s). These increases and decreases in our power to persevere hone attention, informing our awareness so that our perspective on the world takes shape. In the propositions that immediately follow, 3p12–13, Spinoza explains the causes of our imagining what we do. It is not simply that we are causally impacted by an external thing and then take that thing to be present or imagine

it. Rather, what we imagine depends on how things affect us, that is, on how they impact our power to persevere or continue to exist.[18] Spinoza says as much in 3p12, 3p13, and 3p13c:

> The mind, as far as it can, strives to imagine those things that increase or aid the body's power of acting.
>
> (3p12)

> When the mind imagines those things that diminish or restrain the body's power of acting, it strives, as far as it can, to recollect things that exclude their existence.
>
> (3p13)

> From this it follows that the mind avoids imagining those things that diminish or restrain its or the body's power.
>
> (3p13c)

Insofar as these propositions maintain that we become aware of that which increases our power to persevere in existence and, equally, put out of our mind those things which constrain our continued existence, they provide Spinoza's explanation of how we come to imagine, that is, to take as present to us, or to be conscious of, the things we do.

While love and hatred are not primary affects for Spinoza, they are introduced in the scholium of 3p13c and retain a special place in Spinoza's taxonomy for they are the first passions in which we imagine, that is, represent, external objects:

> From this we understand clearly what love and hate are. *Love is* nothing but *joy with the accompanying idea of an external cause*, and *hate* is nothing but *sadness with the accompanying idea of an external cause*. We see, then, that one who loves necessarily strives to have present and preserve the thing he loves; and on the other hand, one who hates strives to remove and destroy the thing he hates.
>
> (3p13s)

I take the definitions of these passions to further indicate that our representations of objects as present to us are constituted by the ways in which things affect us, not simply perceptions that we then imbue with value.

With this picture in place, we can now understand why Spinoza dismisses wonder as an affect. Descartes's account of mind seems to presuppose that we have an array of ideas in mind, and without being able to assume any resemblance between those representations and things, the account needed to explain how we attend to some things rather than

others. Wonder provided that explanation within the Cartesian account. On Spinoza's view, objects are presented to us as present just in virtue of the ways in which we are affected. We have no need for a separate affect to explain what we attend to for attention and imagination are fully aligned, and they are both explained by the way things impact our power to persevere.

It is also worth noting that in Spinoza's taxonomy of primary affects, there is no highlighting of the temporality of thought. This too is consistent with the picture that Spinoza presents. Thinking, metaphysically speaking, is not in time insofar as it is, like Nature, eternal. Even the inadequate thinking of finite things is not intrinsically temporal for we only situate things in time once we have already imagined things as present and then associated those imaginations through the ways in which we are affected (see 2p18s and 3p18s1).

If the interpretation I am presenting is correct, it brings out just how radical Spinoza's taxonomy of primary affects is. I have been demonstrating how a philosophical taxonomy of primitive passions highlights some basic structural features of thought. Each primitive passion marks an aspect – not unlike a Kantian category – essential to representational thought. Spinoza's pared down set of primary affects reflects the modesty of his conception of thought for on his account, even temporality is not intrinsic to our representations of objects. Moreover, for Spinoza, the primary affects do not simply highlight structural features of thought. They provide the structure through which we finite humans think, that is, through which we perceive objects in the world and thereby inform our perception. On Spinoza's account, desire subsumes within consciousness three structural features of representation that were taken to be distinct by Descartes: consciousness, an inclination to action, and value. Joy and sadness, as the increase and decrease of our power to persevere in existence, provide the mechanism through which we distinguish different elements of the causal nexus of which we are a part. Through them, we imagine the objects we do.

Notes

1 Amy Schmitter tells me it might not have to be that way. She unearthed a play, written in 1630, called *Pathomachia: or the Battle of the Affections* that dramatizes a taxonomy of passions.
2 See Voss (1981) for an interesting discussion of Spinoza's likely source: the Latin translation of the *Passions*, which was not approved by Descartes and which contains several significant variations from the French edition.
3 Following the citation practice in this volume, the reference to the Adam and Tannery edition of the *Oeuvres complètes* of Descartes are to Volume:page. When I rely on translations, Adam and Tannery edition reference is following by Descartes, *The Philosophical Works of Descartes* (1984–1991) [CSM and CSMK].
4 Brennan (2005) provides a helpful overview of Stoic accounts of emotion.

5 Knuuttila (2004, 243). Knuuttila's discussion of Aquinas's system (pp. 239–255) forms the basis of my brief summary here. See also King (2011).

6 There is another feature of the Thomist account worth noting. Though this taxonomy, in virtue of being a taxonomy, presents each of these passions as discrete possible states, the passions themselves do not seem to function discretely but rather are interconnected and work together. Consider the concupiscent passions. First, in feeling love or hatred, we perceive the value of an object, whether it is good (or attractive) or bad (or repulsive), but love leads us naturally to desire, and hate to aversion, that is, to move towards or away from the object. Moreover, in approaching the object we desire and love, we feel joy, just as we feel sadness in nearing that to which we are averse and hate. Conversely, we feel sadness in being apart from the object of our desire and love, and joy in being removed from that to which we are averse and hate. This movement, from one to the other to the next and back again, is how we experience the passions. We only rarely experience them discretely. Our movement through the passions parallels the movement of objects through these dimensions, and that movement helps in our cognition of these formal features. We hope to regain what we have loved and lost. We despair at the prospect that our beloved will remain remote. We rejoice when we find ourselves with the object of our love again. This cycling through the passions helps to pinpoint the value of things, not only in relation to us but also in relation to one another, and it makes more precise our situation in space and time.

7 I recognize that this interpretation of Aquinas demands a much more thorough defense, but this sketch is sufficient for my purposes here.

8 See Kambouchner (1995).

9 It appears that we are to arrive at the list of primitive passions by first surveying our experiences and then either breaking them down into their parts, much as we are to break down a problem that requires solution, or adducing from a variety of experiences a general point of commonality:

> For by carrying out a review of all those I have enumerated, one can discover with ease that only six of them are of this kind [simple and primitive] . . . and all the others are composed of some of these six or are species of them.
>
> (*Passions* art. 69, AT XI 380)

10 I do not mean to suggest that this is the *only* sense in which primitive passions are primitive. I mean only to suggest that highlighting structural features of our thought is *one* important sense in which they are primitive passions for Descartes. Kambouchner identifies three crucial points of Descartes's account. My interpretation is aligned with the third point, but let me mention the first two here. First, there are three senses of primitivity in play in the enumeration of the primitive passions: they are primitive in a logical sense, as generics in relation to all the others (the way in which Descartes himself presents the ordering); they are physiologically primitive, as the movements proper to these basic passions can be combined; and they are genetically primitive, as the primitive passions are the first ones felt (and the objects are various conditions of the blood), and all mature feelings develop from these original ones. Second, Descartes's mode of presentation is meant to bring out the *immediacy* with which we feel the passions, and in particular that our feelings of the passions do not presuppose that we have already differentiated objects to which we attach or direct our feelings. And third, and this is the point which I consider in the body of the paper, the primitive passions are psychologically primitive insofar as they are ideas, that is, *formally*; they

are not psychologically primitive *objectively,* that is, insofar as they identify some basic ways of being self-aware.

11 Kambouchner distinguishes being psychologically primitive *formally* from being psychologically primitive *objectively,* that is, insofar as they identify some basic ways of being self-aware.

12 That proof argues that while "corporeal things exist, they may not all exist in a way that exactly corresponds with my sensory grasp of them" (AT VII 80, CSM II 55). The insight that we "misuse them [our sensations] by treating them as reliable touchstones for immediate judgements about the essential nature of the bodies located outside me" (AT VII 83, CSM II 57–58) follows.

13 Understanding desire in this way can help to explain why Descartes denies that aversion is a separate passion: aversion too clearly situates objects in space and time, and there is no need for duplication. The activity of our representing things as good or bad in relation to us provides another reason why aversion is not an opposite to desire. In representing something as good or bad in relation to us, we rely on one and the same norm.

14 Descartes takes great pains here to distinguish the primitive passions of joy and sadness, those caused by the motions of the animal spirits, from an intellectual joy and sadness. It is hard to understand what he intends, but his point seems to be that in the primitive passions of joy, we represent immediately a good as proper to us. The two intellectual passions, though they are closely connected with their primitive cognates, arise from an opinion that a particular good or evil is our own, that is, they involve an intermediary step or a judgment.

15 See Nadler (2006, 203–204).

16 One might think of the distinction I am suggesting between appetite and desire as akin to the distinction drawn in Part 1 of the *Ethics* between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*.

17 For more detailed discussions of Spinoza's account of consciousness, see Nadler (2008), Garrett (2008), LeBuffe (2010), and Marshall (2013). These accounts focus on how Spinoza conceives of consciousness and its relation to thought. Though my view is aligned with Garrett and Marshall, my concern is to draw out what follows about Spinoza's account of reasoning – understood as the relations of ideas – given that he takes us to affectively represent things as present.

18 I argue for this claim in Shapiro (2017).

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5 Spinoza on the Primary Affects

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Early in Part 3 of the *Ethics*, Spinoza presents his theory of *cupiditas* (desire), *laetitia* (the basic positive affect, running the gamut from pleasure to joy), and *tristitia* (the basic negative affect, running the gamut from pain to sorrow). His theorizing about these three primary affects (*affectum primarium*) draws heavily upon the highly original account of the human being he offers in the first two parts of the *Ethics*. In this chapter, I begin by sketching an interpretation of that account and then proceed to provide a treatment of the three fundamental affects that keeps that earlier theory firmly in view. Spinoza thinks I am a union of my mind with my body, where my mind is God's idea of my body; my mind is united to my body as an idea is to its object. But how can I – a being who lives a life filled with desire, pleasure/joy, and pain/sorrow – locate myself in Spinoza's schematic and puzzling theory? By carefully working through the account of the primary affects that Spinoza develops in the wake of his picture of the human being, we can begin to answer this question. Moreover, by keeping his theorizing about the primary affects answerable to the metaphysical account of the human being that he provides earlier, we can appreciate the deep unity of his project, and in particular the close relationship between the first two parts of his *Ethics* and the last three.

1 Preliminaries

Spinoza's *Ethics* is an ethics in the sense of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: it is meant to provide an account of human flourishing. A natural thought, common to Spinoza and the Aristotelian tradition, is that there is an intimate connection between what you are – your essence – and what it is for you to flourish. Thus, the *Nicomachean Ethics*' discussion of flourishing is framed by the so-called "function" argument.

In the first two parts of the *Ethics*, Spinoza provides an account of our essence. In my view, this is the main thing they contribute to the last three parts. In Part 1, we learn that we are modifications of something more fundamental. Let's begin with the human body. A human body is the modification of God's (or substance's) basic geometrical, kinetic, and

dynamic invariances. The body could no more exist apart from these invariances in Spinoza's universe than it could exist apart from the basic laws of electricity and magnetism in ours. Moreover, Spinoza holds that the body must be understood through – his preferred phrasing is "must be conceived through" – these invariances, just as we think that the body must be understood through the basic principles of the physical order.

More specifically, Spinoza thinks of finite bodies as determinations of God's invariant structure. Here, his model is geometry. We might think of the three-sided closed plane figure as a determination of invariant Euclidean structure. This structure admits of being described in certain ways but not others. It is open to being described into a three-sided closed plane figure but not a two-sided one. Euclidean construction procedures explain how to get from the more basic invariant structure to the finite descriptions; they are the proximate causes of figures. In Spinoza's view, they provide real definitions of figures, which explicate the figures' essences. This is how he thinks of the essence of plenum entities, i.e., bodies. A finite body – say, an oak tree – is the result of a construction out of Extension's geometric, kinetic, and dynamic invariances. The dynamic construction procedures are proximate causes, which serve as real definitions explicating the resulting bodies' essences. How the result of the procedure – what we might call the construction (as opposed to the construction procedure) – fares over time is a function of both the procedure and the environment in which the resulting construction or structure finds itself.

Now, according to Spinoza, the world is the product of an unconditionally necessary being exercising its power in an unconditionally necessary way. God's unlimited reality or power naturally and necessarily brings forth the richest possible order of modes, the order of modes that is maximal in its reality. (Think of this as Spinoza's analogue to Leibniz's later claim that God inevitably creates the best of all possible worlds.) In the case of the attribute of Extension, God produces an "individual" that Spinoza terms "the face of the whole universe." The face of the universe is an overarching system or pattern of motion and rest that surpasses all other orders in the richness of its reality. We might think of this privileged order as the solution to a fantastically complex construction problem or (anachronistically) the solution to some set of differential equations. All finite subconstructions find their home within the infinite face of the universe.

What does Spinoza think the human mind is?[1] The human mind is located within divine cognition in a way that is roughly analogous to the way that the human body is located within the face of the universe. So, how is divine cognition, which Spinoza calls the infinite intellect, structured? Well, God cognizes his own essence and sees everything that flows from it. This gives his cognition its unity or organization (2p4). Among the things that God sees flowing from his essence is, within the

attribute of Extension, the face of the universe. Everything found within it, including my body, exists cognitively or "objectively" within God's cognition.

My mind, according to Spinoza, is God's cognition of my body. As Spinoza puts it, my mind is God's idea of my body. My mind is thus a real thing, as real as God's cognition. God does not understand my body "neat," as it were, apart from the rest of the plenum, but rather as part of his overall cognition of the system of the universe (2p9). More precisely, God appreciates certain things about my body in view of his cognition of the dynamic construction procedure that gives rise to it and explicates it; other aspects of my body, however, can be understood only through his cognition of the larger causal nexus in which my body finds itself (cf. 2p11c).

Spinoza models, then, the relation of the mind to the body on the relation of God's cognition of X to X. In the Aristotelian tradition, this relation is thought to involve a sort of identity. The soul becomes all things; the knower becomes "in a way" identical to the known. God's idea of my body, for example, *is* my body existing objectively. The sense of sameness here, of course, is that of Aristotelian cognitive identity, not of Fregean "=" identity.[2] It is the sense of sameness at issue when, while doing geometry well, I take my thought somehow to conform to the nature of a circle and (some of the) properties flowing from it.

Spinoza cautions that the idea of the body is not the body itself, just as the idea of a circle is not a circle. The idea of a circle does not have a circumference and a center, whereas the circle does (TIE sec. 33). Moreover, he speaks of this relation as one of *union* (2p13s and TIE secs. 21 and 22), which is not how Hesperus is related to Phosphorus.[3]

Spinoza is trying to find a way to balance our intuitive sense of the sameness of mind and body (which has tempted philosophers toward some sort of "identity" theory over the years) and the intuitive sense of difference between mind and body (which has caused philosophers to resist "identity" theory over the years). Otherwise put, he is trying to chart a course between Cartesian dualism and Hobbesian materialism. Exchanging Aristotelian cognitive isomorphism for Fregean "=" identity threatens to obscure this.

It is too early to gauge the philosophical success of Spinoza's middle way. Much depends on how he fleshes it out. He undertakes some of this work in Part 2, where he explains what human sensory cognition, (associative) memory, and imagination are, and how error arises, even though our minds are part of the infinite intellect of God, who only understands (and doesn't sense or imagine) and is omniscient. Spinoza's account of these matters exploits the fact that our minds are only God's partial cognition – roughly, what God understands through understanding our bodies – rather than what God understands *tout court*. This theory helps to flesh out what we might call the narrowly cognitive aspect

of the mind's relation to the body. But there is an affective aspect as well. The mind experiences ups, downs, and desires. How are these related to the ups, downs, and motive tendencies of the body? The important task of working these matters out is undertaken at the beginning of Part 3.

2 3p10 and 3p11, and the *Conatus* of the Mind

The introduction of Spinoza's theory of the basic affects – *cupiditas*, *laetitia*, and *tristitia* – requires some groundwork. The account of *cupiditas* (3p9s) depends on the theory of *conatus* (especially 3p4–7) because *cupiditas* turns out to be a certain aspect of *conatus*. The accounts of *laetitia* and *tristitia* (3p11s) require that Spinoza make clear what the mind's basic drive is (3p10 and 3p11). Before we can think of the mind as being advanced (*laetitia*) or set back (*tristitia*), we must be able to think of it as having a direction in which it wants to go.

My mind is a finite real being. Real beings act, that is, do things. Finite real beings *strive* to do things, have *conatus*. The point of framing things in terms of striving or tendency (*conor*), I think, is that a finite being's activity may be thwarted. To be finite is to be limited, and to be limited involves being vulnerable to failure because some more powerful force interferes (4ax1). If a being were unlimited in its power, there would be no need to speak of its striving to do something as opposed to its simply doing something. (It is an interesting question, which I won't try to resolve, whether an infinite mode that meets no external resistance, e.g., the face of the whole universe, has a *conatus*.)

Plenum structures, bodies, both support one another (a tree depends on its environment for its being) and come into conflict (a tree may be compromised by rot or lightning). But how is conflict to be understood with respect to ideas or minds? What is it for one idea or mind to be opposed or contrary to another? To answer this, we need some sense of what the mind is trying to do, that is, what its *conatus* is. 3p10 and 3p11 (and 3p11s) provide help here.

Let's begin with 3p10:

> An idea that excludes the existence of our Body cannot be in our Mind, but is contrary to it.

In this context, I think, an idea that excludes the existence of my body would be an idea of something, call it X – say, a cancerous growth – that destroys my body. Since my mind is God's cognition of my body, the idea of X can belong to my mind only if X belongs to my body. Spinoza argued earlier (3p5), however, that things inimical to my body cannot belong to it, so X cannot belong to my body. Spinoza infers from this that the idea of X is not part of God's cognition of my body, that is, not something that God understands through understanding my body. Since

my mind is God's cognition of my body, God's cognition of X is not part of my mind.

To be clear, when Spinoza says that the idea of X is not in my mind, he is not saying that my mind is unable to have any sort of cognition of X. I can think of X in the way that I can think of other external things. As Spinoza explains (2p17s), Paul can have an idea of Peter through Paul's ideas of the constellation of the various traces Peter's body has left on Paul's brain. Because Paul is finite, his ideas of these brain traces serve as vehicles through which he thinks of Peter. Not so in the case of God. Since he sees how both X and Peter's body flow from his essence, God has no use for such roundabout mechanisms. God understands X directly, not through his cognition of the traces that X leaves on my brain.

But how are we to understand the opposition between the mind and God's idea of the tumor? Here's what Spinoza says in 3p10d:

> since (by 2p11 and 2p13) the first thing that constitutes the essence of the Mind is the idea of an actually existing Body, the first and principal [tendency] of the *conatus* of our Mind (by 3p7) is to affirm the existence of our Body. And so an idea that denies the existence of our Body is contrary to our Mind, etc., q.e.d.[4]

An idea, for Spinoza, affirms its object. So, in particular, the idea of the human body, the mind, affirms the existence of the human body. This is the mind's *conatus*. An idea denying the existence of the body is "contrary" to the mind because it opposes the primary inclination of the mind to affirm the existence of its object, the body. As the tumor destroys my body, and as God cognizes this, the present existence of my body becomes no longer thinkable. The idea of my body, my mind, exits the infinite intellect of God.

One thing that Spinoza emphasizes in 3p11s is that the body's destruction does not *cause* the mind's destruction. Conversely, it is worth noting, Spinoza would disagree with the view, perhaps Descartes's, that the mind somehow tends to or looks after the body. The *primum et praecipuum* ("first and principal") tendency of the mind is not the *preservation* of the body but rather the *affirmation* of the being of the body. The only thing that can make a difference within the universe's cognition – within the infinite intellect of God – is further cognition, i.e., other ideas, ultimately generated by God's understanding of his essence and what flows from it.

3p10 might leave one with the impression that the mind's basic *conatus* is simply to affirm that the body exists, as if what the mind does is simply repeat to itself, "The body exists, the body exists, etc." However, the body's own *conatus* is not simply to remain in being but to strive toward maximizing its *reality*, and what the mind affirms is this *reality* and not simply the body's continuance in existence.[5]

In the next proposition, Spinoza writes:

> 3p11: The idea of any thing that increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our Body's power of acting, increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our Mind's power of thinking.

This is the first time he uses the phrase "the mind's power of thinking." He uses it five times in Part 3.[6] What is the mind's power of thinking? How is it related to the body's power of acting? We now have in play two implicit characterizations of the mind, one as a being that seeks to maintain its power of thinking and one as a being that affirms the existence of the human body. How do the two fit together?

In 3p59d, Spinoza links the mind's power of thinking to its power of understanding and its power of acting:

> But by Sadness we understand the fact that the Mind's power of thinking [*cogitandi*] is diminished or restrained (3p11 and 3p11s). And so insofar as the Mind is saddened, its power of understanding, i.e. (by 3p1), of acting, is diminished or restrained.

A mind is not more powerful simply because it knows more truths; it is more powerful because it *understands*, that is, because it sees how things fit together. For Spinoza, the movement from a weak mind to a strong mind is the movement from the fragmentary and confused (the first kind of cognition) to the rationally ordered (the second kind of cognition) and ultimately to an intuitive appreciation of essences and how things follow from them (the third kind of cognition). The more a mind's cognition is of the second and third kinds, the more adequate its ideas are, the more active it is (3p1), and the greater the mind's power of acting is.[7]

Finite modes of cognition – minds – naturally tend from the fragmentary and piecemeal toward the systematic and interconnected. This much is true of finite cognitive beings in general. What is distinctive about a human mind is that the primary content, so to speak, of its thought is the human body. All of my mind's content is traceable back to my body along certain paths. For example, my mind has the understanding of geometry and kinetics that it has because it is God's cognition of a geometrical/kinetic system. My mind has the understanding of substance and mode that it has because it is God's cognition of a mode of a substance. My mind's cognition of the individual physical structures found in the plenum and what understanding (theoretical or otherwise) it has of them depends on the way in which they affect my body. Spinoza also thinks that the mind has a certain amount of self-knowledge in that it has ideas of its ideas, but at the base of such cognition are various ideas of the affections of the body (see 2p23).

That my mind affirms, as the *primum* and *praecipuum* tendency of its *conatus*, the existence of its object, my body, gives it its perspective on the world. Through the content found in this object, my mind in effect assumes something like what Leibniz will later call, in a different metaphysical setting, a point of view.

So much, then, for the relation of the body to what might be called the content of my cognition. What about the relation of my body to what might be called the quality or strength of my cognition? Spinoza's broad, systematic reasons for thinking that the upticks and downticks in the body's reality or perfection must be correlated with the upticks and downticks in the mind's – so that, for example, the better my body is doing (especially my brain, presumably), the better my mind is doing – are obvious enough. But can we flesh out his picture of this relationship by building on the clues he provides?[8]

The power of thinking of the mind is related to the power of its object, the body. Spinoza's lead idea here is that when a body is causally responsible for more, God understands more through his idea of it. What God understands through his cognition of my body provides a more connected, coherent image of reality. The more causal reality found in the body, the more intelligibility found in the idea of the body. So, the more that a body is causally responsible for, the more God understands simply insofar as he understands that body, that is, the more powerful that body's mind is. Spinoza writes:

> when I said . . . that the Mind's power of Thinking is increased or diminished, I meant nothing but that the Mind has formed of its Body (or of some part of it) an idea which expresses more or less reality than it had affirmed of the Body.
>
> (Gen Def Aff, G II 204/23–27)

There is more reality in the body when it can ground and explain more activities, and when this happens, cognition of it is the source of more understanding. This is how the mind's power of thinking is related to the reality found in its object.

It may help to picture this causal self-sufficiency of the body in terms of the strength and flow of its *ratio*. To the extent that a body's *ratio* is flowing well, it is relatively causally self-sufficient. For example, the stronger a tree's *ratio*, the more the goings-on connected with the tree are explained by its nature. And when the *ratio* is strong, so is the accompanying mind: if the *conatus* is flowing well, so is the thinking. I'm going to assume, although Spinoza is not explicit on this point, that in the case of human beings the flow of motion in the brain is especially salient.

4p39 and 4p39s help us to appreciate how, for Spinoza, the power or strength of a *ratio* is tied not to brute force or simple biological

longevity but rather to complexity of activity. In 4p39, he ties good and evil things – roughly, those things that increase or diminish our power of acting – to those things that, respectively, preserve or destroy our body's *ratio*. In 4p39s, he comments:

> here it should be noted that I understand the Body to die when its parts are so disposed that they acquire a different proportion of motion and rest to one another. For I dare not deny that – even though the circulation of the blood is maintained, as well as other [signs] on account of which the Body is thought to be alive – the human Body can nevertheless be changed into another entirely different from its own.
>
> (4p39s, G II 240/15–20)

Whereas one might have thought that the preservation of my *ratio* is simply a matter of the continuation of certain minimal biological functions, Spinoza makes clear in this passage that his conception of a *ratio* is richer than this. Suppose a spider's body has become diminished in such a way that it can no longer engage in certain activities (e.g., web building). Even though other vital activities continue, we might wonder whether the diminishment has fundamentally altered the situation so that the spider's *ratio* has been destroyed, even though the spider's body has not been changed into a corpse. There is need for caution here, as signaled by Spinoza's phrasing "I dare not deny." We are working at a comparatively superficial level, remote from the arachnid's deep structure; this makes it unclear what will ultimately turn out to be the case. Perhaps something similar is true of a human being who has slipped into an irreversible coma: the greatly diminished level of activity of her body is the result of the destruction of its *ratio*, even though certain biological activities continue.

In Part 5, Spinoza explains that to the extent that the body is doing well, the mind cognizes well, and to the extent that the mind cognizes well, it is eternal. He writes in 5p39s:

> Because human Bodies are capable of a great many things [*ad plurima apta*], there is no doubt but that they can be of such a nature that they are related to Minds which have a great knowledge of themselves and of God, and of which the greatest, or chief, part is eternal.

The "great knowledge [*magnam . . . cognitionem*]" possessed by minds whose bodies are "capable of many things" is a deep understanding of self and world (of which God is the first principle). It seems obvious that when Spinoza says "capable of many things," he is thinking primarily not in terms of the sorts of things that, e.g., Rafael Nadal's body can do

that my body cannot do but rather in terms of the sorts of things that, e.g., Stephen Hawking's body can do that mine cannot. Hawking's brain operates in a way that mine does not.

Spinoza holds that bodies that are apt for many things are paradigmatically active; they shape themselves and their immediate environment rather than being determined by external causes. He understands the independence involved here as the sort of independence involved in a mature adult's being more independent than an infant or a child (even, one supposes, if the mature adult were to require life-support equipment). Someone who, "like an infant or child," with "a Body capable of very few things, and very heavily dependent on external causes," Spinoza explains, has "a Mind which considered solely in itself is conscious of almost nothing of itself, or of God, or of things," whereas someone who has "a Body capable of a great many things," has "a Mind which considered only in itself is very much conscious of itself, and of God, and of things" (5p39s, G II 305/23–28). Spinoza goes on to suggest that as we progress along this dimension, our cognition becomes relatively less dependent on memory and the associations of imagination, and relatively more ordered intellectually.

As Spinoza sees things, then, Hawking's body does some pretty remarkable (*praestans*: outstanding, excellent) things, which are accompanied by some pretty remarkable things going on in his mind. The latter are simply God's cognition of the former. The remarkable things, at the level of the body, are relatively independent of the causal nexus (not "heavily dependent on external causes") and, at the level of the mind, are focused on self and God (as opposed to distracting ideas of images of external things). In this way, the excellence of your mind, which is God's cognition of your body, corresponds to the excellence of your body. If you have an excellent mind, then God understands much through his cognition of your mind, which means that your body is rich in intelligibility or reality.

In Spinoza's view, if you were to think that the excellence of mind and body might come apart, you would be making a mistake. Either you would be keying on what he would regard as relatively superficial excellences of body (say, its brute strength or the quickness of its reflexes), or, worse, you would be thinking of the mind as independent of the body in a way that courts dualism. You cannot have a strong mind in a weak body or a weak mind in a strong body in the sense of power that counts most for Spinoza.

Let's consider some examples. In this context, the things that promote or set back my body's power of acting are what Spinoza calls "affections" of the body (3D3). Moreover, the main affections of the body that are relevant to Part 3 of the *Ethics* are brain images or constellations of brain images. (An image is a physical item in the body, whose idea in the mind presents some external thing as if present to the mind.) So, let's

suppose that the occurrence of some image disrupts the flow of brain activity. When I see a snake, alterations in the soft tissue of my brain initiate a fight-or-flight response. The image in a certain sense grabs or commandeers the motions in the brain. The brain's overall power of acting temporarily decreases; my brain is now less apt to model the rainbow I was attempting to construct from the universe's invariances. For the moment, my body is apt for fewer things. The idea of this image has a similar effect on my mind: my power of thinking or understanding is, also for the moment, decreased. I am unable to theorize about the rainbow. My body, temporarily, functions more like a child's. My mind, temporarily, loses its focus.

Of course, as Spinoza notes (3p17 and 3p17s), the same affect may augment my power of acting in some respects and diminish it in others. The image of the snake may bring my body to a sudden halt, enabling it to sidestep danger (an augmentation) but also interrupting the flow of motion in my brain (a diminishment). Along with the effects of the image on my body, there are effects of the idea of the snake on my mind: that idea interferes with my mind's concentration on some problem it is working on.

The fear caused by the snake is transitory. The images produced by the snake slithering harmlessly away will restore my body to the condition it was in before, and my mind will resume its train of thought. Greed affords a different kind of example. Greed is a case of *cupiditas* or desire. It has to do with how my conative system has been structured so as to be determined to do certain things (e.g., to seek wealth). Perhaps various brain images dating from childhood – involving, say, the sporadic and irregular meeting of one's needs – form a relatively stable and enduring constellation of images that constitute the physical side of greed or obsession with wealth. The soft tissue in the greedy person's brain is so arranged that images of things connected with wealth – say, images of gold, gems, and the like – have a special efficacy in his system. (The role that these images play within the brain depends, of course, on the rest of the system: for example, the way images of gold work on Silas Marner after he becomes a loving parent is different from the way they worked when he was a lonely miser.)

With 3p11 in mind, suppose the greedy person acquires a priceless gem. The acquisition (one assumes) adds energy to his *conatus*. The brain images associated with the acquisition will, because of the affection, increase his body's power of acting and his mind's power of thinking. There will be, temporarily, a new spring in his step and an increased concentration of his mind. There's a local uptick in one aspect of his being, but that subsides quickly as the greedy individual begins to worry again.

More important, this excitement and the subsiding thereof occurs in the context of an affection that is overall detrimental to the greedy

person. The affection of greed tends to be quite limiting. The body of the greedy person is apt for doing fewer things on account of the way the soft tissue in his brain has been shaped. There is less his mind can do as well: the special efficacy that the idea of gold and gems holds over him is felt as an obsessive fixation (Spinoza compares greed to madness in 4p44s), one that prevents his mind from focusing on other things. In particular, it keeps him from getting on with the project of understanding and with pursuing the deep cognition of self and God (5p39s). So, while the image of the acquisition and its idea may add to the greedy person's power of acting along certain narrow dimensions, they generally hinder his being by helping to entrench an affect that is quite limiting.[9]

Other things being equal, there is less reality, less intelligibility, in the greedy person's body than there is in the bodies of others. God understands less through his cognition of a greedy person's body than he does through the cognition of a nongreedy person's. The power of thinking of the greedy person's mind is less than that of the nongreedy person's. This relation between a thing's causal intelligibility, which is a function of its "power of acting," and what God understands through his cognition of that thing (and so determines the "power of thinking" of that thing's mind) is what underlies 3p11:

> The idea of any thing that increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our Body's power of acting, increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our Mind's power of thinking.

3 The Primary Affects: *Cupiditas, Laetitia*, and *Tristitia*

In 3p9s, Spinoza gives us his definition of *cupiditas*, and in 3p11s, his definition of *laetitia* and *tristitia*.[10] These are real definitions, that is, accounts of structures in the (physical and mental) world. As we shall see, *laetitia* and *tristitia* are affections that increase or decrease our power, but let's begin with *cupiditas*, which Spinoza defines first.

3.1 Cupiditas

What is *cupiditas*? In the *Ethics*, Spinoza offers three characterizations.

a In 3p9s, he defines *cupiditas* as:

> appetite together with [*cum*] consciousness [*conscientia*] of it.

b He begins the Definition of the Affects with an account of *cupiditas*.

> 1 Desire [*cupiditas*] is man's very essence, insofar as it is conceived to be determined, from any given affection of it, to do something. (3DA1)

c At the end of Part 3, Spinoza provides this General Definition of the Affects:

> An affect that is called a Passion of the mind is a confused idea, by which the Mind affirms of its Body, or of some part of it, a greater or lesser force of existing than before, which, when it is given, determines the Mind to think of this rather than that. (G II 203/29–32)

The purpose of the final clause, about the mind's determination to think of this rather than that, Spinoza explains, is to express the nature of *cupiditas*.

Although these characterizations appear different, a reasonably consistent picture emerges. Let's start with 3p9s, where *cupiditas* is explained in terms of appetite. Appetite, in turn, is explained as *conatus* "when it is related to mind and body together." So, let's begin by reviewing Spinoza's theory of *conatus*.

Finite bodies are dynamic patterns of motion and rest – Spinoza's word is *rationes* of motion and rest – whose essences are given through dynamic construction procedures. Such patterns exhibit a certain stability and coherence. Spinoza takes this to come out in their drive to maximize their reality. A hurricane does as much as it can to become stronger and to resist what would weaken it. More complex structures – say, trees – behave in a similar fashion. A tree takes energy from the sun and absorbs nutrients from the soil, and resists diseases and other threats from its environment. Spinoza calls a thing's striving to maximize its being its *conatus*.[11]

Of special importance is the relation between *conatus* and essence. In 3p9s, Spinoza writes that appetite "is nothing but the very essence of man." *Conatus* is not something that a finite thing *has* but rather something that a finite thing *is*. The point is reasonably intuitive within Spinoza's metaphysics. There is no hurricane subject prior to hurricane motive tendencies for the tendencies to exist in. The hurricane *is* the organized motive tendencies, the *conatus*. Spinoza thinks of a tree along similar lines: it, too, *is* its *conatus*. This is how he gets from a characterization of *cupiditas* in terms of appetite or *conatus* to a characterization in terms of essence in 3DA1, where he writes that *cupiditas* is "man's very essence."

Notice that Spinoza identifies *cupiditas* with *conatus* or essence only in a qualified way. In 3p9s, he says that *conatus* is "appetite together with consciousness," which I believe has the force of appetite insofar as we are conscious of it. In 3DA1, he restricts *cupiditas* to "man's very essence, in so far as it is conceived to be determined, from any given affection of it, to do something." Although these qualifications look different, I believe they amount to the same thing.

Let's start with the idea that *cupiditas* involves being determined to do something. I think we get some help here from the explanation of desire in the General Definition of the Affects cited above, where Spinoza says that *cupiditas* is a determination of the mind resulting from either *laetitia* or *tristitia*. Although this may give the impression that *cupiditas* is always a determination of *laetitia* or *tristitia,* I doubt that Spinoza means to limit *cupiditas* in this way.[12] That said, he seems centrally concerned in the *Ethics* with the *cupiditas* that is related to *laetitia* or *tristitia*,[13] and I will focus on this sort of *cupiditas*.

Spinoza develops the relationship between *laetitia* and *tristitia*, on the one hand, and *cupiditas*, on the other, in more detail in 3p56d. There, he argues that there are as many species of desire as there are species of joy, sadness, love, hate, etc. Which sorts of things affect me with *laetitia* or *tristitia* is a matter of my "nature [being] constituted in one way or another." But "*cupiditas* is the very essence, or nature, of each [man] insofar as it is conceived to be determined, by whatever constitution he has, to do something (3p9s)." That chocolate or a win by my beloved team should bring me *laetitia*, Spinoza maintains, is a matter of my nature being shaped a certain way, and this shaping structures ("determines") my activity in various ways. According to him, this structuring or determination of my activity is what *cupiditas* is.

Recall Spinoza's picture of a physical individual as an organized collection of motive activity, whose essence is given through its dynamic construction procedure. More or less fortuitous encounters with other things leave their marks on the individual, some of which increase its reality or power (and form the basis of *laetitia*) and some of which decrease its reality (and form the basis of *tristitia*). The individual responds to these alterations in its constitution; it finds itself determined in new directions. In Spinoza's theory, these new determinations count as desires (*cupiditates*).

For example, the greedy person's experiences have so conditioned him that his body seeks wealth. This shows up in God's cognition of the greedy person's body, that is, in the greedy person's mind. The mind has cognition of the greedy person's motive tendencies toward the accumulation of wealth. This cognition is reflective; the mind has cognition of its own tendency to dwell on thoughts of wealth. *Cupiditas* is the mind's perception of its determination to dwell on thoughts of wealth and its accumulation.

In 3p56d, Spinoza stresses the relation of *cupiditas* to essence that we saw earlier: *cupiditas* is the very essence of each man insofar as it is conceived to be determined in a certain way. To a modern reader, this can sound like a solecism: if the greedy person would remain the same individual if she, like Silas Marner, were to become generous, how can greed belong to her essence?

Spinoza's point is that striving toward wealth is the work of the greedy person's fundamental constitution: it is the way in which that constitution expresses itself in the given circumstances. That same constitution might express itself in a different way in other circumstances. One might think, in a similar vein, of the solidity, fluidity, or gaseousness of water as the work of its basic constitution in different thermal settings.[14]

The reason Spinoza wants to emphasize this point is to forestall a competing Aristotelian picture. In that picture, the individual is viewed as an already constituted subject – a first actuality – before the advent of appetite or desire. Appetite or desire shows up subsequently, as part of a theory about how this prior subject gets from first to second actuality. In the case of a plenum entity, it is the activity that does the constituting, so it is harder to separate the constitution from its determination to do this or that.

In 3p9s, Spinoza links *cupiditas* to consciousness when he defines *cupiditas* as "appetite together with [*cum*] consciousness [*conscientia*] of it." How is the restriction of *cupiditas* to appetite of which one is conscious related to the restriction of *cupiditas* to *conatus* that involves determination by affection?

Here, we need to consider the mechanics of the mind's cognition of what happens within it, beginning with what Spinoza says about the mind's cognition of the body:

> The human Mind does not know [*cognoscit*] the human body itself, nor does it know that it exists, except through ideas of affections by which the Body is affected.
>
> (2p19)

By cognition (*cognoscit*) of the human body, I think Spinoza means something like the mind's immediate perception of its own body, as opposed to other modes of cognition of its body, say, through theorizing about the body on the basis of its effects on our sense organs.[15] According to Spinoza, the mind's cognition of its body runs through its cognition of the *affections* of the body. He seems concerned with denying here that we have immediate perception of the body as a whole: the body is not an affection of itself, as it were.

Within the context of Spinoza's system, this claim can seem puzzling. If the mind is God's cognition of the body, why doesn't its immediate perception extend to the body as a whole? Why is it limited to the ideas of the affections of the body? I think Spinoza's answer is that while the human mind *is* the idea of the human body, this – the idea of the human body – is not an idea it *has*.[16] The mind *has* only the ideas found *within* that idea – i.e., the various sub-ideas of God's idea of the body, as it were – and these sub-ideas are the ideas of the various affections of the

body. We might put this thesis informally as the claim that while the mind *feels* (at some level) the various goings-on in its body (according to Spinoza, feels at some level everything that goes on in the body), the mind does not feel the body *simpliciter*.[17]

As one might expect, this limitation concerning the mind's cognition of its body is reflected upward at the level of the mind's cognition of itself. Spinoza says in 2p23:

> The mind does not know [*cognoscit*] itself, except insofar as it perceives the ideas of the affections of the body.

The mind's perception of itself is its perception of the ideas it has (and not of the idea that it is). So, in the same way that the mind does not perceive the body as a whole, but only the affections of the body, the mind does not perceive itself as a whole, only its ideas of the affections of the body. Thus, the mind is not *conscia* of itself *tout court*; it is *conscia* only of those tendencies of thought within it that arise from its perception of its ideas of bodily affections.

In 3DA1, Spinoza explains that he did not define desire as one's essence qua determined to do something because such a definition would not account for the cause of consciousness involved in *cupiditas*. Thus, "it was necessary [by 2p23] to add: *insofar as it is conceived, from some given affection of it, to be determined etc*." (G II 190/19–23). I think Spinoza is suggesting here that I don't feel my tendency to persevere in being, but only specific aspects of it. For example, I may, as I get hungry or thirsty, feel the gradual flow of my thoughts toward those of food and drink or, when threatened, feel the quick determination of my thoughts toward those of ducking the oncoming projectile. What my mind is not *conscia* of is its affirming of the reality of its body. That is something my mind is – namely, an affirming of the reality of my body – rather than something it experiences. I'm not sure Spinoza is right about this, but it seems to me that there is something phenomenologically plausible about his positions, both that I sense (or feel) what goes on in my body as opposed to the body itself and that I am *conscia* of (or perceive) what happens within my mind as opposed to the mind itself.

A note about *conscientia*. Spinoza appears to choose the word deliberately. He uses the words *conscientia* or *conscius* only thirteen times in Part 3, about two-thirds of which come up in the context of *cupiditas*.[18] I've been assuming that he is using these terms to mean, in accordance with one standard Latin usage, the mind's cognition of itself. For example, *conscius* comes up in 3p9, which sets the stage for 3p9s:

> Both insofar as the Mind has clear and distinct ideas, and insofar as it has confused ideas, it strives [*conatur*], for an indefinite duration, to persevere in its being and it is conscious [*conscia*] of this striving [*conatus*] it has.

So, while *conscientia* has to do with feeling, it seems to concern specifically the mind's feeling of what is going on within itself.[19]

That *conscientia* or *conscius* is the mind's cognition of itself seems to be a considered commitment. It fits the account of *cupiditas* given in the General Definition of the Affects, where we are told that *cupiditas* is the mind's determination to think of this rather than that. Moreover, when Spinoza explains how the mind comes to be *conscius* of its striving (3p9) or how it comes to have *conscientia* of its appetite (3DA1exp), he appeals to 2p23, which concerns the mind's perception of its own ideas, rather than to 2p19, which concerns the mind's ideas of its body.

So, strictly, it would be the mind's feeling of what it is striving to do rather than the mind's feeling of what the body is striving to do that counts as *cupiditas*, although the two are very closely related in that what the mind is trying to do is to affirm the reality of the body. The *conscientia* involved in the greedy person's *cupiditas* turns out to be the mind's sense of its being determined to dwell on thoughts of wealth.

Be that as it may, what I think is especially philosophically interesting about Spinoza's account of desire is the way in which Spinoza thinks we often misunderstand its nature. The greedy man's thoughts turn toward the acquisition of wealth because this is how his *conatus* or essence has been determined. He has *conscientia* that his mind is so determined. This, according to Spinoza, is *cupiditas*. But his *cupiditas* sits atop enormous physical and psychological complexity. And the greedy man is ignorant of this. We might put it that while the greedy man at some level feels or senses his desires and actions, he lacks understanding of why he wants what he wants and does what he does.

Here are two of Spinoza's canonical statements of this diagnosis (both of which involve the word *conscius*):

> So experience itself, no less clearly than reason, teaches that men believe themselves free because they are conscious [*conscii*] of their own actions, and ignorant [*ignari*] of the causes by which they are determined, that decisions of the Mind are nothing but the appetites themselves, which vary as the disposition of the Body varies.
>
> (3p2s, G II 143/30–33)

> [Habitation, taken as a final cause] is nothing more than this singular appetite. It is really an efficient cause, which is considered as a first cause, because men are commonly ignorant of the causes of their appetites. For as I have often said before, they are conscious [*conscii*] of their actions and appetites, but are ignorant [*ignari*] of the causes by which they are determined to want something.
>
> (4pref, G II 207/9–14)

According to Spinoza, then, people often are *conscius* of what they are determined to do – we might fold actions and appetites under this

rubric – but ignorant of why they are trying to do it. For example, their appetites are systematically related to their bodies – the appetites "vary as the disposition of the Body varies" – but they don't realize this. They don't understand how their appetites originate.

This ignorance of the origin of their appetites, and of the deep relation between their mind's appetitive structure and their body's appetitive structure, leads people to invent a motivational pseudo-structure. They abstract the desire or appetite from its deep structure and invent the idea of a final cause. They suppose, for example, that the apparent goodness of wealth elicits a (perhaps immoderate) desire in the greedy person. For Spinoza, this way of thinking is part of a fantasy physics that turns nature "completely upside down" (1app, G II 80/11), making what is posterior (the direction in which one's *conatus* is taking one) prior, and what is prior (one's *conatus* or essence) posterior. (Notice that this inversion is not essentially temporal, as is often supposed.)

An end cannot be fundamental in this way for Spinoza. It is posterior to the dynamic construction procedure that determines the individual's essence and *conatus*. We derive the ends from the procedure and how the construction finds itself situated in the plenum; the ends do not enter into the basic characterization of the procedure itself. For Spinoza, a final cause or an end can be only nominal, not constitutive. While ends may perhaps help with valuable classificatory or taxonomic work, they show up in the construction procedure itself (or, *a fortiori*, in God's cognition thereof). To use vocabulary closer to Spinoza's, an end is a being of reason, not among the things "that are" (1ax1).

Finally, we might note that desire for Spinoza, as a determination of *conatus*, does not connote lack or deficiency. In an Aristotelian scheme, appetite or desire is understood to be the movement toward an absent end. But for Spinoza, the idea of one's *conatus* being determined in a certain direction does not carry this connotation. This is of a piece with Spinoza's identification of *conatus* with essence, where a thing *is* its motive tendencies. This identification stands in marked contrast to a picture in which the motive tendencies of a thing are for its further actualization.

3.2 Laetitia *and* tristitia

Spinoza defines the other two primary passions in 3p11s. He begins the scholium by saying:

> We see, then, that the Mind can undergo great changes, and pass now to a greater, now to a lesser perfection.

He goes on to tell us that *laetitia* (joy/pleasure) is simply an affect that advances the mind's perfection (or increases its power of thinking), and

tristitia (sorrow/pain) is simply an affect that sets back its perfection (or decreases its power of thinking):[20]

> By *laetitia* I shall understand in what follows that passion by which [*qua*] the Mind passes [*transit*] to a greater perfection. And by *tristitia*, that passion by which [*qua*] it passes [*transit*] to a lesser perfection.

This account of *laetitia* and *tristitia* links them in a direct way to Spinoza's original characterization of an affect, near the beginning of Part 3:

> 3D3: By affect I understand affections of the Body by which the Body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time [*simul*], the ideas of these affections.

(This definition obscures the place of *cupiditas* as a primary affect, something that Spinoza corrects in the General Definition of the Affects.)

Laetitia is the mind's idea of an affection that (at least locally) bolsters the body's power of acting; this idea will (at least locally) bolster the mind's power of thinking. Similarly, *tristitia* is the mind's idea of an affection that (at least locally) impedes the body's power of acting; this idea will (at least locally) impede the mind's power of thinking. We already discussed the tie between the physical and mental ingredients of the affect: as the body increases in its reality and is causally responsible for more, God understands more through his cognition of the body. In this way, the body's mind progresses from a relatively fragmentary conception of the world to a more rationally unified one; the opposite happens when the body suffers an affection that decreases its reality.

According to Spinoza, *laetitia* is something like a tailwind brought about by a bodily affection and its idea, and *tristitia* is something like a headwind brought about by a bodily affection and its idea. *Laetitia* and *tristitia* are not freestanding *qualia*; they are rooted in a human being's architecture. The obnoxiousness of *tristitia* arises from the way in which it depresses one's power of acting. The welcomeness of *laetitia* arises from the way it elevates it.[21]

Laetitia and *tristitia* involve transition (*transire*). Spinoza takes up this point in greater detail in 3DA2 and 3DA3 of Part 3:

> 3DA2: *Laetitia* is a man's transition [*transitio*] from a lesser to a greater perfection.
>
> 3DA3: *Tristitia* is a man's transition [*transitio*] from a greater to a lesser perfection.
>
> Exp.: I say a transition. For *laetitia* is not perfection itself. If a man were born with the perfection to which he passes, he would possess it without an affect of *laetitia*.

One might have thought that *laetitia* would be the enjoyment of some reality or perfection and that *tristitia* would be the perception of the loss or deprivation of some reality or perfection. Aquinas, for example, understands *delectatio* (delight) as one's conjunction with some good, along with the perception of this conjunction (ST I-II, Q. 31, A. 1), and *dolor* (sorrow) as one's conjunction with the good-depriving evil, along with the perception of this conjunction (ST I-II, Q. 35, A. 1). But Spinoza thinks instead that transition is what matters. He considers the point easier to understand with respect to *tristitia*:

> no one can deny that *tristitia* consists in the transition to a lesser perfection, not in the lesser perfection itself, since a man cannot be saddened [*contristari*] insofar as he participates in some perfection. Nor can we say that *tristitia* consists in the privation of a greater perfection. For a privation is nothing, whereas the affect of *tristitia* is an act [*actus*], which can therefore be no other act than that of passing to a lesser perfection, i.e., an act by which man's power of acting is diminished or restrained (see 3p11s).
>
> (3DA3exp, G II 191/9–17)

Tristitia is what we might think of as a negative affect. Its negative aspect can't be accounted for by one's being in a state of lesser perfection, because all perfection, qua perfection, is positive. And it cannot be accounted for by one's not being in a state of higher perfection, because that is not a thing but a non-thing, whereas *tristitia* is an *actus*.

The claim that *tristitia* is a transition could suggest that *tristitia* is the experience of a fall ("Whoops!") as one's perfection diminishes in some respect, and that *laetitia* is the experience of success ("Whee!") as one's perfection increases in some respect. I don't think that quite captures Spinoza's idea. That an affect is an *actus* suggests that he's interested in what we might think of as the reality of the affect, which involves what the affect does, the difference it makes to the world. *Tristitia*, for Spinoza, is something that hinders one's power of acting, weighing down one's *conatus*, and *laetitia* is something that elevates one's power of acting. In this respect, it seems to me that the definitions Spinoza gives at 3p11s, which explain *laetitia* and *tristitia* as passions "by which" (*qua*: ablative of means) my power of acting is enhanced or diminished, because they gesture toward an affect's causal role, are clearer than the definitions he gives at the end of Part 3 (3DA2, 3DA3), which simply identify *laetitia* and *tristitia* with the transition (see also 3D3 and Gen Def Aff).[22]

Suppose I become sad at witnessing my beloved team lose the championship. Let's think of the relevant bodily affection as the constellations the brain images produced when I watched the defeat. As long as this affection is adversely affecting my power of acting, and its idea

is adversely affecting my power of thinking, it counts as *tristitia*, even if my power of acting should remain at its new lower level rather than plunging further. But if at some point the affection and its idea should stop adversely affecting my power of acting and thinking – say, because I no longer care – then the combination of the bodily affection and its idea is no longer *tristitia*. We might put it, when I recollect the loss (revive the images), I no longer feel sad. Similar remarks apply to *laetitia*, that combination of a bodily affection and its idea that makes a positive difference to my power of acting and thinking. If the bodily affection should cease to make this positive difference, it and its idea would no longer be *laetitia*. This is why I compared *tristitia* to feeling a headwind and *laetitia* to feeling a tailwind.

Exactly how to work out notions like pressure and resistance within the context of a plenum mechanics is notoriously difficult. Perhaps Spinoza thinks, with Hobbes and Leibniz, that all tendencies – what I am calling upward and downward pressure – resolve themselves into actual (possibly infinitesimal) motions, so that there is no pressure without a series of actual transitions of some sort. Perhaps he takes tendencies to be irreducible features of the universe that are ultimately grounded in the way that God or substance exercises its power. However we settle this issue on Spinoza's behalf, it seems best to think of *laetitia* and *tristitia* as dynamic factors in an individual's makeup.

Spinoza's claim that *tristitia* does not consist "in the lesser perfection itself, since a man cannot be saddened [*contristari*] insofar as he participates in some perfection" (3DA3exp, G II 191/9–11), may sound counterintuitive. Surely we can imagine someone who is in constant misery. Why shouldn't we think that this is someone who is sad insofar as he participates in a low degree of perfection? Spinoza would not disagree, of course, that a finite being can find itself in a wretched condition. Its misery, however, is not a function of where it sits on the scale of being but rather of suffering some affection that diminishes or restrains its power of acting.

Finally, there is something surprising about Spinoza's claim that someone born with perfection would not thereby have the affect of *laetitia* (see 3DA3). Isn't the condition of the person born with perfection happy, in some sense? Here, we should note that a remark Spinoza makes in Part 5 suggests that he would answer yes: "If *laetitia* consists in the transition [*transitio*] to a greater perfection, *beatitudo* must surely consist in this, that the mind is endowed with perfection itself" (5p33s). If we suppose that beatitude is a form of psychic pleasantness, then there are other pleasant conditions besides *laetitia*.

Perhaps Spinoza holds that beatitude lies on a continuum, so that every mind has some share of that form of pleasantness, where the greater the perfection of the mind, the greater the pleasantness. This view would fit the spirit of his comment that "a man cannot be saddened [*contristari*]

insofar as he participates in some perfection." The same thing that discourages one from thinking that *tristitia* could consist in the absence of perfection encourages the thought that there is some connection between perfection and pleasantness. But if there is such a form of pleasantness, it is not an affect, not *laetitia*. For affects are affections in our body that elevate or depress our power of acting, along with the mind's ideas of those affections. When we feel an affect, what we feel is the influence of these affections on our power of acting. I am tempted to think that Spinoza would say that the psychic pleasantness is not something we *feel*, exactly, but rather something we experience in some broader sense of experience.

4 Some Consequences

Now that we've examined Spinoza's account of his primary affects – *laetitia*, *tristitia*, and *cupiditas* – and explained how they are embedded in the architecture of the human being, let's consider some consequences.

(1) First, because of the fundamental place of *laetitia* and *tristitia* in Spinoza's system, many commentators have wondered whether there is an affinity between his thought and hedonism. An important text here is 3p28:

> We strive to further the occurrence of what we imagine will lead to *laetitia*, and to avert or destroy what we imagine is contrary to it, or will lead to *tristitia*.

The point that Spinoza is making here about *laetitia* and *tristitia* is somewhat different from the point we have been considering because it is prospective: it concerns imagining things that *will* lead to (future) *laetitia* and *will* defeat what leads to (future) *tristitia*. Thus far, we have been thinking of desire as a reaction to (already present) *laetitia* and *tristitia*. But this shift is not as momentous as it might seem, I believe, because the mechanisms by which an individual heads toward future *laetitia* and away from future *tristitia* are shaped by past and current *laetitia* and *tristitia*.[23] But let me set that question aside and simply ask, does 3p28 of itself count as a statement of hedonism?

I think not. Spinoza is being careful here. While he does say that things work out so that we head toward what we think will lead to *laetitia* and head away from what we think will lead to *tristitia*, he refrains from saying – deliberately, it seems to me – that we head toward the first *because* it leads to *laetitia* and head away from the second *because* it leads to *tristitia*. And the "because" is, if delicate, extremely important.[24] It is true that my *conatus* welcomes things that enhance my power of acting and thinking, and resists things that weigh on my power of acting and thinking. That is what is fundamental. So, to the extent that *laetitia* involves things that enhance my power of acting and thinking, my *conatus*

(or I) will work toward them – not because these are *laetitia* but rather because they enhance my power of acting and power of thinking. And similarly, to the extent that *tristitia* involves things that suppress my power of acting and ideas that suppress my power of thinking, I will work against them – not because of their unpleasantness but rather because they suppress my power of acting and power of thinking.[25]

There are, so to speak, no degrees of freedom (in the sense of physics) such that pleasure or pain could become independent variables. That my *body* will, as far as it can, seek what enhances its power of acting and resist what diminishes it is already settled by its *conatus*. It does this for more or less the same reason that a tree does what it can to further whatever enhances its power of acting and resist whatever diminishes it. That my *mind* (and the tree's mind, according to Spinoza) strives to think of things that will enhance its body's power of acting (and, thus, its power of thinking) happens because the first tendency of a mind is to affirm the reality of its body. This is why I, both in body and in mind, head toward *laetitia*. Similar mechanisms are at work in my striving to avert or destroy what will lead to *tristitia*.[26] There is no room in Spinoza's picture for the thought that an individual – either it or its mind – is motivated by the pleasantness of *laetitia* or the unpleasantness of *tristitia*. And this, it seems to me, distances his view decisively from hedonism.[27]

(2) There's a certain traditional ordering of passions that Spinoza is implicitly rejecting. Aquinas influentially held that love, which is an inclination toward some end or good, comes first in the order of the concupiscible passions.[28] Love engenders a subsequent movement toward this end or good, desire. If this end or good is achieved, then delight ensues. If we, working at the level of surface psychology, think of love, desire, and joy as forming a relatively freestanding constellation of interconnected affective phenomena, then Aquinas's view seems a natural one. It fits well with our everyday sense of things that joy should be fundamentally the satisfaction of some desire, and desire should be fundamentally a response to something that is loved.

Spinoza, however, insists that we go deeper and embed our theory of joy and desire within the complex physiological and psychological structures that he takes us to be. These structures have – or, better, *are* – complex strivings to persevere in being or reality. Spinoza positions his theory of the affects vis-à-vis such structures. Joy, he thinks, turns out to be an affection that elevates our power of acting; sorrow, one that depresses it; and desire, alterations in our strivings brought about, *inter alia*, by joy and sorrow. Love and hate are not primary affects for Spinoza and appear only downstream. The interrelationship of love, desire, and joy looks very different in a universe in which they are embedded in his conception of the essence of a human being, as a dynamic construction in the plenum and God's idea thereof, from how they look if theorized about in a way divorced from this picture of our deep structure.[29]

(3) Finally, lying in the background of Aquinas's ordering of the passions is a certain teleological conception, according to which ends are primary. Love, or the "complacency" in some end or good, comes first. It engenders appetite, or movement toward the end. And if the end is obtained, then joy, as a sort of completion, ensues. Moreover, the coherence of a thing's nature comes through its ultimate end – in our case, the *visio dei*.

I touched on the place of ends in general when discussing *cupiditas* above. Let me say something now about the idea of an ultimate end or a highest good. Spinoza thinks that I have a highest good, which he regards as a sort of upper bound on the amount of perfection my system can absorb without breaking (4pref, G II 208/24–29). This is the best thing open to me if all goes well. What this is is a purely objective affair. Indeed, in Parts 4 and 5 of the *Ethics*, Spinoza undertakes to show what this upper bound looks like (the model of the ideal human) and how to advance toward it.

But this upper bound functions as a *supremum*, not a *telos*. A being has not been formed for its *supremum*; that's just where it will end up if all goes well. Moreover, my activity is not to be understood as being for the sake of the *supremum*; I (like every other finite being) am always and everywhere simply doing what I can to maximize my reality. To think otherwise – to posit the *supremum* as an end toward which all my desires and activities are directed – is to become caught up in the motivational pseudo-structure we discussed earlier and turn "nature completely upside down" (1app, G II 80/11).

As an ideal limit, this upper bound has the nominal standing of the end of a theoretical scale, not the real standing of some constituent of my nature. It is not a part of the characterization of my nature. It is not my *telos*; I am not "for" it. I will fall somewhere on the scale between nonbeing and the *supremum*. Nothing says I am supposed to be at my upper bound. To the extent that I fall short of it, I am not in a state of privation – missing something that I ought to have by nature – but merely in a state of negation (a simple absence of being) (4pref, G II 207/15–208/7). And to the extent that I am fortunate enough to come close to it, I am not in a condition of fulfillment or completion but simply in a blessed state of relatively high perfection.[30]

Notes

1 For instructive surveys of Spinoza's account of the human mind, along with insightful discussion of some of the puzzles it raises, see Alanen (2011) and Koistinen (2018).

2 By Aristotelian cognitive identity, I have in mind the thesis that in cognition the soul becomes in a way all things (see, e.g., *De Anima*, 430a10 and 431b20). I take this to be related to the later medieval thesis that known things exist "objectively" in the soul. Descartes says in the First Replies that

"the idea of the sun is the sun itself existing in the intellect – not of course formally existing, as it does in the heavens, but objectively existing" (AT VII 102–103, CSM II 75). Spinoza, for his part, speaks of objective existence in TIE secs. 33–36 and 41, 2p7c, and Ep. 32.

3 Many readers have wanted to read Spinoza's identity talk in the *Ethics* (e.g., in 2p7s and 3p2s, and related texts, such as 4p8d) as invoking the Fregean "=" identity picture. See, e.g., Jarrett (1982) and Morrison (unpublished manuscript).

4 On *primum et praecipuum* ("the first and principal"), see Curley's translation note (C1 500 n.17).

5 See Carriero (2017); see also the account of 3p12 and 3p13 in Carriero (2011). For a different reading, along with a helpful account of some of the problems Spinoza runs into when so interpreted, see James (1997, 154–156).

6 See 3p11, 3p12, 3p15, 3p59, and Gen Def Aff.

7 I presented things intellectualistically, but we should keep in mind that it is not at all obvious what Spinoza would make of a distinction between theoretical and practical reason, especially in view of his denial of the will.

8 See especially 2p13s, 4p38, 4p39, 4p39s, 5p39, and 5p39s.

9 Cf. what Spinoza says about the pursuit of sensual pleasure, honor, and wealth at TIE sec. 4.

10 I have been helped here by Alanen (2018, especially 320–323). See also Alanen (2012).

11 For more discussion, see Carriero (2017).

12 As Lilli Alanen has pointed out in correspondence, the general language in 3DA1 and 3p36d suggests that *cupiditas* need not be determination by an affect. Spinoza defines *cupiditas* at 3p9s before he defines *laetitia* and *tristitia* (3p11s), suggesting that he does not think an account of the former relies on the latter.

13 For example, a cursory inspection of the definitions of the affects having to do with desire (3DA32-48) suggests that they concern *cupiditas* related to *laetitia* or *tristitia*.

14 For discussion of relevant issues, see Hübner (2017).

15 This point is similar to the one we saw earlier in connection with 3p10 about the sense in which the idea of being that is inimical to the body could not be in the mind.

16 See Guéroult (1968, II, 236).

17 Spinoza seems to distinguish implicitly *percipere* and *sentire* in this way at 2ax4 and 2ax5 (see also 2p23), so that the mind perceives (*percipere*) its ideas and senses (*sentire*) its body's affections. I'm using "feels" to cover both.

18 *Conscientia* or *conscius* comes up in 3p2, 3p9 (thrice), 3p9s (twice), 3p18s2, 3p30 (twice), and the explication of definition of desire (3DA1) (four times).

19 I don't think that *conscientia*, for Spinoza, carries with it the idea of explicit awareness, because he holds that the mind contains an idea of every bodily affection (2p12 and 2p14) and so also an idea of each of these ideas (2p22). I think it makes best sense to think along the lines of micro-consciousness or what Leibniz will later call *petites perceptions*. For more on this topic, see Della Rocca (2008, chapter 3, section 5) and Alanen in her contribution to this volume (section 5 and the work she discusses there).

20 I've used the word "affect" where Spinoza uses the word "passion." In 3p11s, he gives the impression that every *laetitia* or *tristitia* is a passion. That's not quite right. At the end of Part 3, he explicitly recognizes active *laetitia*. In addition to active *laetitia*, he also recognizes active *cupiditas*.

21 Spinoza's position that pleasure and pain are not primary motivators accords with the Aristotelian tradition. See, e.g., Carriero (2018, n.19).
22 The general idea that pleasure is a help to a thing's power of acting and pain a hindrance is close to Hobbes's theory. See Hobbes's *Elements of Philosophy* (chap. 25, section 12) and *Leviathan* (I, 6).
23 For finite beings with memory, a past experience of being burned by a fire (*tristitia*) will lead them to resist coming very near a fire in the future. The current determination of the body to stay away from fire, along with the mind's consciousness of its determination to think, "Avoid fire" (*cupiditas*), is a response to past *tristitia*, a response made available by the fact that the individual has memory. An individual without memory would not be able to avoid *tristitia* in this way. (This ability would not lie in the individual "*quantum in se est*.") See Carriero (2011, 81–82).
24 LeBuffe attributes what he calls "descriptive hedonism" to Spinoza (LeBuffe 2010, chapter 7), which may differ from the explanatory hedonism considered in the text.
25 Here, I may be disagreeing with Viljanen's "teleological-cognitive" reading of 3p38 (Viljanen 2011, 136–138).
26 Indeed, the burden of 3p28 is to explain *why* we head toward pleasure and away from pain. This is not something that can be taken as primitive within Spinoza's metaphysics.
27 Many contemporary philosophers, drawn to some form of the idea that the mental "supervenes" on the physical, would find congenial the thought that the mind does not introduce new degrees of freedom such that pleasure and pain can be independent motivators, and that their effect on an individual's behavior must be mediated by their relationship to the individual's physiology.
28 My general sense of Aquinas's importance in this context is indebted to James (1997, chapter 3).
29 I discuss the contrast between Aquinas's picture of our deep structure and Spinoza's in Carriero (2015, 172–182).
30 This paper was given at the Eastern Meetings of the APA in 2014, where Eugene Marshall commented, and at a 2016 Helsinki conference in honor of Lilli Alanen. I am grateful to those audiences for comments. I am also grateful to Joseph Almog, Deborah Brown, Barbara Herman, Karolina Hübner, Olli Koistinen, Michael LeBuffe, Eugene Marshall, Noa Naaman-Zauderer, and Calvin Normore for valuable comments and discussion. I am especially grateful to Lilli Alanen, whose comments on multiple drafts significantly influenced the substance of the paper.

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6 Affectivity and Cognitive Perfection

Lilli Alanen

1 Introduction

The questions of the nature of passions and the role of reason in governing them took on a new urgency within the framework of mechanistic naturalism. The two earliest and very different broadly "mechanist" accounts of the passions were sketched out by Descartes and Hobbes, respectively, the first in correspondence with Princess Elisabeth and more elaborately in the *Passions of the Soul* (1648), and the second in *De Cive* (1642), *De Corpore,* and *Leviathan* (1651). Spinoza reacts to both authors in developing his theory of emotions (which he calls "affects") in Part 3 of the *Ethics demonstrated in the Geometrical Fashion* (1677). Spinoza scholars like to emphasize his originality as the first truly *modern* thinker, and there is surely much to be said for this.[1] Spinoza is among the first to work out the consequences of a unitary mechanistic view of the physical universe for our understanding of human nature as part of it. Yet the *Ethics* responds to concerns rooted in ancient and scholastic philosophy foreign to the spirit of enlightenment humanism. If Spinoza's account of the emotions has been seen as anticipating present-day research, both his general attitude to the passions and the cure he proposes are inspired by traditional philosophical salvation agendas, where the cultivation of intellectual capacities and the intellectual joy of understanding are placed highest on the list of goods to pursue.[2] While his ethical project seeks to free us from the bondage by passions and to ground the control of passions on true knowledge, the account he offers of the passions as dynamic states (modes) of mind may seem to undermine the power he ascribes to reason to master them.[3] One aspect of this worry is the difficulty of reconciling the perfectionist ethics Spinoza endorses with his inertia-mechanistic vision of nature.[4] I want to pursue these questions, focusing here on the account he proposes of the mind-body unity and the role of the body for understanding the mind's affectivity and activity.

Spinoza's moral theory starts out as a theory of self-preservation – on some readings, as a form of ethical egoism and utilitarianism. At some juncture, the striving to persist turns into a striving to understand for the sake of understanding itself, whereby the finite mode links onto or merges

with the infinite and eternal.[5] While the goal Spinoza sets for himself in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* is to find an eternal unchangeable good that is permanent and unfailing, the *Ethics* defines the striving that drives us to seek salvation in terms of self-preservation. But what is the self or being that seeks to maintain itself here? A reading that I favor sees the striving to understand as part of the very essence of the human mind. According to Part 2 of the *Ethics*, the essence of man is constituted "by definite modes," i.e., "modes of thinking" which are modes of God's attribute of Thinking (2p11d), so that the human mind is part of the infinite intellect of God (2p11c). As an idea in God's infinite intellect, the human mind has from the very start its share of God's power of thinking.[6] Spinoza can thus assume that reason is naturally at work in highly complex systems like human mind-bodies, which, insofar as they form adequate ideas, also develop a desire to understand. This rational desire is the form that their striving for being for the sake of being itself naturally takes. It is clearly for Spinoza the most perfect form of desire since he also identifies, without arguing for it, being or reality with perfection and activity or understanding.[7] It is less clear to what extent it is continuous with the other passions, which, according to Spinoza's mechanistic psychology, are defined as fluctuations of our basic striving to persist in a field of opposing forces, subject to common and necessary laws of nature or what power it could have to oppose them.

With these questions in the back of my mind, my aim here is to examine and reflect on the complex view of the nature of the mind that emerges from Spinoza's original account of the mind-body unity and the passions, focusing in particular on the roles given to affectivity depending on the mind-body union, on the one hand, and to consciousness and reason, on the other hand, in the process of emancipation from their bondage.

I will start by briefly summarizing my understanding of Spinoza's attribute dualism, which grounds his controversial definition of the human mind and its mode of union with the body whose idea it is. This leads me to consider also his doctrine of ideas and of striving as applied to ideas, and to discuss some recent interpretations of Spinoza's naturalist psychology in terms of consciousness. I argue that rational activity is more important than consciousness in Spinoza's account of the human mind and the ways of perfecting it, and that his strong commitment to rationality sets his philosophical psychology widely apart from any other form of modern or contemporary naturalism.

2 Mind-Body Dualism without a Real Distinction

Like other individual things, human beings are mere modes, and mind and body, qua modes, are determinate, finite expressions of one infinite substance considered through two different and independent attributes

(2p6–2p7s). If Spinoza avoids Descartes's problematic substance dualism through his monism, he retains the doctrine of two main conceptually independent attributes with the strict explanatory dualism this distinction entails. There is no causal relation between the attribute of Thinking and that of Extension; instead, there is identity or parallelism and representation.

Now, since the mind is defined generally as the idea of the body, it may be tempting to give explanatory priority to the body, assuming that the more we know about extended corporeal nature, the more we know about the mind.[8] Spinoza himself leads us on this way in his long excursus about the body in 2p13. It is certainly true that the more we know about the human body and about what it can do, the more we know about how its mind (conceived as thinking) differs from others – as Spinoza explains in the long scholium to 3p2 (see Section 5 below). Yet we do not thereby know more about thinking or about the idea that has this particular body as its object qua idea. For the idea constituting the human mind – the idea of this particular human body – is, qua idea, causally determined not by the body but by other ideas and the laws of thinking alone.[9]

The explanatory dualism implied by Spinoza's attribute distinction (2p6–2p7s) holds universally. The human passions are no exception: qua mental, they are confused ideas or perceptions of what, qua bodily, are physiological changes or affections of the states of the body and its striving to endure. There is a general difficulty in understanding the implications of Spinoza's attribute dualism and the conceptual independence of Thought and Extension for his naturalist psychology and his theory of the passions. As he defines them, passions are complex psycho-physical phenomena, where affects (modes of body) and their ideas (modes of mind) are inextricably united in that they are one and the same reality expressed in two different ways. Affections of the body (which are literally physical impressions or "traces" – patterns of motion – in the body's fluid parts) are due to the interaction of movements resulting in part from a body's own striving to persist in being and in part from the forces of external objects acting on it according to the laws of physical nature. Their mental counterpart, which Spinoza calls ideas of affections (or sensations, perceptions, images), are not caused by physical processes but by other, more or less obscurely perceived antecedent ideas and perceptions according to the laws of thought. The ways ideas are linked to and follow each other reflect the ways the body is affected, and it is through the medium of ideas that we perceive how our body (and our self) is affected, yet they cannot be understood through the bodily affections they are ideas of. To explain an effect (according to 1ax4 and 1ax5) is to understand it in terms of its causes for knowledge of the effect "involves the knowledge of the cause" (1ax4, see also 1ax5). The human mind and the ideas it contains can only be explained through other ideas and laws of thought.[10]

3 The Human Mind as the Idea of the Human Body

Spinoza makes a point of explaining that the mind is united to the body as an idea to its object: the object of the idea constituting the human mind is the body that it represents. The thesis that "the object of the idea constituting the human Mind is the Body" (2p13) is presented as a new solution to the mind-body problem, one that shows both that "man consists of a Mind and a Body" (2p13c) and how "the union of Mind and Body" should be understood (2p13s).

How, exactly, is this ingenious redefinition supposed to advance our understanding?[11] It does eliminate the problem of causal interaction by turning what Descartes took to be separable substances into a mode of one unitary substance. Yet our understanding of this mode is still conditioned by two independent attributes – Thought and Extension – that we are now invited to think of as related to one another as an idea is to its object, to the thing it represents. Substantial unity of being is completed by logical unity of modes. Since the attribute dualism (rather, pluralism) is universal (2p5), one of the difficulties here is to make sense of the notion of representation involved and to account for how the idea constituting the human mind differs from other ideas, say, that of a teapot or a worm in the blood.[12] Any finite particular mode of extension and its idea are identical. What, specifically, makes the idea constituting the human mind human? Is there a human essence or nature whereby human beings are explained?

Among the resources Spinoza relies on in accounting for the human mind is the notion of degrees of perfection; another is the distinction between confused and distinct ideas, and a third is that between passivity and activity – all of which are interrelated.[13] The last, which is the most important and the one that has received the most attention in the literature, is introduced in Part 3 of the *Ethics*, where passions are explained and defined. Yet the nature of this distinction and the way it is connected to the other two deserves more discussion.

To act or to be active in Spinoza's system is to be the "adequate cause" of some effect, so that we are said to be active when something that takes place or is done "in us or outside us follows from our nature" and "can be clearly and distinctly understood through it alone" (3D2). Conversely, we are said to be passive or acted on when "something happens in us, or follows from our nature, of which we are only a partial cause," i.e., when we do not understand the effect as following from our nature alone but need to rely on other external causes to account for it – causes of which we are mostly ignorant. This definition ties activity and being active to adequate cognition of the causes of any given effect one contributes to bringing about.

A human mind is active in certain things and passive or acted upon in others. Our mind is necessarily active to the extent that it has adequate ideas, whereas it is necessarily passive to the extent that it has

inadequate ideas or, as they are also described, "mutilated and confused ideas" (3p1 and 3p1d). Each human mind is composed of adequate and inadequate ideas, and while the adequate ideas in the human mind are adequate in God's eternal intellect "in so far as he constitutes the essence of that mind," those that are inadequate in a particular mind are also adequate in God, considered this time not as containing only the essence of that mind but as containing at the same time the ideas of all other things in that particular mind (3p1d).[14]

The argument here relies on 2p11c, which takes us right into the thick of Spinozistic metaphysics. The proposition states that "The first thing that constitutes the actual being of the human Mind is nothing but the idea of a singular thing which actually exists." In its proof, Spinoza argues first that (1) the essence of man, to which, as shown in 2p10d, substance does not pertain, "is constituted by certain modes of God's attributes." We – each of us – know by experience that we think. "Man thinks" is for Spinoza an axiom (2ax2 and 2ax3). We are thinking beings, and given that we think but are not substances, our essence is constituted by *modes* of thinking. This does not turn us into immaterial – non-extended – beings, however, for, as we have seen, the modes of thinking constituting the essence of our mind have objects, namely, the human body and the changes it undergoes. Minds not only represent but form a unity with the body they are ideas of – they are, in fact, the same thing. Spinoza further argues that (2) of all the modes of thinking constituting the essence of man qua thinking, "the idea is prior in nature, and when it is given, the other modes (to which the idea is prior in nature) must be in the same individual (by 2ax3)" (2p11d).

Note that the proposition (2p11) is about the "actual being of a human mind" and its proof starts by mentioning the "essence of man." If man is essentially a mind or idea, this idea, or mind, *is* actual only to the extent that its object actually exists (2p11d). The mind qua idea of this individual body comes into being and perishes with the latter. (This indeed is confirmed in 3p11s, to which I will return below.) There may still be a sense in which the mind qua part of the divine intellect survives, but it is not clear whether the mind so conceived retains its individuality or represents some more general, abstract essence.[15]

One may ask whether the mind as the idea of a singular actually existing thing is adequate or not. For one thing, it is the idea of a contingently, not necessarily existing object. For another, Spinoza says explicitly that the human mind consists of adequate and inadequate ideas. Yet in 2p11c, he argues "that the human Mind is a part of the infinite intellect of God," and, one supposes, the infinite intellect of God contains only adequate ideas. But the human mind is not said to be part of the divine intellect without qualification. It is part of the divine intellect – not qua infinite – but "in so far as he [God] is explained through the human mind or insofar as he constitutes the essence of the human

mind" and, so considered, perceives what this human mind actually happens to perceive. God so considered *is* this finite individual human mind, not the eternal infinite intellect. And when God, so considered, has this or that idea not only qua essence of the human mind but also "simultaneously with the human mind the idea of another thing, then we are saying that the human mind perceives a thing partially, and inadequately." Partial and inadequate perception, according to the account of cognition developed in Part 2 of the *Ethics*, characterizes the lowest kind of knowledge, i.e., imagination, that occupies our minds most of the time. The passions, which are ideas of bodily affections, more particularly, of a subclass of affections, namely affections of its striving to exist, that Spinoza calls affects, are also confused, so inadequate ideas.[16]

This distinction between distinct and confused, or adequate and partial, is mind-relative: what a finite human mind merely senses or perceives in confused and partial ways may be adequately represented by more powerful minds, e.g., by the infinite intellect considered in itself. Increased cognitive perfection, and so increased activity, is a matter of reducing the impact of sense perception and imagination that tie the human mind to the present affections of the singular body by seeing these in a larger context from the perspective of some greater whole. To understand how this wider perspective is supposed to be achieved, we must turn to consider Spinoza's view of the striving defining the body that is the object of the idea of the human mind.

4 Striving to Persist in Being and Its Idea

In Spinoza's vision, nature is an infinitely extended, inherently dynamic plenum of forces, where singular modes, or systems of interrelated modes, are temporal, finite, and determinate expressions of one infinite active causal power. Every individual is endowed with its share of this power or force by means of which it, "in so far as it is in itself, strives to preserve itself in its being," and that determines all its actions (3p6d). This power, which Spinoza calls *conatus* (striving or endeavor), constitutes its actual essence or being (3p7–9). Everything in the universe is striving, so active, to some extent, i.e., to the extent that the effects it produces or contributes to causing, can be seen as following from its own force or essence.

Spinoza's *conatus* doctrine, according to recent interpretations, is best understood in broadly mechanistic, non-teleological terms.[17] A main idea here is that things, including living systems, are a sum of their actual tendencies, striving to persist in whatever tendencies actually prevail in them.[18] This principle that each thing (whether considered as a mind or a body, as a complex idea or as an extended system of forces) strives towards self-preservation is fundamental also to Spinoza's

naturalistic psychology and ethics (3p4–7). It is not clear, however, how inertia would work in psychology and, particularly, in cognitive psychology. Thus, when Spinoza sees understanding as a key to salvation and emphasizes that in understanding things rightly, "the striving of the better part of us agrees with the order of the whole of nature" (4app32, G II 276/20–21), "better part," here, if interpreted in terms of inertia, may be read as better in the sense of most useful in contributing to preserving the system as a totality of its given tendencies "in its being." But what would this "being" – *esse suo* or essence – that it matters to preserve in the case of the mind, or its better part, consist in? If all that matters is preserving any given state, say, of motion and rest, it is hard to see how Spinoza's answer to this question with regard to a striving proper to the mind or its best part could support a reading excluding any kind of teleology or final causation.

Spinoza's view of nature as inherently thinking and extended renders his naturalism very different from any naturalism spelled out in merely physicalist terms. The attribute of Thinking of which the intellect is an infinite mode is, after all, supposed to be on a par with Extension as one independent or self-contained expression of the essence of substance (nature), as we understand it (1D4). If and insofar as the comparison with physical systems and their inertial striving works for extended bodies, it is unclear how it applies to systems of ideas considered qua modes of thought whose interrelations cannot be captured in terms of force and impact.

Yet the human mind as the idea of the human body must be in some sense identical to the body of which it is the idea. It is natural to think of the mind, therefore, as driven by the very same *conatus* or striving to uphold itself, although, because of attribute dualism, this striving manifests itself and is explained in two different ways – as a physical force, by, for instance, geometric, kinetic, and dynamic laws, on the one hand, and as desires or inclinations explained by psychological, logical, and perhaps moral laws, on the other hand.

One way of thinking of identity here would be in terms of the technical concepts of objective and formal reality used by Spinoza in his earlier writings, and which also comes up in the *Ethics*. The idea would be identical to its object by way of representing or instantiating the same reality objectively as the thing represented possesses formally or actually.[19] If the determinate mode of extension constituting the human body (2p13), which is the object of the idea constituting this particular human mind, strives to persist in its being (3p6), then so does the given idea mind. In fact, the being whose reality or existence the idea qua idea strives to preserve is precisely that of its object. In so striving to maintain itself in actual being as the idea it is, the idea would affirm the continued existence of its object (including its prevailing tendencies). A complication

here, however, is that the actual being of the mind, as Spinoza argues, includes adequate and inadequate ideas:

> The Mind, both in so far as it has clear and distinct ideas, and insofar as it has confused ideas, strives to persist in its being during an indefinite period of time and is conscious of this striving it has [*et hujus sui conatus est conscia*].
>
> (3p9)

Is this to say that the mind's own striving has, as it were, two dimensions? On the one hand, qua mind or power of thinking, its striving consists in affirming clear and distinct, adequate ideas (including that of the formal essence of the human body) and, on the other hand, qua idea of the actually existing body, it strives to maintain the body with its current tendencies in existence. The mind insofar as it understands is a finite mode or determination of God's infinite intellect, whose striving ultimately merges with the universal force or power of thinking of nature. Qua idea of this finite, determinate body, on the other hand, a human mind strives to maintain or preserve its actual content or individual being by affirming (inadequate) ideas of the prevailing tendencies of its primary object.[20] How, then, are these two kinds of striving to be adjusted?

5 Consciousness and Striving

Spinoza also discusses the striving of the formally real, actually existing body using the terms being conscious of (*conscious esse*) and *conscientia*. The ideas of the affections of the body make us conscious of its striving to persist in being, i.e., of its actual essence (3p7).[21] The mind, to the extent it is conscious of its body's actual striving, is conscious of its essence. The mental counterpart of the physical striving to persevere in existence is the consciousness or awareness of this striving. What exactly is it to be conscious for Spinoza – what work, if any, does "consciousness" do here?

Earlier (in 2ax4, 2ax5, and 2p13c) Spinoza appealed to sensation – *sentire* – when deducing from the nature of the human mind "that man consists of a Mind and a Body, and that the human Body exists, as we sense it [*prout ipsum sentimus*]."[22] The fact that we sense our body proves its actual existence – which is cognized only through sensory experience that, although ranked as the lowest kind of cognition, is treated here by Spinoza as certain and unproblematic. The actual striving of the bodily entity that we are and of which our mind is the idea is likewise cognized through direct or immediate sensory awareness, though this cognition is now described in terms of *conscientia*. It is, I think, important not to read too much into this terminology, however.[23]

To be conscious here is a matter of registering transitions in one's striving through more or less confused sensory ideas of current bodily affections with their external causes (3p9d).

That the ideas, through which the mind cognizes itself or its (body's) striving, are inadequate and confused appears from the reference to 2p23 and to 2p16 invoked in 3p9d. Self-consciousness insofar as it involves the actual striving to persist of the body is not transparent (cf. 2p19, 2p24, 2p25–29). The (self-)consciousness referred to above takes different forms. It is called *desire* when it is related both to the mind and to the body, and it is called *will* when it is related to the mind alone (3p9s).[24] Spinoza goes on to explain that just as the idea of an actually existing body is the essence of the mind, so the mind's primary and main striving (*conatus*) is to affirm the existence of the body (3p10d).

What does *affirmare* mean here? Before trying to answer this question, we should first note that the power of a being's striving, as we learn in 3p11, is subject to constant fluctuation, and so the mind's power to think co-varies with the body's power to persevere in a field of changing forces, some supporting and some opposing it. The variations of the power to persist of a being are variations in its degrees of perfection. Spinoza's system of passions is based on these variations, which serve to "explain to us the affects of Joy and Sadness." The former consists in "the Mind's transition to a greater perfection," and the latter consists in a transition to "lesser perfection." Joy, sadness, and desire are, for Spinoza, the three primary affects from which all others are derived (3p11s).

Note also that Spinoza, before deducing the other passions, returns once more to the question of the essence of the mind. He draws together what was established in 2p17s, "that the idea which constitutes the essence of the Mind involves the existence of the Body *so long as the body itself exists*" (my italics), with what was shown in 2p8c, namely, that singular things may still have objective being or exist objectively in God's attributes when the thing of which they are the ideas have ceased to exist actually. They then exist as what he calls "formal essences" contained in God's infinite idea (2p8) but without actual being in duration.[25] For "the present existence of our Mind depends only on this, that the Mind involves the actual existence of the Body" (3p11s, G II 149/19). The mind, insofar as it involves the actual existence of the body, is, I argue, the human mind properly. It is the mind that, in sensing, perceiving, or imagining the changing states of its body, *affirms* its actual temporal striving to persist and the fluctuations of power that the body undergoes. Its power to imagine and to be affected depends on this: that it involves and senses the actual existence and striving to persist of the Body, and processing images and sensations of its affections is how it affirms the body's striving.[26]

Is this to say, then, that imagination is the human kind of thought or cognition par excellence? Is Spinoza anticipating Hume? If he does, as it seems to me, anticipate Hume here, he does so only to a point. In many

crucial passages, and Karolina Hübner has scrutinized them carefully, Spinoza associates reason – not imagination – to the nature or essence of man.[27] Yet it is important to note that although reason, differently from imagination, which is always biased and partial, operates on common notions that are adequate and universal, it still presupposes experience, i.e., the mind-body's power to be affected and to imagine its affections. This takes us back to the question of what exactly the role Spinoza gives to body in explaining the mind is.

6 The Nature and Role of the Body

If Spinoza claims to have made it clear, in the propositions leading up to 2p13, not only "how the human mind is united to the body, but also what should be understood by the union of Mind and Body," he also warns that this understanding cannot be adequate or distinct as long as one does not know the "nature of our Body." For the things proved so far "are completely general and do not pertain more to man than to other individuals, all of which, though in different degrees, are nevertheless animate" (2p13s, G II 96/21–29). What would Spinoza mean here by "other individuals" – animals, any things of varying degrees of complexity: stones, teapots, or organisms like worms in the blood? Whatever he means, it is clear that he does not consider what has been advanced so far sufficient to determine the difference between human minds and minds or ideas of other things in nature. Doing that requires knowing, more specifically, the human body and its power. Power varies within and between things and degrees of power or activity, as we saw, are identified with degrees of reality or perfection, where the degree of perfection of ideas reflects that of their object, so, generally speaking, it is true

> that *in proportion as a Body is more capable than others of doing many things at once, and being acted on in many ways at once, its Mind is more capable than others of perceiving many things at once.* And in proportion as the actions of a body depend more on itself alone, and as other bodies concur with it less in acting, so its mind is more capable of understanding distinctly.
>
> (2p13s, G II 97/7–13; my italics)

The body's power to act and be acted on stressed here goes hand in hand with the mind's power of perception, so the power to perceive (and do) many things at once, which depends on the complexity and relative independence of the body, is essential to the relative excellence of a mind (cf. 5p39). Examining the bodies and their powers helps us not only "to know the excellence of one mind over the others" but also to "see the cause why we have only a completely confused knowledge [*admodum confusam habeamus cognitionem*] of our Body, and many other things" (2p13s, G II 97/13–16).

What follows is known as Spinoza's excursus on the body, with the account of imagination and the mechanisms grounding its associations of ideas. What, in Spinoza's cumbersome terminology, are called inadequate and mutilated or confused ideas of bodily affections are roughly what others would refer to as sensory perceptions and imagination. The physiology to be developed in this context, as appears from this introductory scholium, is not meant to explain the human mind through the human body – something that could not be done, given explanatory dualism, nor is it required here. The excursus in physiology, as I understand it, is not primarily about the nature of the human body in itself but about the nature and conditions of the human kind of thinking or cognition. It contributes to establishing the general point that the degree of perfection of the mind depends on the complexity and relative independence of the power of activity of the body. It shows the extent to which its ideas are confused and hampered by accidental patterns of traces in the body but also how a general knowledge of the order of the affections it suffers qua the idea of this finite contingent body can help it endure and understand its affections.[28]

Don Garrett has argued against Wilson that Spinoza can be seen as using consciousness to restrict the scope of imagination in ways that make his claims about the human mind less incredible. While Wilson did not find any decisive evidence for this, Don Garrett points out that the claims Spinoza makes about consciousness in the *Ethics* appear "to be restricted to human beings."[29] Since, moreover, the human mind is characterized from the axiom "Man thinks" (2ax2) onwards in terms of thinking, and is said to include both adequate and inadequate ideas, it is tempting to assume that what is common to distinct and confused perception is the fact that they are "consciously" perceived.[30] Other things, from toasters to animals, may be said to feel or be animate to the extent that they are affected – but they are not, although Spinoza does not say this explicitly, aware or conscious of their affections. All of this may be said, yet the idea of degrees of consciousness does not strike me as very helpful here since, after all, Spinoza does not have any elaborate or proper "theory of consciousness," and in spelling out what marks a higher from a lower degree of consciousness, one has to rely on his account of different kinds of cognition, which are based on degrees of distinctness, adequacy, activity, and perfection.

Thus, in his account of desire as "appetite accompanied by consciousness [*conscientia*] of this appetite," Spinoza himself draws attention to the ways in which desire determines one's actions and thoughts (thirst sets my thoughts on drinking and finding means to quench it; hunger leads me to look for food). I suggest that we should carefully consider the inferential and causal roles that various ideas play in the system of thoughts constituting one's mind rather than focusing merely on the ways they present themselves to consciousness. Importantly, as argued

in the next section, it is not a matter of how, for instance, ideas or perceptions are felt, or their subjective intensity in the mind, as much as of their impact on its other current thoughts and power of thinking, for instance, in concurring with and supporting or, on the contrary, obstructing and blocking other ideas from asserting themselves, thereby determining its thoughts and actions.

7 Variations in Striving and Kinds of Desire

Desire is the first of the passions to be defined, and its definition is worth considering carefully. It is one of the three basic affects, the other two being joy and sadness, which are determinate expressions of desire and which also produce new determinations of it. In fact, Joy and Sadness "are the Desire, *or* Appetite itself in so far as it is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, by external causes" (3p57d). It is "the very essence of man, insofar as it is conceived to be determined, from any of its given affections, to act in some way" (3DA1). Earlier appetite was said to be the very essence of man "from whose nature there necessarily follows those things that promote his preservation" (3p9s). Necessarily, a human being strives to persist and her actions, whether or not she is aware of it, follow from this striving. Desire is this appetite insofar as we are conscious of its current determinations, i.e., insofar as we are more or less clearly conscious of the things we are pursuing at any given moment. This does not mean, however, that all we do or even that all we consciously strive for necessarily promotes our self-preservation. What Spinoza says, referring to 2p23, where it was shown that the mind does not cognize itself except insofar as it "perceives the ideas of the affections of the body" in confused and mutilated ways is that it is through these that the mind cognizes its present tendencies, impulses, or appetites as manifested in its bodily states and behavior, and becomes aware of itself in so doing. The striving or appetite constituting our essence determines us, whether we are aware of it or not, but it is only through the (inadequate) ideas of its particular affects that we perceive or register how and where it directs us.

The affections of the body determine how, at any given moment, its essence or striving is constituted. Its constitution is in part "innate" and in part formed by external forces, and it may be "conceived through the attribute of Thought or Extension alone or related to both at once" (3DA1exp). As I read this, there is a natural, given constitution of this essence, which undergoes changes as it is affected – changes that we perceive as ideas of affects.[31] We know that striving or appetite relates to both mind and body, but qua conscious appetite, desire is conceived a mental, cognitive act whose object is a current state of its bodily striving. Our appetites and desires change as our constitution varies, and they "are not rarely so opposed to one another that the man is drawn in different directions and knows not where to turn" (3DA1exp, G II 190).

When, for instance, I am really tired, I need sleep and perceive this as wanting to get some; when bored, I long for a break or something to lift me up; when I am both tired and in need of an uplift, I may not know what to do: try to get some sleep or seek to divert myself. You may want many contrary things simultaneously and be more or less conscious of different present urges and wishes affecting you at once. All of them determine your mind and your actions in different ways and directions. Thus, in the General Definition of the Affects, where these are characterized as confused ideas or "passions of the mind," whereby the mind is said to "affirm of its body, or some part of it, a greater or lesser force of existing than before," the given change in its actual state or constitution is said to "determine the Mind to think of this or that" (Gen Def Aff). The mind itself passes with the body from a lesser to a greater force of existing or "perfection," and any change occurring in its force determines the nature of its actual desire, i.e., determines whether its desire for sleep and rest will be overcome or not by the desire to join in with the cheerful company for a round of drinks, cards, or whatever. Many factors come into play here that we are not aware of – the point is that the desire, i.e., our appetite, as we are aware of it, is not just some brute feeling but a more or less confused cognitive registering of external (real or imagined) things tempting or pulling us, a noticing of where we want to go or are, in fact, already actually heading (3p57d).

The passive affects, joy or gladness and sorrow or misery, that lead our way are so many different expressions of our essence, and they vary in nature both between kinds of beings (equine lust differs from human lust) and between individuals of one kind, just as their natures vary.[32] Thus, as Spinoza observes, "there is no small difference between the merriment or gladness [*gaudium*] by which for instance the drunk is led on and the gladness a Philosopher possesses" (3p57s). The difference, it turns out, is that the former is a passive, whereas the latter is an active joy, resulting from one's own mental activity of understanding.[33] This leads us to consider Spinoza's notion of increase of perfection.

8 Activity, Passivity and Increase of Perfection

One might think that Spinoza's distinction between actions and passions is straightforward and could be understood in terms of that between a thing's own power of activity and the effects on this power by other things.[34] I am active in what I undergo and do through my own power and passive when I do or suffer something to which I am determined by external forces. Things are not that simple, though. One element that complicates the picture is Spinoza's monism, another is his definition of action through adequate causation. Related to the latter, we must consider the distinction between activity related to mind and body at once, and activity referring only to the mind.[35]

Starting with the first – activity related to the mind-body unity – we are not (as Descartes and other confused philosophers may imagine) real substances but modes, and no mere mode is self-sufficient. If the actions of any individual mode depend on its own power – the share of power it has been endowed with and which constitutes its nature – its actions are as much or even more dependent on the powers of external things co-acting with and supporting its striving to sustain itself in a field of competing and contrary forces. Activity is thus a relative notion and always a matter of more and less. Is this to say, then, that the more other things contribute to increasing one's power, the more active one is, i.e., the more effects one causes? Some things Spinoza says may seem to support this, as when he writes, "the more we are affected with joy, the greater the perfection we pass to [*nam quo majore Laetitia afficimur, eo ad majorem perfectionem transimus*]" (4p45c2s).

Spinoza also thinks, as argued in Part 4, that the greater the perfection we pass to, the more we participate in divine nature – in the infinite power of activity whose modes we are (cf. 4p45c2s, G II 244). God or nature qua self-causing is pure activity, so, the more we participate in divine nature the greater share we have in this pure activity or perfection. Joy (which is not perfection but a transition from lesser to greater perfection, according to 3DA3exp, G II 191) can thus never in itself be excessive or evil, whereas sadness is always in itself evil, and the same holds for cheerfulness and melancholy (cf. 4p41–42).[36] The proof of the latter claim is interesting: cheerfulness (*hilaritas*) is a kind of joy arising from an increase of power of activity or perfection of the whole body, when all its parts are equally affected (4p42d). Pleasure, to the contrary, affects only one part of the body at the expense of the others and can be excessive in disrupting its wholesome proportion of motion and rest, disturbing its natural capacity to be affected by and to affect many other things (4p43). Here, remarkably, is the only case where a negative, power inhibiting affect (cf. what the stoics called a "sinking" feeling), namely, pain (*dolor*), can be good. For although bad in itself, pain is good insofar as it can check pleasure from being excessive and thereby hinder it from disturbing the body's natural capacity to being variously affected and alert to what so affects it. (Think of some excessive pleasure caused, say, by opiates and how destructive that can be for a body's normal functioning.)[37]

This brings us to a famous problem formulated by Paul Hoffman (1991) about passive joy, which depends on inadequate or confused ideas, whereas acting presupposes adequate ideas (3p59).[38] The problem is pressing for, as we saw, Spinoza does hold that "our power of acting can be increased by an increase in the ways we can be affected" (4p38).[39] He also holds that the mind necessarily seeks to increase its body's power of acting by dwelling on whatever (inadequate ideas) gives it joy or pleasure.[40] So, he seems to argue "that the more we are capable

of being affected by other things, that is . . . the more passive we are, the more we are capable of understanding, that is, the more active we are" (Hoffman 1991, 177).

Hoffman's best hypothesis to explain this paradox is to suggest that Spinoza holds that the more ways we are affected, "the more common properties we perceive," referring here to 2p39, which does seem to say that the human mind, in being affected by external bodies that it has properties in common with, has adequate ideas of these properties (the so-called "common notions").[41] The therapy of passions in Part 5 is grounded on this idea (5p4).

How could any passive affects, which by definition are confused ideas that inhibit our essential activity, to the extent they involve more common notions, at the same time be said to increase it? The latter conclusion may be blocked by the fact that the diminishing of one's power of activity that, for instance, pain or anger involve impairs one's capacity to attend to adequate ideas. So, it seems, do intense joys or pleasures – the higher you are, the less you are capable of clear, adequate thinking. In neither case does it seem to be a matter of being more affected by external things as much as of their impact on your cognitive alertness and your capability of registering all your current affections with their causes and effects, affecting thereby also your own power to act.

Spinoza does introduce an important qualification to the general claim that joy is always good in itself (4app), and this, it seems to me, does answer to Hoffman's problem. Whatever their form, joy and its varieties should always be attended by (alert or vigilant) reason for, if not harmful in themselves, the desires accompanying them can be excessive (the stronger the affect, the stronger the desires). Furthermore, qua passive and confused, they keep us focused on what is attractive in the present, hindering us from being as strongly affected as we should be by considerations relating to the future (4app30). (The more wine you drink and fun you have in this pleasant company, the less important the meeting tomorrow on which your future depends starts to look.) So, there are limits to what one can enjoy, to how much more perfect passive joy can render one: if it is true that joy in itself is never evil, this holds only as long as "it is moderated by consideration (by reason) of our true advantage [*laetitia unquam mala esse potest, quam nostrae utilitatis vera ratio moderator*]" (4app31).[42]

Hoffman's discussion takes adequate ideas in the sense of distinct concepts of Cartesian-style mathematical physics and illustrates with geometrical examples,[43] emphasizing the opposition between adequate and inadequate ideas. I suggest that these should be seen instead as parts of one whole, namely, of the mind as the idea of an actual human body, which as such is a sum of external and internal forces: of inadequate ideas depending on external things that it cannot do without nor avoid being affected by, and of ideas depending on its own power, i.e., the

share in the infinite power of thinking it is part of. Hitting the road to salvation depends on the proportion of adequate thinking in relation to confused thinking in one's mind. Even the latter contains some element of truth, so, the more a mind has adequate ideas, the more it understands, and the greater its capability to discern what is true in its inadequate ideas. Understanding comes with active affects, and these can neutralize the effects of passive affects. Through understanding their causes and effects, one may also learn to put the inadequate imagination they feed on to good use (see 5p10–14).

This leads to the second point noted above in passing: Spinoza defines activity and passivity in epistemic terms, as a matter of *adequate* causation.[44] This is a very restricted sense of activity. We can be said to act in this sense only with respect to effects inside or outside us that we have adequately caused, i.e., that "can be clearly and distinctly understood through our nature alone" (3D2).

If we are inadequate causes of some effect, we are patients, not agents.[45] We may get stronger through the support and feedback in what we are doing or undergoing from external causes, for instance, when healing from a disease or injury, in benefiting from good care and healthy food. But we do not necessarily thereby become more active. We count as active only with respect to what is distinctly seen to follow from our nature or inner force (insofar as it is itself).[46] Since Spinoza places salvation in activity and freedom from passions, this makes the question of what exactly an individual's nature is pressing – how do we know what we are and what, exactly, depends on "us"?

Spinoza, as we have seen, includes affects and ideas of affects in the same definition, treating them as two sides of one coin (3D3). His identity theory combines substantial monism with explanatory dualism and hence with the idea of parallel causal chains. Parallelism as developed in 2p6–7 and 2p12 and, as explained again in 3p2d, entails that "the order of actions and passions of the body is, by nature, at one with [*simul sit natura*] the order of actions and passions of the mind" (3p2s). This, as Spinoza himself notes, is hard to believe, and he devotes the long scholium to refuting objections from dualists, arguing that we do not know yet what the body, considered as corporeal, can do when determined by "the laws of nature alone" and what it can do when determined by the mind (3p2s, G II 142/5–9).

As Spinoza's examples show, he does not think the mind can determine the body to do anything.[47] Human bodies, on the contrary – and we have seen this – can build cathedrals (Spinoza's example) or write the *Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata*, challenging and occupying other bodies and minds for centuries. Human bodies can compose and perform and affect each other through stunning music and fiction, and yes, "yes, we can" do many wondrous and even more fearful and devastating things when joining forces and acting together. But which of

these can be seen to follow from our nature alone? More particularly, can any of these be said to follow from the nature of body *considered as* corporeal?

Taking the identity thesis seriously means, as we have seen, that what is a passion in the mind is a passion in the body, and what is an action in the mind is an action in the body – the same increasing or diminishing of power of activity in the mode constituting the human being interpreted in two ways. Changes manifested in the body's force of activity are described in terms, perhaps, of variations in its ratio of motion and rest, and show up in the effects it produces, whereas those in the mind's power of thinking manifest themselves in variations in the proportion of adequate and inadequate, or distinct and confused, ideas and trains of thought. The mind's power of activity may show itself in how much it understands, how much adequate ideas it can process, and how well it tracks logical relations. Hence, we seem to have these two parallel series: on the one hand, passions coming with their chains of inadequate and confused ideas paralleled by random transitions in bodily power of activity and, on the other hand, "actions" properly consisting in adequate ideas and deductive reasoning paralleled by corresponding transitions. However this is spelled out, the increasing power of thought in understanding would have to be expressed in an increasing power of bodily activity. It could be a matter of increased brain or neural activity. It could also involve more than the processes or events within the limits of the singular mind-body which is being affected. It could be thought of as including not only the external causes but also the external effects of its present affections. Increase of the body's power of activity could, to speculate, mean not an actual augmentation of the body's own force of activity as such but as the linking of it to those of external things partially contributing to cause them, as well as to those it partially contributes to cause. Continuing on this line: the more detailed and extensive one's cognition is of the "external" causes contributing to the production of some effect of which one is a partial cause – i.e., the wider the network of concurring causes, the more of nature's activity it covers – the more activity one's own finite mind actualizes. In this sense, then, activity and perfection of a singular mind-body can be said to increase as the (relative) adequacy of its cognition expands, and it learns to see itself and its place as part of a larger whole.[48]

The cognition here need not be a matter of theoretical knowledge or science alone. For one could suppose there is a sense of autonomy and empowerment that comes with exercising one's mind-body at whatever it knows best. The activity here needs perhaps not be limited to (discursive) rational thinking alone but could express itself in music or fiction or dance or whatever activity a given mind-body excels in and gets a lift out of producing and doing well (perhaps, for some, making bombs or shooting to kill? There is, recall, nothing good and bad in nature apart

from what we desire.) The question, then, is which of these human activities come assisted by affects that contribute most to preserving the essential being of the particular mind in question. Spinoza's answer is unwavering: the exercise of reason and understanding truth. It is backed up by notions that are *not* derivable from mere inertia: the ideal of the free man established in Part 4 as a model for us to imitate, on the one hand, and by the general metaphysical assumptions of the *Ethics,* identifying being and goodness or perfection, on the other hand.[49]

This identification entails that there is nothing positive in falsity, which "consists in the privation of cognition that inadequate or fragmentary and confused ideas involve" (2p35). So, there is always some element of truth in inadequate ideas, which, because of our finitude and limited perspective, are crowding our mind at all times. We can avoid being misled by them, however (2p35s). Even as our knowledge of nature and its laws increases, we continue to see our voluntary actions as up to us or the sun as so much closer to us than it is. Yet as we learn to understand the true distance of the sun, or that what we commonly think of as *our* actions do not depend on us – finite transitory modes as we are – at all or depend on us only in insignificant degrees, we are freed from illusions about our power and false hopes with ensuing harmful passions.

Adequate cognition blocks false inferences based on inadequate ideas of affections – but can it keep in check desires prompted by confused ideas of passive affects? According to Spinoza's theory, this can work but only indirectly, and it requires, it seems, the highest level of cognitive perfection that a human being can attain: namely, active understanding. Active understanding or true cognition comes with absolute certainty and involves understanding or knowing that one understands for "truth is its own standard" (2p43s, G II 124/38). When our mind "perceives things truly, it is part of God's infinite intellect" (2p43s), and it perceives things as necessary "in the light of eternity [*sub specie aeternitatis*]" (2p44c2). In knowing that, it knows our mind is truly active and rejoices (3p58d). Knowing the truth does nothing to check passive affects in virtue of being true, but the active affect of joy that true self-understanding produces can, Spinoza argues, moderate and keep in check any passive affect (5p6–9, 5p15).

Spinoza may seem carried away by his own affects in reasoning here. There are two moves in his chains of demonstration that I find particularly troublesome and have discussed elsewhere. The first has to do with his move from passive to active joy, in a way suggesting that the increase in perfection would be continuous – that the mind would be as strongly or even more strongly affected in the latter case, although no corresponding increase in its bodily power has occurred.[50] The second has to do with the argument in 5p3d, where he uses the scholastic notion of distinction of reason to argue that a passive affect can be transformed into an active one because the distinct idea of the former

affect is really identical with it – so, merely by forming a distinct idea of it, the passive affect supposedly would turn into joy and love of God-Nature. Affects, passive or active, cause desires of their own: the joy in understating generates a strong desire for more understanding, which generates more joy. But Spinoza, as we saw, also teaches that cognitive perfection – perfection actualized – comes without affects, which are changes or transitions of power. There is a limit to how much perfection a finite mode of thinking can actualize – a limit that is reached as soon as its time, or existence in temporal duration, is up. Whatever it is that survives and remains for eternity is unchanging perfection so unaffected by any joys or sorrows and hence hardly on the radar screen of the human mind's awareness.

9 Concluding Remarks

My discussion rests on the assumption that Spinoza's notion of action as defined through adequate causation stands for action in a strict or absolute sense, which seems to be the kind of exclusive intellectual activity that counts in Part 5 of the *Ethics* as leading to salvation, reserved, it seems, for a few philosophers – those who are lucky enough to stay on that arduous road. But he also seems, as often recognized, to allow for a sense of action that is relative – a matter of more or less. In the latter sense, we can be said to act whenever contributing to produce effects that we cause only partially and which depend on concurring external causes.[51] Spinoza's ethical project, I want to argue, relies on a related distinction between actions referred to the mind consisting in thinking or understanding alone, and actions referred to the mind and body at once.[52] The latter, which include practical deliberation and action, can be caused by us only in the relative sense. To the extent that a mind can be considered an *adequate* cause, its activity is restrained to the former, i.e., to actions referred to the mind alone. Here again, some dualism reasserts itself. Mind has to be considered in two ways: as an individual finite, human mind, being the actual idea of this body, so, feeling its affections (2ax4) and conscious of its desire, on the one hand (3p9s), and as a finite mode of the infinite divine intellect or understanding, on the other hand.[53] Whatever adequate ideas the human mind forms depend on this universal power of thinking or intellect of which it is a finite mode.[54] Our actions in the strict sense, then, are not ours but God's or Nature's. We can still be agents in a relative sense whenever our actions of which we are merely partial causes conform with the latter in being governed by reason. But we cannot be said to act in either sense when our "actions" are not governed by reason but follow the accidental run of things.

The concern here has been with the questions about Spinoza's moral psychology and whether he can ground his salvation project on the theory of mind that he offers, with trying to elucidate the latter and what exactly his naturalistic approach commits him to. I see, ultimately, two

ways to go to make Spinoza's moral psychology consistent with his ethical project – one stressing the role of exercising reason for the sake of understanding alone, which seems to commit him to extreme rationalism, elitism, and perhaps also idealism. The therapy of passions in this perspective does not transform them but remains an essentially intellectual or cognitive affair, reserved for those who, by natural inclination, find their highest contentment in understanding. The other, which I prefer, reads his naturalism along more Aristotelian lines, stressing the practical role of reason.[55] Both lines of reading, however, have to accommodate assumptions of some form of finality, grades of perfection, or normativity within Spinoza's doctrine, assumptions that he seems to rely on but which are hard to reconcile with his general commitment to a non-finalistic necessitarianist framework.

Notes

1 See, e.g., Wolfson (1968). Damasio (2003) finds anticipations of contemporary research in his theory of passions.
2 For comparisons of Spinoza and the Stoics, see, e.g., DeBrabander (2004), Long (2003), and Miller (2014). Carriero (2014) sees Spinoza's doctrine, rather, as a new and original variation on the themes of Aristotelian ethics but also emphasizes the philosophico-religious character of the bliss of contemplating God that his medieval predecessors reserved for the afterlife but that Spinoza transfers to this life with God immanent in nature.
3 In an earlier paper, to which this is a sequel, I raise the question of whether the account of the passions developed in Spinoza's *Ethics* can ground the kind of emancipation through intellectual understanding that he is seeking, without introducing a duality in the doctrine that is hard to reconcile with the kind of naturalism he is seen as defending. See Alanen (2017).
4 Though see the chapter of John Carriero in this volume for a reading that seems to offer a way of reconciling them.
5 See Yovel (1999).
6 Cf. Wilson (1999), Alanen (2011, 2012). See also Hübner (2014).
7 Carriero develops this line of reading. See Carriero (2014) and his contribution to this volume.
8 See, e.g., Nadler (2008).
9 Thought is not a corporeal act and "Extension, in so far as it is Extension, is not Thought," as Spinoza writes in response to Oldenburg (Ep. 4, G IV 13/23–25). It is also essentially by working to change our ideas that we are supposed to moderate the effects of the passions which, as states of the body, follow from other bodily states.
10 I discuss this in Alanen (2011, 12–13). See also Schmalz (2018).
11 Cf. the questions raised by Wilson (1999). The problems I will focus on here, however, are not those that Wilson's interpretation highlights.
12 For discussion, see the work referred to in previous note and Della Rocca (1996a), Don Garrett (2008), and Carriero (2011, section 1).
13 Cf. 5p40. The more perfection a thing has, the more it is active.
14 God's eternal intellect is infinite Nature considered *qua* thinking, but this does not help explain the different natures of things.
15 Cf. note 37 below. For recent discussions, see Koistinen (2018) and Hübner (2014).
16 I discuss Spinoza's account of passions in more detail in Alanen (2017, 2018).

17 The problem with Spinoza's version of this principle is to understand what being in itself means. For different readings see, e.g., Hoffman (2009, 298–305), Della Rocca (1996b), and the overview of recent discussions in Viljanen (2011, 97–104 and chapter 5).
18 For a clear and instructive reading along these lines, see Carriero (2011). He writes, "Plainly, the *conatus* principle reflects a picture of activity that is meant to be continuous with plenum mechanics" (p. 70), using examples such as those of tornadoes or water eddies to illustrate it. We are here supposed to think of the modes constituting human bodies and their ideas as more complex and intricate subsystems of the plenum of forces that constitutes nature than, for instance, a stone or a tornado.
19 Spinoza uses this language, but it is not obvious to me that it makes good sense here, unless, like Carriero, one thinks of the ideas as it were from God's point of view. God is the thinking substance, and God's ideas replicate the things he creates in their cognitive being. Ideas are the things existing – in God's mind – cognitively or objectively. See Carriero (2011, 77) and his contribution to this volume.
20 I discuss this puzzling claim also in Alanen (2017, section 6). For an interesting and original reading, see Koistinen (2009, 181–186).
21 Cf. 2p10–11. For discussions of Spinoza's notion of essence, see Don Garrett (2009), Carriero (unpublished manuscript), and Hübner (2014).
22 Translated by Curley "as we are aware of it," leaning apparently on the Dutch "*gewaar worden*." See Curley's translation note (C1 457 n.10).
23 It has recently been suggested that what distinguishes different kinds of minds from each other are degrees of consciousness, so that, for instance, *conscious* imagination would restrict the human kind of imagination from other sub-conscious or maybe non-conscious imagination common to all things in nature, and that heightened degrees of consciousness are what separates the sage from the multitude. See discussion below and in the literature referred to in notes 29 and 30 below.
24 Like Hobbes in *Leviathan*, VI, and against Descartes's traditional account of desire as caused by the consideration good or evil (*Passions* arts. 57, 86), Spinoza draws, in the next paragraph, his startling conclusion that "we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it" (3p9s).
25 For a more extensive discussion of this, see the literature referred to in notes 14 and 20 above, and Alanen (2017).
26 See 3p11s, including 2p17–18 and 2p18s referred to there.
27 Hübner (2014).
28 The ingress to Part 2 sets the agenda: "I will only explain what can lead us to the knowledge of the human mind and its supreme blessedness." The account of rational, distinct, and true cognition is developed from 2p40 on.
29 In support of this, one can note that all the relevant passages mentioning consciousness do occur in contexts dealing explicitly with the human mind and the human affects (3p2s, 1app, 2p35s, 3p9, 3p9s, 3p30d, 4p8; see also 4p19d and 4p64d). 5p39 states that "he who has a Body capable of great many things, has a Mind which considered only in itself is very much conscious of itself, and of God, and of things." See Don Garrett (2008).
30 LeBuffe (2010), in expanding on Garrett's reading, explains that Spinoza is likely to follow Descartes where he does not explicitly oppose him, and understanding thought as involving consciousness could be a case in point. The focus on consciousness as the mark of mentality in contemporary discussions certainly creates its own pressures to find anticipations of present-day theories in Spinoza too. Yet one should be wary of generalizations over

centuries here, and caution should be used in interpreting Spinoza's use of the term conscious, as it should in the case of Descartes, as I argue in Alanen (2016).

31 Carriero (2011) helpfully distinguishes between the deep structure of a being – expressed through its ratio of motion and rest – which sets the limits of the variations it can undergo, and these variations caused by the action of external things or systems.

32 Hoffman (1991, 173ff) points out that Spinoza distinguishes between the power to persevere, which does not change, and its force of activity (4pref, G II 208, C1 545–546) – it is the latter that increases or is restrained, but Hoffman also notes that Spinoza often treats them as interchangeable, e.g., 4p14, 3p57, and 4p24. There is a limit to how much one's power of activity can be changed while one's essence remains. Cf. note 37 below.

33 For discussion of the active affects to which Spinoza turns in the very next proposition (3p58) and develops in Part 4, see Alanen (2017).

34 In line perhaps with Descartes's distinction between action and passion that opens his *Passions of the Soul* (AT XI, 328).

35 Cf. the distinction between two kinds of desire, 3p57d and 3p58d. When conceiving adequate ideas, the mind is said necessarily to contemplate or be aware of itself and its activity, which gives it joy and comes with a desire of its own: a desire not related to the body but to us insofar as we understand, i.e., to the mind alone (3p58d). The mind qua mind thus seems to have an essence or striving of its own that does not depend on the body's and thereby the mind-body's striving.

36 Cf. 1p20c2, 2D4, 2p32, 5p17d, 5p17c.

37 The proportion of motion-and-rest is fixed for any particular body and constitutes its "form" (*forma*). Whatever contributes to the preservation of this fixed proportion "which the parts of the human body maintain towards one another, preserves the form of the human body" and thereby its power to be affected and affect other bodies in many ways, and is therefore good for it (4p39d). The body dies, as explained in 4p39s, when the proportion of motion and rest changes. Without even turning into a corpse, a human body can be said to die when its (essential) form or proportion changes, as happened to the Spanish poet whose brain got damaged so that he could not remember that he was the author of the books he had written. The body that lived on after his memory was gone had assumed another nature. This, it seems to me, is a very interesting point. It ties self-identity to memory but more importantly to the power of producing certain kind of effects, so, to agency or the power of acting.

38 "How could our being caused to have certain inadequate ideas increase our power of having adequate ideas, since adequate ideas follow from other adequate ideas?" Hoffman (1991, 177).

39 "Whatever so disposes the human body that it can be affected in a great many ways, or renders it capable of affecting external bodies in a great many ways, is useful to man . . ." and the more it so disposes it, the more useful it is (4p38). For the more the body is rendered capable of being affected in many ways, "the more the mind is rendered capable of perceiving (by 2p14)" (4p38d). What renders the body capable of these – perceiving many things and affecting many things – is said to be "necessarily good, *or useful*," referring to p26 and p27, although it is a bit of a mystery whether to Part 2 or Part 4 of the *Ethics*. Naaman-Zauderer suggests, sensibly, the former, while Samuel Shirley's translation takes him to refer to 4p26 and 4p27. Spinoza goes on to claim in 4p39 that what preserves the proportion of motion and rest (which is the "human body's form") is good. The increased capacity

to be affected (perceive) and affect other bodies thus seems to depend on how well the form of the human body – the ideal or essential proportion of motion and rest between its parts – is preserved, something that is a matter basically of how other bodies affect it (2post4). As long as the action of external bodies on one's own concur with those that preserve its form, one's body (and mind) increase in perfection or active joy.

40 See 3p12 and 3p13. Is this a psychological counterpart of the *conatus* principle? For an interesting recent discussion, see Carriero's contribution to this volume, section 2. See also Della Rocca (1996b).

41 2p39d really seems to imply that properties common to the affecting and affected body would be in God's mind "insofar as he constitutes the nature of the human mind" (2p13) and so must be adequate also in the human mind. The proof is obscure, and it is hard to say in what sense this adequate idea would be in the human mind qua affected since qua affected the mind's ideas are partial and confused.

42 But see Lloyd (1998, 39–40).

43 Hoffman (1991, 177). For an interesting discussion of the problem of passive joy and Hoffman's treatment of it, see LeBuffe (2009, esp. 211–218).

44 A cause is adequate "whose effect can be clearly and distinctly understood through it" (3D1) so that we can be said to act "when something in us or outside us follows from our nature, which can be clearly and distinctly understood through our nature alone" (3D2).

45 We are said to be passive (acted on, *pati*) when we are only the partial causes of what occurs in us or follows from our nature, i.e., when what we are doing or what goes on in us is not understood through our nature alone (3D2).

46 Any affection of which we are the adequate cause counts as an action. Correspondingly – any affection of which we are not adequate causes ourselves is a passion (*passionem*) (3D3).

47 Spinoza argues, on the contrary,

> that both the decision of the mind and the appetite and the determination of the body . . . are one and the same thing, which we call decision when it is considered under, and explained through, the attribute of Thought, and which we call a determination when it is considered under the attribute of Extension and deduced from the laws of motion and rest.
>
> (3p2s, G II 144/2–8, C1 497)

Decisions of the mind are nothing but the affirmations that ideas contain in themselves,

> and so these decisions of the Mind arise by the same necessity as the ideas of things that actually exist. Those, therefore, who believe that they either speak or are silent, or do anything form a free decision of the Mind, dream with open eyes.
>
> (3p2s, G II 144/27–30)

Note that what is called decision of the mind *is the same thing* as a determination – a necessary effect of determinate causes, considered under the attribute of Extension. (So much for the power of self-determination that Descartes and others of Spinoza's predecessors call will.)

48 See, e.g., the example of the worm in the blood – Ep. 32, *Letters* 193–194.

49 2D4 and 2D6. Cf. 4pref (G II 209, C1 546).

50 See 3p57 and 3p58 that relies on 3p53, discussed in Alanen (2017, 94 ff).

51 Cf. KV II 5 (G I 63–64, C1,106).

52 I develop this in "The Mind's Power Over the Affects, Intuitive Cognition and Spinoza's Two Notions of Love of God," work in progress.

53 We – individual perceivers of singular things – who are said to "feel [*sentimus*] a given body to be affected in many ways" (2ax4) and to sense or perceive individual bodies (modes of extension) as well as modes of thought (2ax5), are, presumably, human minds, which, qua finite and individual, are dominated by inadequate perceptions.

54 For evidence and discussion, see Alanen (2011). For a different reading, see Koistinen (2018).

55 There may be other solutions too. After all, Spinoza's *Ethics* heralds new ways of conceiving the world – and left posterity with the challenge of working out its details consistently in new terms. I am grateful to Amihud Gilead for stressing this as well as to all the participants in the discussion at the Jerusalem conference where a first draft of this work was presented. I am much indebted to John Carriero for helpful conversations and to Noa Naaman-Zauderer for her questions and comments in revising the paper.

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7 Deciding What to Do

The Relation of Affect and Reason in Spinoza's *Ethics*

Donald Rutherford

What kind of theory of human action do we find in Spinoza's *Ethics*? More specifically, does Spinoza defend an account of human beings as rational agents that meets the demands of his ethics? The answer to this question hinges on what we take his ethical theory to be. One could envision a reading of the *Ethics* on which a theory of action in the usual sense, one rooted in an account of deliberative practical reason, would not be required because Spinoza was not advancing a normative theory at all. If he were merely demonstrating truths about the causal properties of human minds and human bodies, both of them subject to universal laws governing modifications of the attributes Thought and Extension, then we might think that he would be taxed at most with providing an explanation of the psychological phenomena whereby human beings *take* themselves and others to be responsible agents with the capacity to decide how to act. Presumably, such phenomena would stand in need of explanation, even if human beings did not have the capacity to direct their actions on the basis of deliberation and choice. But in that case, there would be no need to explain how human beings operate as rational agents who deliberate about different courses of action and choose one as what they should do.[1]

Although I do not rule out such a reading of the *Ethics*, I believe we should not dismiss too quickly the standard view of Spinoza as offering more than just a descriptive account of the determination of the content of mental states. He aims to develop an *ethics* – a conception of the best way of life for a human being – that builds on his theory of the causal properties of minds and bodies but also holds out the possibility that, in learning the details of that theory, individuals may be led to pursue "the right way of living [*recta vivendi ratio*]" (4app, G II 266), in which they live virtuously and direct their actions toward the attainment of the highest good.[2] In this and other ways, Spinoza's ethics connects meaningfully with ancient eudaimonism. Spinoza does not claim that every human being can achieve the highest good; given their limited powers, it is certain that most will not. However, in this, his position is aligned with those of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. What Spinoza and his ancient antecedents claim is that, given their nature as rational beings, it is both possible and appropriate for human beings to regulate their actions with reference

to the attainment of the good. Human beings are capable of doing this because they *are* rational beings, even if their rationality is not always determinative of their actions, and it is appropriate for them to do so because, in this way, they will live as well as they can as rational beings.

If this is correct as a broad characterization of Spinoza's project in the *Ethics*, it might still be doubted whether he can coherently defend such a position. Although he ascribes to human beings the capacity to act "by the guidance of reason [*ex rationis ductu*]" (4p66), he does not explicitly attribute to them a capacity for practical reason in the sense many believe to be necessary for ethics. In this sense, practical reason is taken to imply a conception of agency that minimally meets three conditions. It involves: (1) *deliberation* about possible courses of action, based on considerations of benefit, or the value realized through an action; (2) a *decision*, or *choice*, to act in one way rather than another because it is the action for which one has the greatest reason, all things considered; and (3) the *effectiveness* of this choice in determining one's action. It is common to think that Spinoza's metaphysics cannot sustain this minimal conception of practical reason. Among the reasons cited on behalf of this conclusion are (a) Spinoza's explicit denial of an "absolute, or free, will" in human beings (2p48); (b) his rejection of any contingency in nature in favor of the view that "all things have been determined from the necessity of the divine nature to exist and produce an effect in a certain way" (1p29); and (c) his rejection of the mind as a cause of changes in the body's state of motion (3p2), a conclusion that is thought to rule against the relevance of an act of choice or decision in explaining the distinctive features of intentional action.[3]

In what follows, I will not respond directly to these doubts about the adequacy of Spinoza's theory of action for his ethics. My aim, instead, is to sketch the account of human action that I believe can be extracted from the *Ethics*. Given the complexity of the topic, I can do no more than present it in broad outlines, focusing on some parts of it and leaving others for exploration on another occasion. At the heart of Spinoza's theory of action is his explanation of "the origin and nature of the affects," the topic of the long middle part of the *Ethics*. My main goal in this chapter is to illuminate Spinoza's multidimensional analysis of the affects, in terms of their cognitive, motivational, and evaluative properties, and to suggest how this analysis intersects with an account of practical reason. My treatment will stop short of a full-blown defense of Spinoza's theory of action as adequate for his ethics, but it will, I hope, suggest some ways in which the former meets the demands of the latter.

1 The Fiction of a "Free Decision"

Many people believe that they act by a "free decision of the will." By this, they mean that it is they as agents, possessing an "absolute faculty

of willing and not willing" (2p48d), who ultimately decide whether or not to act. Various circumstances, causal or otherwise, may influence their decision, but in the end, with all these circumstances given, it is open to them to choose whether or not to act.[4]

Spinoza argues that this belief is a fiction. There is no faculty of "free will" of the sort that people imagine themselves to possess. The belief in such a faculty is the result of a cognitive error, which he ascribes to an inadequate knowledge of nature:

> Men are deceived in that they think themselves free, an opinion which consists only in this, that they are conscious of their actions and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined. This, then, is their idea of freedom—that they do not know any cause of their actions. They say, of course, that human actions depend on the will, but these are only words for which they have no idea. For all are ignorant of what the will is, and how it moves the Body.[5]
>
> (2p35s)

Spinoza locates the source of the error of those who posit a faculty of free will in an inadequate knowledge of the causes of action. But what lesson does he draw from this diagnosis? Does he believe that with a more adequate knowledge of the causes of action, we could do without the concept of free will, and perhaps even without the concept of will altogether, replacing an account of action in which agents decide to act in one way rather than another with an account in which they are merely determined to act as they do?

There is reason to think that Spinoza does not foresee or intend these consequences. In the first place, he recognizes that the idea of free will is closely bound up with emotions crucial for morality. This comes out clearly in his definitions of "self-esteem" (*acquiescentia in se ipso*) and "repentance" (*poenitentia*). His formal definition of *acquiescentia in se ipso*, literally, "satisfaction with oneself," is that it is "a joy born of the fact that a man considers himself and his own power of acting" (3DA25). In general, *acquiescentia in se ipso* is a contentment with oneself and one's power of acting. In this sense, the affect is opposed to *humilitas*, which is defined as "a sadness born of the fact that a man considers his own lack of power, or weakness" (3DA25). However, Spinoza also distinguishes (though he does not name) a narrower notion of self-esteem that is tied to the praise one receives for one's actions. He defines this emotion as "a joy, accompanied by the idea of some deed which we believe we have done from a free decision of the mind [*ex Mentis libero decreto*]" (3DA26exp), and he contrasts it with repentance: "a sadness accompanied by the idea of some deed we believe ourselves to have done from a free decision of the mind" (3DA27). Spinoza associates the latter two emotions with normative practices, reflective of custom or religion,

in which agents are held accountable for their actions. Because "right" actions are recommended and praised, they are joined with emotions of joy; because "wrong" actions are blamed and criticized, they are joined with emotions of sadness. From this, Spinoza draws a general explanation of the function of repentance and self-esteem, which ties their occurrence to the observance of conventional norms: "according as each one has been educated, so he either repents of a deed or exults at being esteemed for it" (3DA27exp).

Spinoza's definitions of self-esteem and repentance, which involve reference to an agent's belief that an action was done "from a free decision of the mind," form part of his project of explaining human affects in a geometrical manner, "just as if it were a question of lines, planes, and bodies." Where others would "prefer to curse and laugh at the affects and actions of men," Spinoza aims to understand them and "to demonstrate with certain reason" even those things which are contrary to reason (3pref, G II 138). Given this, the definitions of self-esteem and repentance as involving belief in deeds done from a free decision of the mind do not amount to an endorsement of those affects. Nevertheless, even if Spinoza thinks, as he does, that human beings would, in principle, be better off if their lives were not ruled by affects that presuppose a false belief about the causality of their actions, he holds that it is impossible for most people to escape such affects entirely and that we would be worse off if they did.[6] The person who lives by the guidance of reason will seek to understand the causes of things, knowing that "a true understanding of them gives the mind as much satisfaction as the apprehension of things pleasing to the senses" (TP I 4, G III 274). Yet most people will not live by the guidance of reason; they will continue to hold false beliefs about their own agency and will live under the rule of passions determined by those beliefs. For such people, the emotions of repentance and self-esteem play a critical role in regulating their actions and promoting social harmony.

Spinoza's criticisms of the idea of "free will" – that it is premised on ignorance about the causes of our actions and that it supports passions that are often harmful to us – may suggest a radical revision of our understanding of ourselves as agents. It may even suggest the elimination of the idea of practical reason altogether, replacing it with the single imperative to *understand* the causes of things – causes that are determined by prior causes, and so on to infinity. It is far from obvious, though, that this is Spinoza's view. In the passage from 2p35s quoted earlier, he speaks not of the elimination of the concept of will but of a proper understanding of it: "They say, of course, that human actions depend on the will, but these are only words for which they have no idea. For all are ignorant of what the will is, and how it moves the Body" (2p35s, G II 117/17–20). To claim that those whom he is criticizing have no idea of what the will is is not to deny that there is a will and that it

plays a role in the explanation of human action. Likewise, Spinoza does not argue for the rejection of the idea of freedom but says only "This, then, is their idea of freedom – that they do not know any cause of their actions" – leaving room for a different idea of human freedom that does not presuppose an ignorance of the causes of action.[7]

We know from later parts of the *Ethics* that Spinoza defends his own conception of freedom in the guise of the "free man," "who lives according to the dictate of reason alone" (4p67d). What we need to ask is whether he offers similar revisionary analyses of the ideas of will (*voluntas*) and decision (*decretum*). Do these notions survive his geometrical treatment of the affects and ultimately find a place within a coherent theory of human action?

2 Will and Decision

From Parts 1 and 2 of the *Ethics*, we know the following about what a decision does not involve. First, making a decision does not involve the exercise of a faculty of "absolute, or free, will" because the supposition of such a faculty is inconsistent with the thesis of universal causal determination (1p28). Whenever the mind wills this or that, it is determined to do so by a cause, which is determined by a prior cause, and so on to infinity (2p48). Second, a singular volition – this or that affirmation or negation – is nothing over and above what is contained in a particular idea. Spinoza illustrates this with the example of the idea of a triangle and the affirmation that its three angles equal two right angles. Clearly, affirming this proposition requires that we have the idea of a triangle; however, he also asserts the converse: the affirmation that the sum of the triangle's angles equals two right angles "pertains to the essence of the idea of the triangle, and is nothing beyond it" (2p49d), that is, this affirmation requires no mental act over and above that involved in having the idea itself.[8]

The geometrical example Spinoza offers in support of this conclusion raises a number of interpretative issues; here, I limit my attention to the thesis itself. In general, he argues, "singular volitions [*singulares volitiones*] and ideas are one and the same" (2p49cd); any volition "is nothing apart from the idea" (2p49d). To judge that anything is the case requires only that one have an idea that represents the world in a certain way. There is no need for a distinct act of judgment, ascribed by Descartes to a separate power of willing. If a child imagines a winged horse and does not perceive anything that excludes the existence of the horse, she will necessarily affirm the horse as present, i.e. assert its existence (2p49cs, G II 134/20).

The examples Spinoza gives of volitions in Part 2 are doxastic (affirmations or denials that express belief) and seem to have little to do with our capacity to will a course of action. Willing is typically

associated with our decisively wanting the world to be different than it is and with our endeavor to bring about that state of the world. In Part 2, Spinoza states that by "will" (*voluntas*), he understands "the faculty by which the Mind affirms or denies something true or something false, and not the desire [*cupiditatem*] by which the mind wants a thing or avoids it" (2p48s, G II 129/31–130/2). Yet if volition has nothing to do with desire, we might wonder whether Spinoza's account of the former has anything useful to say about human action.[9]

Spinoza takes up the topic of the will's role in action at the beginning of Part 3. He reiterates his objection to the Cartesian doctrine that the mind, through the will, exercises a direct influence on the body (3p2). He allows that it is difficult to dislodge this view because ordinary people are so firmly persuaded that "the Body now moves, now is at rest, solely from the Mind's command, and that it does a great many things which depend only on the Mind's will and its art of thinking" (3p2s, G II 142/1–4). Yet this assumption, Spinoza claims, rests on peoples' ignorance about the determination of their actions:

> experience itself, no less clearly than reason, teaches that men believe themselves free because they are conscious of their own actions, and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined, that the decisions [*decreta*] of the Mind are nothing but the appetites themselves, which therefore vary as the disposition of the Body varies. For each one governs [*moderatur*] everything from his affect.
>
> (G II 143/30–35)

Spinoza's main point, again, concerns the determination of action: actions are not the outcomes of "a free decision of the Mind" (3p2s, G II 144/16) but of psychological states, appetites, or affects, which themselves are not under the control of an agent. Implicit in this point about the determination of action is a second claim about the explanation of action – namely, that such explanations do not involve positing causal relations between states of the mind and states of the body. Instead, the same action can be explained from two complementary points of view:

> both the decision of the Mind [*Mentis tam decretum*] and the appetite and the determination of the Body by nature exist together – or rather are one and the same thing, which we call a decision when it is considered under, and explained through, the attribute of Thought, and which we call a determination when it is considered under the attribute of Extension and deduced from the laws of motion and rest.
>
> (3p2s, G II 144/2–7)

The account of action to which Spinoza commits himself is far from transparent. Changes in the body's state of motion – including changes

involved in intentional actions, such as walking and talking – are governed solely by the laws of motion and rest. Mental states play no role in explaining why the body moves as it does. Yet Spinoza explicitly makes room for a "decision of the Mind" that is parallel to the body's appetite and its determination to a new state of motion. Thus, in at least some instances of human action, we can say that the action is accompanied by a *decision*, which is a mental state parallel to the body's determination to a new state of motion. But what precisely is a "decision"? Where does it fit within Spinoza's theory of the mental?

When he finally explains what he means by the term *decretum* in the scholium to 3p2, he appeals to the same notion that informs his account of volition in Part 2 of the *Ethics*:

> this decision of the Mind [*Mentis decretum*] which is believed to be free is not . . . anything beyond that affirmation which the idea, insofar as it is an idea, necessarily involves (see 2p49). And so these decisions of the Mind arise by the same necessity as the ideas of things that actually exist.
>
> (3p2s, G II 144/24–28)

As it turns out, a decision is a volition in the sense specified in Part 2, that is, the affirmation that pertains to the essence of an idea. And since the volition in question is one associated with action, we have located a type of volition that is pragmatic, and not merely doxastic, as in the examples from 2p48–49.

This leaves us with one final question: what are the specific ideas with which decisions are associated as affirmations? The answer, I suggest, is *affects*. In relation to the mind, affects are ideas (3D3), and decisions are affirmations of the contents of those ideas. As I will try to show, a decision entails, other things being equal, a commitment to pursue the object of a desire determined by an affect. If this is right, then "decision" has a meaning for Spinoza that is consonant with traditional accounts of agency: it is the mental assent to the doing of an action, whether in isolation or in preference to other actions represented as possible.

3 Affects

Spinoza's doctrine of affects forms the foundation of his practical philosophy. Affects initiate action and explain, through their variety and variable strength, why people do different things in different circumstances and, ultimately, why some people succeed and some fail in living well, "according to the dictate of reason." As Spinoza writes in 3p2s, "each one governs everything from his affect," which is to say that each person is, and can be, only what her affects determine her to be.

Spinoza defines an affect as an "affection of the Body by which the Body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained,

and at the same time, the ideas of these affections" (3D3). That affects are defined in the first place as affections of the body is significant; here, however, I restrict my concern to the ideas of these affections, which I will call without qualification "affects." A further point to note is that when Spinoza begins his discussion of the affects in 3p11s, he says there are three primary affects: joy (*laetitia*), sadness (*tristitia*), and desire (*cupiditas*). These affects are primary because all other affects can be explained in terms of them. One might wonder whether desire should be included in this list. According to Spinoza's definition, there are only two primary affects, joy and sadness, one registering the body's (and the mind's) passage to a state of greater power or perfection, and the other its passage to a state of lesser power or perfection (3D3, 3p11s, 3DA1–2). Desire is closely related to these affects. In the most general sense, Spinoza writes, "desire is man's very essence, insofar as it is conceived to be determined to do something" (3DA1exp). Given this, desire may seem even more basic than joy and sadness because it is a determinate expression of the actual essence of an individual. Desires, which include "any of a man's strivings, impulses, appetites, and volitions," are the causes of changes in an individual's power or perfection, and these changes are registered in his affects, i.e. states of joy and sadness. However, Spinoza also sees the causal relation as running in the other direction: states of joy and sadness determine new desires, which, in turn, lead to new affects. Taken together, these points confirm the suggestion in 3p11s that joy, sadness, and desire are equally fundamental from a causal point of view in explaining psychological phenomena.[10]

These distinctions are reflected in Spinoza's General Definition of the Affects, which comes at the end of Part 3:

> An Affect that is called a Passion of the mind is a confused idea, by which the Mind affirms of its Body, or of some part of it, a greater or lesser force of existing than before, which, when it is given, determines the mind to think of this rather than that.

Despite Spinoza's description of it as "general," the definition mentions only passive affects, that is, affects in which a change occurs in the mind that is only partially explained by the mind's own nature. According to Spinoza, the mind *acts*, in the narrow sense, insofar as it has adequate ideas from which follow other ideas that can be clearly and distinct understood through the nature of the mind alone. The mind is *acted on*, or is passive, insofar as it has inadequate, or confused, ideas whose explanation requires appeal to things outside the mind (3D2, 3p1). In both cases, a change in the mind's power of acting is registered as an affect. Only in the latter case, however, is it a passion, which may be either joy, reflecting the mind's increase in power, or sadness, reflecting its decrease in power.[11]

In identifying passions with confused ideas, Spinoza implicitly acknowledges that all affects are *cognitive*. This is not to say that they need represent some external object. In fact, as affects, they do not. The object of an affect like love is explained by Spinoza in terms not of the content of the affect itself but of an idea associated with it. ("Love is nothing but Joy with the accompanying idea of an external cause"; 3p13s). The content proper to an affect, what *it* represents, is a change in the body's power of acting. In Spinoza's words, the idea

> which constitutes the form of the affect must indicate or express a constitution of the Body (or of some part of it), which the Body (or some part if it) has because its power of acting, or force of existing, is increased or diminished, aided or restrained.
>
> (Gen Def Aff, G II 204/10–12)

The mind does not register a change in the body's power of acting by comparing its present state to its past state. Rather, the representation of the change is immediate and non-inferential through the content of the confused idea that is the "form" of the affect.

In his General Definition of the Affects, Spinoza expresses this point in terms of the mind's *affirming* of its body, through a confused idea, a greater or lesser force of existing than before. Spinoza's talk of "affirming" should point us back to 2p48–49 and the relation he establishes there between an idea and an affirmation that "pertains" to it. Just as an affirmation of the existence of something is contained in the idea of it (provided the idea is not accompanied by another idea that excludes the existence of the object of the first), so an affirmation of a change in the body's power of acting is contained in each of its affects. In Part 2, Spinoza describes this affirmation as a "volition" (*volitio*), but the sense he gives to the term there has no clear relation to desire and action. If it is to serve as an account of decision (*decretum*), some such relation must be established.

The General Definition of the Affects does this. It concludes by stating that the confused idea that is the form of the affect "determines the Mind to think of this rather than that" (G II 203/31–32). In his explication of the definition, Spinoza writes that he added these words "in order to express also, in addition to the nature of Joy and Sadness (which the first part of the definition explains), the nature of Desire" (G II 204/29–32). Thus, along with the cognitive dimension of Spinoza's account of the affects, there is a *motivational* dimension: any affect is or contains an endeavor whereby the mind tends toward a new idea or cognitive state. This motivation consists, most basically, in the mind's striving to persist in a state of joy and to resist states of sadness. This follows from the fact that "the first and principal [tendency] of the striving of our Mind (by p7) is to affirm the existence of our Body" (3p10d). Since the affect of

joy involves a representation of the greater power of the body, the mind strives to sustain that affect, which entails its affirmation of the body's continued existence. Over and above this, Spinoza says that the mind is determined "to think of this rather than that." The import of these words can be gleaned from earlier propositions in Part 3. In general, Spinoza argues, the mind "strives to imagine those things that increase or aid the body's power of acting" (3p12), and it strives to imagine things that exclude the existence of things that it represents as diminishing or restraining the body's power of acting (3p13d). That is, the mind desires to pursue those things that it represents as the causes of joy or pleasure (an increase in the power of a part of the mind or body) and to avoid those things that it represents as the causes of sadness or pain.

Involved in every passion, then, is a confused idea by which the mind affirms of its body a greater or lesser force of existing than before and an appetite to persist in that state if it is one of joy or to escape the state if it is one of sadness. From these two theses, we can recover a minimal conception of a *commitment* to being in a state of joy and, by extension, a commitment to things associated with the promotion of that state. When affected by joy, we represent and affirm the body's increase in power and strive to persist in that state. To the extent that we are conscious of the affect, we say it is a state that we want to be in, and we seek other things insofar as we represent them as conducive to a state of joy. By contrast, when affected by sadness, we represent and affirm the body's decrease in power and strive to overcome that state. To the extent that we are conscious of the affect, we say it is a state that we want to escape, and we seek to avoid other things insofar as we represent them as conducive to a state of sadness.

With this, we stand on the verge of recovering what the term "decision," or *decretum*, might mean for Spinoza in the context of action. To get there, we need to take one further step. Spinoza describes a passive affect as a confused idea that includes an affirmation of the body's increase or decrease in power. This affirmation, I have suggested, is doxastic: it is the expression of a belief *that* the body has increased or decreased in power. With the addition of the motivational component of the affect, however, the striving to persist in a state of joy, a different kind of judgment becomes possible. This is a primitive normative judgment about the affect, conveyed in the statement "joy is *to be sustained*." Why should we see this as a plausible view to attribute to Spinoza? Most importantly, because joy is not just any affect for him. It is an affect that involves an affirmation of the body's continued existence, for which there is an inherent striving of the body. Indeed, we may see the judgment that joy is to be sustained as a mental expression of the fundamental striving itself. Joy registers the body's increase in power, a condition that the body strives to sustain, and this is reflected in the mind's judgment that this state *is to be sustained*.

The evidence we need to flesh out this account comes partly from Part 3 and partly from Part 4. In 3p39s, Spinoza asserts that "each one, from his own affect, judges, or evaluates [*judicat, seu aestimat*], what is good and what is bad, what is better and what is worse, and finally what is best and what is worst" (G II 170/20). The crucial point he makes here is that the affects of joy and sadness provide a ground for judgments of value. "By good," Spinoza writes, "I understand every kind of joy, and whatever leads to it, and especially what satisfies any kind of longing whatever that may be. And by evil every kind of sadness, and especially what frustrates longing [*desiderium*]" (G II 170/12–15). For reasons already discussed, it is critical that Spinoza construe joy (*laetitia*) as the primitive ground of judgments of value; no other affect has the necessary relation to the body's striving to persevere in existence. The thought conveyed in the preceding passages is that other things are judged as having positive value to varying degrees based on the extent to which they are represented as contributing to the promotion of a state of joy. Since joy is something that the mind naturally and necessarily judges *should* be pursued, anything that is represented as leading to joy is judged as having positive value and as something that should, other things being equal, be pursued. Conversely, anything that is represented as leading to sadness is judged as having negative value and as something that should, other things being equal, be avoided.

Spinoza sometimes seems to suggest, e.g., in 3p9s and 3p39s, that judgments of value are functions of desire: "we desire nothing because we judge it to be good, but on the contrary, we call it good because we desire it. Consequently, what we are averse to we call evil" (G II 170/16–19). It is not the case, however, that just any desire, simply by being a desire, supports a judgment that an object is good or worthy of being sought. The judgment depends, rather, on the fact that the object of the desire is represented as a source of joy, which implies our affirmation of the bodily state in which the object adds to our power. The judgment of value, therefore, is a direct extension of the affirmation of the body's increase in power, which is the form of the affect of joy (see also 3p51s).

The role of the affects of joy and sadness in grounding judgments of value is given a final critical statement in 4p8: "The c*ognitio* of good and evil is nothing but an affect of joy and sadness insofar as we are conscious of it." Almost all translators render *cognitio* here and in Part 2, as "knowledge," which is misleading in English. The French *connaissance* is better since it implies an acquaintance or familiarity with the object as opposed to a comprehension or understanding of it, or certainty concerning it. When Spinoza speaks of the *cognitio* of good and evil in 4p8, we should interpret this as the representation of something *as* good or evil (or of what is useful, or harmful, to us), which he identifies with the affects of joy and sadness. As Spinoza writes, "insofar as we perceive

that a thing affects us with joy or sadness, we call it good or evil. And so a *cognitio* of good and evil is nothing but an idea of joy or sadness" (4p8d).

We have traveled by a rather circuitous route in pursuing the relation between Spinoza's concept of affect and the notion of decision. The thought driving the inquiry was that agents make decisions; they commit themselves to one course of action rather than another. Consequently, if Spinoza cannot say anything about what it is to make a decision, if the only vocabulary he has to talk about human action is one of causal determination, then he cannot be seen as advancing an account of action adequate for his ethics. So far, I have suggested how an account might get off the ground. Starting from the basic concept of an affect, I have located in that concept cognitive, motivational, and evaluative elements. The primary affect of joy involves (i) an affirmation of the body's increase in power; (ii) a striving to sustain that increase in power; and (iii) a judgment that the state, and whatever promotes it, is good – that is, is to be pursued. Now, I submit that this amounts, other things being equal, to a *decision* to pursue a course of action: we commit to doing so, provided that no competing action makes a stronger claim on us. Consistent with Spinoza's parallelism, such a decision is a mental state, which does not influence the movement of the body. It is, rather, an assent to the aptness of the course of action – an assent that reflects both our representation of how the course of action is apt (it would increase our power) and our motivation to pursue it.[12]

Obviously, this is a minimalist account of what it is to decide. From Spinoza, we are not going to get everything traditional theories have built into the concept of human action. Nevertheless, a plausible account of decision must involve at least an explanation of what it is to decide, or choose, between possible courses of action and what it is to choose on the basis of reason. Spinoza has answers to both of these questions, which I briefly survey in the next section.

4 Deciding What to Do: Reason versus Passion

Consider this common scenario: I am moving through the line at a cafeteria. I see all sorts of items in front of me. They attract me in different ways, promising different kinds of joy and sadness. I have a variety of thoughts about how they might or might not benefit my body. But I am aware that I have to act quickly, and so, I make a decision: I opt for the Caesar salad over the roast beef sandwich.[13]

Spinoza's account of action can handle this kind of decision quite easily. We can set aside issues of the possible causal influence of the mind on the body. According to Spinoza, my body, understood to include the brain and all the external influences it receives, is going to move *whatever* my mind thinks about it. To this extent, my mind is more or less

along for the ride. It is aware of the condition of the body; it passes through a parallel series of states that register states of the body and its own representations of the positive and negative features of the options, and then it makes a decision, "That's the one," more or less around the time that my hand reaches for the Caesar salad. My decision is a mental affirmation of the rightness of the object toward which my hand is moving. If that object is suddenly snatched away by another customer, I will feel sad, frustrated, my choice thwarted.

I intend this scenario to be the sort of case in which we routinely take ourselves to make a decision, but in which no clear rational plan guides our action. We respond to the relative force of competing passions, themselves arising through a variety of (largely unconscious) causal associations. We have a language (of good and bad) in which to make rudimentary comparative judgments about the value of the options, and some fleeting thoughts may influence the strength of our desires (e.g., "I had roast beef yesterday"). But for the most part, we are simply moved by our affective responses to the presented options, and the affect that determines our decision will be that one which is, all things considered, stronger. Hence, Spinoza: "An affect cannot be restrained or taken away except by an affect opposite to, and stronger than, the affect to be restrained" (4p7).[14]

Consider now a different scenario. I have just come from my doctor, who has told me that my cholesterol is dangerously high and that if I want to preserve my health, I have to modify my eating habits. I am in the same line at the cafeteria and have chosen the Caesar salad. I then see an enticing piece of chocolate cake. The line is not as busy on this occasion, and I have time to reflect on my options. I think about what is most valuable to me (e.g., a long life with my family); I weigh the short-term pleasure I will gain from the cake versus the possible health consequences and shortened lifespan I face if I give in (and, strengthening the habit, continue to give in) to the temptation of the cake. After weighing the goods available to me, I decide not to take the cake and move on to the register.

This is a typical example of deliberative reasoning. I weigh the value of competing goods (cake or no cake) relative to some conception of an end (bodily health, preservation of life). From the perspective of reason, I discount some short-term goods (e.g. the pleasures of eating) relative to a more valuable long-term good. Reason "tells me" that I should forego the former for the sake of the latter, and I act on the advice of reason.

How would Spinoza analyze this case? When Spinoza speaks of acting from the dictate of reason, or under the guidance of reason, he does not mean that reason governs the will through a set of norms or prescriptions. To act from the dictate of reason is simply to be determined to act by adequate ideas of reason.[15] The *authority* reason exercises in action is explained by the knowledge it gives of the conditions under which

affects of joy and sadness accurately track increases and decreases in an agent's power. As we have seen, passive affects "affirm" increases or decreases in the body's power, but they do so on the basis of inadequate or confused ideas. This inadequacy is explained by the fact that such ideas represent increases or decreases in power in only a part of the body and without regard to the consequences of those changes for the future state of the body.

The importance of adequate ideas of reason is that they provide us with knowledge of how the body's power of acting is affected by external circumstances. Ideas of reason are able to do this because they represent not only a limited spatial or temporal part of the body's existence but its overall condition as determined by its own power of acting and the causes acting on it. Such knowledge is the basis of my being able to consider the long-term health of my body and the foods that are most likely to preserve my life. I may acquire, for example, knowledge that certain foods promote elevated cholesterol levels, which, in turn, have consequences for the capacity of my heart to pump blood effectively through my body.

The question before us is how adequate ideas of this sort engage action for Spinoza. How does knowledge of the adverse consequences of certain foods for my health support my acting prudentially, exercising control over the satisfaction of desires for short-term pleasures (e.g. that involved in eating cake)? At the beginning of Part 4 of the *Ethics*, Spinoza offers definitions of good and evil that appear to establish the relevant connection. "By good," he writes, "I shall understand what we certainly know to be useful to us. By evil, however, I shall understand what we certainly know prevents us from being masters of some good" (4D1–2). However we interpret these definitions, they represent Spinoza's attempt to adjudicate, from the point of view of reason, the conditions under which we correctly judge things to be good and bad. In general, we have seen, we judge good (on the basis of the affect of joy) whatever increases our power and judge bad (on the basis of the affect of sadness) whatever decreases our power. Yet these judgments can be mistaken to the extent that they fail to track the body's overall power of acting. Accordingly, in 4D1–2, Spinoza advances a standard for judging of good and evil, based on a representation of the body's power from the point of view of reason. The things we know with certainty to be good for us are those things that agree with our nature, that is, things that, in fact, aid the preservation of our nature and promote our power of acting (4p31d).

Again, though, we may ask what this knowledge of good and evil has to do with action. On the basis of Spinoza's definition of good and evil, we will be in a position to challenge value judgments made on the basis of the primary affects. When the anticipation of pleasure prompts us to judge, "Cake is good," reason can intervene and declare, "No, cake is (all things considered) bad, because it has detrimental, long-term

consequences for the health of the body." The significance of this knowledge is that it offers an agent an authoritative perspective on the correctness of their value judgments. Positive value judgments which we initially took to affirm the aptness of a course of action can be found wanting from the perspective of reason, which reveals how certain actions, in fact, influence the overall power of the body.

Nothing that has been said so far, however, makes clear how Spinoza sees reason as engaging the will and countering the motivation associated with our initial value judgment. At most, it seems, we have theoretical knowledge – important in its own right for showing us the errors implicit in our value judgments – but not practical knowledge that is effective in resisting the inclinations of the passions. In fact, I believe, it is a mistake to think of the knowledge of good and evil defined in 4D1–2 as functioning in this way. Spinoza characterizes the knowledge in question as only "abstract *or* universal" (4p62s, G II 257/28). Such knowledge conveys information about the sorts of actions that would be useful to us – e.g. saving for the future, exercising more regularly, cutting down on calories – but it does not tell us what we *ought* to do. For ideas of reason to be implicated in action, they must generate desire, and this they can do only as affects (4p15d), where joy is the *cogitatio* of good and sadness the *cogitatio* of evil (4p8). This we might call "concrete" or "practical" knowledge of good and evil, contrasting it with the "abstract or universal" knowledge of 4D1–2.

With this distinction in hand, the second cafeteria scenario can be analyzed as follows. I judge the piece of cake good and am motivated to take it, based on my inadequate idea, experienced as an affect of joy, of the increase it will produce in my body's power. Given what I have learned of current medical science, I also have adequate, "abstract and universal" knowledge that the choice of the cake would be bad for me – that it may, in fact, contribute to a long-term decrease in my power. Yet that knowledge is not what motivates me to act differently than I would otherwise act under the influence of the desire for the cake. What determines me to decide against the cake is an immediate and non-inferential representation of a decrease in my body's power (manifested in illness or the loss of life) if I act on my initial desire. This representation is based on reason to the extent that I abstract from my present circumstances and conceive of the long-term effects on my body. Nevertheless, it is also an affect – in this case, one of sadness – insofar as it is an immediate representation of a change of power. As such, it is the basis of my judgment of the badness of the cake and of my motivation to forego it.

Reason can thus be seen as playing two complementary roles for Spinoza in the evaluation and determination of action. As "abstract and universal" knowledge, it informs us in general of the kinds of things that contribute to increases or decreases in our power of acting. But theoretical knowledge of this sort – knowledge that such-and-such a

cause is determinative of such-and-such an effect – does not account for our disposition to act from the guidance of reason. This is explained by immediate representations of changes in the body's power of acting – i.e. affects – from the standpoint of reason, which is to say, adequate representations of changes in the body's power, as conditioned by its place in the causal order of nature. The motive we acquire in this case is always based on an affect of joy or sadness, that is, an idea by which the mind affirms of the body a greater or lesser force of existing than before (4p7d).

On Spinoza's account, the determination of action always takes the form of a struggle among competing affects: "An affect cannot be restrained or taken away except by an affect opposite to, and stronger than, the affect to be restrained" (4p7). This extends to the prototypical competition between reason and appetite, as represented in my second scenario. According to Spinoza, "No affect can be restrained by the true knowledge of good and evil insofar as it is true, but only insofar as it is considered an affect" (4p14). His demonstration of this proposition turns on the fact that an affect, e.g. the imagined pleasure that the cake will bring me, "has nothing positive which could be removed by the presence of the true." From the point of view of action, an affect is merely "an idea by which the mind affirms of its body a greater or lesser force of existing than before" (4p14d), and hence, it can be blocked only by a stronger affect. If reason is to be effective in curbing the impulses of appetite, then, it must be as an affect with greater power than the appetite it opposes. Spinoza acknowledges that this means that desires arising from reason can easily be extinguished by desires for pleasure (4p16). Of this, we hardly need to be reminded. At the same time, nothing in his account implies that reason lacks the power to moderate the affects or that it is not in our interest to exercise that power to the best of our abilities.

Does Spinoza's analysis of the way in which reason sometimes does, and sometimes does not, overcome desires for pleasure threaten a picture of ourselves as agents who act from choice or decision? I don't see that it does. From Spinoza's account of the affects, we can recover a notion of decision as an assent to the aptness of a course of action – an assent that reflects our representation of how the course of action is apt (it would produce joy, i.e., an increase in power) and our motivation to pursue it. Any object of desire is given to us as something we would, other things being equal, assent to pursuing. If no countervailing desires are present, we will act on that decision. Spinoza ascribes to rational agents the power to assess whether or not they *should* pursue one course of action rather than another, based on the relative usefulness of the expected outcomes. Insofar as they are led by reason, their deliberation will lead them to a representation of one outcome (if there is one) as the greater good, and they will, insofar as they are led by reason, commit to pursuing it. Yet that commitment need not be decisive, if there are stronger countervailing desires. While I may judge that one course of action

better serves my interests than another and identify that course of action as the best one for me, I may nonetheless opt for another, a decision that reflects the relative strength of my affects. If I opt to take the cake, I have made a decision, even if it is, all things considered, a bad one.

5 Conclusion

Let me briefly review what I hope to have accomplished in this chapter. In focusing on the metaphysics of Spinoza's *Ethics*, it is easy to come away with the impression that he leaves no room for an account of human beings as rational agents, who act intentionally in pursuit of objects that they represent as good. His trenchant critique of traditional models of agency, which privilege the notion of a rational and free will as an executive authority in action, may seem to rule out a conception of ourselves as agents who deliberate about alternatives and decide to act in one way rather than another. This, I have argued, is a mistake. As in the case of freedom, Spinoza offers a revisionary, rather than an eliminative, account of the will. Decisions are not the product of an autonomous decider, an efficacious rational will, yet each of us makes decisions, and those decisions reflect the individuals we are. "Each one governs everything from his affect" (3p2s), Spinoza writes, and "that life and joy with which each is content is nothing but the idea, or soul, of the individual" (3p57s).

Notes

1 Cf. Carriero (2005), Hübner (2018).
2 For recent interpretations of Spinoza's ethical theory, see LeBuffe (2010), Kisner (2011).
3 Doubts along these lines are raised in Irwin (2008, 179–203).
4 This view of human freedom, often described as "libertarian," is closely associated with the position defended in Luis de Molina's *Concordia* of 1588. On its influence in the early modern period, see Sleigh, Chappell, and Della Rocca (1988).
5 Cf. Ep. 58 (G IV 265–267).
6 That a belief in the will's freedom is harmful is explained in part by the fact that it leaves one more susceptible to overwhelming passions of love and hate. See 3p49 and 5p5–6, and 3p51s: "Because men believe themselves free, these affects [i.e. repentance and self-esteem] are very violent." In 4p54s, however, Spinoza emphasizes the positive consequences of such affects:

> Because men rarely live from the dictate of reason, these two affects, humility and repentance . . . bring more advantage than disadvantage. . . . If weak-minded men were all equally proud, ashamed of nothing, and afraid of nothing, how could they be united or restrained by any bonds?

Accordingly, it is not Spinoza's view that human beings are always made better off by minimizing the influence of the passions. Here, I agree with Justin Steinberg (2014, 183).
7 For a full treatment of this topic, see Kisner (2011).
8 In defense of this point, see Della Rocca (2003).

9 In a note to his translation, Curley acknowledges the "provisional character" of the distinction Spinoza draws in 2p48s between volition and desire. Steven Nadler has suggested to me that Spinoza does not present his own view here but adopts for the sake of argument a Cartesian conception of the will.
10 Cf. LeBuffe (2009), Steinberg (2016).
11 Although passions are the most common type of human affect and the basis of Spinoza's attempts to explain human action in causal terms, active affects, such as the self-esteem arising from an adequate idea of one's own power of acting (*acquiescentia in se ipso*), are crucial for ethics (cf. 4p52, 4p52s). In general, Spinoza lays out an ethical program in which, in the person who is led by reason, passive affects are replaced by active affects, reflecting the mind's understanding of the causal determination of the passions and its representation of its own increase in power (cf. 5p4, 5p4s).
12 In emphasizing that a decision involves assent to the aptness of a course of action, based on the affirmation of an anticipated increase in bodily power (the form of the affect of joy), I mean to distance Spinoza's account from the one commonly attributed to Hobbes, according to which an agent's will, expressing a decision to act, is nothing but "the last appetite or aversion immediately adhering to the action, or to the omission thereof" (*Leviathan*, chapter 6). Most read Hobbes as reducing deliberation to a causal process in which conflicting appetites and aversions contend until one emerges as dominant and precipitates a movement of the agent's body. Though this may be accurate as a description of the causal determination that Spinoza claims to hold of both the mental and the physical (1p28), I see him as sensitive to the fact that from the point of view of an agent, there is more to be said. Agents confront the world as a field of value, representing potential sources of joy and sadness, and they commit themselves to the appropriateness of courses of action based on this. Thus, from the point of view of an agent, deliberation involves the assessment of reasons for action, not just contention among appetitive forces.
13 I assume that agents represent alternative courses of action as possible, and the outcome of their choice as contingent, because they have only inadequate knowledge of the causal order of nature (cf. Spinoza's definition of "possible" at 4D4). This is another feature of human agency that Spinoza means to uphold: our practical perspective is that of limited, embodied minds who are confronted with choices among options differentiated through the value they have for us. For more on this point, see Rutherford (2012, 215–217).
14 Even if the strength of the dominant appetite explains the choice we make, the choice is accompanied by a judgment of the appropriateness of the action based on the joy associated with it. We can contrast this case with ones in which we act against our will because appetite moves us contrary to our evaluative judgments. This is the condition of the unwilling addict, who judges sobriety a preferred state to intoxication yet is moved to act contrary to his judgment.
15 I defend this view in Rutherford (2008). For challenges to it, see Miller (2014), Steinberg (2014).

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8 Materializing Spinoza's Account of Human Freedom

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> Does not experience also teach that if . . . the Body is inactive, the Mind is at the same time incapable of thinking?
>
> (*Ethics* 3p2s)

Spinoza considers human freedom and the means of obtaining it throughout his oeuvre. The *Theologico-Political Treatise* defends the freedom to philosophize as necessary for human flourishing (IV G III 60; VII G III 111) and defines the purpose of the state as freedom (XX G III 241).[1] *Political Treatise* II 8 calls the life of reason "the highest peak of human freedom." In the *Ethics*, too, freedom is a central theme. Spinoza criticizes prevailing Christian and Cartesian ideas of divine and human freedom as imaginary, and he argues that those ideas, together with the political abstractions and institutions they engender, increase rather than ameliorate human suffering and servitude. Hence, he comprehensively eliminates them, replacing the idea of freedom from necessity with the concurrence of freedom and necessity, demystifying the divine will as an anthropomorphic projection and replacing human volition with *conatus*. The later parts of the *Ethics* show the close link between knowledge and freedom. *Ethics* 4 argues that the rational person is less torn by violent affects, more joyful, and more able to join with others to live cooperatively (4p34–35). The person guided by reason is "more free in a state" than in solitude (4p73) because the bonds of community increase our power of self-preservation, both in the sense of securing basic sustenance and in the sense of enabling us to develop greater powers of reasoning. *Ethics* 5 identifies the paramount form of human freedom with *scientia intuitiva* and the joyful affects it produces. 5p36s explicitly identifies *amor dei intellectualis*, the love characteristic of the third kind of knowing, with human well-being, felicity, and freedom. In his characteristic way of using *sive* and *seu*, Spinoza writes, "*salus, seu beatitudo, seu Libertas*."

Despite his emphasis on the socio-political life of embodied individuals and his explicit statements of the intrinsically affective character of intellectual knowing and freedom, Spinoza is often taken to be a quintessential exponent of early modern European rationalism, according to which the good life is guided exclusively by reason and intellect, to the exclusion

of bodies and affects. Bodies and affects, for the arch-rationalist, are to be governed and ideally surpassed by reason and intellect, and they in any case make no positive contribution to the projects of knowledge and freedom. Freedom, on this construal, would be freedom from or above and beyond the constraints of corporeal and affective life. It would also occur at considerable remove from social and political life. Even if we restore intellectual affects to the rationalist paradigm, the emphatically non-dualistic, immanentizing tenor of Spinoza's philosophy should give us pause about assimilating his position to paradigms of disembodied transcendence and Cartesian dualism. Here, we need only recall 2p7s: "The thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, which is now comprehended under this attribute, now under that." With respect to affects, we need only recall 3D3: "By affect I understand affections of the Body by which the Body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections."

In 4p8d, Spinoza connects ideas, affects, and bodily affections concisely. An idea is united to an affect, he explains,

> in the same way as the Mind is united to the Body (by 2p21), i.e. (as I have shown in 2p21s), this idea is not really distinguished from the affect itself, *or* (by the general Definition of Affects) from the idea of the Body's affection.

In other words, the idea is "only conceptually distinguished" from the affect. Spinoza unequivocally prohibits cross-attribute causal explanation (3p2), but that prohibition does not bar us from examining how different forms or registers of human existence – thought and extension as well as affects – are one and the same (3p2s, 5p1).

My intention in the present paper is to restore the body and affects to our account of Spinozan freedom, that is, to move away from the arch-rationalist picture and explicitly re-materialize Spinozan freedom. I do so under the banner of perspectivalist interpretation, which emphasizes Spinoza's replacement of real distinctions with irreducible but not ontological distinctions in aspects (*sub specie*) (1p29s, 5p29); under attributes (2p7s); and, as we just saw, in conceiving. Perspectivalism is thus a way of thinking about the simultaneous sameness and heterogeneity articulated in 2p7s. It is also an alternative to Platonizing interpretations, which characteristically separate actual essences and formal or eternal essences, and so lead to positing two kinds or realms of being, and versions of parallelism that suggest, however tacitly, a correspondence between two things.[2]

The most promising texts for materializing Spinozan freedom might appear to be the *Theological-Political Treatise* (TTP) or the *Political Treatise* (TP), each of which is obviously concerned with corporeal self-preservation and matters of political economy.[3] But the *Ethics*, too,

directly and systematically addresses our striving to persevere in existing and to flourish from the perspective of extension and affects. 2p7s anchors a remarkable series of texts about the relationship – or, better, the simultaneous sameness and difference – of corporeal striving and mental striving. The series begins in 2p13s: "In proportion as a Body is more capable than others of doing many things at once, or being acted on in many ways at once, so its Mind is more capable than others of perceiving many things at once." It enters the formal demonstrative chain in 2p14: "The human Mind is capable of perceiving a great many things, and is the more capable, the more its body can be disposed in a great many ways." Each subsequent part of the *Ethics* repeats the point. 3p11 draws together bodies and their ideas, arguing that "the idea of anything that increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our Body's power of acting, increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our Mind's power of thinking." 4p38 proves that whatever "disposes the human Body so that it can be affected in a great many ways, or renders it capable of affecting external Bodies in a great many ways, is useful to man" directly from 2p14, and 4app27 connects the capacity to be affected and to affect explicitly to thinking. At the apex of *Ethics* 5, Spinoza demonstrates that "He who has a Body capable of a great many things has a Mind whose greatest part is eternal" (5p39). We strive, he explains, to transform a weak human infant's body into a strong body "capable of a great many things and related to a Mind that is very much conscious of itself, of God, and of things" (5p39s). Were *scientia intuitiva* and the freedom consequent upon it actually incorporeal, they could be accomplished without a capable body, indeed without any body at all. Attending to Spinoza's insistence on the power of the body in these texts suggests that intuitive freedom, not only political freedom, is a way of experiencing natural life. Like *libertas*, *salus* and *beatitudo* are this-worldly experiences of actual human beings, not promises of a disembodied or ontologically separate intellectual and eternal life.[4]

My argument proceeds in several steps. Section 1 differentiates Spinozan *conatus* from classical Christian and Cartesian volition. By rejecting a real distinction between activity and passivity, and a real distinction between mind or soul and body, Spinoza rejects the traditional Christian framework of incorporeal activity and corporeal passivity. With it go the ideas of freedom as disembodied transcendence and freedom as freedom from (corporeal or mechanical) necessity. Although a complete reconstruction is impossible here, Spinoza's dismissal of the will and re-analysis of determination, choice, and action in terms of *conatus* suggests his familiarity with the non-dualistic views of medieval Jewish and Islamic Aristotelians, particularly Gersonides. Section 1 concludes by examining *conatus* with respect to extension, thought, and affect. To understand the central Spinozan idea of *conatus se conservandi*, we need to understand striving in its different dimensions.

Section 2 considers Spinoza's analysis of the means of liberation. I focus mainly on transition from the first kind of knowing, imagination, to the second kind, reason, and sketch the effects of the transition from reason to the third kind of knowing. In accord with my materializing aim, I consider the transitions with respect to bodies and affects as well as ideas. Key issues here are the complexity of imagination and the impact of Spinoza's denials of, respectively, teleology and a separate or transcendent rational power.

Section 3 examines Spinoza's identification of freedom with *salus* in 5p36s and his pledge to discuss "those things which pertain to Mind's duration without relation to the body" (5p20s), which might be thought to constitute prima facie objections to his account of freedom. Upon careful inspection, however, conceiving the mind *sine relatione ad corpus* need not commit us to a dualistic account or to some kind of afterlife. Spinoza's continual reference to extension and affect in the *Ethics*, as well as his use of *salus* in other works, suggests that we should understand *salus*, typically translated as "salvation" in English, more in terms of medicine, *scientia*, and politics than in terms of theology. As we shall see, Spinoza mobilizes the multiple meanings of *salus* for decidedly un-theological and this-worldly ends. Thus, a materializing interpretation of his identification of *amor dei intellectualis*, *salus*, *beatitudo*, and *libertas* in 5p36s is available. Section 4 is a brief conclusion.

1 From *Voluntas* to *Conatus*

Spinoza criticizes the theory of will (*voluntas*) throughout his oeuvre. In *Descartes's Principles of Philosophy* (DPP 1663), Cartesian volition, itself a species of Christian volition, appears chiefly in extra-demonstrative portions of the text.[5] In the *Political Treatise*, Spinoza denies that the human mind is "created directly by God and . . . so independent of other things that it has an absolute power to determine itself and to use reason in a correct way" (II 6). The *Short Treatise* and the *Ethics* offer Spinoza's most detailed discussions of volition, and both texts reconceive human action and freedom in terms of appetite and desire. Most strikingly, the complex Spinozan notion of striving (*conatus*), according to which to act is to have been affected and according to which both mind and body are passive and active, replaces the divisions characteristic of the volitional approach.

While Spinoza's proximate target is frequently Descartes, his critique bears on the broader tradition of Christian philosophical psychology and free will. The idea of the will (*voluntas*) as an active but not fully rational psychic faculty originates in Paul's Letter to the Romans, and it is closely linked to the theology of Original Sin.[6] From Paul to Augustine and beyond, the Christian tradition distinguishes between corporeal appetite and volitional action. Centrally, Christian freedom is freedom

from corporeal nature and desire, and freedom for and of the incorporeal spirit. Volitional activity is thus tightly linked to the divergence, and ultimate separation, of mind and body. In contrast, no such distinct psychic faculty or power of volition is found in Plato, Aristotle, or ancient Stoic authors. As a result, many (but not all) medieval Jewish and Islamic Aristotelians, as distinct from their Christian counterparts, work with a psychology and anthropology organized by sensation, imagination, intellect, and appetite or desire, and they ground human cognition in sense experience. Choice and action hinge on how the appetitive faculty is moved by what is imagined and/or understood. Spinoza's own position has much in common with these Aristotelians.[7]

KV II 17 distinguishes between Will (*Wille*) and Desire or Appetite (*Begeerte*), and it eliminates the former in favor of the latter. Spinoza's real agenda is to elucidate the caused character of human actions: to act is to have been affected, or, to put the point another way, choices about present and future actions emerge out of past encounters. The backdrop for this chapter of the *Short Treatise* is Aristotle's *De Anima* III 10, which attributes animal motion to appetite. In that chapter, Aristotle explains animal motion in the same framework he uses for motion in general, distinguishing between "(1) that which originates the movement, (2) that by means of which it originates it, and (3) that which is moved" (433b10–15). In the case of appetite or desire, the object perceived as good (irrespective of whether it is genuinely or only apparently good) originates the movement. The appetitive power of the soul is the means by which the external mover originates the animal's motion; when the animal desires an object as an end, it responds to the stimulated appetitive faculty by moving toward the object. In other words, the appetitive power of the soul is a moved mover. Ultimately, that which is moved is the individual animal. What the Latins called *voluntas*, usually good or rational will, and what they called *voluptas*, corporeal desire or concupiscence, are, for Aristotle and Spinoza, species of a common genus, *Begeerte* or, in Spinoza's Latin, *cupiditas*. Traditional theorists of free will fail, Spinoza explains, because they "do not consider what it might be that happens to draw the appetite from the one to the other" (G I 85/27–28). Time-honored appeals to the will's sovereign power to set aside desires are re-explained by Spinoza in terms of how the individual is moved: "by the order and course of Nature he is affected by something that is more pleasant to him than the first thing" (G I 86/16–18).

In the *Ethics*, three themes organize Spinoza's account of volition. He argues that *voluntas* generates contradictions in the idea of *Deus sive Natura*, intensifies human misery by misrepresenting human power, and entrenches ignorance and tyranny. *Ethics* 1, particularly in 1p17s and 1p32c, eliminates the traditional notion of divine free will on the ground that God acts from necessity. Since freedom amounts to acting on the necessities of one's nature, freedom and necessity coincide. The same

holds for human knowers inasmuch as *ratio* and *scientia intuitiva* exhibit what is necessary.[8] 1app amplifies Spinoza's rejection of divine will, characterizing it as an anthropomorphic fantasy. Simultaneously evoking political and epistemological consequences, Spinoza audaciously calls God's will the "sanctuary of ignorance" (1app, G II 81/11), and he charges that invoking it serves anti-rational ends. Human free will, too, is a fantasy reflective of the human condition. All people are "born ignorant of the causes of things," want "to seek their own advantage," and are "conscious of this appetite" (1app, G II 78/15–17).[9] The upshot is the fantasy of teleology and, with it, free will. *Ethics* 2 targets the Cartesian will's role in judgment: "In the Mind there is no volition, or affirmation and negation, except that which the idea involves insofar as it is an idea" (2p49).[10] *Ethics* Part 3 replaces *voluntas* with *conatus*, paving the way to eliminate volition in socio-political as well as ethical life. Correctly understood, Spinoza argues, human beings, like all finite modes, are produced by and part of the causal fabric of nature; any individual is a *pars inter partes*, not a "kingdom within a kingdom," with "absolute power over its own actions" and "absolute dominion over its Affects" (3pref, G II 137–138; TP II 6).

In 3p2s, in a passage reminiscent of KV II 17, Spinoza identifies mental decision and bodily appetites. In one stroke, he eliminates the real distinction between activity and passivity, and dismisses Cartesian substance dualism: "The decisions of the Mind are nothing but the appetites themselves." He introduces the perspectival idioms "considered under" and "explained through" to clarify the "nothing but" formulation:

> the decision of the Mind and the appetite and the determination of the Body by nature exist simultaneously – or, better, are one and the same thing, which we call a decision when it is considered under, and explained through, the attribute of Thought, and which we call a determination when it is considered under the attribute of Extension and deduced from the laws of motion and rest.[11]
>
> (3p2s, G II 144)

As in 2p7s, Spinoza here appeals to the way in which one and the same thing can be considered in different respects or perspectives. Decision, previously attributed to the active mind, is one and the same with determination, previously attributed to the passive body. In underlining that the distinction between decision and determination is nominal and conceptual, i.e. a feature of how we speak about and conceive natural things rather than a feature of how they are in themselves, Spinoza suggests that he will revise our philosophical language. The revision comes in 3p9s, which redefines the traditional lexicon of will in terms of *conatus*. When *conatus* is related to the mind alone, "it is called Will [*Voluntas*]." When *conatus* "is related to the mind and body together, it is called

Appetite [*Appetitus*].” If we wish to refer to our consciousness of our own appetite, we use the term desire (*cupiditas*), but “between appetite and desire there is no difference.”[12] *Voluntas* effectively disappears from the remainder of the *Ethics*, until 5pref, where Spinoza criticizes it harshly. Contra Stoic thinkers and Descartes, Spinoza categorically rejects the idea that our affects depend on our free will and dismisses the project of volitional self-mastery. Experience, Spinoza writes, “cries out against” these models (5pref, G II 277/22). Their divergence from experience produces and entrenches, rather than alleviates, suffering and servitude.

In reframing the discussion of self-preservation, acting, and being affected in terms of *conatus*, Spinoza displaces Christian metaphysical psychology in favor of a Gersonidean framework. As commentators have noted, Spinozan *conatus* matches neither the Cartesian nor the Hobbesian model. In *Principles of Philosophy* II 26, Descartes presents *conatus* as the action needed to make parts of the human body move or rest and, through them, cause external bodies to start or cease to move. Spinoza himself associated his notion of *conatus* with Descartes’s first law of nature: “any object, in and of itself, always perseveres in the same state” (*Principles* II 37). The association is limited, however, since Spinoza regards *conatus* as “something outside the laws and nature of motion” (CM I 6), that is, as something relevant not only in physics but in metaphysics as well. Much as Hobbes’s notion of bodies as resisting other bodies is important in Spinoza’s philosophy, Hobbes’s definition of *conatus* as the smallest beginning of motion does not account for Spinoza’s usage.[13] Looking beyond the seventeenth century, Wolfson suggests Aristotelian *hormē,* Ciceronian *appetitus* and *conatus*, and various medieval sources.[14] Harvey convincingly identifies the source as Gersonides, whose religious and philosophical works would have come to the young Spinoza’s attention through his teacher, Rabbi Saul Levi Morteira. The ideas of endeavor or striving (*hištadlut*) and preservation (*šemirah*) are central in Gersonides’s natural philosophy and metaphysics. In biblical commentaries, super-commentaries on Averroes’s commentaries on Aristotle, and *The Wars of the Lord*, Gersonides slides easily between formulations such as “Nature preserves” and “Nature endeavors” to “God preserves” and “God endeavors.” Harvey terms this movement a “translation from biological to theological language.”[15] If, for Gersonides, the translation is from biological to theological language, for Spinoza, the translation is from theology to the science of nature. The step Gersonides’s philosophy suggests, but which Gersonides himself does not quite take, is expressed concisely in Spinoza’s famous formula, *Deus sive Natura*.

Spinoza conceptualizes *conatus* as each mode’s immanent expression of the power of *Deus sive Natura*, i.e. substance. Any mode expresses itself amidst other modes such that modes are determined by

and determine others. Each singular thing in nature strives to persevere in its being (*suum esse conservare conatur*), i.e., has *conatus se conservandi* (3p6), and the core propositions about *conatus* as self-preservation apply universally to *res singulares*, not exclusively or even primarily to human beings. 3p6 reads, "Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being." In the plainer language of TTP XVI, "The desire to persevere in existing is the *summa lex naturae*" (G III 189/25).[16] Spinoza's demonstration of 3p6 rests on 1p25c, which defines singular things as "modes by which God's attributes are expressed in a certain and determinate way," and 1p34, which defines modes as certain and determinate expression of God's power.[17] Thus, 3p6 prepares us to rethink human actions and passions in view of the fundamental metaphysical theses of *Ethics* 1. 3p7d, which identifies *conatus* with the actual essence of a thing, likewise emphasizes the close connection to *Ethics* 1, using 1p29 and 1p36 to reiterate the identification of *conatus* and *potentia*. In 4p4, Spinoza returns to the same way of thinking of singular things as determinate expressions of the infinite *potentia dei sive naturae* in the course of explaining the limitation "as far as it can." As a part of nature, any singular thing is part of a causal network or environment in which its own causal power is or will be exceeded (4ax1). Hence, no *res singularis* is a fully adequate or continuously adequate cause (4p3–4).

Conceived under the attribute of Extension, *conatus* is the body's power to maintain its characteristic ratio of motion and rest. Its nature can be formulated as that ratio (2le3–5). Contra Descartes, it is not an inert entity awaiting motion from an external force but must rather be conceived in terms of its own force.[18] Like all natural things, Spinozan bodies exist in a modal flux, not in atomistic isolation. Thus, Spinozan bodies are simultaneously constituted by internal motions that strive toward self-preservation and by external interactions, whose effects may be useful for or destructive to their characteristic ratio of motion and rest. Were a body entirely passive, it could not exist under the pressure of ambient bodies. Because the human body is exceedingly complex (2post1), its self-preservation consists in acting on, and being acted on by, external bodies in many ways: "The human Body, to be preserved, requires a great many other bodies, by which it is, as it were, continually regenerated" (2post3). For this reason, the Spinozan sage is no ascetic. The wise person "refresh[es] and restore[s] himself in moderation with pleasant food and drink" for the complex parts of the human body

> constantly require new and varied nourishment, so that the whole Body may be equally capable of all the things which can follow from its nature, and hence, so that the Mind also may be equally capable of understanding many things.
>
> (4p45c2s)

Viewed in political terms, human beings require the assistance of other human beings for security in the face of threats and to assure sustenance. Human beings "can hardly live a solitary life" (4p35s) and "require one another's aid" (4p37s2).[19] In sum, then, striving to persevere in existing expresses a body's distinctive ratio of motion and rest, and it requires congenial environments; without nourishment, and in the presence of superior forces, such as natural and political predators, corporeal self-preservation is impossible.

The mind, too, strives to increase its power of self-preservation. In Section 2 below, I consider the passage from imaginative expressions of self-preservation to rational and intellectual ones. For now, the important point is that as human individuals become more rational, they strive above all else for understanding. Thus, rational individuals judge the utility of all things according to whether they lead to understanding (4p26); *conatus intelligendi* (4p26d), the intellectual desire to know, is central to the project of the *Ethics*. *Ethics* 4 identifies *conatus se conservandi* as the "first and only foundation of virtue" (4p22c) and quickly draws virtue and reason together in order to explain acting and living: "Acting absolutely from virtue is nothing else in us but acting, living, and preserving our being (these three signify the same thing) by the guidance of reason, from the foundation of seeking one's own advantage" (4p24). Similarly, 4p67d reminds us that the wise person "acts, lives, and preserves his being" in light of his own advantage: namely, virtue and knowledge.[20] Thus, the rational individual wants "to perfect, as far as [he] can, [his] intellect, or reason . . . Perfecting the intellect is nothing but understanding God, his attributes, and his actions, which follow from the necessity of his nature." In other words, "the ultimate end of the man who is led by reason, i.e. his highest desire" is "that by which he is led to conceive adequately both himself and all things which can fall under his understanding" (4app4).[21] *Ethics* 5 transforms our understanding of this striving by re-articulating it in terms of the eternity of the mind. With 5p28, "The Striving, or Desire, to know things by the third kind of knowledge cannot arise from the first kind of knowledge, but can indeed arise from the second," Spinoza re-emphasizes 4app4 and provides a rigorous demonstration of its core claim. The third kind of knowing makes no reference to time or duration (5p23s, 5p29d and 5p29s; 1D8exp) and so constitutes the mind's eternity.

Affects, too, express *conatus*. As noted above, Spinoza defines affects as the "affections of the Body by which the Body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, ideas of those affections" (3D3). In the most basic terms, affects express modulations of, or transitions in, desire, joy, and sadness (3p11). Each affect registers increases and decreases in power relative to previous experience (3p12–13; Gen Def Aff). When our interactions conduce to self-preservation, as when our power is enhanced or at least not diminished,

we feel joy. Destructive encounters, in which our ratio is disrupted or its expression limited by unfavorable bodies, produce sadness. At the close of 3D3, Spinoza introduces a further distinction between passive and active joy (3D3). In passive joys, our increase in power depends on how external causes determine us. To the extent that we are favorably affected, the change is positive: our joy manifests increasing power. Imagined pleasures are real pleasures – they move us and cause us to move – and they may lead to genuine goods and so to reason:

> Joy is bad [only] insofar as it prevents man from being capable of acting (by P41 and P43), and so to that extent also, we cannot be determined to any action which we could not do if we were guided by reason.
>
> Finally, insofar as Joy is good, it agrees with reason (for it consists in this, that a man's power of acting is increased or aided), and is not a passion except insofar as the man's power of acting is not increased to the point where he conceives himself and his actions adequately. So if a man affected with Joy were led to such a great perfection that he conceived himself and his actions adequately, he would be capable – indeed more capable—of the same actions to which he is now determined from affects which are passions.
>
> (4p59d)

As Spinoza's comment that the adequate knower would be "more capable [*aptior*]" indicates, passive pleasures, no matter how beneficial, leave something to be desired: namely, activity. Being dependent on external causes subjects us to the variations of nature – not all external causes are congenial to us, and a congenial cause may disappear – and to turbulent affects since shifts in our causal environment may be rapid and dramatic. Thus, passive joy easily turns to sadness, love to hate, and so on. Insofar as we imagine, i.e., insofar as we are affected by external causes and grasp them inadequately, we are moved uncomprehendingly and sometimes quite violently between hope and fear (3p50s; TTP pref G III 5). In active joys, in contrast, expressing our own nature organizes our constructive encounters and generates the affect; in Spinoza's technical idiom, understanding our encounters through our own nature amounts to understanding ourselves as adequate causes. To the degree that we reason, and so connect with things congenial to our self-preservation, we experience active joy. Crucially, too, reasoning enables us to comprehend ourselves as finite *partes naturae* and subject to nature's universal and necessary laws. Coming to understand ourselves and our situation moves us from passivity to activity and thereby produces active joy and even love (5p20s). As becomes clear in *Ethics* 5, the third kind of knowing produces the highest satisfaction and joy of the mind (5p27), which Spinoza calls *amor dei intellectualis* (5p32c). I say more about this below.

2 *Conatus* without Teleology or Transcendence: The Means of Liberation

Given Spinoza's insistence on the sameness of extension, thinking, and affect, it is easy to see that flourishing happens simultaneously in all three respects. The body's degree of power is manifest as the mind's degree of power, and vice versa, and affective states express these degrees of power. The process of achieving flourishing is nevertheless complex, and our prospects are uncertain. Were matters otherwise, *salus* would not be neglected. Nor would all things excellent be most difficult or most rare (5p42s). In this section, I focus mainly on the difficulties attending the initial transition from – under the attribute of Thought – imagination to reason and so from relative passivity to relative activity and passive affects to active affects. 2p29s describes this as the transition from thinking of affections received in the body according to the common order of nature, which are manifest as confused, inadequate ideas, to forming clear and distinct adequate ideas of things in "their agreements, differences, and opposition." The same scholium sums up the transition as a shift from external to internal determination. In *Ethics* 4–5, Spinoza re-articulates the transition as the movement from bondage to freedom. Living according to the guidance of reason, and, further, achieving the freedom consequent upon being oneself rational, are the necessary (but not sufficient) conditions for the experience of freedom proper to *scientia intuitiva*.

Three central and signature Spinozan ideas come to bear on the transition from imagination to reason and intellect, and hence from bondage to freedom. The first, the finitude of human beings, we have already encountered: given superior forces in nature, preserving our own ratio is difficult. To this, we must add, second, Spinoza's denial of a single, overarching or master teleology and, third, his insistence that all knowing begins in sensation and imagination.[22] Were Spinoza a teleological thinker, he could argue that imagination would reliably lead to the development of reason and that imaginative desires would reliably lead to effective self-preservation. Absent teleology, however, our experiences of passivity and inadequacy are as natural as their opposites. Misery is as natural as thriving, and bondage is as natural as freedom. Flourishing may be more desirable or more enjoyable than suffering, at least for some of us[23], but it is nevertheless not guaranteed to transpire. As Spinoza makes clear in the *Ethics* and the TTP, the desire for self-preservation is the *summa lex naturae*, but it occurs in many ways.

Were Spinoza to regard the human intellect as really distinct from the body, he could argue that the vagaries of corporeal experience and any difficulties attendant upon imaginative ideas and desires would be resolved by recourse to a higher, separate faculty. Such a faculty would transcend or bypass imaginative experience and so be able correct or

obviate it. Spinoza's rejection of the idea of any separate and prior intellectual actuality on the model of, for example, Cartesian innate ideas in favor of explaining the origins of knowledge in sensible experience precludes that approach. Since reason emerges through sensible experience, Spinoza can appeal only to a process of immanent critique, that is, to working through or reconfiguring imaginative ideas on the way to reason. Although nature is intrinsically intelligible (1p16, 2p1, 2p3), it is not immediately intelligible to us.[24] Like our finitude, the complexity of bodily affections makes becoming rational on-going and often non-linear. All affections involve the nature of our body and other bodies; thus, they are multiply determined and difficult to decipher. One and the same individual, too, can vary over time, sometimes being moved to an action by reason and other times being moved to the same action by imagination, sometimes stable under the guidance of the *dictamina rationis* and other times enduring the vicissitudes of imaginative life (3p17s, 3p51s). In short, "we live in continuous change" (5p39s). For this reason, as we saw above, Spinoza proposes imaginative regimes conducive to the development of reason, and he is quite explicit about the need for "correct principles of living, or sure maxims of life" to assist us in challenging circumstances (5p10s). Constructive social institutions and laws serve the same purpose (e.g. 4p37 and its scholia). In the TTP, religion, via teachings and practices, is the principal way of producing social imaginaries conducive to human flourishing. Laws and institutions are likewise essential.[25]

Beginning from *Ethics* 3 brings these factors into focus. In 3p11, Spinoza argues that "the idea of any thing that increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our Body's power of acting, increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our Mind's power of thinking." Hence, the mind strives to imagine "only those things that affirm or posits its power of acting" (3p54) and to avoid imaging "those things that diminish or restrain its or its Body's power" (3p13c). But on what basis does the mind pursue some things and avoid others? 3p51s answers that human beings often judge things "only from an affect" (G II 179). TTP XVI is characteristically blunt: an individual chooses that "which *seems* [to her] to be greater or lesser," i.e., more or less conducive to increasing her power to persevere in existing, irrespective of whether her judgment is correct (G III 192).[26] Without adequate ideas, it is easy to imagine as good things that are actually harmful, such that the desire for self-preservation takes distorted, even self-destructive, forms. To experience freedom, then, each human being must attune herself to, and come to desire, what accords with her nature and so *actually* enhances her power of acting (4p31c). Eschewing merely apparent goods, she must desire useful (*utiles*) things recommended by reason. Very concretely, adequate knowing enables us to optimize self-preservation (4p18s, 4p26d). The more we are able to know and express the necessities of our nature, the more we are free. As

I discuss below, understanding our affections and passions reconfigures the mind in active terms.

We can further trace the challenge of becoming rational and hence free to the very nature of the human body, which retains impressions, and to human sociality. All human affections involve the nature of the human body and the nature of the external body (2p16). In *Ethics* 3, the same is true of affects. The palimpsestic human body presents and re-presents impressions until they are overwritten by new impressions. Thus, we imagine as present experienced objects that are no longer present, and we imagine "objects" that appear due merely to the overlap and combination of retained impressions (2p17). Human bodies are, moreover, exceedingly complex such that any bodily affection may have multiple components and generate multiple effects. Translating these dynamics into affective terms, the causal structure of affects involves features of our nature – what Spinoza would call internal or intrinsic causes – and features of the external or extrinsic causes. Any given affect may have a complex temporal and causal structure as well as complex effects. What we experience as a single affect may arise from multiple different bodily affections. Finally, these causal-structural complexities are redoubled by the social, and hence, political, character of the Spinozan imagination. Just as Spinozan bodies communicate their motions, so too do Spinozan individuals communicate affects. Imitation epitomizes the way we acquire and transmit affects (3p17). 3p31 shows our responsiveness to others like us: our love for something we want is strengthened by seeing others love the same good.[27] Over-determination is the rule in Spinozan affects.

Since it is impossible here to do justice to Spinoza's account of the transition from imagining to reasoning, let alone the transition from reason to intuition, a sketch of the outcome of his proposed interventions must suffice. Drawing on *Ethics* 3 (e.g. 3p53) and 4 (e.g. 4app32), *Ethics* 5 emphasizes the affective shifts in these transitions. Spinoza presents the shift from imagining and passionate experience to reasoning and the practice of virtue as a change in perspective:

> all the appetites, *or* Desires, are passions only insofar as [*quatenus ad*] they arise from inadequate ideas, and are counted as virtues when they are aroused or generated by adequate ideas. For the Desires by which are determined to do something can arise as much from adequate ideas as from inadequate ones (by 4p59).
>
> (5p4s)

It is possible, in other words, to strive for the same thing from a predominantly passive, imaginatively driven position or from a predominantly active, rationally organized position. Both the infant and the sage, for example, need nutrition, but they experience the need and its satisfaction

differently (5p39s). TTP XVI offers a parallel analysis of the expression natural right, contrasting those who seek self-preservation according to appetitive urges with those who live by the rules and laws of reason. The rational person's moderation and relative affective stability surely feel different, and produce different effects in the world, from the blind desire and turmoil characteristic of the ignorant, the weak, or the mad (G III 190). In *Ethics* 5, Spinoza particularly directs our attention to the *idea dei*. Because "The Mind can bring it about that all the Body's affections, or images of things, are related to the idea of God" (5p14), even an experience of sadness can become an experience of joy: "he who understands himself and his affects clearly and distinctly rejoices (by 3p53), and this Joy is accompanied by the idea of God (by p14)" (5p15d). Joy accompanied by the *idea dei* is love (3DA6), and this rational love is the necessary but not sufficient condition for the third kind of knowing and *amor dei intellectualis* (5p28).

3 Rethinking *Salus, seu Beatitudo, seu Libertas*

If we have begun to materialize freedom, what about *salus* and *beatitudo*, which Spinoza identifies with freedom? And what about the fact that, after 5p20s, Spinoza considers the mind *sine relatione ad corpus*? Might *Ethics* 5 scuttle the materializing interpretation?

Let us begin with *salus*, to which Spinoza refers twice in the *Ethics*. The first instance occurs in 5p36s:

> We clearly understand wherein our *salus*, or blessedness [*seu beatitudo*], or liberty [*seu Libertas*] consists, namely in a constant and eternal Love toward God, *or* God's Love toward men. And this Love [*Amor*], *or* blessedness, is called Glory [*Gloria*] in the Sacred Scriptures. For whether this Love is related to God or to the Mind, it can rightly be called satisfaction of mind [*acquiescentia animi*], which is really not distinguished from Glory.

The second instance closes the book:

> If *salus* were at hand, and could be found without great effort, how could nearly everyone neglect it? But all things excellent [*praeclara*] are as difficult as they are rare.
>
> (5p42s)

Even if the preceding arguments establish the intellectual character of the love and the decidedly unconventional character of Spinoza's *Deus sive Natura*, pairing *salus* with *beatitudo* and scriptural *gloria* evokes traditional religious ideas. Since, moreover, we are considering the mind *sine relatione ad corpus*, the temptation to assimilate Spinoza's argument

into conventionally theological, particularly Christian, ideas of salvation is powerful. *Salus* would then point to disembodied transcendence and even to an afterlife. Yet Spinoza's emphasis on the material basis of, and social setting of, cognition, together with his displacement of *voluntas* in favor of *conatus*, urges us in the opposite direction. Unless we are willing, following Bennett (1984), to conclude that *Ethics* 5 departs from what preceded it (and is probably also internally incoherent), we need an account of *salus* that reflects Spinoza's repeated claim that the more the body is capable of undergoing, the more the mind is capable of knowing. Spinoza's strategy, stated explicitly in 3DA20, of re-defining "words whose usual meaning is not entirely opposed to the meaning with which I wish to use them" makes this task especially urgent.[28] We need a properly Spinozan interpretation.

I suggest that we look beyond the *Ethics* in Spinoza's oeuvre. Doing so should lead us, first, to restore the principal sense of *salus* in classical Latin: namely, health, to the *Ethics*. Second, it should lead us to appreciate how Spinoza employs, and even exploits, the theological, political, and medical senses of *salus*. The TTP uses *salus* principally in the registers of theology and politics. Spinoza identifies *publica salus* (pref, G III 7, 9) with the *salus* achieved when individuals venerate God by practicing justice and lovingkindness (*iustitia et charitas*). This veneration amounts to "works," i.e., prosocial behaviors, and therefore political survival (XIV G III 177). Curley's translation of *salus* as survival at G III 7/9 clearly reflects these later texts. If some individuals need to imagine themselves obeying a supreme being and are motivated by conventional religious ideas of salvation, the semantic range of *salus* enables Spinoza to offer them powerful persuasion at the same time that he offers a naturalistic reinterpretation for philosophical readers. But there is no question that he views being saved as a this-worldly affair. TTP XIX sums up the situation with a Ciceronian maxim: "the well-being of the people [*salus populi*] is the supreme law. All laws, both human and divine, must be accommodated to it" (G III 232).

Spinoza's letters likewise naturalize *salus*. Ep. 18 shows that van Blyenbergh thinks of *salus* as Christian salvation, but Spinoza replies in consistently naturalistic terms. Answering van Blyenbergh's queries about Adam's disobedience in Eden, Spinoza explains that Scripture offers *salus* and *perditio* via laws and commands for an unsophisticated audience. Seen philosophically, the prohibition to Adam in Eden imaginatively represents the perfectly rational, essentially medical, idea that poison is deadly. To the extent that "salvation" is at stake, then, it is nothing other than physical health (Ep. 19, G IV 93/32–35). By eating the prohibited fruit, ignorant Adam shortened his life.[29] Letter 73, in which Spinoza tells Henry Oldenburg that it is not necessary to know Christ *secundum carnem* for salvation, similarly reinterprets *salus*, this time presenting it as philosophical knowledge. To know Christ *secundum*

spiritum is to achieve well-being through philosophy, i.e., knowledge of *Deus sive Natura* as distinct from traditional doctrine. This latter usage resembles Spinozan *beatitudo*, which is knowing God (e.g. 2p49cs G II 135–136; 4p21; 4app4, 23; 5p31s; 5p33s). In the TTP, too, *beatitudo* refers to intellectual knowledge and the love consequent upon it. In TTP IV, the person "who is necessarily the most perfect and who participates most in supreme blessedness is the one who loves above all else the intellectual knowledge of God . . . and takes the most pleasure in that knowledge" (G III 60).[30]

Readers may object at this point that the *Ethics* is importantly different from these other texts inasmuch as the propositions about the human mind after 5p20s proceed "without relation to the body" (5p20s). Additionally, the mind is subject to passions and the affects they generate "only while the body endures" (5p34). Memory and imagination "perish with the body" (5p21, 5p38s), but the part of the mind constituted by *scientia intuitiva* "remains" (5p23) and is eternal (5p23d, 5p38, 5p40c). Although these formulations appear to suggest eternity and freedom divorced from extension, the objection faces a pivotal question: are there non-dualistic reasons to think that being conceived without relation to the body, i.e., being considered under the attribute of Thought, is equivalent to existing independently of the body? Further, are there non-dualistic reasons to think that the perishing of memory and imagination requires us to invoke an incorporeal eternal part of the mind, i.e., an intellect that has really left its body behind?[31]

On the perspectivalist, materializing reading of previous portions of the *Ethics*, Spinoza provides no such reasons. On pain, then, of ascribing self-contradiction to him, can we explain the "perishing" of memory and imagination as well as what "remains" of the mind (5p23) without invoking familiar ideas of death of the body and the immortality of the incorporeal soul? Read perspectivally, considering the mind "without relation to the body" means that, in some contexts and with respect to some issues, we leave the body out of consideration. Crucially, this setting aside or proceeding without reference need not introduce new metaphysical claims. It is thus not equivalent to really leaving the body behind or denying its existence.[32] Memory and imagination merely "perish" in the transition to reason and understanding. 4p39s defines bodily death as a radical disruption and rearrangement the body's parts and their characteristic ratio. As go bodies, so, too, go ideas. Reasoning and intellection disrupt and reconfigure a ratio: in this case, the ratio of a mind constituted by imaginative ideas. In shifting from inadequate to increasingly adequate knowing, imagination and passivity "perish" not because the body actually perishes but because the mind is actively constituted by the same power which previously was passively undergone (4p59).[33]

5p4, which brings together the extent to which we can form adequate knowledge and the extent to which we are capable of active, i.e., rational and intellectual, affects, describes the transition clearly. Quite noticeably, Spinoza begins from our experience of extension. There is "no affection of the Body of which we cannot form a clear and distinct concept" (5p4). The scholium immediately qualifies this wide-reaching proposition, noting that we are able to form clear and distinct ideas "in part, at least, if not absolutely" (5p4s). Spinoza reiterates this pattern vis-à-vis images: "The Mind can bring it about that all the Body's affections, or images of things, are related to the idea of God" (5p14). Looking back to *Ethics* 3–4, our continuing experiences of sadness and hate reflect the extent to which our mind is also constituted by inadequate ideas. Just as memory and imagination, qua inadequate ideas, "perish," so, too, do sadness and hate "perish." In the formulation of 5p15d, "he who understands himself and his affects clearly and distinctly rejoices (by 3p53), and this Joy is accompanied by the idea of God (by p14)." 5p18s explains the same point. Sadness "ceases" when we attune ourselves to the causal order of nature:

> Insofar as we understand the causes of Sadness, it ceases (by 5p3) to be a passion, (i.e. by 3p59), to that extent it ceases to be Sadness. And so, insofar as we understand God to be the cause of Sadness, we rejoice.

There is one final term in 5p36s: *gloria*. Spinoza's introduction of *gloria* confirms, albeit in a backhanded way, reading the other terms non-dualistically. Major figures in the medieval Jewish commentary tradition identify glory with the divine intellect. Spinoza's favorite biblical commentator, Abraham Ibn Ezra, participates in it, and Spinoza cites the usual prooftext, Isaiah 58:8. Spinoza's most-criticized biblical commentator – and arguably, one of his most influential interlocutors – Maimonides, also participates, interpreting Isaiah 58:8 as referring to the conjunction of the human intellect with the active intellect, i.e., with intellectual perfection, ultimately felicity, and immortality.[34] In *Guide of the Perplexed* III 51, Maimonides extols Moses's perfection, specifically noting his unique achievement of a state of focused, passionate intellectual apprehension in which "he talks with people and is occupied with his bodily necessities while his intellect is wholly turned toward [God]."[35] Rather than actually leaving the socio-political realm or the body and its needs behind, Moses attends to intellectual matters while carrying out ordinary activities. Much, then, as Maimonides often appears to attribute intellectual conjunction to a "separated" human intellect, which raises difficult interpretive questions about what "separation" or "separability" means, Moses is here explicitly said to achieve it without real separation. The extraordinary prophet, who has achieved

a paramount state of integrated activity, remains a human knower. To be sure, Spinoza often denies Moses's intellectual excellence (e.g. TTP III 29–30), but perhaps the glory of Maimonides's Moses is to provide a model of intellectual apprehension in this life. In TTP V (G III 71), Spinoza connects the same chapter of Isaiah to bodily and political well-being.

4 Conclusion

I have argued that understanding Spinoza's idea of human freedom requires comprehending under the attribute of Extension, not just thought, and in terms of affects. Numerous passages linking the power of the human body and human mind, the implications of shifting from free will to *conatus*, and looking more widely than just the *Ethics* in Spinoza's oeuvre push us to rethink old paradigms and trace his distinctive use of familiar terms. By reading perspectivally, that is, non-dualistically and non-reductively, we can account for the different dimensions or registers of Spinoza's analysis of freedom and see his clear departures from the tradition of transcendence and disembodiment. Even freedom conceived in terms of *amor dei intellectualis* can be understood in light of the corporeal, affective, and political conditions of thinking. Simply put, to be able to conceptualize freedom *sine relatione ad corpus*, the knower must actually exist. Put another way, the human mind is the idea of an actually existing singular thing: namely, the human body (2p11–13).

Notes

1 I use Edwin Curley's English translations but cite Gebhardt pages as a common point of reference.
2 For reasons to eschew the rhetoric of parallelism, see Yakira (2015, chapter 2). For a systematic critique of Platonizing readings, see Lærke (2017).
3 E.g. TTP V (G III 73) and XVII (G III 208).
4 Some Anglophone commentators who share this view include Yovel, who characterizes freedom "a state to be achieved *within this life* rather than after it. Whatever else it is, it enriches the philosopher's immanent, this-worldly existence and has no important meaning beyond it" (1989, 169). LeBuffe concludes that "Spinoza's discussion of the mind's eternity is best understood as an account of human excellence in this life" (2010, 26). Nadler (2015) pushes against the arch-rationalist reading in the course of arguing that Spinozan freedom is attainable. Ravven (2014) comes close to the view I present here, and other well-known more materially inclined contemporary interpreters include Alexandre Matheron, Louis Althusser, Étienne Balibar, Genevieve. Lloyd, Moira Gatens, Susan James, and Hasana Sharp. Alquié (2003, 326–327) is also a notable exception to the picture of the removed and other-worldly Spinozan sage.
5 See Meyer's Preface (G I 132) and Spinoza's own patently ironic treatment of Descartes's "demonstration" in 1p15s (G I 174/20). Cf. Ep. 2 (G IV 9), and

Ep. 43, where Spinoza tells Ostens that Descartes "maintained that everything we do was previously preordained by God . . . and that nevertheless we act from the freedom of our will. Surely, as Descartes himself confesses, no one can comprehend this" (G IV 222b/24–27).

6 Spinoza dismisses Original Sin in Ep. 19 and TP II 6.

7 On the history of volition, see Dihle (1982), Kahn (1988), Kent (1995), and Frede (2011). On the Hebrew tradition, see Dobbs-Weinstein (2004) and Manekin (2014). Leo (2015) shows Spinoza's knowledge of later Catholic and Reformed debates. It is vital to recognize how the Christian problematic is subsequently recast in less overtly doctrinal terms. Kant's appeal to the distinction between *phenomena* and *noumena* to reconcile freedom; the will's ability to operate *de novo* and by its own laws; and nature, the realm of mechanistic necessity, is paradigmatic.

8 E.g. 4app32. The freedom of God or Nature is absolute (1p17). In view of 4ax1 and 4p4, finite modes achieve freedom to some degree, i.e. in relative terms.

9 Cf. TTP XVI: "everyone is born ignorant of everything" (G III 190).

10 See Della Rocca (2003) on 2p48–49.

11 Cf. 3p29d and 5p4s: "It must particularly be noted that the appetite by which a man is said to act, and that by which he is said to be acted on, are one and the same."

12 5p28 uses "*conatus, seu cupiditas*."

13 *Leviathan* I 6; *De Corpore* III 15 3.

14 Wolfson (1934, II, 195–204).

15 Harvey (2012, 285).

16 In Ep. 58, Spinoza considers the *conatus* of a stone projectile (G IV 266) in the course of criticizing the fantasy of human free will.

17 Given Spinoza's emphasis on nature's expression and dynamism, we could translate *modi* as certain and determinate *ways* in which nature's infinite power occurs. 2D7 similarly suggests the act of exist*ing* over the abstract noun "existence."

18 See, e.g., 1p15s (G II 59–60), Ep. 81, and Ep. 83.

19 Cf. TTP III (G III 47–48), V (G III 73–74), and XVI (G III 191).

20 See also 4p18s; 4p20; 4p25, where "preserving" is synonymous with "acting" and "living"; and 4app8–9. Earlier, in CM II 6, Spinoza defines life as "the force though which things persevere in their being" and identifies it with God.

21 Given the infinite regress in finite modes (1p28) and the character of nature (2le7s; 4p2–4p4d), no finite individual can achieve perfectly adequate knowledge. Rather, she achieves only relative degrees of adequacy and inadequacy in knowing, and hence in causal power. Spinoza's oft-repeated formula, "the more [*quamprimus*] . . . the more [*quamprimus*]," captures this scalar quality. Cf. TTP XVI (G III 190–191).

22 Readers who find a Cartesian, Kantian, or idealist Spinoza will obviously reject my claim that he espouses a modified Aristotelian theory of cognition. Other commentators who emphasize the presence of a modified – particularly with regard to faculties and teleology – Aristotelian epistemic psychology in Spinoza include Dobbs-Weinstein and Yakira. The essays in Nadler (2014) survey Spinoza's debts to the medieval Jewish Aristotelian tradition. From a different but complementary perspective, James comments, "Turning to the claim that reasoning is divorced from everything bodily, we seen that this is as far as possible from Spinoza's view" (1997, 205); James 2014 expands on this theme. LeBuffe (2018) considers the range of options and settles on a middle path.

23 The problem of competing accounts of flourishing is notoriously difficult. Spinoza is notably concerned with how people come to love their suffering, usually under the heading of devotion. TTP pref worries about this distortion of self-preservation in people who believe that self-sacrifice for vain monarchs is honorable (G III 7); cf. the Machiavellian discussion of motivating soldiers in TTP V (G III 75). Spinoza's correspondent Willem van Blyenbergh is a perfect example: his letters radiate anxiety and fear, yet the last thing he would give up is the God who provokes (and promises relief from) these affects. That we can not only rationalize but actively embrace and affirm our unhappiness is surely the hardest problem for ideology critique.
24 On this, see Klein (forthcoming).
25 See especially TTP V and XVII on the roles of law, institutions, doctrine, and ritual or ceremony.
26 1app anticipates this theme, noting that "men judge things according to the dispositions of their brain, and imagine, rather than understand them" (G II 83). See also TTP V:

> It's true that everyone seeks his own advantage – but people want things and judge them useful, not by the dictate of sound reason, but for the most part only from immoderate desire and because they are carried away by affects of mind which take no account of the future and of other things.
>
> (G III 74)

TTP XVI repeats that self-preservation is "determined not by sound reason but by desire and power" (G III 190).
27 Balibar (2008, chapter 4) shows very clearly how Spinoza mobilizes the communicative structure of imaginative affects for social stability in 4p37dalt.
28 On 3DA20, see Lærke (2014).
29 Cf. TTP IV (G III 63–64) and 4p68s.
30 On Spinoza's appropriation of Aristotelian intellectual pleasure, see Dobbs-Weinstein (1998), Nadler (2001), and Klein (2014).
31 I have addressed the vexed question of personal identity and the eternity of the mind in Klein (2014). Whatever we make of that issue, there are always extended events that are the same as events in thought, even if those events are not precisely "mine."
32 5p40s adds the common Spinozan perspectival qualifier, "insofar as" (*quatenus ad*) to "*sine relatione*":

> These are things I have decided to show concerning the Mind, insofar as it is considered without relation to the Body's existence. From them, and at the same time from 1p21 and other things – it is clear that our Mind, insofar as it understands, is an eternal mode of thinking, which is determined by another eternal mode of thinking, and this again by another, and so on, to infinity; so that together, they all constitute God's eternal and infinite intellect.

33 "Perishing" might thus be best understood as a pedagogical metaphor for our changing forms of cognition and feeling. Duration and temporal origination are in this sense also pedagogical images. Contra 1D8, according to which eternity has no relation to time and duration, Spinoza invokes duration in 5p20s and writes in 5p3s that "although we are already certain that the Mind is eternal . . . we shall consider it as if it were now beginning to be." Even accomplished would-be philosophers sometimes need images.
34 Harvey (2014) surveys the commentary tradition.
35 Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* (1963, III 51, 623).

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9 Spinoza's Values

Joy, Desire, and Good in the *Ethics*

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If there is one thing about Spinoza's moral philosophy that is crystal clear, it is this: nothing is good or evil in itself – not nature as a whole, and not anything in nature. There are no values embedded in the world. Nothing exists for the sake of some higher purpose or end, and nothing, considered on its own, is better or worse than any other thing. Whatever is just is. In Spinoza's metaphysics, all things necessarily exist and act by the laws of Nature (*Deus sive Natura*): "All things, I say, are in God, and all things that happen, happen only through the laws of God's infinite nature and follow . . . from the necessity of his essence" (1p15s). There are no individuals or objects, or states of affairs in nature that are, intrinsically and without relationship to anything else, good.

But if being good is not an intrinsic feature of things, then what is its status? What is it for something to be good (or bad)? This is a point on which there is some significant disagreement among scholars. In this essay, I take issue with a prevalent "subjectivist"[1] tendency in reading Spinoza's account of good. According to the different versions of this interpretation, something's being good is nothing but a matter of opinion, a human "construction," an expression of desire, a form of "prejudice," and even a confusion in the minds of the untutored. I argue that, on the contrary, the moral qualities of good and bad, for Spinoza, are, if not real "affections [*affectiones*]" of things in the world, nonetheless objective and (in a sense) mind-independent, albeit relational, features of them. What makes something good in the most basic sense is that it is the cause of a positive passive affect (passion [*passio*]) in an individual, that is, it causes an increase in that individual's *conatus* or power of acting. Correlatively, something is bad if it is the cause of a negative passive affect in an individual or a decrease in that individual's power. And what makes something good in the truest and fullest sense of the term is that it so improves the power of an individual as to bring it closer to the ideal condition of its nature – in the case of human beings, it helps one become more like the "more perfect human being" that is, in Spinoza's words, the "exemplar of human nature [*naturae humanae exemplar*]."

My general claim that Spinoza's account of good is not a variety of subjectivism is certainly not original. Such a thesis has been defended or at least assumed by a number of scholars in a variety of ways.[2] However,

I do hope to add some new and useful support to the case and perhaps provide a new and interesting perspective on just how good as a value relates to passion and desire in Spinoza's *Ethics*.

1 "Good and bad do not exist in Nature"

Spinoza could not be more forthright and unambiguous that good and bad are not real and intrinsic features of things, qualities that characterize things "taken by themselves" and independent of any relation to something else. It is, in fact, something that formed an important part of his thinking from the very start of his philosophical career. In the *Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being*, for example, he insists that "good and bad, or sins, are nothing but modes of thinking, not things, or anything that has existence" (G I 43, C1 87). In the chapter titled "What Good and Bad Are," he takes issue with the claim that good and bad are "real beings," that is, things or qualities of things that they possess independent of other things. "Good and bad," he says, "are nothing but relations"; therefore,

> they must, beyond any doubt, be regarded as *beings of reason*. For one never says that something is good except in respect to something else that is not so good, or not so useful to us as something else. So one says that a man is bad only in respect to one who is better, or that an apple is bad only in respect to another that is good or better.
>
> (G I 49, C1 92)

For the sake of clarity and certainty, Spinoza puts his case in the form of a "proof":

> All things which exist in Nature are either things or actions.
> Now good and bad are neither things nor actions.
> Therefore, good and bad do not exist in Nature.[3]
>
> (G I 49, C1 93)

Spinoza abandoned the *Short Treatise* within a year or so in order to devote himself to the more perspicuous geometrical presentation of the *Ethics*. But he remained committed to the view that nothing is good or bad in itself. In the Preface to Part 4 of the *Ethics*, which contains Spinoza's most important and detailed presentation of his view of good and bad, he says that

> as far as good and bad are concerned, they also indicate nothing positive in things, considered in themselves, nor are they anything other than modes of thinking, *or* notions we form because we compare things to one another.
>
> (4pref, G II 208/8–12, C1 545)

Spinoza is apparently moved to emphasize, repeatedly, this point about the ontological status of good and bad because of a habitual mistake made by most (i.e., non-philosophical) people. The "ignorant," he says in the Appendix to Part 1, typically attribute normative qualities to things in their own right. They consider these "modes of imagining, by which the imagination is variously affected" to be "the chief attributes of things . . . and call a thing good or bad, sound or rotten, as they are affected by it" (G II 82, C1 445). Much as the common folk project sensory qualities in the mind (like color or warmth) onto objects themselves, so they are convinced that these other "modes of thinking" really characterize things as well. They believe that the yellowness they see and the warmth they feel really are in the sun, whether anyone perceives them or not, and they believe goodness or badness are features out there in the world in the things that affect them in various ways.

The passages above, with their claims that good and evil are only "modes of thinking," "modes of imagining," "notions," or (as he puts it elsewhere) "beings of reason" (as opposed to "real beings") seem to suggest that Spinoza believes that something is good or bad only because someone *regards* it as good or bad, and that there is nothing more to its goodness or badness than this personal assessment – in other words, that its goodness is solely in the eye of the beholder.

The comparison Spinoza draws in the Preface of Part 4 between the notions of good and bad, and other evaluative concepts (such as "perfect" and "imperfect") reinforces the impression that this is his view. Nothing, he claims, is, in itself, perfect or imperfect. Again, whatever is just is. Products of human artisanship – works produced by various crafts and arts – are regarded as more or less perfect according to how well they match up either with the artisan-maker's original intention or with some individual's conception of what an ideal specimen of that kind of thing should be.

> After men began to form universal ideas, and devise models of houses, buildings, towers, etc., and to prefer some models of things to others, it came about that each one called perfect what he saw agreed with the universal idea he had formed of this kind of thing, and imperfect, what he saw agreed less with the model he had conceived, even though its maker thought he had entirely finished it.
>
> (4pref, G II 206, C1 544)

Because one person's ideal of a certain kind of thing may be different from another person's ideal of that kind of thing, the former's judgment about what is or is not "perfect" will differ from the latter's. If two people have different "universal ideas" about what a house or a table or ice cream should be, they will arrive at different evaluative judgments about how perfect this or that house or table or ice cream is. These judgments

are really nothing more than their respective opinions based on highly subjective, variable, even arbitrary criteria.

Similarly, natural things, "which have not been made by human hand," are judged to be more or less perfect only because of the common (but false) belief that nature, like art – and perhaps because nature is believed to be the product of God's providential artisanship – is teleological, that it acts in purposive ways to achieve certain ends. "So when they see something happen in nature which does not agree with the model they have conceived of this kind of thing, they believe that Nature itself has failed or sinned, and left the thing imperfect." A withered tree is, in fact, an "imperfect" tree only in the mind of the perceiver, who has a certain conception of what a tree is and how nature should function. The conclusion that Spinoza draws is that "men are accustomed to call natural things perfect or imperfect more from prejudice than from true knowledge of those things" (4pref, G II 206, C1 544).

For Spinoza, then, perfect and imperfect are wholly subjective notions and do nothing more than express individual and idiosyncratic opinion. They have their source in and are valid for only the person making the judgment. "Perfection and imperfection, therefore, are only modes of thinking, i.e., notions we are accustomed to feign because we compare individuals of the same species or genus to one another" (4pref, G II 207, C1 545) or to some ideal of that species in our minds. Something is perfect or imperfect *only* if someone believes it to be so, its perfection or imperfection consists only in his believing it to be so, it is perfect only for him and in his eyes (and for whoever else happens to share his conceptual ideal of the thing), and he will believe it to be so only because he has come up with some general but personal conception of what that thing *should* be.

The passages examined so far suggest (but *only* suggest) that, for Spinoza, good and bad are no less subjective than perfection and imperfection, and for the same reasons. His statement that good and bad "*also* indicate nothing positive in things" (my emphasis) comes immediately after his deflationary discussion of perfection. In the all-important Appendix to Part 1 of the *Ethics*, where Spinoza explains the ramifications for religion of his metaphysics of God or Nature, he notes that

> After men persuaded themselves that everything that happens, happens on their account, they had to judge that what is most important in each thing is what is most useful to them, and to rate as most excellent all those things by which they were most pleased. Hence, they had to form these notions, by which they explained natural things: *good*, *bad*, *order*, *confusion*, *warm*, *cold*, *beauty*, *ugliness*.
>
> (G II 81, C1 444)

The comparison in this passage with sensory qualities, like warmth and coldness, and with aesthetic judgments might seem telling. Evaluations

of good and bad, it would appear, are no less personal and idiosyncratic than the undeniably personal and idiosyncratic judgments about how something sensibly feels or aesthetically looks. No one who is well enough informed scientifically would argue that the qualitative, felt warmth of water (as opposed to the matter in motion that is its cause) or the perceived "ugliness" of some creature's visage is really in the thing itself. Similarly, no one should believe that goodness is really in a thing – or so Spinoza might appear to be saying.

The idea, then, would be that something is good if and only if a person believes it to be good. Or, since one may experience approval of a thing without necessarily having any firm beliefs about it – perhaps one simply has a good feeling or some other affective attitude toward the thing without really *believing* anything about it – it might be better to substitute for 'believes' the phrase 'pro-attitude.' This can refer to any number of ways of experiencing approval of something. It may be through a belief about the thing, but it might, alternatively, involve being drawn to it in a non-cognitive manner, such as through affectionate desire. A person may find that he simply likes or approves of something without having any particular beliefs about it.[4] Thus, the claim under discussion is better put by saying that for Spinoza, something is good if and only if a person has a pro-attitude towards it. On this account, the person's pro-attitude toward or endorsement of the thing is all there is to its goodness, whatever may be the cause of this pro-attitude.

In light of his claims about the non-intrinsic nature of the goodness of things, then, where nothing is good absolutely and in-itself, Spinoza might come across as being wholly dismissive of the notions of good and bad. In his desire to dispel the notion that the world is imbued with values, he appears on the face of it to go to the opposite extreme and to treat good and bad (like perfection and imperfection) as thoroughly subjective, as imaginary, misleading, and even pernicious fictions that, when projected onto nature as if they are objective features of it, can deceive us into superstitious religious belief – after all, if nature itself is good, must it not be because it was created by an all-wise, all-good, providential deity? Thus, when, after his initial presentation of the topic of good and bad in the Preface to Part 4, Spinoza says that "still we must retain these words," it may seem that, in the end, the words are *all* that are to be retained and that the concepts of good and bad are to play no substantive role in his moral philosophy.

Now there is, for Spinoza, a very close relationship between what effect a thing has on a person and what is good. There is also an intimate connection between what a person desires and what is good. And yet, it would be a mistake to think that Spinoza is prepared to regard good and bad as solely mind-dependent – or, in a more extreme reading, to think that he is willing to dismiss them as subjective imaginings, as "confusions" or "prejudices" common among the untutored[5] – and that he is

therefore ready to do without them as important and informative moral categories. These evaluative notions may not refer to real and intrinsic (that is, non-relational) features that characterize things absolutely and "in themselves"; to recall Spinoza's words from the *Short Treatise*, "good and bad are neither things nor actions." However, for him, the goodness or badness of some thing or action *is* a non-mind-dependent objective matter of fact about that thing.[6] It may not be an objective matter of fact that, on his very complex account, is totally unrelated to what someone may happen to believe or feel or desire about the thing, as we shall see. But this belief or feeling about the thing does not exhaust or account for what constitutes its goodness. When, unlike the ignorant masses, we judge rightly about such things, our evaluations capture certain truths about the world and not just truths about what we think.

2 Desire and Good: A First Approach

To sort things out, let us begin with a survey of the several different kinds of statements that Spinoza makes about good and bad in the *Ethics*. Here they are in their order of appearance, starting with what he says in Part 3, which is devoted to "the Origin and Nature of the Affects."

1 "It is clear that we neither strive for, nor will, neither want, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary, we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it."[7]

(3p9s)

He repeats this idea thirty propositions later, adding some more detail to the account:

2 "By good here I understand every kind of Joy, and whatever leads to it, and especially what satisfies any kind of longing, whatever that may be. And by bad [I understand here] every kind of Sadness, and especially what frustrates longing. For we have shown above (in 3p9s) that we desire nothing because we judge it to be good, but on the contrary, we call it good because we desire it. Consequently, what we are averse to we call bad. So each one, from his own affect, judges or evaluates, what is good and what is bad, what is better and what is worse, and finally, what is best and what is worst."

(3p39s)

We seem in these passages still to be in the realm of a kind of subjectivism: goodness is a function of someone having a pro-attitude toward or in some way expressing an endorsement of a thing. Something is good because someone desires it, and it is good only for that person and only

as long as she desires it. Or, as the point is made in passage (2), something is good if it causes joy in a person or satisfies some desire she has. Apparently, it does not matter what kind of desire is at stake or what it is a desire for (as Spinoza puts it, "what satisfies any kind of longing"). If something causes joy or pleasure in a person, they will desire it and judge it to be good, and the goodness of the thing consists in nothing more than its being so desired and so judged. Or so it might seem from these passages.[8]

Nonetheless, Spinoza's considered position in the *Ethics* is *not* a reduction of good and bad to a matter of personal approbation. To see that this is so, let us turn to some additional passages, especially the discussion of good and bad in Part 4. This is where Spinoza transitions from the psychological analysis of the passions in Part 3 to the moral topic of our servitude to them – what he calls "human bondage" – and the kind of freedom from their turmoil that is available to us. From these texts, it should be clear that, for him, it is absolutely *not* the case that something is good simply and solely because someone believes it to be good, or desires it, or has some kind of positive feeling about it – although it *is* the case that *if* something is good, then there will be, in the person for whom it is good, a pro-attitude toward it. Here are some of the relevant passages:

3 "By good I shall understand what we certainly know to be useful to us" (4D1); "By bad, however, I shall understand what we certainly know prevents us from being masters of some good." (4D2)

4 "We call good, or bad, what is useful to, or harmful to, preserve our being (by D1 and D2), i.e. (by 3p7) what increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our power of acting. Therefore (by the Definitions of Joy and Sadness in 3p11s), insofar as we perceive that a thing affects us with Joy or Sadness, we call it good or bad. And so knowledge of good and bad is nothing but an idea of Joy or Sadness which follows necessarily from the affect of Joy or Sadness itself (by 2p22)." (4p8d)

5 "Insofar as a thing agrees with our nature, it is necessarily good." (4p31)

6 "Nothing, therefore, can be good except insofar as it agrees with our nature. So the more a thing agrees with our nature, the more useful it is, and conversely, q.e.d." (4p31c)

7 "Those things are good which bring about the preservation of the proportion of motion and rest the human body's parts have to one another; on the other hand, those things are bad which bring it about that the parts of the human body have a different proportion of motion and rest to one another."

(4p39)

8 "Since those things are good which assist the parts of the Body to perform their function, and Joy consists in the fact that man's power, insofar as he consists of Mind and Body, is aided or increased, all things that bring Joy are good."

(4app30)

9 "I shall understand by good what we know certainly is a means by which we may approach nearer and nearer to the model of human nature that we set before ourselves. By bad, what we certainly know prevents us from becoming like that model."

(4pref)

The first thing to note about these passages is that they are not all about the same thing. Some concern our beliefs or judgments about what is good and bad. Others are statements about the goodness or badness of things or actions – they are claims about what makes something good or bad. And at least one of the passages (4) seems to be primarily about linguistic usage ("we call 'good' . . .", although this may not be significantly different from the point he is making about belief and judgment). These are distinct issues and should not be confused. The statements about the judgments we make concerning good and bad, like the claims from Part 3 (passages (1) and (2)), do not, by themselves, say or imply that what makes something good or bad is that we desire it. At the same time, it may turn out that we do always desire (and hence judge to be good) what is, in fact, and in some way, more or less, good. That is, desire (and, consequently, judgment) may track goodness, at least as it is possessed to some degree or another by things. Or the situation may be more restricted than this, and it is only when desire is properly informed by knowledge that what we, consequent to desire, judge to be good really *is* good. This is what needs to be investigated.

I am confident that, in the end, all of this fits together into a single coherent account and that Spinoza's various remarks about goodness are consistent with each other. But in order to see how this is so, it is necessary to distinguish the normative ethical question of what it is to *be* good from the meta-ethical question of what we are doing when we *judge* or proclaim something to be good. And then there is the further question of moral epistemology: how do we *know* that something is good? On what evidential basis do we come to judge the goodness of something?

3 "By good I shall understand what we certainly know to be useful to us"

It might be best to start with the normative question about what goodness consists in for Spinoza. What exactly makes something good (or bad)? In passages (3) through (9), as well as numerous other texts, Spinoza offers what seem initially to be different responses to this question. He claims that what is good is what is "useful" to an individual, what "preserves our being," what "increases" or "aids . . . our power of acting," what "agrees with our nature," what "brings joy," what is "a means by which we may approach nearer and nearer to the model of human nature that we set before ourselves," and what "assists the parts of the Body to perform their function" or preserves the proportion of motion and rest between its parts. In fact, as we shall see, these all amount to basically the same thing. Understanding this, however, requires a brief excursus into Spinoza's account of human nature, especially his explanation of the passive affects (passions) that constitute the dominant feature of our mental lives and the desire that accompanies them.

Part 3 of the *Ethics* is devoted to the emotions (*affectûs*), that is, the active and passive ways in which the mind of an individual undergoes changes (correlated with changes in the body), either through its own resources or through the way it is affected by external things. An individual is active when it is the adequate or complete cause of some effect, especially those effects that are a part of itself (such as when a person makes choices). An individual "acts" when its condition or what it does has its source in that individual's own nature and resources. By contrast, an individual is passive, it experiences "passions," when it is only the partial cause of some effect, with the remaining causal contribution made by some other individual (for example, when someone feels pain or anger as a result of something that impinges upon his body) (see 3D2).

The activity and passivity of the human being with which Spinoza is concerned in Part 3 centers on changes in what he calls, alternately, "the power of acting [*potentia agendi*]" or "force of existing [*vis existendi*]." Every finite mode of Nature is a determinate parcel of power, a partial and limited expression of one and the same infinite power of God/Nature/substance. This power of Nature manifests itself under the attribute of Thought as finite minds and their thoughts or ideas and under the attribute of Extension as finite extended bodies in motion and at rest. Every particular mind, then, is a finite expression of God or Nature's infinite power through thinking; likewise, every particular body is a finite expression of God or Nature's infinite power in matter and motion.

The finite quantum of power that constitutes each thing is what Spinoza calls *conatus*, variously translated as 'striving,' 'tendency,' or 'endeavor'. In any particular finite thing, this determination of power manifests itself as a striving to persevere as that thing.

> 3p6: Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being.
>
> Dem.: For singular things are modes by which God's attributes are expressed in a certain and determinate way (by 1p25c), i.e. (By 1p34), things that express, in a certain and determinate way, God's power, by which God is and acts. And no thing has anything in itself by which it can be destroyed, or which takes its existence away (by 3p4). On the contrary, it is opposed to everything which can take its existence away (by 3p5). Therefore, as far as it can, and it lies in itself, it strives to persevere in its being.

Conatus is not a temporary or accidental feature of the thing, something that the thing can be without, but involves "an indefinite duration" and goes right to the heart of the thing's individuation (3p8). It constitutes "the actual essence" of anything (3p7). It is, he suggests, nothing different from the thing itself.[9] A thing's *conatus* is, in other words, its nature.

In the human mind, an individual's *conatus* manifests itself as will – not an abstract faculty of willing but the particular affirmations or negations that make up much of our thinking life. When the human being is considered as a composite entity constituted by a mind and a body, its *conatus* constitutes appetite. When a person is conscious of the striving of his mind and body together, when he is aware of an appetite, it becomes desire.[10] In both cases, the mind and the mind-body composite, *conatus* is the motivational force that lies at the root of all a person's endeavors.

In the human body, *conatus* manifests itself as the body's physical resistance to any threat to its integrity and well-being. In the human mind, it is the conscious aversion to things that might weaken it and the conscious striving after those things that (as far as it can tell) promote its well-being, and preserve and increase its power and the well-being and power of the body on which its existence depends.

So far, then, we see that an individual's power, striving (to persevere), activity, nature, and desire are all one and the same thing, albeit regarded from different perspectives.

Now, the power or striving that constitutes the nature or essence of any individual, while always "on" and steady, does not remain unmodified throughout a person's lifetime but is constantly subject to change. In particular, the *conatus* can enjoy an increase or strengthening, or it can suffer a decrease or diminution. This is the heart of Spinoza's account of the emotions or affects. An affect just *is* any such change in an individual's power of acting, whether for better or for worse.

> 3D3: By affect I understand affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time the ideas of these affections [in the mind].

It is important to note – and Spinoza stresses this – that an affect or emotion is neither the cause nor the result of the change; rather, it *is* the transition itself from one condition to another. One experiences or undergoes an affect. It is, he says, "a passage [*transitio*]" (3DA2). An affect is either the move from a better condition to a worse condition or the improvement to a better condition; it is not the origin or the end result of the move. In the case of both mind and body, Spinoza is referring simply to an improvement or deterioration in its condition, including the strength of its *conatus* or ability to preserve itself, resist outside forces, and even seek increase.

Increases or decreases in an individual's powers can come about either through the action of external things or from within. A passive affect, or passion, is a change in the individual's power whose adequate cause lies not wholly in the individual itself but partly in external things. Passions are modifications in power that an individual undergoes or suffers. An active affect, on the other hand, is a change in the individual's power whose adequate cause lies completely in the individual itself (3D3). If one is improved or harmed by interaction with other people or objects, then the transition suffered is a passion. If the improvement in one's condition comes about wholly through one's own resources, and especially because of knowledge that one possesses, then the transition experienced is an action.

While passions or externally caused changes can be for the better or for the worse, actions are always improvements in an individual's power. This is because, as we know from the *conatus* doctrine itself, no individual will, through his own nature and capacities alone, and regardless of how he is affected and made to feel by other things, do anything except what he believes will preserve his being and increase his power. And when a rational being is truly active insofar as he is moved by adequate knowledge, the things he does are guided by a true understanding of what is in his own interest and thus bring about an improvement in his condition.

There is one final set of explanations to consider before returning to Spinoza's account of what makes something good.

Most of Spinoza's attention in Part 3 is devoted to the passions and the ways in which a human being's condition is affected by his causal interactions with the physical and social world he inhabits. The passions include all of our emotional, temperamental, and volitional responses to things. Our joys, loves, hates, sympathies, desires, inclinations, repulsions, and vacillations of the mind are all a function of the ways in which our power is improved or diminished by objects and people as well as of the ways in which the mind associates ideas and moves from one thought to another.

Spinoza believes that there are three primary passive affects and that all of the other passions are functions of or can be derived from the

primary ones. The primary passive affects are joy, sadness, and desire. Joy (*laetitia*) is "that passion by which the mind passes to a greater perfection" (3p11s) or the passage to a greater power of acting caused by something outside the individual.[11] It is the feeling of having one's condition improved by another thing. The corresponding affect in the mind/body composite is pleasure (*titillatio*). Sadness (*tristitia*), on the other hand, is "that passion by which [the mind] passes to a lesser perfection." It is the feeling of having one's condition caused to deteriorate. The corresponding mind/body affect is, as one might expect, pain (*dolores*).[12]

All of the other passions either have joy or sadness at their core, or are variations on joy or sadness. Love, for example, is nothing but joy accompanied by a conception of the object that is believed to be the cause of the joy. One loves the object that is thought to bring about an improvement in one's condition or the person who benefits one. Hate, similarly, is sadness accompanied by a conception of the object that is believed to be the cause of sadness. One hates the object that is thought to bring about a deterioration in one's condition or the person who is thought to cause one harm (3p13s). These passions bring about a corresponding modification of the individual's striving. Desire becomes focused on possessing (and, in some cases, possessing uniquely) the object or person that is loved or destroying the object or person that is hated.

Spinoza is sensitive to the way in which our emotional lives are immensely rich and diverse. In his analyses, there seems to be no end to the variations to which the basic affects are subject. The relevant factors include not only the number of people or objects involved but also the character of each element. Different people react to different things in different ways; even the same person may react to the same thing in different ways at different times. This does not mean that there is any kind of causal indeterminacy or choice or spontaneity in the passions. This is ruled out by Spinoza's determinism. But it does mean that when there are different causal ingredients involved, the effects will necessarily be different. The most important cause of the differences among the passions between people are the differences between their bodily constitutions, which will, of course, be paralleled by differences in the respective minds, whose modes mirror the affections of the body.

> 3p51: Different men can be affected differently by one and the same object; and one and the same man can be affected differently at different times by one and the same object.
>
> Dem.: The human body (by 2post3) is affected in a great many ways by external bodies. Therefore, two men can be differently affected at the same time, and so (by 2ax1" [G II 99]) they can be affected differently by one and the same object.
>
> Next (by the same postulate) The human body can be affected now in this way, now in another. Consequently (by the same axiom)

> it can be affected differently at different times by one and the same object, q.e.d.

The conclusion is that

> what the one [person] loves, the other hates, what the one fears, the other does not, and that one and the same man may now love what before he hated, and now dare what before he was too timid for. (3p51s)

Above all, desire will vary according to the affects behind it. The object of one person's desire is the object of another person's aversion.

4 Joy, Desire, and the Good

With this summary of Spinoza's psychology of the affects and desire in hand, we can return to his diverse statements in Part 4 about what makes something good and try to come up with a coherent account that makes sense of them all. Then we can see whether this can also be reconciled with what he says about the relationship between desire and good – according to which we judge something good because we desire it – in Part 3.

We now know that every individual, by its nature, strives to persevere and that what this involves is an effort to maintain, and even increase, its *conatus* or power of acting – it is, in essence, a striving to increase its power of striving. In fact, every individual is nothing but such a *conatus* or striving to persevere. What passages (3) through (8) show is that something is good, truly good, if and only if it aids the individual in its striving or helps it increase its power of acting or contributes to the preservation of its being – all of these being one and the same thing. And because something that helps an individual in its striving to persevere is certainly "useful" to that individual (in that respect), what is good can also be described as what is useful to an individual. Moreover, because *conatus* just is an individual's essence or nature, what is useful to that individual, hence what is good, is what "agrees with [that individual's] nature." Finally, since the passion of joy is defined as an externally caused increase in an individual's power of acting, something that causes joy in an individual is also, by that fact, good. As Spinoza succinctly puts it in Part 3, "By good here I understand every kind of joy and whatever leads to it" (3p39s).

This is Spinoza's account of what makes something good. Something (a thing, an activity, a state of affairs, etc.) is good if it is a cause of joy, that is, if it contributes to an individual's striving to persevere, to its effort to maintain and even increase its power. Correlatively, something is bad if it is a cause of pain/sadness, that is, if it hinders this striving or weakens an individual's power.

Of course, some things contribute in a temporary and small-scale manner to an individual's power. These would be sources of minor or partial joy and thus good in a very limited sense. Eating a rich and fattening meal with many sweet desserts might be momentarily pleasant – as could any powerfully attractive indulgence that might titillate some part of us – and thus be a cause of some positive passive affect. At the same time, these short-term sources of partial joy typically have deleterious long-term consequences, and so, they do not constitute true and lasting goods; in the end, they bring a decrease in power. Real goods are those that bring a more permanent increase in power of greater scope, a more lasting joy to a greater part of us and even to our whole being.

This account is clearly consistent with Spinoza's repeated claim that nothing is good in itself, on its own, or "considered in its own nature" since nothing is good except insofar as it is a cause of joy in some individual, insofar as it is useful to that individual and aids it in its striving. There is, however, it should be noted, one important exception to all this. Spinoza does say in that passage from 3p39s that "by good here I understand every kind of joy and whatever leads to it." This suggests that there is *one* thing that is good on its own: namely, the increase in power that is joy itself. He calls joy "directly good [*laetitia directe bona* est]" and sadness "directly evil" (4p41), and says that forms of joy are "good per se [*per se bonus*]" (4p45c2s). Aside from the increase in *conatus* that is joy, however, everything else is only instrumentally good as a means to joy. And joy itself is good only *for the individual who experiences it*. In other words, being good is, in all cases — including joy itself — a completely *relational* feature of a thing; it is a function of the causal relationship it bears to something else. If something does not aid or increase the *conatus* of some individual, then it is not good but either bad or "indifferent" (4p31d).

What this means, then, is that something's being good is certainly not a subjective affair; the goodness of something is not reducible to someone having a pro-attitude toward it. Relativism is not subjectivism. If something "aids or restrains" an individual's power of acting, its *conatus*, if it is a cause of a positive passive affect, this is an objective, non-mind-dependent matter of fact. It is a *relational* (not an absolute or intrinsic) matter of fact about the thing but an objective matter of fact, nonetheless. Similarly, being soluble in water is an objective, non-mind-dependent feature of salt – it is independent of anyone's beliefs about or attitude toward salt or water. It is not, however, an intrinsic and absolute (non-relational) feature of salt since it is dependent as well on the chemical constitution of water and the interaction between the two. It may be the case that someone's believing or wanting a thing to be useful to them might contribute to its actually being useful; this would be something interesting for psychology to investigate. But whether or not the thing does indeed turn out to be useful is not reducible to the person's believing or wanting it to be useful.

5 Real Beings and Beings of Reason

What about Spinoza's claims that good and bad are not "real beings" but "beings of reason" or "modes of thinking"? Do such terms complicate matters and imply that his view does amount to something more extreme than just relativism? Do they mean that he is saying that these central moral categories refer only to states of mind?

Not necessarily. According to Spinoza's ontology, there are only three kinds of item that are real: substance, or what has absolutely independent being ("what is in itself and is conceived by itself" [1D3]); attribute, or "what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence" (1D4); and mode, which refers to the items really inhering in and dependent upon substance, like their properties or states (he calls modes "the affections of a substance, or that which is in another through which it is also conceived" [1D5]). Or, as Spinoza had put it in the *Short Treatise* "proof" that good and bad are nothing real, "All things which exist in Nature are either things or actions" (G I 49/30).

Now good and bad, he insists, are neither: "good and bad are not things or actions which are in Nature" (G I 50/5–6, C1 93). They are not substances, attributes of a substance, or modes of a substance. Therefore, good and bad are not authentically "real" in the strict, ontological sense of the term. But to say that goodness is neither a thing nor an action does not, by itself, make it a purely subjective phenomenon, a mere state of mind.

In Spinoza's world, things (especially finite modes and their properties) stand in objective, law-governed, non-mind-dependent relationships to each other – for example, causal relationships. Billiard balls collide and cause motion and rest in one another, objects strike the human body and cause damage, and so on. These relationships, while they may involve things and their "actions," are in Spinoza's ontology not themselves either things or actions, and thus, they are not "real beings." On the other hand, such states of affairs are not only "in the mind"; they are not solely a matter of belief or a function of how someone thinks or feels. It is not a subjective matter that *x* causes a certain effect in *y* – for example, that water causes salt to dissolve. The fact that *x* causes an effect in *y* does not consist simply in someone believing that it does or wanting it to, or having some other mental attitude toward it. *X* either does or does not cause that effect in *y*, independent of what anyone may think or wish or feel about it. Being a cause of joy in an individual – bringing about an increase in that individual's power – is a true causal relationship between a thing and that individual, and it is not dependent on any attitudes (pro- or otherwise) that may be had toward it (although it may be essentially related to some pro-attitude, as we shall see).

But why, then, does Spinoza call good and bad "beings of reason" and "modes of thinking," which at least suggests that they *are* only in the mind of the beholder?

6 Good and the Model of Human Nature

A solution to this puzzle might lie in passage (9), from the *Ethics*, which seems to be the odd man out among our passages above. Passage (9) *could* be seen as providing hope for one who wants to find a kind of subjectivism lurking in Spinoza's account of what is good. This is because (9), from the Preface to Part 4, links goodness to the immediately preceding discussion of perfection, and perfection really does seem to be a subjective affair: something is perfect or imperfect only with respect to some ideal model that a person may have in mind. Not only do such models vary from one person to the next, depending upon their beliefs or experience, but if no one actually conceives the model and undertakes the mental activity of making the comparison, then there is no perfection. "Therefore," Spinoza concludes, "perfection and imperfection are only modes of thinking, i.e., notions we are accustomed to feign because we compare individuals of the same species or genus to one another" (G II 207, C1 545). Following up on this, passage (9) says that good and evil also involve a comparative measure with respect to some model.

The "model of human nature" would seem, on the face of it, to be no different from the other kinds of models with reference to which things are judged to be more or less perfect: the model table, the model tree, the model giraffe, the model ice cream (the *lactis gelidis exemplar*). In this case, judgments about good and bad would appear to be no less subjective than judgments about perfection. It could still be an objective matter of fact whether or not something does or does not help one achieve or come closer to the ideal condition specified in the model. But the subjectivity and arbitrariness of the ideal itself would, presumably, infect the whole edifice. A thing either does or does not help a person become more like the model that he may have in mind as the ideal human being, and this is not subjective – what one may believe or feel about it has no bearing. But if the relevant model human being, no less than the model tree or the ideal ice cream, were subjective – an idiosyncratic matter specific to that person and his experience, values, desires, etc. – then so, too, would be the goodness or badness of the thing under consideration since whether or not that thing is good depends ultimately on the highly personal, even arbitrary, choice of model.

However, Spinoza's metaphysics does allow him to say that there is, in fact, an objective, non-arbitrary determination of what constitutes a more perfect or ideal human being, that is, a "model of human nature [*naturae humanae exemplar*]" at which all individual human beings aim, at least in principle.[13] It is the human being that is most successful in its striving for perseverance, the human being of maximal *conatus* (Spinoza will, as of 4p66s, call this individual the "free man [*homo liber*]"). If every individual is, essentially and by its nature, striving to maintain its being and even increase its power, then this condition of maximal power is the ideal state toward which every individual naturally and

necessarily – that is, objectively and by its nature – strives. A tree is striving to be a maximally powerful tree, and a giraffe is striving to be a maximally powerful giraffe. A human being, in turn, is striving to be a maximally powerful human being, and it is precisely such a successfully striving human being that the "model of human nature" is supposed to capture. In this way, the model is no mere subjective ideal but anchored in the reality of things.[14]

In the *Short Treatise*, just after "proving" that "good and bad do not exist in Nature" because they are neither things nor actions, Spinoza notes that

> good and bad, say, Peter's goodness and Judas's badness, have no definitions apart from the [particular] essence[s] of Judas and Peter, for these [essences] alone [are] in Nature, and without them [the goodness of Peter and the badness of Judas] cannot be defined.
>
> (G I 50, C1 93)

What is real in nature are the particular essences (read: the particular strivings) of individuals, and these serve to ground the objectivity and non-arbitrariness of both the ideal model and, consequently, good and bad. There still is no good and bad per se. Rather, these evaluative notions are defined relative to the striving of individuals. There is Peter's goodness and what is good relative to Peter: namely, what helps him increase his power or essence and achieve the model toward which he naturally and necessarily strives (the maximally powerful Peter *qua* human).

The goodness of something, if it is relative to such a model, is plausibly described as a "being of reason." This is because the model itself, the ideal that captures what is being strived for and in light of which the thing is assessed – what Spinoza, in the *Short Treatise*, calls "a perfect man" – is, like any model or ideal, a concept or idea and as such is in the mind. But this particular kind of ideal, while a "mode of thinking," is not, like many other models, idiosyncratic and arbitrary. It is not the product of a personal and variable choice. Rather, it has an independent and metaphysical basis in reality and conceptually represents a state toward which every individual of a certain kind is, by its nature, internally striving. Thus, anything that does help an individual human being come closer to this condition of being a maximally powerful human being, to resembling the conceived "model of human nature," is relatively but objectively good.

Thus, insofar as goodness consists in a relation (whereby something is conducive to an individual's joy) and involves reference to an ideal condition (which a thing helps an individual achieve), it is neither a substance nor an attribute or mode of a substance – that is, it is not a "real being" according to the categories of Spinoza's Cartesian ontology. Therefore,

it must be a being of reason. Nonetheless, the thing does actually serve to increase the power of that individual and move it toward that ideal condition grounded in the individual's nature.

This proposal for accommodating Spinoza's "beings of reason" talk for good and bad just may work. It makes sense of much of what he says about good and the model of human nature, in the *Ethics* and elsewhere. In the *Short Treatise*, where he also insists that "if one says that something is good, that is nothing but saying that it agrees well with the universal Idea which we have of such things," he likewise notes that

> some things are in our intellect and not in Nature; so these are only our own work, and they help us understand things distinctly. Among these we include all relations, which have reference to different things. These we call *beings of reason*.
>
> (G I 49, C1 92)

There is no indication, however, that just because something is a relation and "our own work," it is not well grounded in an objective state of affairs in the world. Without reference to an ideal model conceived in the mind, nothing would be judged or considered to be "good." However, some things would still, in fact, *be* good insofar as they contribute to a thing's joy and thus move it closer to its maximally powerful condition. It seems to me not insignificant here that Spinoza calls good and bad "beings of reason" and not "beings of the imagination", and that, as we shall see, he concedes that there is a "true knowledge of good and evil."

There seems to be no getting around the fact that, despite occasional language that suggests that good and bad are only in the mind of the beholder, given what Spinoza says about *conatus* and the ways in which things can help an individual in its striving, it is a matter of fact, causally independent of any antecedent mental attitudes, that something is or is not good. This is a feature of Spinoza's thought that endures from the very first paragraph of his extant writings – where, in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, he says that "the true good" is that which "would continuously give me the greatest joy" and is the means toward acquiring "a human nature much stronger and more enduring than his own" – to his mature masterpiece, the *Ethics*.

7 Desire and Good: A Second Approach

There remains the question of what to do about passages (1) and (2). These texts from Part 3 of the *Ethics* certainly seem to suggest that, for Spinoza, something's being good or bad is completely mind-dependent:

1 "It is clear that we neither strive for, nor will, neither want, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary,

> we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it."
>
> (3p9s)

2 "By good here I understand every kind of Joy, and whatever leads to it, and especially what satisfies any kind of longing, whatever that may be. And by bad [I understand here] every kind of Sadness, and especially what frustrates longing. For we have shown above (in 3p9s) that we desire nothing because we judge it to be good, but on the contrary, we call it good because we desire it. Consequently, what we are averse to we call bad. So each one, from his own affect, judges or evaluates, what is good and what is bad, what is better and what is worse, and finally, what is best and what is worst."

(3p39s)

On our first reading of (1) and (2), the passages appeared to be claiming that something has value if and only if it is the object of someone's pro-attitude. More precisely, something is good only with respect to a particular individual and only if that person desires it; if it is not an object of desire, then it is not good. While there is a sense in which this is indeed true for Spinoza, it is not in the straightforward way in which one might naturally think, whereby the desire for the thing (causally) accounts for the thing's goodness.

Notice, first, that both passages are, in fact, only about judgments. The claim they are making is that when "we judge something to be good" or when we "evaluate what is good," it is on the basis of some affect or desire, of some pro-attitude toward the thing that we experience. Neither passage is contending that such a pro-attitude is what *makes* something good. This emphasis on evaluative judgment or labeling is even clearer in 3p51s, where Spinoza says that

> because each one judges from his own affect what is good and what is bad, what is better and what is worse, it follows that men can vary as much in judgment as in affect. The result is that when we compare one with another, we distinguish them only by a difference of affects, and call some intrepid, others timid, and others, finally, by another name.

There certainly is a close, even necessary, relationship for Spinoza between something's *being* good and its being the object of desire. It is not, however, a relationship that makes something's being good directly dependent upon it being the object of desire.

Anything that actually brings about some joy in an individual, some increase in his *conatus* – whether that increase in power be limited in duration and scope, affecting only some part of the individual for a short time, or more extensive and permanent, affecting the whole individual

for the long-term – will, according to Spinoza's psychology of the affects, necessarily be the object of desire.

To be more specific, as we have seen, desire just is *conatus* insofar as one is conscious of it. Thus, any manifestation of *conatus* will involve desire (whether it is an attraction to something or an aversion to it). Joy is an increase in *conatus*, and thus, joy necessarily involves desire – in fact, it is, like all affects, a form of desire. Therefore, it is impossible for something to bring about an increase in an individual's power without thereby bringing about a concomitant desire. Something cannot be a source of joy, and thus cannot be good, without by that very same means being an object of desire. The upshot is that for Spinoza, desire is *both* a necessary and constitutive part of the objective state of affairs that is something's presently being good for a person *and* the ground for that person's judgments about the thing's goodness.

Thus, if there is a sense in which the goodness of something is indeed mind-dependent for Spinoza, it is this: if something is good and is actively bringing about an increase in an individual's power, then it is necessarily an object of desire. Nothing is actively good for an individual without there being an accompanying approbatory mental state in the individual. In this way, desire functions as a reliable indicator of the presence of a good thing (a cause of joy) to some individual. (Conversely, if there is no desire, then there is nothing presently and actively bringing about any increase in *conatus*.) Still, what makes the thing good is that it brings about an increase in the power of an individual – this is what goodness consists in – even though this is also to say that it brings about in that individual a desire for it.

Of course, it is not only something that is actively and presently bringing about an increase in power that will be an object of desire. Anything that is *believed* to be good, to bring about some joy, will necessarily be an object of desire as well. This is because every individual naturally strives to increase its power of acting and so will necessarily desire whatever it thinks will move it toward that better condition. "We strive to further the occurrence of whatever we imagine will lead to Joy, and to avert or destroy what we imagine is contrary to it, or will lead to Sadness" (3p28). Moreover, it is certainly possible for something to *be* good and not be an object of desire at all. Things that are neither present to and actively benefitting an individual nor believed by that individual to be a source of joy but that would, were they present, bring about joy, are, for that reason, good, but they will not be objects of desire for that individual at that time.

To return now to passages (1) and (2) in light of this discussion, the relationship between joy, desire, and judgments of value has the following structure (where S stands for some person):

> x causes (or is believed to cause) joy in S → S desires x → S judges that x is good.

While the passages reveal how judgment follows upon desire or "longing," and how desire follows upon – in fact, is partly constitutive of – the affect of joy, the passages do not say anything about what the goodness of something consists in. They may explain why people ordinarily *think* that something is good (namely, because they desire it), but it does not explain what actually makes that thing good. But now we know what it is that *does* make something good: it causes joy, it brings about an increase in a person's *conatus*.[15]

We thus see that, for Spinoza, it is absolutely *not* the case that something is good just because someone desires it, believes it to be good, or has some positive feeling or pro-attitude toward it. All of these things do occur *if* something is good since things that bring about an increase in *conatus* necessarily give rise to desire. But what makes that thing truly good, what its real goodness for human beings consists in, is the fact – a relational but thoroughly objective and non-mind-dependent fact – that it benefits a person and increases his power in the best way.[16]

Notes

1 Let me here express the necessary caveat that it is notoriously difficult to come up with a useful and unambiguous definition of 'subjectivism,' one that does justice to the various ways in which some quality (moral or otherwise) might be "mind-dependent"; see Joyce (2015) and Rosen (1994). Thus, I generally avoid such jargon in this paper, although when I do use the terms 'subjective' and 'objective,' I hope that my discussion makes my meaning clear.

2 Frankena (1975) argues that Spinoza is indeed a subjectivist about both moral evaluation and, it seems, moral properties. A subjectivist or anti-realist reading, in one version or another, is also offered in Harvey (1981), Rutherford (2008), Melamed (2011), and Jarrett (2014), among others. Mattern (1978), on the other hand, believes that Spinoza, while offering a kind of "idealism" about moral qualities, is not a subjectivist. Youpa (2010) makes the case against subjectivism but by arguing that Spinoza does not hold a desire-satisfaction theory of value. Bennett (1984, 293); Garrett (1996); Miller (2005); Kisner (2010, 2011, especially chapter 5); and, if I read him correctly, LeBuffe (2010) also offer non-subjectivist readings, all in different ways. See also Lagrée (2002), who argues for "une norme pratique . . . absolue" in Spinoza (although she may go too far in suggesting that this is more than a "norme relative").

3 See also the beginning of the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, where he notes that nothing "considered in its own nature [*in sua natura spectatum*]" is good or bad (G II 5, C1 7).

4 Actually, moral subjectivism as a meta-ethical position could be put even more abstractly than this: that the standards that determine whether something is good are fixed by each individual, and they could be anything – not necessarily personal approval, liking, or endorsement. My thanks to Russ Shafer-Landau for his help in this matter.

5 Melamed (2011) argues that for Spinoza, the notions of good and bad are "prejudices" that are among the "errors, illusions, and misconceptions" that characterize ordinary (i.e., non-philosophically enlightened) thinking about

the world (p. 156). Similarly, Harvey (1981) claims that for Spinoza, "good and evil . . . are notions that arise only as a result of the act of the imagination," and hence, "the question of what things are to be considered good or evil is at bottom a subjective one, that is, that it is relative to our own intents, targets, and *exemplaria*" (p. 158).

6 Of course, even if the goodness of something is completely mind-dependent in the subjectivist manner, it may still be an objective matter of fact. That is, it will be a fact that *x* is good but a fact that is dependent upon someone's having the relevant pro-attitude toward *x*. My claim is not just that Spinoza thinks that something's being good is an objective state of affairs but that he believes that that objective state of affairs is not primarily and directly dependent on some person having an attitude one way or the other. For a discussion of the complexity and difficulty of specifying what exactly being "mind-dependent" involves in the moral context, see Joyce (2015).

7 This represents a clear and significant reversal of the account of the relationship between desire and good that Spinoza had offered in the *Short Treatise*. In that earlier work, Spinoza had claimed that a person desires something *because* he has judged it to be good, not (as he argues in the *Ethics*) vice versa (see G I 80, C1 121). It is possible that what changed Spinoza's mind was his reading of what Hobbes had to say on this topic in *De Cive*, *De Homine*, and in Part 1 of *Leviathan*, which Spinoza read in either its Dutch (1667) or Latin (1668) translation. For a discussion of this reversal, see Scribano (2012).

8 That these passages are at least suggestive of emotivism, an extreme form of subjectivism, has been noted by Garrett (1996, 287). See also Frankena (1975), Manzini (2009, 52), Mattern (1978), and Youpa (2010).

9 See CM I 6 (G I 248, C1 314).

10 "Desire can be defined as appetite together with consciousness of the appetite" (3p9s).

11 Joy is not always a passion since an improvement in one's *conatus* can be brought about actively.

12 It is odd for Spinoza to speak of desire as a species of affect. This is because desire, at least as it is initially defined (3p9s), really just is the power or striving itself whose transitions constitute the affects.

13 This does not imply that all human beings consciously have such a model in mind. The greedy person, for example, may not realize that his desire for money is ultimately a (falsely guided) desire to increase his power of persevering to the maximal condition represented by the *exemplar*.

14 For a contrary view, see Jarrett (2014). Jarrett argues that Spinoza's ethics is a "constructivist" one and that "the terms 'good' and 'bad' . . . have no meaning except in virtue of the construction of a concept of an ideal person" (78), and that this concept is not objectively grounded in any essence or in the reality of things.

15 These two passages also naturally raise the following question: when a person desires something and thus judges the thing to be good, is that judgment accurate? Is the thing, in fact, good? Put another way, do desire and judgment always track the objective, mind-independent goodness of things? From my analysis of the structure of joy/desire/judgment, it should be clear that Spinoza's answer to this question is "yes, in a sense they do." Desire and subsequent judgment about what is good can be directed either by true intellectual knowledge (adequate ideas) or by beliefs derived from sensation and imagination (inadequate ideas). In the lives of most people, they ordinarily take their lead from inadequate ideas and are grounded simply in how an individual is affected by external things. Desire and judgment arise, that is, on

the occasion of passive affects, especially experienced pleasures. We desire what happens to make us feel good, usually at the moment. But feelings of pleasure caused by external objects, even though they are inadequate ideas, are still, in fact, instances of joy. Each represents an improvement of some degree in the condition of the body and the mind. When judgment is grounded in passive affect, it is, *in a sense*, always accurate. This is because judgment always follows desire, and in this case, desire is an expression of some positive passive affect, some increase in an individuals' power brought about by the external thing. So, when the person judges that something is good, it is because that thing is the cause of an increase, to some degree and extent, in S's *conatus* – that is, the thing is, to some degree and extent, objectively good. However, it is the degree and extent of that increase in *conatus* that is the crucial factor. What really matters is whether an increase in *conatus* is partial in extent and limited in duration or, on the other hand, a long-term improvement in one's whole being, physical and mental. And in the case of increases brought about by our interactions with external objects, the increase in power generally tends to be partial and limited. Indulging some base bodily pleasure in a gluttonous way might be a source of an intense joy, but the good feeling is only temporary and invariably accompanied by a subsequent turn for the worse and a weakening of a person's more refined elements. All the same, to the extent that the activity does, in fact, bring some joy, some burst of *conatus*, it will necessarily be an object of desire and thus judged (correctly but limitedly) to be good. The potential for error in these cases comes in thinking that the cause of a brief and partial joy is a true and lasting good, one that increases one's power in a global and more sustained manner. When desire is guided by the experience of passive affects, by how we are made to feel by things, the judgments that follow it are indeed highly subjective and often misleading (see 3p39s). The case is very different when desire is guided not by inadequate ideas, by the experience of passive joy, but by the informed awareness that something is bringing or will bring about a true improvement in one's condition, a comprehensive increase in one's power, and a complete and lasting joy. This is what Spinoza calls "desire that arises from reason" (4p61d). When desire is caused and informed by knowledge – when one desires something because one understands *through the adequate ideas of reason* that it truly benefits one as a human being in a substantial and enduring manner, then the evaluative judgments that desire engenders do an effective and reliable job of tracking true goodness. What the person guided by reason and knowledge desires and thus judges to be good really and objectively *is* good for him – not because of his passionate preferences, peculiarities, and peccadillos but because of his humanity. For this reason, what the person guided by reason and knowledge desires and judges to be good is also really and objectively good for all human beings. It is what will move any human being closer to "the model of human nature." Unlike desire that is informed by sensory and imaginative ideas that only reflect how one happens to be pleasurably affected by external objects but do not reveal the true order of nature, desire that takes its lead from adequate ideas of the intellect captures the more profound and beneficial goodness of things. This difference between desire/judgment about goodness that is grounded in the passive affects and desire/judgment that is grounded in adequate ideas helps explain the initially puzzling distinction that Spinoza employs throughout Part 4 between "knowledge of good and evil [*cognitio boni et mali*]" and "true knowledge [*vera cognitio*] of good and evil" (compare 4p8 with 4p14).

16 My thanks to Matt Kisner, Andrew Youpa, and Jon Miller for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this essay.

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10 Spinoza on Human Freedoms and the Eternity of the Mind

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1 Introduction

Spinoza's account of human freedom in the *Ethics* provides one of the most significant criticisms and alternatives to Descartes's theory of action and free will. Unlike his celebrated predecessor, Spinoza rejects the idea that freedom means "free decision" or "free choice" and frames his own definition of freedom in terms of internal necessity: "That thing is called free which exists from the necessity of its nature alone, and is determined to act by itself alone" (1D7; see also Ep. 58). Although in a strict sense "God alone is a free cause" in that he alone exists and acts only from the necessity of his own nature (1p17c1), human beings, to a certain limited extent, can also be free insofar as they are self-determined in their actions, meaning to the extent to which they produce effects by their own power or striving (*conatus*).

Scholars have offered various perspectives on the kind of freedom that Spinoza might have envisaged when speaking of human freedom in the *Ethics* and on how "the true freedom of man" (4p73s) may relate to the absolute freedom that only God *or* Nature genuinely possesses. Most work on Spinoza's view of human freedom has tended to focus on what he calls "acting from reason (*ratio*)" or the second kind of cognition, and thus on Parts 3 and 4 of the *Ethics* and the first half of Part 5 (5p1–20). These sections together provide the means for increasing the power of reason over the passions so as to become more and more active, virtuous, and free. Surprisingly, though, the notion of freedom that arises from the third kind of cognition (*scientia intuitiva*), which Spinoza equates with blessedness, salvation, and intellectual love of God in the second half of Part 5 of the *Ethics* (5p21–42), and which he calls "freedom of mind, or blessedness" (*mentis libertas seu beatitude*) (5pref), has typically not been part of the discussion of human freedom.[1]

In this essay, I focus on this relatively neglected aspect of Spinoza's account of freedom as found in the second half of Part 5 of the *Ethics*. I argue that, apart from the absolute freedom applied exclusively to God, two distinct notions of *human* freedom are at work in the *Ethics*, in accordance with the second and third kinds of cognition. I refer to these

notions as, respectively, "rational" and "intellectual" (or "intuitive") freedom. Although both consist in adequate causation and activity, I suggest that rational freedom and intellectual freedom deserve to be treated separately since they differ from one another in kind. Specifically, I will argue that Spinoza's notions of eternity and blessedness, which he equates with intellectual freedom, are to be viewed as constitutive of his full account of freedom and his ethical theory in general.

In Section 2, I highlight the divide between the two halves of Part 5 of the *Ethics*, pointing to a tendency in Spinoza scholarship either to conflate the two notions of freedom they suggest or to entirely exclude the second half from the discussion of human freedom in the *Ethics*. In Section 3, I briefly sketch Spinoza's account of rational freedom in terms of adequate causation and activity, along with its affective counterparts. Since my main concern in this paper is an interpretation of Spinoza's notion of intuitive freedom, I devote less attention to his account of rational freedom, which has been widely discussed in recent literature. Section 4 will make the case for the claim that reason (*ratio*) and intuitive knowledge (*scientia intuitiva*), on which the two kinds of human freedom are founded, differ from one another in kind and not merely in degree. This discussion paves the way for a detailed analysis of intuitive freedom in the last two sections. In Section 5, I explore the distinctive characteristics of intuitive freedom, as implied by its identification with blessedness; in Section 6, I discuss intuitive freedom in light of Spinoza's doctrine of the mind's eternity, with special emphasis on his most enigmatic assertion that "we feel and know by experience that we are eternal" (5p23s). I will explain how in experiencing itself *sub specie aeternitatis*, the mind enjoys a sense of absolute freedom in a manner reminiscent of the absolute freedom and eternity of God.

2 Interpreting Part 5 of the *Ethics*

The widespread tendency to exclude the last section of Part 5 of the *Ethics* from the discussion of human freedom is particularly puzzling, given the well-known and often cited passages where Spinoza explicitly identifies freedom (*libertas*) with salvation (*salus*), blessedness (*beatitudo*), and intellectual love of God (*amor Dei intellectualis*) (5p36s; cf. 5pref, 5p42s). He writes, "From this we clearly understand wherein our salvation, *or* blessedness, *or* freedom, consists; viz., in a constant and eternal love of God, *or* in God's love for men" (5p36s). In the Preface to Part 5, as noted, Spinoza similarly identifies freedom of mind with blessedness (G II 277/C1 594; cf. 4p54s), which he later defines as "the greatest satisfaction of mind there can be" that arises from the third kind of knowledge (5p27, 5p27d). The last proposition of the *Ethics* also indicates that blessedness consists in intellectual love of God that

"must be related to the mind insofar as it acts" (5p42d). Recall that not until the second half of Part 5 of the *Ethics* does Spinoza set himself to expound on intuitive knowledge (*scientia intuitiva)* and its distinctive affective-ethical counterparts – blessedness, salvation, and intellectual love of God. Given the distinction between the second and third *kinds* (*genera*) of cognition, I analyze later, the notion of freedom that Spinoza equates with blessedness in the second half of Part 5 may plausibly be viewed as different in *kind* (*generis*) from the rational freedom he discusses in Part 4 and in the first twenty propositions of Part 5, understood as a gradual liberation from the passions through reason (*ratio*).

Spinoza's choice to entitle only Part 5 of the *Ethics* (and none of the earlier ones) "On the Power of the Intellect, *or* on Human Freedom" makes the above interpretive tendency even more perplexing. Commentators have typically tended to tie the "On Human Freedom" clause in this title specifically to the first twenty propositions of Part 5 (5p1–20), where Spinoza outlines various techniques and means for increasing reason's power over the passions. "The Power of the Intellect" in the title of Part 5, which is equated with "Human Freedom" by the operator "*or*," has thus usually been reduced to the power of reason. The notion of freedom as salvation or blessedness through intuitive knowledge that is the core of the second half of Part 5 is scarcely ever mentioned in this context.[2]

A similar line of interpretation is usually endorsed regarding the opening lines of the Preface to Part 5, which some scholars actually cite in support of the view that Spinoza identifies human freedom with reason.[3] A closer look at this paragraph, however, indicates that it does, in fact, differentiate between the two kinds of freedom at issue in Part 5. The Preface opens with Spinoza introducing his main objectives in this last Part of the work: "I pass, finally, to the remaining Part of the *Ethics*, which concerns the means, or way, leading to freedom." He then concisely sums up the two kinds of freedom discussed in this Part: "Here, then, I shall treat the power of reason showing what it can do against the affects, and [then, *deinde*], what freedom of mind, or blessedness, is" (G II 277).[4] While the first clause ("the power of reason, showing what it can do against the affects") refers to the rational freedom at the focus of the first twenty propositions of Part 5, the second clause ("and then [*et deinde*], what freedom of mind, or blessedness, is") refers to the intuitive freedom at the core of the second half of Part 5 (5p21–42).

This shift from the "power of reason" (*potentia rationis*) to "freedom of mind or blessedness" (*mentis libertas seu beatitudo*) is revealing and anticipates the change of perspective occurring in the middle of Part 5, near the end of 5p20s, where Spinoza famously proclaims, "it is time now to pass to those things which pertain to the mind's duration without relation to the body." This proclamation marks a crucial turning point in the sequence of arguments in Part 5, which I discuss in detail in Sections 5 and 6 below. At this stage, I will simply note that this shift in

focus is indicative of the transition from the second to the third kind of cognition, one followed by a parallel transition from rational freedom (involving both the body and the mind) to intuitive freedom or "freedom of mind" (concerned with the mind's duration without relation to the body). This transition involves a parallel shift from one kind of affective powers arising from reason (mainly joy, love of God, and self-love or self-satisfaction – *acquiescentia in se ipso*) to another kind (blessedness, intellectual love of God, and satisfaction of mind – *animi acquiescentia*). In the latter state, the mind draws satisfaction from its own present perfection rather than from any increase of power in the mind and body (5p33s).[5]

Note that the word "freedom" and its cognates appear only eight times throughout Part 5 of the *Ethics*. Considering the title of this Part and the opening sentence of its Preface, the relatively limited appearances of the word "freedom" seem to call for an explanation. For this purpose, I suggest taking a closer look at the relation between freedom, eternity, blessedness, and intellectual love of God in the last section of Part 5. I will argue that, when speaking of the mind's experience of its own eternity as well as of human blessedness, salvation, and intellectual love of God, Spinoza is in fact dealing with the mind's highest possible form of freedom.

But does the *Ethics* indeed introduce two distinct notions of human freedom in accordance with the second and third kinds of cognition? Could not the notion of freedom that Spinoza identifies with blessedness and salvation be just a higher grade of the rational freedom he deals with throughout Part 4 and in the first half of Part 5 of the *Ethics*? An immediate response to this query might simply point to the fact that Spinoza is speaking of three *kinds* (*genera*) of cognitions, and specifically of the second and third kinds (*secundo et tertio cognitionis genere*), rather than of different *degrees* (*gradus*) of the same kind. To address this objection properly, however, I will suggest strong textual evidence indicating that Spinoza's consistent choice of the word "kind" (*generis*) when referring to *imaginatio*, *ratio*, and *scientia intuitiva* throughout the *Ethics* should be taken seriously and read literally. To make the case for the two *kinds* of human freedom operating in the *Ethics*, I will first present a rough outline of Spinoza's notion of rational freedom and then clarify more precisely the relationship between reason (*ratio*), or the second kind of cognition, and *scientia intuitiva*, or the third kind of cognition – the basis for the division between his two kinds of human freedom.

3 Freedom as Acting from Reason: Preliminaries

According to Spinoza's definition of freedom, a thing is considered free if and only if it is the complete and sole cause of its own existence and actions (1D7). Freedom on this definition emerges as a categorical, all-or-nothing matter rather than as one of degree. Unless a thing exists and

acts only from the necessity of its own nature, it is considered necessary or compelled rather than free. Given Spinoza's substance monism and determinism, no finite mode seems to satisfy either of these categorical requirements. In an absolute sense, then, God alone is a free cause, as Spinoza explicitly asserts (1p17c2). Yet Spinoza not only recognizes that human beings can enjoy a certain limited degree of freedom but also praises human freedom as the key to all human perfections and the highest of all human excellences. In Part 3 of the *Ethics,* he defines action or activity in terms of self-determination or adequate causation, which forms the basis for his definition of virtue in Part 4. This Part, whose main focus is Spinoza's ethical theory, ends with the portrayal of the ideal free man (*homo liber*), one who lives according to the dictates of reason alone. The *Ethics* culminates in a discussion of the highest form of freedom, "freedom of mind," which is identical with the mind's salvation and blessedness.

To acquire a clearer grasp of Spinoza's view of human freedom, we need to address his definition of adequate causation: "I call that cause adequate," he writes, "whose effect can be clearly and distinctly perceived through it. But I call it partial, *or* inadequate, if its effect cannot be understood through it alone" (3D1). The basis of this definition is clearly Spinoza's well-known axiom that "the knowledge [*cognitio*] of an effect depends on, and involves [*involvit*], the knowledge of its cause" (1ax4). Given that every effect is necessarily conceived or explained through its cause, as this axiom indicates, Spinoza's definition of adequate causation becomes apparent: an adequate (or complete) cause is one whose effect follows from and is conceivable through it alone as its proximate cause, as opposed to an inadequate (partial, incomplete) cause, whose effect requires, in addition, knowledge of causes external to itself in order to be understood.

The parallelism, or indeed unity, between the causal and the explanatory force of an adequate cause clarifies how freedom is essentially connected with acting from reason or knowledge. This becomes explicit in Spinoza's definition of action or activity (3D2), where he applies his notion of adequate causation specifically to human beings:

> I say that we act when something happens, in us or outside us, of which we are the adequate cause, i.e. (by 3D1), when something in us or outside us follows from our natures, which can be clearly and distinctly understood through it alone. On the other hand, I say that we are acted on when something happens in us, or something follows from our nature, of which we are only a partial cause.
>
> (3D2)

This definition indicates that we act and are thus humanly free to the extent to which we produce effects that follow from and are explicable

through our own power of acting (*potentia agendi*) or (which amounts to the same thing) insofar as we form adequate ideas. The latter are those ideas whose full explanation (when considered in their objective reality, to use Descartes's terminology) and total proximate cause (when considered in their formal reality) lie entirely within one's power of thinking (*potentia cogitandi*). We are passive or acted on, by contrast, to the extent to which some effects are only partially determined and explicable through our own power, and partially through things external to it (3p2c) or, in other words, inasmuch as we form inadequate ideas (3p1c).

Central to this account is Spinoza's notion of power (*potentia*), which signifies a thing's actual causal activity rather than a mere potentiality or capacity to cause effects. For Spinoza, the actual essence of every existing thing, whether finite or infinite, is power. "God's power," he writes, "by which he and all things are and act, is his essence itself" (1p34d), and the actual power or "striving [*conatus*] by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing" (3p7). And since our power of thinking is nothing but our mind's power of forming adequate ideas (3p59, 5pref, G II 280, C1 597), Spinoza can write that "the power of the mind is defined only by understanding" (5pref, G II 280, C1 597), and that every action we are passively determined to perform by passion, we can actively perform by reason (4p59), in a way explainable through our power of thinking alone.

Spinoza maintains, moreover, that the human power of acting or striving to persevere, insofar as it is explainable through one's own actual essence, "is part of God *or* Nature's infinite power, i.e., (by 1p34), of its essence" (4p4d. Cf. 2p11c). On these grounds, he equates a singular thing's degree of activity with its degree of perfection and reality (5p40d). The more we are able to produce effects through our own power, without the aid of outside sources, the freer, the more active, and the more perfect and real we are. This allows Spinoza to equate human freedom or activity with virtue, which he defines as "the very essence, or nature, of man, insofar as he has the power of bringing about certain things, which can be understood through the laws of his nature alone" (4D8). And since what we strive for from reason is nothing but understanding (4p26), understanding is "the absolute virtue of the mind" (4p28d). Spinoza accordingly writes that "only insofar as the mind understands, does it act, and can it be said absolutely to act from virtue" (4p28d). Referring specifically to human beings, moreover, he indicates that the striving to persevere that constitutes our essence is a striving not only to maintain but also to increase our power of acting.[6] In being concrete manifestations of God's attributes and infinite power, then, all human beings strive to increase their degree of freedom and perfection, and thereby enhance their participation in God. "The more perfection a thing has," Spinoza writes to Blyenbergh, "the more it has of godliness, and the more it expresses God's perfection."

The causal and the conceptual self-sufficiency that forms Spinoza's notion of activity has inseparable affective bearings, which he defines in terms of the striving of the mind and the body. An affect is Spinoza's peculiar name for any change (increase or decrease) in the body's power of acting that the mind affirms (*or* represents), which is necessarily followed by a parallel change in the mind's power of thinking (3D3). He enumerates three primary affects, of which all others are either species or compositions: joy (*laetitia*), "by which the mind passes to a greater perfection"; sadness (*tristitia*), "by which it passes to a lesser perfection" (3p11s. Cf. 3DA2 and 3DA3); and desire (*cupiditas*), which is "the striving to act itself" (4p59d). Desire is a conscious appetite, that is, a particular manifestation of the *conatus* related to the mind and the body together (3p9s, 3DA1).[7] Affects can be either active (and are then called "actions") or passive (in which case they are called "passions"), depending on whether the mind is an adequate or inadequate cause of its own change of power (3D3). As Spinoza remarks, "if we can be the adequate cause of any of these affections, I understand by the affect an action; otherwise, a passion" (3D3).

Note that a mere increase in one's power of acting, which is joy, is not a sufficient sign of rational freedom or activity (in the narrow sense defined in 3D2). Whenever one's increase of power follows from and is explicable through external forces, one experiences a passive joy, which is a passion rather than an action. On my interpretation, moreover, Spinoza assigns intrinsic ethical value not to a mere increase of power but rather to activity in the narrow sense defined in 3D3, which he equates with virtue, perfection, freedom, and reality. Whereas free and virtuous activity is inherently joyful, not all joyful affects are active. I thus side with Don Garrett, who holds that it is activity or perfection itself that Spinoza values for its own sake, rather than an increase of power per se (1996, 298).[8] With this in mind, we may now examine Spinoza's view of the relation between reason and intuition, the grounds for his twofold notion of human freedom.

4 The Distinction between Reason and Intuition

Although crucial to his therapeutic and ethical project, Spinoza's remarks on the distinction between *ratio* and intuition are rather sparse and hardly sufficient for a clear understanding of his view. No wonder, therefore, that interpretive disagreements prevail on the very nature of each kind of cognition and on the core differences between them. One debatable issue is whether Spinoza posits continuity or rather a difference in kind between the two types of cognition. Another contentious question is what precisely is the difference between the two kinds of cognition: do they differ in both their objects and their intrinsic cognitive methods or only in their methods while applying to the same kind of objects?[9]

Spinoza famously holds that both reason and intuition are necessarily true (2p41) and adequate (2p41d, 2p42d). He also indicates that intuitive knowledge and the desire to know things intuitively can arise only from reason (5p28, 5p28d). Yet, in this section, I argue that although Spinoza claims that intuition depends on reason (5p28d), this does not prevent him from positing a categorical difference between them in both their intrinsic features and their objects, as two distinct kinds (*genera*) of the same *genus* (cognition or knowledge), and of the same form (attribute of Thought). But before I can address this, let me first present a rough outline of Spinoza's account of the three kinds of cognition.

In Part 2 of the *Ethics*, Spinoza specifies three ways by which "we perceive many things and form universal notions" (2p40s2). The first two he calls "cognition of the first kind, opinion, or imagination" (*Cognitionem primi generis opinionem vel imaginationem*). This includes cognition of singular things from "random experience" (*experientia vaga*) based on the senses and cognition "from signs" (*ex signis*). What makes both species of the first kind of cognition inherently inadequate and "the only cause of falsity" (2p41) is their fragmentary, associative, and unsystematic nature and origin. Based as it is on random experience, the mind "perceives things from the common order of nature [*communis natura ordo*]" (2p29c) and is thus "determined externally, from fortuitous encounters with things" (2p29s).

Spinoza then turns to describe a third way by which "we perceive many things and form universal notions," which he calls "reason, and the second kind of knowledge" (*rationem, et secundi generis cognitionem*). Reason, he writes, derives "from the fact that we have common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things" (2p40s2). Common notions (*notiones communes*) are notions or ideas of properties shared by all finite modes under a given attribute, which are present "equally in the part and in the whole" (2p37, 2p38).[10] The capability of being in motion and rest is an example of such a fundamental property common to all bodies, equally found in the part and in the whole of each (2le2).[11]

Spinoza contrasts the common notions with what have traditionally been called "universals," such as "man, horse, dog, etc.," which he considers false and inherently confused ideas (2p40s1). Whereas the latter are abstractions of the imagination from singular experiences based on our contingent encounter with singular things (2p40s1; cf. 2p29s), common notions are grasped by the intellect and are therefore "common to all men" (2p38c). Spinoza demonstrates that common notions "can only be conceived adequately" (2p38) by drawing on their pervasiveness, that is, on their all-prevalent presence in the part and in the whole of each finite mode pertaining to a given attribute (2p38d). However partial or inadequate our understanding of singular things, we cannot but perceive adequately (i.e., completely) the fundamental properties they share with

all other modes of the same attribute since the latter inhere equally in each part of them as in their entirety.

Given that common notions are "the foundations of reason" (*fundamenta rationis*) (2p44c2, G II 126/29; cf. 2p40s1, G II 120/16), and given that these notions and whatever follows from them can only be conceived adequately (2p38, 2p40), cognition of the second kind is necessarily adequate and true (2p41, 2p42). Spinoza writes, accordingly, "It is of the nature of reason to perceive things truly, i.e., (by 1A6) as they are in themselves, i.e., . . . as necessary" (2p44d).

In perceiving things as necessary, however, reason can perceive things only from a general, law-governed point of view, on the basis of their shared properties, and has no access to the essence peculiar to any singular thing (2p44c2d). The properties common to all things, Spinoza says, do not constitute the essence of any singular thing (2p37). He defines essence as "that without which the thing can neither be nor be conceived, and which can neither be nor be conceived without the thing" (2D2). An essence is thus always singular and unique to the thing of which it is an essence, and it cannot be shared by any number of distinct things.[12] This applies both to a singular thing's actual essence (*essentia actualis*) or actual causal power and to a thing's formal essence (*essentia formalis*), which signifies its reality, meaning its possible existence as it is eternally contained in God's attribute (2p8).

It is thus no wonder that Spinoza labels reason in Part 5 of the *Ethics* (5p36s) a "universal cognition" (*cognitione universali*) and intuition a "cognition of singular things" (*rerum singularium cognitio*). And in Part 2, he explains: "But (by 1p16) this necessity of things [i.e., that which reason perceives] is the very necessity of God's eternal nature. Therefore, it is of the nature of reason to regard things under this species of eternity" (2p44c2d, G II 126/25–28). What Spinoza has in mind here, I think, is that reason derives the necessity of things not from the very essence distinctive of any singular thing, as does intuition, but from the necessity of God's eternal nature, on which all things depend, and thus through the mediation of general laws (such as, e.g., 1p16). Spinoza proceeds:

> Add to this that the foundations of reason are notions . . . which (by 2p37) do not explain the essence of any singular thing. On that account, they must be conceived without any relation to time, but under a *certain* species of eternity (*sub quadam aeternitatis specie*).
> (2p44c2d, G II 126/29–33; my emphasis)

Intuition, by contrast, which I now turn to discuss, conceives things "under a species of eternity" (*sub specie aeternitatis*), that is, as real beings whose ideas "involve the eternal and infinite essence of God" (5p29s). Spinoza's definition of intuitive knowledge in 2p40s2 reads,

> In addition to these two kinds of knowledge, there is (as I shall show in what follows) another, third kind, which we shall call intuitive knowledge [*scientia intuitiva*]. And this kind of knowledge proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the [NS: formal] essence of things.
>
> (2p40s2, G II 122, C1 478)

Spinoza opens this brief exposition of intuitive knowledge with a promise of later elaboration ("in what follows"), though he returns to it only in the last twenty propositions of the *Ethics*, where he expounds on its cognitive, affective, and ethical supremacy over reason (5p36s). There, intuition is proved to be the "greatest striving of the mind and its greatest virtue" (5p25, 5p27d), the source of "the greatest satisfaction of the mind" (5p27), and "the greatest human perfection" (5p27d). But even in the concise exposition of Part 2, Spinoza points to some fundamental features of intuition that mark it off from reason.

First, he says that the cognition from which intuition proceeds is "an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God" or, according to 5p25d, "an adequate idea of certain attributes of God," which is an adequate idea of God's formal essence as expressed in some of his attributes. This implies a discontinuity in the mind's ascent from reason to intuition. The propositions subsequent to 2p40s2 indicate that the adequate idea from which intuition begins is *not* a conclusion deduced from common notions through discursive reason but instead an idea already inherent in every human mind: "The human mind has an adequate knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence" (2p47), knowledge that, by axiom 4 of Part 1, each idea of each singular thing that actually exists necessarily involves (2p45–46). Given that the idea from which intuition begins is an idea of a singular essence rather than of a general property common to a plurality of things, the mind's transition from reason to intuition must involve a cognitive leap rather than a continuous mental movement.

One might object, however, that an adequate idea of a certain attribute of God is an idea of a general property (e.g., extension) shared by infinitely many things rather than an idea of a singular thing. If, owing to their pervasiveness, divine attributes may plausibly be considered *something like* common qualities or properties (taken in a nontechnical sense that is wider than *propria*), then there might be a continuity between reason and intuition.[13] In that case, the idea of an attribute, the starting point of intuition, will turn out to fall under the heading of reason.

Contrary to this objection, I argue that the idea from which intuition begins is *not* an adequate idea of an attribute (such as "Extension" or "Thought") taken as an abstract quality, however privileged and

self-conceived it may be, but is rather an adequate idea of God's infinite essence as conceived under this or that attribute. Whereas God's essence is unique and singular, the attributes are infinitely many ways by which this unitary essence is perceived by the infinite intellect. Although Spinoza writes to Jarig Jelles that "someone who calls God one or unique does not have a true idea of God, or is speaking improperly about him" (Ep. 50, G IV 240b, C2 406), he also tells his friend that "we cannot form a universal idea concerning [God's] essence" since his existence is his essence (Ep. 50, G IV240b/C2 406). This implies, on my reading, that the attributes are to be considered not God's essences but rather the infinitely many exclusive ways or dimensions by which God's unitary essence and whatever follows from it are properly perceived. As such, moreover, the attributes are neither "things" nor abstract properties of things or common notions inhering "in" the substance. Therefore, in saying that intuition proceeds "from an adequate idea of certain attributes of God" (5p25), I take Spinoza to be referring to an adequate idea of God's essence considered under a certain attribute.

The discontinuity in the mind's passage from reason to intuition, to be sure, does not detract from the indispensable role that reason plays in the acquisition of intuitive knowledge. Spinoza says, as noted, that "the striving, or desire, to know things by the third kind of knowledge cannot arise from the first kind of knowledge but can indeed arise from the second" (5p28). Since we understand things adequately either through themselves "or through something else which is conceived through itself," he explains, the ideas that are related to the third kind of knowledge cannot follow from mutilated and confused ideas of imagination but can follow from adequate ideas of the second and third kinds of knowledge (5p28d). This, I claim, is not in any tension with viewing reason and intuition as distinct from one another in kind (*generis*). Likewise, in the transition from the first to the second kind of cognition, the indispensability of *imaginatio* for reason[14] is not in any conflict with Spinoza's explicit claim that common notions are not abstractions from random sense experience or imagination but are instead "axioms, *or* notions" grasped by the intellect as adequate ideas (2p40s1).

The difference between reason and intuition with respect to their objects is closely linked to differences in their intrinsic features and procedures. To see this, we need to explore the relationship between the (already present) adequate idea of the essence of God from which intuition proceeds and the adequate idea of the formal essence of the singular thing. Is there any mental movement involved here – or does the intuitive mind grasp both in a single, momentary glimpse?

The immediacy characteristic of intuition is clearly illustrated in Spinoza's well-known mathematical example of the fourth proportional: "Suppose there are three numbers, and the problem is to find a fourth which is to the third as the second is to the first" (2p40s2). As the

example suggests, those guided by reason will arrive at the fourth number through a sequence of operations based on their previous knowledge of the rule of proportionals' common property, as in Euclid's proposition 19 of Book 7. The intuitive mathematician, by contrast, is able to "see" the whole sequence "in one glance" (*uno intuitu videmus*(and arrive at the fourth number without the mediation of concepts and demonstrative deduction.

The mathematical example, as some have noted, hardly accords with the description of the three kinds of cognition as having distinct objects and, specifically, with the definition of intuitive knowledge as cognition of singular essences. Yet the "seeing metaphor" that Spinoza employs in this context conveys the immediacy characteristic of intuition as knowledge that reaches its objects without the mediation of general concepts and deductive movement occurring in time. This metaphor reappears later in the *Ethics* in connection with the mind's experience of its own eternity while attaining intuitive knowledge. Spinoza writes, "For the eyes of the mind, by which it sees and observes things, are the demonstrations themselves" (5p23s). Whereas reason, having common notions as antecedents, is conceptual in the sense that its objects fall under general kinds, intuition *qua* "cognition of singular things" (*rerum singularium cognitio*) is essentially non-conceptual, having an experiential and immediate access to its singular objects.

The experiential and non-conceptual nature of intuitive knowledge will concern us later, in Section 6, where I discuss what it means for the mind to perceive itself *sub specie aeternitatis* and thus "through God's essence." For now, I should note that the description of intuition as proceeding *from* one cognition *to* another as well as Spinoza's use of verbs such as "conclude" (*concludimus*, as in the above mathematical example [2p40s2], or *concludere/concluditur* in 3p36s, which Curley translates as "infer") and "deduce" (*deducere*, as in 2p47s, 4p36s) have led some to think of intuition, although immediate and non-discursive, as in some sense inferential.[15]

However, when Spinoza says that intuition proceeds from God's attribute to the essence of a singular thing, I take him to mean that the primacy of the idea of God's essence to that of the thing is logical and ontological rather than chronological. The intuitive mind has a single, momentary insight into the essence of the singular thing *through* God's infinite essence, which it captures immediately and without any mental movement over time. Therefore, unless we deny the immediate characteristic of intuition and favor instead its perception as a succession of cognitions unfolding over time, only discursive reason seemingly deserves to be called inferential. Intuition, owing to its experiential character, captures both cognitions at once in a single, immediate glimpse but still in a certain ontological order that is synchronic rather than diachronic: it grasps the one (the essence of the singular thing) through the other (an adequate knowledge of divine essence under a certain attribute).

Later I will argue that, by virtue of its experiential and non-conceptual feature, intuition is able to resolve some of the most challenging tensions in Spinoza's metaphysics, which might seem insoluble when considered through discursive reason. One of these tensions concerns Spinoza's enigmatic doctrine of the eternity of the mind, which I touch on below in Section 6. Another tension concerns his doctrine that "all the things which follow from the absolute nature of any of God's attributes," either immediately or mediately, "are, through the same attribute, eternal and infinite" (1p21–23). Read in conjunction with 1p16 and 1p28, these propositions imply that singular things do not follow either immediately or mediately from God's infinite attributes, although, in the *Ethics*, Spinoza does explicitly affirm that they do.[16] Though recent literature proposes various perceptive ways to settle the matter,[17] I believe these seeming inconsistencies cannot be fully resolved unless our mind transcends the conceptual and general level of discursive reason and immediately intuits its own singular essence through the essence of God. In 5p36s, Spinoza alludes to this while stating that intuition affects the mind far more powerfully than reason:

> I thought this worth the trouble of noting here, in order to show by this example how much the knowledge of singular things I have called intuitive, *or* knowledge of the third kind (see 2p40s2), can accomplish, and how much more powerful it is than the universal knowledge I have called knowledge of the second kind. For although I have shown generally in Part 1 that all things (and consequently the human mind also) depend on God both for their essence and their existence, nevertheless, that demonstration, though legitimate and put beyond all chance of doubt, still does not affect our mind as much as when this is inferred from the very essence of any singular thing which we say depends on God.
>
> (5p36s, G II 303/17–25)

On this passage, the mind conceives of its own dependence on divine nature through discursive reason by deducing it from the general propositions demonstrated in *Ethics* Part 1. But this mediated inference, though "legitimate and put beyond all chance of doubt," still does not affect our mind as forcefully as when this dependence is inferred intuitively from the very essence of the singular thing. Given the noted cognitive disparities between intuition and reason in both their objects and intrinsic features, it is hardly surprising to find that they bear different affective powers. Spinoza labels "beatitude" (*beatitudo*, commonly rendered as "blessedness") the intuitive mind's greatest contentment or satisfaction with its own present perfection, and he associates it with the highest form of freedom (5p36s). But how does intuitive knowledge (and intuitive *self*-knowledge in particular) give rise to the greatest satisfaction

of mind? And what is distinctive of intuitive freedom or "freedom of mind" that makes it different in kind, not only in degree, from rational freedom? To deal with these questions, a closer focus is required on the unique content of intuitive self-knowledge and on the form of freedom it involves. These are the topics of the next two sections.

5 Freedom of Mind and/as Blessedness

In the cited passage from 5p36s, Spinoza says that intuitive knowledge affects the mind far more forcefully and effectively than reason. The affective superiority of intuition is that it gives rise to blessedness (*beatitudo*), which Spinoza associates with salvation (*salus*), freedom (*libertas*), and intellectual love of God (*amor Dei intellectualis*): "From this we clearly understand wherein our salvation, *or* blessedness, *or* freedom, consists; viz., in a constant and eternal love of God, *or* in God's love for men" (5p36s).

Inquiring into the nature of blessedness will clarify the kind of freedom corresponding to it and furnish insights into Spinoza's ultimate ethical objectives in the entire work. Already in the short Preface to Part 2, he indicates that the whole work aims at blessedness as its final goal:

> I pass now to explaining those things which must necessarily follow from the essence of God, or the infinite and eternal being – not, indeed, all of them, . . . but only those that can lead us, by the hand, as it were, to the knowledge of the human mind and its highest blessedness.
>
> (2pref)

Blessedness is also at the closure of the *Ethics*, where Spinoza equates it with virtue. "Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself," he writes, as it consists in the intellectual love of God that "must be related to the mind insofar as it acts" (5p42d).

Defining blessedness in Part 5 of the *Ethics*, Spinoza contrasts it with ordinary joy (*laetitia*): "If joy, then, consists in the passage to a greater perfection, blessedness must surely consist in the fact that the mind is endowed with perfection itself" (5p33s). This implies at least two main differences between rational joy and blessedness. One is that blessedness consists in the mind's satisfaction with its own *present* perfection rather than with its passage to a greater perfection or power, as does joy. On these grounds, Spinoza distinguishes blessedness (which he also calls *vera animi acquiescentia,* "true satisfaction of mind," 5p42) from what he terms *acquiescentia in se ipso* (self-satisfaction or "self-esteem," in Curley's translation), which is a rational affect arising from the fact that one recognizes oneself as the cause of one's own increase of power (4p52; 3DA25). The second difference is that, unlike rational joy, blessedness is

defined in terms relating solely to the mind; it consists in the mind's satisfaction with its *own* activity and power, without relation to the body of which it is an idea. Given Spinoza's definition of "affect" in terms of both the body and the mind (3D3), it is hardly unexpected to find scholars claiming that blessedness is not at all an affect.[18]

With these considerations in mind, we may proceed to explore where exactly the categorical difference between rational and intuitive freedom lies. I argue that a distinctive feature of intuitive freedom, blessedness, and intellectual love of God is that they all consist in the mind's ability to experience itself apart from the body of which it is an idea and with which it is unified. Spinoza addresses this ability already in Part 2 of the *Ethics*, when he writes that "the idea of the mind, i.e., the idea of the idea (*idea ideae)*, is nothing but the form of the idea insofar as this is considered as a mode of thinking without relation to the object" (2p21s). By the "form of the idea," I take Spinoza to denote the formal reality of the idea as opposed to its objective (representational) reality. In the Third Meditation, Descartes writes that the formal reality (*realitas formalis*) of ideas, which he also calls "formal being" (*esse formale*), refers to the ideas considered simply as modes of thought, as mental events, with no reference to their object. Considered formally, Descartes indicates, all ideas have the same degree of reality as they all follow in the same manner from within the thinking substance: "In so far as ideas are considered simply as modes of thought, there is no recognizable inequality among them: they all appear to come from within me in the same fashion." Considered in their objective reality (*realitas objectiva*), however – that is, "as images which represent different things" – ideas differ from one another in the degree of objective reality they contain in accordance with the degree of formal reality they represent (AT VII 40, CSM II 27–28).[19] It is against this background, I argue, that we should read the change of focus that Spinoza famously proclaims at the closure of 5p20s, a passage cited earlier. He writes,

> With this I have completed everything which concerns this present life . . . in these few words I have covered all the remedies for the affects. So it is time now to pass to those things which pertain to the mind's duration without relation to the body.
>
> (5p20s, G II 293/17–24)

Some commentators have interpreted these lines as indicating the end of Spinoza's ethical theory and practical philosophy.[20] It is therefore not unusual for scholars to claim that "there is a sense in which the *Ethics* ends here, since we understand in what freedom and virtue consist and how we can attain them."[21] Such readings, in my view, fail to capture not only Spinoza's view of freedom but also a highly innovative aspect of his ethical thinking in general. On my interpretation, Spinoza

is proclaiming here a shift in focus from reason to intuition, and thus from rational freedom (and its affective counterparts, such as rational joy) to "freedom of mind, or blessedness" (*mentis libertas seu beatitudo*) (5pref, G II 277), which is a matter of the mind's immediate awareness of and satisfaction with its own thinking activity, or perfection, or power, or formal reality (which are all equivalents) at the highest possible level. In the next and last section, I argue that intuitive freedom or "freedom of mind," as opposed to rational freedom, hinges on the mind's ability to experience itself only in its formal reality, as pure activity and without relation to the body with which it is united as its object. I seek to show how crucial this ability is for the mind's experience of itself not only as a finite share of God's infinite intellect, as in rational freedom (by 2p11c), but also as united with God and hence as divinely free and eternal in the strict sense of 1D7 and 1D8, respectively.

6 The Missing Piece: Freedom of Mind and the Eternity of the Mind

Spinoza's account of the eternity of the mind in the second half of Part 5 of the *Ethics* (from 5p20s to the end of the book) is known as the most difficult and enigmatic section of the entire work. "The human mind," he says, "cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but something of it remains which is eternal" (5p23). But insofar as the human mind is united with the human body (2p7s, 2p21s), how can any part of it persist or "remain" after the death of the body? Another problem concerns the temporal resonance of this assertion, which appears to be at odds with the atemporal sense assigned to the term "eternity" in the *Ethics*: "By eternity I understand existence itself, insofar as it is conceived to follow necessarily from the definition alone of the eternal thing" (1D8). This definition and the explanation attached to it imply that "eternity," for Spinoza, signifies the timeless existence of a self-caused being, which necessarily follows from its essence alone. Although a detailed discussion of this doctrine far exceeds the scope of this chapter, the present section attempts to show how this account establishes the human mind's prospects to transcend its own finitude and partake, in some sense, in the freedom and eternity of God.

Apart from God and his eternal attributes, all the infinite modes that necessarily follow either immediately or mediately from them are eternal as well (2p21). Singular things are also said to be eternal when, rather than in their actual, durational existence (*sub specie durationis*), they are conceived from the perspective of eternity (*sub specie aeternitatis*):

> We can conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them to exist in relation to a certain time and place, or insofar as we conceive them to be contained in God and to follow from

> the necessity of the divine nature. But the things we conceive in this second way as true, *or* real, we conceive under a species of eternity [*sub specie aeternitatis*], and to that extent their ideas involve the eternal and infinite essence of God.
>
> (5p29s)

This dual perspective on existence plays a significant role in Spinoza's account of the mind's experience of its own eternity and ultimate freedom when attaining intuitive self-knowledge. Particularly important here is the scholium to proposition 5p23, where Spinoza states that "we feel and know by experience that we are eternal":

> And though it is impossible that we should recollect that we existed before the body – since there cannot be any traces of this in the body . . . – still, we feel and know by experience that we are eternal. For the mind feels those things that it conceives in understanding no less than those it has in the memory. For the eyes of the mind, by which it sees and observes things, are the demonstrations themselves.
>
> (5p23s)

This passage opens up a cluster of questions. Above all, what is it for the human mind, as a finite mode, to adequately experience itself *sub specie aeternitatis*? What kind of "experience" is involved here, and why does Spinoza think this experience is reliable and supported by proof rather than merely a product of the imagination? To answer these questions, it will be helpful to consider an important passage in which Spinoza introduces his fullest account of the mind experiencing itself *sub specie aeternitatis*. He first writes, in proposition 30, that "insofar as our mind knows itself and the body under a species of eternity, it necessarily has knowledge of God, and knows that it is in God and is conceived through God" (5p30). The demonstration of this proposition, which has drawn relatively limited attention in the literature, is striking; for it illuminates what it is for the mind to experience itself *sub specie aeternitatis* and how this experience amounts to its consciousness of freedom in a way echoing the absolute freedom of God:

> Eternity is the very essence of God insofar as this involves necessary existence (by 1D8). To conceive things under a species of eternity, therefore, is to conceive things insofar as they are conceived through God's essence, as real beings, *or* insofar as *through God's essence they involve existence* [*sive quatenus per Dei essentiam involvunt existentiam*].
>
> (5p30d; my emphasis)

This demonstration remarkably indicates that for the mind to conceive itself *sub specie aeternitatis*, under a species of eternity, is for it to intuit its own essence insofar as it is conceived "through God's essence," as a real being, which is, in turn, tantamount to saying that the mind intuits its own essence – through God's essence – as involving existence! (*sive quatenus per Dei essentiam involvunt existentiam* ["*or* insofar as through God's essence they involve existence"]). This implies that, in intuitive self-knowledge, the mind immediately experiences its own essence or power of thinking not only as a final share of God's infinite intellect (by 2p11c) but also, in some sense, as united with the divine and hence as divinely eternal, real, and free.

But how can a finite mind experience its own essence as involving existence without thereby incurring a state of error typical of the first kind of cognition? How can this self-experience, in other words, be counted as a true and adequate cognition, given that God, the infinite substance, is the only being whose essence involves existence? The "conceiving through" relation, moreover, which forms Spinoza's definitions of substance (1D3) and mode (1D5), signifies conceptual dependence and, at least with regard to the substance and its modes, is coextensive with two other relations: that of causation ("being caused by") and that of inherence ("being-in"). Given that, in conceiving itself "through God's essence," the mind experiences itself as being in God (by 5p30) and as following from the divine nature (1p16), the metaphysical basis for the alleged union thesis is far from obvious.

In his early works, Spinoza does speak of the intuitive soul as forming with God or with the whole of nature a unified whole.[22] But these early works hold a different view of eternity that can hardly be read into the later account of the *Ethics*. Yet some traces of the union thesis can be found in the *Ethics* as well. In Part 5, Spinoza famously asserts that "God's love of men and the mind's intellectual love of God are one and the same" (5p36c) or that "the mind's intellectual love of God is the very love of God by which God loves himself" (5p36).[23] These propositions draw partly on 1p25c ("Particular things are nothing but affections of God's attributes, *or* modes by which God's attributes are expressed in a certain and determinate way") and on 2p11c, which states that the human mind is a part of the infinite intellect of God. Inasmuch as the human mind forms adequate ideas, then, it is a part of the infinite mode that constitutes God's power of thinking or actual essence. In this context, as Spinoza emphasizes, God is considered not as infinite but "insofar as he is explained through the nature of the human mind, *or* insofar as he constitutes the essence of the human mind." Yet it is one thing to say that the human mind, to the extent to which it perceives things adequately, is a part of God's intellect, and it is quite another to say or to imply that the intuitive mind legitimately experiences its own essence as

involving existence (meaning as eternal and free in the absolute sense of 1D8 and 1D7, respectively).

The key to understanding this puzzle, I think, is Spinoza's invocation of the scholastic-Cartesian distinction mentioned earlier between the formal and the objective reality of ideas. Given that every effect is known through its cause (1ax4), and given the conceptual barrier between the attributes, to use Della Rocca's phrasing, according to which the essence of the human mind can be conceived *or* causally explained only through God under the attribute of Thought (2p5, 2p7s), the mind's change of focus to its pure thinking activity (i.e., formal reality), regardless of its object, turns out to be crucial to its sense of unification with God and intellectual freedom.

In 2p5, Spinoza writes that "the formal being of ideas admits God as a cause only insofar as he is considered as a thinking thing, and not insofar as he is explained by any other attribute." And he also argues that "ideas, both of God's attributes and of singular things, admit not the objects themselves, or the things perceived, as their efficient cause, but God himself, insofar as he is a thinking thing." Although the body (as a mode of extension) and the mind (as its idea) are "one and the same thing" (2p7s), this identity should not mislead us into thinking that the mind's essence can be explained in terms of the body with which it is united. This idea reappears in 2p7s, where Spinoza asserts that "so long as things are considered as modes of thinking," their causal explanation must pertain to the attribute of Thought alone.

With this in mind, we may now proceed to reconsider the shift of focus that Spinoza proclaims in the last section of the *Ethics*, Part 5. What I think he is implying in 5p30d, in the first place, is that only when experiencing itself *formally*, as a pure thinking activity or a mode of thinking without relation to its object and to its representational function, can the mind perceive itself immediately "through God's essence" under the attribute of Thought, regardless of the body's essence it expresses (5p29). Spinoza writes, accordingly, that the mind's intellectual love of God is

> an action by which the mind contemplates itself, with the accompanying idea of God as its cause (by 5p32 and 5p32c), that is (by 1p25c and 2p11c), an action by which God, insofar as he can be explained through the human mind, contemplates himself, with the accompanying idea of himself [as the cause].
>
> (5p36d)

And he also says that this love "must be related to the mind insofar as it acts" (5p42d). Second, only when conceiving itself in its formal reality, as a pure thinking activity, can the mind legitimately consider itself to be possessing the same degree of formal reality as does God considered under the attribute of Thought. For, inasmuch as Spinoza follows in

the footsteps of his predecessor, ideas differ from one another only in their objective reality, as noted previously, in accord with the formal reality they represent, rather than in their formal reality, where "there is no recognizable inequality among them." Third, and even more importantly, it is only by shifting its attention away from its own representational character and from the body it represents and conceiving itself *formally,* that the mind is able to release itself from the awareness of the body and the individual personality it imposes, and experience itself as united with God considered as a thinking thing.

In freeing itself from the *awareness* of the body, to be sure, the mind is not releasing itself from the body with which it is united any more than it becomes eternal simply by conceiving itself *sub specie aeternitatis* (5p31s). Aware of itself as a pure thinking activity, rather, the intuitive mind becomes immediately acquainted – in an experiential and non-conceptual manner – with the eternal aspects of its being and feels itself to be one with God's active essence (*Dei actuosm essentiam*; 2p3s). As Spinoza writes, "we feel and know by experience that we are eternal" (*sentimus experimurque, nos aeternos esse*) (5p23s). On the reading I propose, then, the mind's shift of focus to itself as a pure thinking activity without relation to its object is what grounds the experiential, non-representational, and non-conceptual character of its intuitive self-knowledge and intellectual freedom. In a way, this is reminiscent of the Cartesian *cogito*, where the certainty of the "I exists" emerges from the meditator's immediate awareness of her own pure thinking activity, regardless of its contents. For Spinoza, likewise, as I hope I have shown, only insofar as the intuitive mind experiences itself formally, without relation to its object, can it feel itself to be one with God considered as a thinking thing, and thus to be divinely real, perfect, active, or free. In this state, the mind draws satisfaction from its own present perfection, reality, activity, or freedom, which reaches the highest possible level available to human beings.[24]

Notes

1 Exceptions to this tendency are, for instance, Aaron Garrett (2003), De Dijn (2011), and Julie Klein's contribution to this volume. In French scholarship, see Macherey (1994, 40–43), among others.

2 A notable example is Jonathan Bennett's account of human freedom in the *Ethics*. He writes,

> Part 5 of the *Ethics* is called 'On the Power of the Intellect, or on Human Freedom,' a title reflecting Spinoza's belief that we can achieve a measure of what he calls 'freedom' through the cultivation of intellect, i.e., the use of reason. In contrast, Part 4 is called 'Of Human Bondage, or the Strength of the Affects.' . . . Oddly, it is in Part 4 that Spinoza tells us what the effects are of being free. What Part 5 adds are some intellectual techniques for increasing one's freedom.
>
> (1984, 315)

3 See, for instance, Eugene Marshall (2013, 146), Colin Marshall (2015, 138–139) and Kisner (2011, 23ff).
4 "*In hac ergo de potentia rationis agam ostendens, quid ipsa ratio in affectus possit, et deinde, quid mentis libertas seu beatitudo sit*." Notice that Curley's translation omits the word "then" (*deinde)* from this sentence, whereas Shirley's translation does not.
5 Not all scholars agree that this shift in focus marks a significant turning point in the sequence of arguments in Part 5 and in the *Ethics* as a whole. Eugene Marshall, for instance, explains Spinoza's notions of salvation, blessedness, and freedom in Part 5 of the *Ethics* as rational affective states reached via the same affective mechanisms of association that bring about bondage (2013, chapter 6, esp. pp. 187, 205, 211, 214). He notes, moreover, that he sees "Spinoza's project in the first half of Part 5 as being the same as in the second half of Part 5" (2013, 202 n.15).
6 Michael Della Rocca, while referring to 3p12, emphasizes this point (2008, 154–156).
7 In considering desire the primary passion that is closest to action, one that disposes the mind to act, Spinoza is echoing Descartes (*Passions*, arts. 143–144).
8 See also 3DA3exp. For a different reading, see Kisner (2011) and his contribution to this volume.
9 Representatives of the first line of interpretation are, for example, Curley (1973, 25–29), Allison (1987, 117–118), Parkinson (1993, 276), Lloyd (1994, 108–110), Wilson (1996), Ellsiepen (2011, 136–145), and Soyarslan (2014, 147–149). Among the scholars endorsing the second option are Carr (1978), Yovel (1990, 159–160, 167–168), Sandler (2005), Nadler (2006, 178–183), and Don Garrett (2010).
10 Some interpreters regard Spinoza's common notions as exclusively applying to the attribute of Extension, hence, as properties shared by all bodies. See, for example, Curley (1988, 45–47, 77), Bennett (1984, 107), Miller (2004, 573), and Don Garrett (2010, 107–108). Though Spinoza's discussion of common notions is indeed specifically concerned with bodies, ideas are also "things" having common properties of their own. The parallelism thus entails that the foundations of reason should also include common notions under the attribute of Thought, whose objects are properties shared by all minds or ideas. See also Nadler (2006, 175), Ellsiepen (2011, 134 n.15), and Soyarslan (2014, 244 n.31).
11 Notice that all common notions may plausibly be ideas of infinite modes, but not all infinite modes are the objects of common notions, as the examples of "infinite intellect" (2p7c, 2p11c) and "the face of the whole universe" (*facies totius universi*) indicate (Ep. 64, G IV 278/27–28).
12 As some have noted, Spinoza seems to be following here the traditional distinction between essence and *propria*, which is a property of a thing that necessarily belongs to it although not constituting part of its essence. See, for instance, Parkinson (1993, 276) and Melamed (2013, 51). See Della Rocca (2004, 132–134, 2008, 194), who points to passages where Spinoza also allows for general essences shared by more than one individual (e.g., 1p8s2, 1p17s, and 4p35c1). Cf. Hübner (2016).
13 I am grateful to Michael Della Rocca for raising this objection in correspondence. Cf. Curley, who has claimed that in the *Ethics*, intuition "does not include adequate knowledge of the essences of divine attributes," and that "this kind of knowledge is classified under the heading of reason" (1973, 57–58).

14 See De Deugd (1966) and Gilead (1994).
15 See, for instance, Parkinson (1964, 183–184), Carr (1978), Miller (2004, 584), Don Garrett (2010, 109–110), and Ellsiepen (2011, 142). For a different reading, see Diane Steinberg (2009, 154).
16 E.g., 5p36s (G II 303/12–16); 2p45s (G II 127/22–24).
17 See, among others, Curley (1969, chapter 2), Don Garrett (1991), and Della Rocca (2008, 70–71).
18 See Soyarslan (2014, 256 n.77) and the references therein.
19 For further elaboration, see Naaman-Zauderer (2010, 19–27).
20 For a keen criticism of this view, see LeBuffe (2010, 10ff).
21 Lord (2010, 146).
22 See, e.g., KV (G I 103; G I 111). Cf. TIE sec. 13 (G II 8/22).
23 For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see Nadler (2018).
24 Versions of this chapter were presented at the 2016 Symposium of the International Association of Women Philosophers (IAPh) in Melbourne and at the 2019 Netherlands-Israel Spinoza Seminar at the Spinozahuis in Rijnsburg. I would like to thank the participants and audiences at both conferences for helpful discussions and responses. I am deeply grateful to Michael Della Rocca and Matthew Kisner for their encouragement and for their generous comments on earlier drafts of this chapter. I would also like to thank Roy Polad and Daphna Mark for helpful conversations, and the participants in my Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 graduate Spinoza Seminars at Tel Aviv University, for lively discussions and criticisms. The preparation of this chapter was funded by the Israel Science Foundation (ISF) Grant no. 248/1.

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11 The Enigma of Spinoza's *Amor Dei Intellectualis*[1]

Yitzhak Y. Melamed

> Those who confuse the divine nature with the human easily ascribe human affects to God.[2]
> What Spinoza says about the intellectual love of God is only a sop to the masses.[3]

The notion of divine love was essential to medieval Christian conceptions of God.[4] Jewish thinkers, though, had a much more ambivalent attitude about this issue. While Maimonides was reluctant to ascribe love, or any other affect, to God,[5] Gersonides and Crescas celebrated God's love.[6] Though Spinoza is clearly sympathetic to Maimonides's rejection of divine love as anthropomorphism, he attributes love to God nevertheless, unfolding his notion of *amor Dei intellectualis* at the conclusion of his *Ethics*. But is this a legitimate notion within his system? In the first part of this chapter, I will explain some of the problems surrounding this notion and then turn, in the second part, to consider two unsatisfactory solutions. In the third part, I will attempt to rework Spinoza's *amor Dei intellectualis* from his definitions of love and the other affects in Part 3 of the *Ethics*. In the fourth part, I will examine closely how he tweaks his definition of love in order to allow for the possibility of divine intellectual love and conclude by trying to explain what motivated this move.

1 Divine Love as Anthropomorphism

> Moses plainly teaches that God is jealous and nowhere teaches that God lacks emotions or passions of the soul. Hence, we must evidently deduce that this is what Moses believed, or at least what he wanted to teach, however much we may be convinced that this statement conflicts with reason.[7]

In this announcement, taken from Spinoza's famous discussion of the proper method of interpreting scripture, Spinoza points to scripture's depiction of God as having passions as an example of an irrational, anthropomorphic conception of God in scripture. Accordingly, toward the middle of Part 5 of the *Ethics*, he argues:

> 5p17: God is without passions, and is not affected with any affect of Joy or Sadness [*Deus expers est passionum, nec ullo laetitiae aut tristitiae affectu afficitur*].

Then, in the corollary to the same proposition, Spinoza seems to qualify this claim somewhat:

> *Strictly speaking* God loves no one, and hates no one [*Deus* proprie loquendo *neminem amat, neque odio habet*]. For God (by p17) is not affected with any affect of Joy or Sadness. Consequently (by 3DA6, 7), he also loves no one and hates no one.[8]

Why does Spinoza introduce the qualifier "strictly speaking"? Is he insinuating that in some non-strict sense, God may love or hate someone? We might be tempted to follow this hint, but then, a few lines below, Spinoza argues that if one loves God, one *should not* hope that God will love him in return.

> 5p19: He who loves God cannot strive that God should love him in return.
>
> Dem.: If a man were to strive for this, he would desire (by p17c) that God, whom he loves, not be God. Consequently (by 3p19), he would desire to be saddened, which is absurd (by 3p28). Therefore, he who loves God, etc., q.e.d.

Spinoza's argument here is straightforward. Were God to love anyone, God would cease to be what he is (since, per 5p17c, it is contrary to God's nature to have passions). Hence, were we to wish for God to love us, we would, in fact, be wishing that God would cease to be. Thus, insofar as we love God, we would be saddened by the destruction of God (3p19). But we cannot strive to be saddened (3p28). Therefore, we cannot desire that God would love us.

At this point, we might be convinced that God indeed cannot love or hate anyone. 5p19 seems to say that for God to love someone would be just like – to use one of Spinoza's favorite tropes – a triangle becoming a square. Just as a square triangle is nothing but a chimera, so is a loving God, for Spinoza. Love is a passion, and God has no passions.

Yet, as one might suspect, this is not the final word in our divine affair. In 5p20s, there is a crucial transition in the text: it is here that Spinoza begins the enigmatic conclusion of the *Ethics*. In the middle of this Scholium, he suggests the following diagnosis:

> It should be noted that sickness of the mind and misfortunes take their origin especially from too much Love toward a thing which is liable to many variations and which we can never fully possess. For

> no one is disturbed or anxious concerning anything unless he loves it, nor do wrongs, suspicions, and enmities arise except from Love for a thing which no one can really fully possess.[9]
>
> (5p20s)

Then Spinoza notes that with this, he has "completed everything which concerns this present life [*Atque his omnia, quae praesentem hanc vitam spectant, absolvi*]," and therefore, "it is time now to pass to those things which pertain to the Mind's duration without relation to the body [*mentis durationem sine relatione ad corpus*]" (5p20s, G II 294/24).[10]

The rest of Part 5 deals with the third kind of cognition (*scientia intuitiva*), the mind's eternity and blessedness (*beatitudo*), and the mind's intellectual love of God. In the context of the latter, Spinoza makes the following two surprising claims:

> 5p35: God loves himself with an infinite intellectual Love [*Deus se ipsum amore intellectuali infinito amat*].

and

> 5p36c: From this it follows that insofar as God loves himself, he loves men, and consequently that God's love of men and the Mind's intellectual Love of God are one and the same [*Hinc sequitur, quod Deus, quatenus seipsum amat, homines amat, et consequenter quod amor Dei erga homines et mentis erga Deum amor intellectualis unum et idem sit*].

Clearly, we were quite right to suspect something odd in Spinoza's qualification that only "*strictly speaking* God loves no one" (5p17c). In order to avoid ascribing a flat and obvious contradiction to Spinoza, we need to clarify his understanding of divine love. Specifically, we need to answer the following questions:

1. If it is contradictory to God's nature to have the passion of love (according to 5p17 and 5p19d), how can God love either himself (5p35) or men (5p36c)?
2. Since Spinoza defines love as "joy accompanied by the idea of an external cause" (3DA6), it seems that Spinoza's God cannot love anything, insofar as he has no external causes. How, then, can God love himself?[11]
3. How can God's love of men and men's intellectual love of God be "one and the same"? The subjects as well as the objects of these two loves are *not* the same, and (unfortunately) love does not have to be symmetric. What, then, are the grounds for this odd claim of identity?[12]

4 In the TTP, Spinoza pointedly criticizes the Hebrews' view of themselves as God's chosen people.[13] Similarly, in his discussion of miracles, he criticizes those who take humanity to be the chief part of nature and the end toward which the whole of nature works.[14] But, since human beings are not God's *chosen species*, we should wonder why Spinoza singles out *men* as the object of God's love. Does not God love donkeys and porcupines as well?[15]

My impression is that Spinoza is aware of these issues, and indeed, he intentionally draws the reader's attention to them. In the following, I will try to address these difficulties. My discussion will be primarily a simple attempt to understand Spinoza's text, and I will not dwell on the historical sources of his discussion. On the latter topic, there are already several important and fascinating studies;[16] various scholars have identified particular passages in the writings of numerous authors – Aristotle, Maimonides, Aquinas, Gersonides, Hasdai Crescas, Abraham Shalom, Leo Hebraeus (Yehuda Abravanel),[17] and Descartes – as possible sources for Spinoza's discussion.[18] I may occasionally refer to these studies, but primarily, I will be attempting to see whether the *Ethics* can provide us with a coherent account of his notion. I will begin by exploring two solutions which I find lacking.

2 Two Preliminary Solutions

Divine Love as a Rhetorical Gesture. – One way to solve the apparent contradictions in Spinoza's statements about divine love is to take his claims that God loves himself and human beings as nothing more than rhetorical gestures aimed at appeasing traditional readers by making statements which are similar (or at least appear similar) to mainstream religious views. This suggestion might be supported by the following three considerations. First, there seems to be a tendency among some iconoclastic medieval writers – such as Maimonides and Averroes – to adopt a traditionalist tone toward the conclusion of a major work. Spinoza may well have been aware of this tendency; he occasionally notes that he too

> speaks according to the power of understanding of ordinary people . . . For we can gain a considerable advantage, if we yield as much to their understanding as we can. In this way, they will give a favorable hearing to the truth.[19]

Second, in his late work – the TTP and the *Ethics* – Spinoza sometimes deliberately equivocates on the meaning of certain claims, making a point that may sound religiously innocuous on the first reading but turns out to be quite heterodox when we understand Spinoza's particular use

of the given vocabulary.[20] Finally, in the TTP, he speaks of man's participation in God's love while discussing the beliefs required for *obedience*.[21] As he clearly suggests, these beliefs need not be true but need only be conducive to obedience and piety. Therefore, one may reasonably suspect that the belief in God's love belongs to this group of dogmas, which "contain no shadow of truth" yet are required to "move the heart to obedience."[22]

While not denying the importance of the various rhetorical and political devices Spinoza employs in the *Ethics*, I am not fully satisfied with the explanation that the contradictions in the text are the result of an attempt to appease the masses. Spinoza may well be playing with the reader in 5p35–36. Still, he seems to be trying to convey some important positive content in these propositions. He insinuates that the term 'love' might be equivocal (having a strict as well as a non-strict sense) so that the contradictions at stake are only apparent. Given these hints, we should attempt to retrieve and clarify these distinct meanings, and then consider whether the apparent contradictions are defused by our clarification.

Natura naturans vs. *Natura naturata*. – Another tempting and easy way to resolve the contradictions is to suggest that, when Spinoza says that God cannot love and then later says that he does love, he is referring to the two distinct aspects of God qua *Natura naturans* and qua *Natura naturata*. *Natura naturans* refers to God's essence, i.e., the attributes; *Natura naturata* is the realm of the modes (or what follows from God's essence).[23] When Spinoza proves that God is immutable, he attributes immutability *only* to *Natura naturans*.[24] The realm of the modes is left mutable. Given this distinction, one might be tempted to suggest that it is only God qua (mutable) *Natura naturata* that loves himself and human beings, whereas God qua (immutable) *Natura naturans* loves and hates no one.

The issue of mutability does play an important role in Spinoza's original rejection of divine love, as we learn from the following passage from the *Short Treatise*:

> [Were God to love men because they love him] this would also have to produce a great mutability in God. Where previously he had neither loved nor hated, he would now begin to love and to hate, and would be caused to do this by something that would be outside him. But this is absurdity itself.[25]

Similarly, in his discussion of *man's* intellectual love of God in the *Ethics*, Spinoza notes that there is tension between the eternal nature of intellectual love and the very definition of love – a sub-species of joy (3p13s), which, in turn, is defined as an *increase* in the perfection of the mind (3p11s).

> Although this Love toward God has had no beginning (by p33), it still has all the perfections of Love, just as if it had come to be

> (as we have feigned [*finximus*] in p32c). There is no difference here, except that the Mind has had eternally the same perfections which, in our fiction, now come to it, and that it is accompanied by the idea of God as an eternal cause. If Joy, then, consists in the passage to a greater perfection, blessedness must surely consist in the fact that the Mind is endowed with perfection itself.
>
> (5p33s)

Although the simplicity of the claim which denies the possibility of love and joy from God qua (immutable) *Natura naturans* and ascribes them to God qua (mutable) *Natura naturata* is tempting, and might advance us somewhat toward the required solution,[26] it still leaves us with quite a few problems. First, it is not clear why we should ascribe only *love* to God qua *Natura naturata*. Why not also say that God (qua mutable *Natura naurata*) *hates* certain things? Second, in contrast to our suggestion that God qua *Natura naturans* has neither joy nor love, in 5p35d, Spinoza attributes gladness (*gaudium*) – which is another sub-species of joy – to God's nature or essence, i.e., to *Natura naturans*.[27] There is hardly any question that for him, *Natura naturans* is eternal,[28] so how can he ascribe to it gladness, which he defines as "a joy, accompanied by the idea of a *past* thing that has turned out better than *hoped*" (3DA16; italics added)? Does God's eternal nature have memory? Is God subject to *hope,* i.e., "inconstant Joy, born of the idea of a future or past thing whose outcome we to some extent doubt" (3DA12)?

If Spinoza's theory of divine intellectual love is salvageable, there seems to be no other way but to begin with a close examination of the definitions of his basic affects, reconstruct the characteristics of the complex affects, and then examine the way he applies these affects to God in the concluding section of the *Ethics*.

3 The Deduction of Love

Spinoza defines[29] Love [*amor*] as

> *Definition of Love 1*: Joy, accompanied by the idea of an external cause [*Amor est laetitia concomitante idea causae externae*].
>
> (3p13s and 3DA6)

Joy (*laetitia*) is one of three basic affects in Spinoza's psychological theory (the others being Sadness [*tristitia*] and Desire [*cupiditas*]). In 3p11s, he explains and defines the nature of Joy:

> the Mind can undergo great changes, and pass now to a greater, now to a lesser perfection. These passions, indeed, explain to us the affects of Joy and Sadness. By Joy, therefore, I shall understand in what follows that passion by which the Mind passes to a greater

> perfection [*Per laetitiam itaque in sequentibus intelligam passionem, qua mens ad maiorem perfectionem transit*].

By replacing the word "Joy" in 3DA6 with its definition from 3p11s, we get a more elaborate definition of love:

> *Definition of Love 2*: Love is a passion by which X's mind passes to a greater perfection, accompanied by the idea of a cause external to X.

Before we proceed, let me point out that in the Definitions of the Affects section, which appears at the end of Part 3 of the *Ethics* (and summarizes the definitions of affects provided throughout this part), Spinoza suggests a small yet crucial alteration to the definition of joy. He *omits* the clause which states that joy is a passion and thus defines it as "man's passage from a lesser to a greater perfection" (3DA2). This definition of joy clearly allows for a kind of joy that is *not* a passion. Indeed, in 3p58, Spinoza explicitly states, "Apart from Joy and Desire that are passions, there are other affects of Joy and Desire that are related to us insofar as we act" [*Praeter Laetitiam, et Cupiditatem, quae passiones sunt, alii Laetitiae, et Cupiditatis affectus dantur, qui ad nos, quatenus agimus, referuntur*]."[30] 3DA2 seems to be a revised definition of joy, intended to include the kind of active joy that is addressed in 3p58. Still, one wonders why Spinoza did not correct the definition of joy in 3p11s as well. The question of whether joy and love can be actions rather than passions will turn out to be crucial for our investigations, and it seems that, in 3p11s and 3DA2, Spinoza provides contradictory answers to this question. We will revisit this issue toward the end of the paper. For the sake of simplicity, we will proceed for the time being with our initial (3p11s) definition of joy.

In order to complete the unpacking of the definition of love, we must clarify what Spinoza means by 'Passion' (*passio*)' and 'external cause' (*causa externa*). In 3D3, he defines the key notion of 'an affect' and then distinguishes between affects that are *actions* and those that are *passions*.

> 3D3: By *affect* I understand affections of the Body by which the Body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections. Therefore, if we can be the adequate cause of any of these affections, I understand by the Affect *an action*; otherwise, *a passion*
>
> [*Per affectum intelligo corporis affectiones, quibus ipsius corporis agendi potentia augetur vel minuitur, iuvatur vel coercetur, et simul harum affectionum ideas. Si itaque alicuius harum affectionum*

> *adaequata possimus esse causa, tum per affectum actionem intelligo; alias passionem*].

At this point, we might ask: what are 'affections'? In 1D5, Spinoza defines mode as "affections of substance [*substantiae affectiones*]," and his use of the term later in the book indicates that he considers the two terms (*modus* and *affectio*) as roughly equivalent.[31] Thus, 3D3 seems to define the affects as modes, or affections, of the body and the mind. Following 3D3, we arrive at a more detailed explication of love:

> *Definition of Love 3*: Love is a mode of X's mind (and body), of which the mind (/body) is *not* the adequate cause, a mode by which the mind (/body) passes to a greater perfection, and is accompanied by the idea of a cause external to X.

Two remaining notions which require elucidation are adequate cause (*causa adaequata*) and external cause (*causa externa*). The former is defined in 3D1:

> I call that *cause adequate* whose effect can be clearly and distinctly perceived through it. But I call it *partial*, or *inadequate*, if its effect cannot be understood through it alone [*Causam adaequatam appello eam, cuius effectus potest clare et distincte per eandem percipi. Inadaequatam autem seu partialem illam voco, cuius effectus per ipsam solam intelligi nequit*].

I am not aware of any place where Spinoza provides an explicit definition of 'external cause.' Yet, in the *Short Treatise*, he refers to an "immanent or internal cause" and then glosses, "which is all one according to me."[32] He explicates the dichotomy between immanent and transitive cause in 1p18d. An immanent cause is an efficient cause whose effect inheres in the cause; a transitive or external cause is an efficient cause whose effect does not inhere in the cause. Thus, God is the immanent cause of all things insofar as all things are (efficiently) caused by God and inhere in him. God cannot be the external (or transitive) cause of anything since all things are in God.[33]

Relying on this clarification of the notions of adequate and external cause, we arrive at our final explication of Spinoza's definition of love:

> *Definition of Love 4*: Love is a mode of X's mind (and its corresponding mode of the body), which cannot be conceived only through the mind alone, a mode by which the mind passes to a greater perfection, and is accompanied by the idea of a cause of X, in which X does not inhere.

If we had to put this definition into words that are closer to colloquial language, we could say that love is a state of the mind (and body[34]) of X with the following three characteristics:

1 It cannot be fully explained through X's mind alone. (*Explanatory dependence condition*)
2 By it, X's mind passes to a greater perfection. (*Improvement condition*)
3 It is accompanied by the idea of something that contributes to the causation of X, but X does not inhere in it. (*External causation condition*)

We will now turn to see whether these conditions are met in the case of God's ideas, i.e., when X=God.

4 Other Love

1 *Explanatory dependence*. – In the *Ethics*, Spinoza never ascribes mind (*mens*) to God for reasons that are closely related to our topic. He takes *mens* as a term connoting finitude and thus inapplicable to God.[35] Instead, he refers to God's idea (of himself, or what is the same, of everything that is) as *intellectus Dei*, i.e., God's intellect. God's idea or intellect provides the full explanation for any mental fact since (1) all ideas are included in God's idea (2p3), and (2) all mental modes that are not ideas supervene and depend on ideas.[36] Hence, the conceptual dependence condition is not met in the case of God's idea or intellect.
2 *Improvement*. – In 2D6, Spinoza identifies reality and perfection. God, being the most real and the most perfect being,[37] seems to be incapable of "passing to a greater perfection" since there is no greater perfection than God's current state. Hence, the improvement condition cannot be met.
3 *External causation*. – Since all things are in God (1p15), he cannot have an external cause. But if God has no external cause, he cannot have an idea of his external cause since all God's ideas are true (2p32). Therefore, the external causation condition is not met either.

How and why, then, can Spinoza ascribe love to God? Let us bracket for a short while the question of *why* Spinoza attempts to ascribe love to God in spite of the tremendous tensions involved in such an attempt. Let us first see *how* he attempts to defuse these tensions through the surprising notion of 'intellectual love.'

In order to satisfy the *improvement condition*, Spinoza suggests that the definition of joy can be supplemented by an equivalent notion of Blessedness (*beatitudo*). If the mind's *advancement* toward perfection is

Joy, then the mind's *achieving* and *being in this state of perfection* is to be called Blessedness.[38] Thus, intellectual love replaces the component of Joy with Blessedness. Recall a passage we saw a short while ago:

> Although this Love toward God has had no beginning (by p33), it still has all the perfections of Love, just as if it had come to be. . . . There is no difference here, except that the Mind has had eternally the same perfections which, in our fiction, now come to it, and that is accompanied by the idea of God as an eternal cause. *If Joy, then, consists in the passage to a greater perfection, blessedness must surely consist in the fact that the Mind is endowed with perfection itself.*
>
> (5p33s; my italics)

Though the passage deals with *man*'s intellectual love of God, Spinoza's reliance on this passage in 5p36d shows that its chief claims are applicable to *God*'s intellectual love (of himself) as well, and thus, it provides a general characterization of intellectual love.

The last sentence of this passage also hints at what will happen in the case of intellectual love with regard to the other two conditions. If I understand Spinoza correctly, his reasoning is as follows: Love, in spite of the great praises commonly heaped upon it, is a source of much misery.[39] The three conditions which constitute love show its inferiority. If love is to be ascribed to God, it must be perfected. Hence, all three conditions of inferiority should be straightened out, if not completely inverted.

Indeed, in the cases of the *explanatory dependence* and *external causation* conditions, Spinoza stipulates a complete inversion of the conditions in order for love to be ascribed to God. God's love is fully explained through his idea. God's idea is the adequate cause of his love, and thus, this love is an action, not a passion.[40] Spinoza states this point explicitly in 5p36d, where intellectual love is said to be "an action" of the mind.[41] Similarly, the object of an intellectual love must be an *internal* cause. Therefore, in his demonstration of the proposition which states that "God loves himself with an infinite intellectual love" (5p35), Spinoza points out that God's *gaudium* "is accompanied by the idea of himself, i.e., by the idea of his cause."[42]

The closest Spinoza comes to defining divine intellectual love is in 5p32c, where he characterizes it as the joy which necessarily arises in the mind when the mind knows itself through the third kind of cognition,[43] i.e., when the mind has adequate cognition of itself as proceeding from the formal essence of the attribute of Thought (2p40s2, G II 122/18).[44] Notice that in 5p32c, Spinoza employs the notion of joy as defined in 3DA2 ("Joy is a man's passage from a lesser to a greater perfection"), not the one that appears in 3p11s ("that passion by which the Mind passes to a greater perfection"). The former, as opposed to the latter, allows for a kind of joy that is an *action* rather than a passion.

Notably, Spinoza has in his arsenal a notion which is quite close to intellectual love. This is the *acquiescentia in se ipso*, which he borrows from Descartes's treatise on the passions[45] and defines as "a Joy born of the fact that a man considers himself and his own power of acting [*Laetitia, orta ex eo, quod homo se ipsum, suamque agendi potentiam contemplatur*]" (3DA25). Indeed, in 5p36s, Spinoza identifies God's intellectual love with *acquiescentia in se ipso*.

> From this we clearly understand wherein our salvation, or blessedness, or Freedom, consists, viz. in a constant and eternal Love of God, or in God's Love for men. And this Love, or blessedness, is called Glory in the Sacred Scriptures—not without reason. For whether this Love is related to God or to the Mind, it can rightly be called satisfaction of mind [*animi acquiescentia*], which is really not distinguished from Glory (by 3DA25, 30). For insofar as it is related to God (by p35), it is Joy (if I may still be permitted to use this term[46]), accompanied by the idea of himself [as its cause]. And similarly insofar as it is related to the Mind (by p27).

This passage raises quite a few questions, not the least of which is how Spinoza understands the cryptic biblical term *Gloria* (or, in Hebrew, *Kavod*), and why he mentions it here,[47] but we shouldn't allow these to divert us from the more obvious question: why does Spinoza call this state of God's intellect (or of the human mind) intellectual *love*, when its characteristics are utterly opposed to his own definition of love?

Some commentators suggest that Spinoza developed the concept of intellectual love because he thought that all kinds of cognition should have equivalent affective states.[48] I am not categorically sure that this is the case.[49] But even if it were so, it is still not clear why Spinoza calls this state 'intellectual *love*.' A basic commitment to truth in advertising should make him avoid describing it as any kind of love, given his definition of love in 3p13s and 3DA6.

To finally answer this question, we must turn to 3p30 and 3p30s, where Spinoza explains the similarity and difference between love and *acquiescentia in se ipso* (or intellectual love):

> 3p30: If someone has done something which he imagines affects others with Joy, he will be affected with Joy accompanied by the idea of himself as cause, or he will regard himself with Joy. If, on the other hand, he has done something which he imagines affects others with Sadness, he will regard himself with Sadness.
>
> 3p30s: Since Love (by p13s) is Joy, accompanied by the idea of an external cause, and Hate is Sadness, accompanied also by the idea of an external cause, this Joy and Sadness are species of Love and Hate. But because Love and Hate are related to external objects, we shall signify these affects by other names. *Joy accompanied by the*

> *idea of an internal cause,* we shall call *love of esteem* [*gloriam*], and *the Sadness contrary to it, Shame* – I mean *when the Joy or Sadness arise from the fact that the man believes* [*credit*] *that he is praised or blamed.* Otherwise, I shall call *Joy accompanied by the idea of an internal cause, Self-esteem* [*acquiescentiam in se ipso*], and *the Sadness contrary to it, Repentance* [*poenitentiam*].

The topic of 3p30 itself (and the first three quarters of 3p30s) is only tangentially related to our issue; it addresses the affects of Love of Esteem and Shame that are species of Joy and Sadness, respectively, accompanied by the *imagined* idea of oneself as their cause. For our purpose, the crucial passage is the definition of *acquiescentia in se ipso* in the final sentence of 3p30s. "Joy accompanied by the idea of an internal cause" is *precisely* what intellectual love is, and unlike Love of Esteem, it is not grounded in imaginary belief. It seems, I suggest, that while writing the third part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza was keen on calling this affect "*acquiescentia in se ipso*"; only when he turned to develop the last sections of Part 5 did he attach the additional title of "intellectual love" to it. Why this turn of terminology? Influence or even pressure from his Collegiant friends – who were still committed to the Christian notion of divine love – might be part of the explanation. It is more likely, however, that at some point, Spinoza became aware of a certain lacuna in his detailed taxonomy of the affects. Both love (as defined in 3p13s and 3DA6) and divine intellectual love (as explicated in 5p32c[50]) are kinds of Joy accompanied by the idea of an object as its cause. As Spinoza points out in his *Compendium of Hebrew Grammar*, love is a transitive verb, requiring a direct object.[51] Thus, it may well be that by attaching the title of divine intellectual love to *acquiescentia in se ipso*, Spinoza's aim was to establish a new category in his obsessive taxonomy of the affects: the category of Joy that is accompanied by the idea of its cause (a category which is then further divided into the species of love and divine intellectual love).[52]

5 Conclusion

A Guest for the Night (1939) is one of the greatest novels of the Hebrew Nobel laureate Shmuel Yosef Agnon (1888–1970). Toward the end of the novel, the narrator recounts his meeting with a certain Leibtsche Bodenhaus, a pious soul and an amateur philosopher. Leibtsche warmly welcomes the narrator, wishing to share with him some thoughts. "Spinoza teaches us not to laugh, not to weep, not to be enthusiastic, *but to understand*," says Leibtsche.[53] "Can I say that I fulfilled his teaching, except for laughing? In the other qualities, my dear sir, I am a total transgressor." Still, it is not Leibtsche's failure to follow the prescripts of Spinoza to avoid weeping and enthusiasm that truly bother him. Something else weighs on his heart.

> And now, my dear sir, I came to the end of the words of the sublime philosopher. He says, "but to understand" – and surely, however hard we try, we shall never understand. Let us take, for example, the verse, "God is angry every day"[54] – is it possible to understand why He is so angry? And if we had sinned against Him, does he have to make our lives a misery and direct all his blows against us? And would it not be better if He treated us according to the philosophic principle, which means: to understand?[55]

Leibtsche Bodenhaus was unfortunately neither the first nor the last to complain about God's anger. But unlike other seekers of divine justice, Leibtsche's complaint is grounded in Spinoza's teachings on the affects. In this paper, we have examined "the sublime philosopher's" teachings, not about divine anger (Spinoza would easily brush away such a notion) but rather about divine love. The latter question bothered Spinoza from early on.[56] Whether his final word on the issue – in the conclusion to the fifth part of the *Ethics* – reached a stable position, I leave for the reader to judge.

Notes

1 Unless otherwise marked, all references to the *Ethics,* the early works of Spinoza, and Letters 1–29 are to Edwin Curley's translation. In references to the other letters of Spinoza, I have used Samuel Shirley's translation. I would like to thank Michael Della Rocca, Zev Harvey, and Mike LeBuffe for their most helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper.

2 1p8s2, G II 49/35.

3 Leibniz (1989, 281).

4 See, for example, Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I q.36.

5 On the impossibility of ascribing affects to God, see Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, I, 59, and *Book of Knowledge*, Pillars of the Law, I 14.

6 See Gersonides, *Commentary on Genesis* 2:2; Crescas, *Or ha-Shem* II 6, 1. Cf. Harvey (1998, 109, 2014).

7 "*Porro quoniam Moses clare docet, Deum esse zelotypum, ne ullibi docet, Deum carere passionibus sive animi pathematis, hinc plane concludendum, Moses hoc ipsum credisse aut saltem docere voluisse, quantumvis hanc sententiam rationi repugnare credamus*" (TTP VII, G III 101/18–22). I have slightly modified Silverthorne and Israel's translation. They render "*animi pathematis*" as "mental passions."

8 Cf. CM II 8 (G I 265/24–26):

> God is improperly said to hate things, and love others. But when we say that God hates some things and loves others, this is said in the same sense Scripture uses in maintaining that the earth disgorges men, and other things of that kind. That God is angry with no one, *that he does not love things in the way in which ordinary people persuade themselves he does* – these propositions may be inferred sufficiently from Scripture itself.

My italics. Notice that the italicized phrase may insinuate that God loves things, though *not* in the way ordinary people conceive of love.

9 Cf. KV II 5 (G I 63/16–31). Notice, however, that Spinoza's concept of love in the *Short Treatise* is different from that in the *Ethics*. The essential feature of love in the KV is the union (or the desire for union) with an adored object

(cf. Descartes, *Passions* art. 79, AT XI 387). In the *Ethics*, Spinoza rejects this understanding of love, claiming that the desire for union with an object is merely a *proprium*, but not the essence, of love (3DA6exp).

10 Though the issue cannot be adequately discussed here, let me briefly suggest that Spinoza's extraordinary claim about "the Mind's duration without relation to the body" seems to be an attempt to replace the durational view of the mind's survival with his own view of the eternity of the mind, according to which the mind, insofar as it conceives itself as undetached from the substance, enjoys eternity, which is the existence of the substance.

11 For Spinoza's reliance on this motivation to deny divine love, see KV II 24 (G I 104/12).

12 For earlier Hebrew sources which similarly assert the identity of divine and human intellectual love, see the postscript to Harvey (1998, 107, 2014) and Idel (1988, 67).

13 TTP III.

14 TTP VI (G III 82, 88). Cf. the appendix to the first part of the *Ethics*.

15 In the following passage from the *Short Treatise*, Spinoza explains why he rejects the notion of God's love for man. Note that Spinoza stresses in this context that man's status is equal to that of all other finite things:

> When we say, however, that God does not love man, that must not be understood as if he left man, as it were, to proceed on his own; [we mean] rather, that because man, *together with all there is*, is so in God, and God so consists of all of these, there cannot be in him any real love toward something else, since everything consists in one unique thing which is God himself.
>
> (KV II 24, G I 14–19; my italics)

Spinoza's statement in the *Ethics* that God loves man insofar as he loves himself (5p36c) is essentially consistent with his claims in the *Short Treatise*. Both texts seem to allow for God to love man only insofar as man is a mode of God (just as God loves all his other modes). However, in the *Short Treatise*, this understanding of God's love of man is presented as a *rejection* of the traditional understanding of God's love of man.

16 See primarily Wolfson (1934, II 302–325), Harvey (1998, 104–107, 2014), and Idel (1988, 67).

17 The Spanish translation of Abravanel's *Dialogi di amore* was in Spinoza's personal library.

18 See, for example, Wolfson (1934, II 303–306).

19 TIE 17.

20 See Melamed (2012a).

21 See, specifically, Spinoza's exposition of John:

> Because no one has seen God, no one recognizes God or is aware of him other than through love of his neighbor, and hence *the only attribute of God that anyone can know is this love, so far as we share in it*.
>
> (TTP XIV, G III 176; italics added)

22 TTP XIV (G III 176/18–19). Indeed, before elaborating the seven dogmas of universal faith, Spinoza points out the principle underlying these dogmas: "There exists a supreme being who *loves* justice and charity" (*dari ens supremum, quod Justitiam & Charitatem amat*) (G III 177; italics added).

23 See 1p29s:

> Before I proceed further, I wish to explain here – or rather to advise [the reader] what we must understand by *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*. For from the preceding I think it is already established that by *Natura*

> *naturans* we must understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, or such attributes of substance as express an eternal and infinite essence, i.e. (by p14c1 and p17c2), God, insofar as he is considered as a free cause. But by *Natura naturata* I understand whatever follows from the necessity of God's nature, or from any of God's attributes, i.e., all the modes of God's attributes insofar as they are considered as things which are in God, and can neither be nor be conceived without God.

24 See 1p20c2.
25 KV II 24 (G I 104/9–12).
26 One commentator who followed this path is Martineau (1883, 273).
27 "*Dei natura* gaudet *infinita perfectione, idque concomitante idea sui*" (5p35d). Curley translates *gaudet* as "enjoys" and *gaudium* as "gladness."
28 For a clarification of the two senses of eternity in Spinoza, see Melamed (2012b).
29 Spinoza defines the affects (at least) twice in Part 3 of the *Ethics*. First, he defines them in the course of proving the propositions of Part 3. He later repeats these definitions in a separate section placed at the end of Part 3. Occasionally, there are some minor discrepancies between the two sets of definitions. I will point them out whenever they are relevant to our topic. Notice that the definitions of the affects in the *Ethics* (and specifically the definition of love) are quite different from those in Spinoza's early *Short Treatise* (KV II 3–14). The *Short Treatise* is much closer to Descartes on this issue.
30 Cf. 4p59: "To every action to which we are determined from an affect which is a passion, we can be determined by reason, without that affect."
31 See, for example, 1p1 and 1p4.
32 KV II 26 (G I 110/24).
33 Cf. Melamed (2013b, 61–66).
34 I state the three characteristics with reference to the mind only for the sake of simplicity. The characteristics of the body of the lover parallel those of the mind.
35 See Melamed (2013b, 163).
36 2ax3:

> There are no modes of thinking, such as love, desire, or whatever is designated by the word affects of the mind, unless there is in the same Individual the idea of the thing loved, desired, etc. But there can be an idea, even though there is no other mode of thinking.

37 "God's essence excludes all imperfection, and involves absolute perfection" (1p11s, G II 54/31). For God's maximal reality, see 1p9 and 1p10s. Cf. 5p35d.
38 See Wolfson (1934, II 308) for a similar claim in Crescas.
39 See KV II 5 (G I 63/1–24) and TIE 9.
40 Cf. Pollock (1966, 282). For a similar point in Crescas, see Harvey (1998, 106–107).
41 "This Love the Mind has must be related to its actions (by p32c and 3p3); it is, then, an action by which the Mind contemplates itself, with the accompanying idea of God as its cause (by p32 and p32c), i.e. (by 1p25c and 2p11c), an action by which God, insofar as he can be explained through the human Mind, contemplates himself, with the accompanying idea of himself [as the cause]" (5p36d). Spinoza stresses this point in one of the annotations he added to Chapter XVI of the TTP:

> For love of God is not obedience but a virtue necessarily present in someone who rightly knows God. . . . obedience immediately turns into love

which arises from true knowledge as inevitably as light emanates from the sun. By the guidance of reason we can love God, but not obey him.

42 Similarly, the (human) mind's intellectual love of God is accompanied by the idea of man's immanent, or internal, cause, i.e., God. Cf. Martineau (1883, 270).
43 For a detailed explanation of the nature of Spinoza's *scientia intuitiva*, or the third kind of cognition, see Melamed (2013a).
44 5p32c:

> From the third kind of knowledge, there necessarily arises an intellectual Love of God. For from this kind of knowledge there arises (by p32) Joy, accompanied by the idea of God as its cause, i.e. (by 3DA6), Love of God, not insofar as we imagine him as present (by p29), but insofar as we understand God to be eternal. And this is what I call intellectual love of God.

45 Or, more precisely, from Henri Desmarets's 1650 Latin translation of Descartes's *Passions de l'âme*. See Descartes, *Passions*, art. 190 (AT XI 471, CSM I 396).
46 Here, Spinoza draws the readers' attention to the fact that strictly speaking joy – insofar as it is a passion – cannot be ascribed to God.
47 As usual, Harvey provides a helpful explanation by pointing out a crucial parallel with one of the concluding chapters of Maimonides's *Guide*:

> After having expounded on 'passionate love' (*'ishq* or *ḥesheq*) and on the pleasure of the disembodied intellect, Maimonides quotes Isaiah 58:8, which reads literally: 'Thy righteousness shall go before thee, and the *glory* of the Lord shall be thy rearguard [*ya'asfekha*].' As Maimonides understands it, the text means: If you are righteous, i.e., if you love God passionately, then upon your death the divine Glory shall gather you up [*ya'asfekha*], i.e., your intellect will be united with the eternal Active Intellect (*Guide* III, 51). The similarities between the literary contexts of Spinoza's remarks about 'glory' and Maimonides' citation of Isaiah 58:8 prove that Spinoza's remarks allude to Maimonides' citation. There is also an external confirmation of this. In his *Theologico-Political Treatise*, Chapter V, Spinoza argues that Isaiah 58:8 presents the clearest statement of the prophetic teaching on ethics and *beatitudo*, and interprets the verse after the manner of Maimonides: If you are righteous in this life, then after your death *gloria Dei te aggregabit* (G III 71).
>
> (Harvey 2014, 105).

48 Rice (2002, 94).
49 According to 2ax3, "there can be an idea, even though there is no other mode of thinking," such as love and desire. True, every idea, just like any other thing, must have an effect (1p36). Still, this effect could just be another idea which follows from it.
50 Assuming we adopt the definition of Joy in 3DA3.
51 CGH 13 (S 632). For a similar point in Crescas, see Harvey (1998, 106).
52 In the current paper, I have not addressed the question of whether divine intellectual love is one of Spinoza's infinite modes. I discuss this issue in Melamed (2013b, 132–135).
53 Agnon, *A Guest for the Night* (1968, 407).
54 "God is angry every day, and how long is his anger? A moment" (Babylonian Talmud, *Tractate Sanhedrin*, 1935, 105b).
55 Agnon, *A Guest for the Night* (1968, 407).

56 See Spinoza's admission of ignorance on this issue in the *Cogitata Metaphysica*: "God's will to love himself follows from his intellect, but how they are related, we do not know" (CM II 8, G I 264/8).

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